

ABSTRACT

Stacy Stanford, **NARROWING THE EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY GAP FOR PREGNANT AND PARENTING COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH FACULTY ENGAGEMENT** (Under the direction of Dr. Travis Lewis). Department of Educational Leadership, December 2022.

Pregnant and parenting college students often face additional barriers when completing their studies. One specific barrier is the lack of support from their educational institutions. This study focused on how college faculty members' perceptions of parenting students influenced their teaching methodologies, which in turn impacted the educational equity of pregnant and parenting students. This study also assessed faculty perceptions of the extent to which the university where the study was conducted applied the most recent Title IX requirements and best practices within the state university system. Lastly, the study examined how faculty participation in Title IX professional development affected their attitudes toward parenting students and their readiness to implement Title IX adjustments in their classes.

Mixed methods within an action research methodology were utilized across three phases. Before and after the professional development around Title IX, faculty members' knowledge and willingness to implement Title IX measures in their classroom practices were assessed. This data was collected through pre- and post-surveys and follow-up interviews.

The findings of this study demonstrated a notable shift in the participants' understanding and awareness of the educational inequities that pregnant and parenting college students often face, following participation in professional development centered around Title IX awareness. In addition, the frequency in which instructors indicated they would integrate Title IX provisions increased following this professional development. According to the findings of this study, increased faculty awareness and engagement in Title IX learning opportunities could potentially

improve the educational experience and access to an equitable education of pregnant and parenting students, which supports the need for additional research.

NARROWING THE EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY GAP FOR PREGNANT AND PARENTING
COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

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The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Stacy Stanford

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COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my two children, who have always inspired me to seek more. They taught me to push through any limitations and to keep moving forward no matter what. Without them I could not have finished this journey. They are and continue to be my inspiration to be better and do better.

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"Barbara, your friendship and guidance throughout our professional and personal journey have had an immeasurable impact on me." Thank you for always being there for me, even if you wouldn't share your third doughnut with me...

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Despite multiple setbacks and delays, the unfailing support and encouragement of those around me enabled me to continue, fulfill a lifelong dream, and never give up. This program provided me with the opportunity to study abroad in Peru. During my visit to Machu Picchu, I saw a sign that read "No Detenerse, Continue," which translates to "Don't Stop, Continue." Thank you to everyone who reminded me of "Don't Stop, Continue."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE.....	i
COPYRIGHT.....	ii
SIGNATURE.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Problem.....	2
Context of the Study	4
Problem Statement	8
Purpose of the Study.....	9
Study Questions.....	10
Study Design.....	10
Collaborative Inquiry Partners.....	13
Student Resources.....	14
Transformative Learning Theory.....	15
Definition of Key Terms.....	16
Role of the Scholarly Practitioner.....	18
Assumptions.....	20
Scope and Delimitations.....	20

Limitations.....	21
Significance of the Study.....	22
Advances in Practice.....	23
Advances in Equity and Social Justice.....	23
Summary.....	24
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	26
Higher Education and Women	26
Legalization Leading to the Creation of Title IX.....	29
Defining and Setting Guidelines to Title IX.....	33
Overseeing and Enforcing Title IX for Pregnant and Parenting Students.....	34
Legal Implications of Pregnancy-Related Discrimination.....	37
Barriers Impacting Pregnant and Parenting Students.....	40
Adult Learners.....	40
Attrition.....	41
Psychosocial Barriers.....	42
Physical Barriers.....	44
Theoretical Foundations	47
Transformative Learning Theory.....	47
Self-Determination Theory.....	50
Bean and Metzner’s Model of Nontraditional Student Attrition.....	52
Faculty Learning and Organizational Change.....	54
Increasing Institutional Retention.....	56
Summary.....	59

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	61
Study Design and Rationale.....	62
Action Research.....	62
Mixed Methods	65
Procedures.....	66
Action Phase I: Planning and Development.....	66
Population.....	67
Sample and Sampling Procedures.....	68
Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent.....	69
Pilot Study.....	70
Action Phase II: Intervention.....	71
Title IX Professional Development.....	71
Campus Resources	73
Action Phase III: Data Analysis.....	74
Coding.....	75
Triangulation.....	75
Inquiry Rigor.....	76
Instrumentation.....	77
Summary.....	78
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	81
COVID-19 Pandemic.....	81
Institutional Impact.....	82
Research Impact.....	85

Introduction.....	86
Data Collection.....	87
Results.....	89
Study Question 1.....	93
Survey Data.....	93
Interview Data.....	96
Study Question 2.....	99
Survey Data.....	100
Interview Data.....	102
Study Question 3.....	105
Survey Data.....	105
Interview Data.....	114
Summary.....	118
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	119
Summary of the Findings.....	120
Interpretation of the Findings.....	121
Study Question 1.....	121
Study Question 2.....	123
Study Question 3.....	124
Limitations.....	125
Implications of Findings in Practice.....	126
Implications of Findings for Equity.....	127
Recommendations for Campus Leadership.....	129

Recommendations for Future Research..... 131

Personal Leadership Development..... 132

Conclusion..... 133

REFERENCES..... 136

APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL..... 150

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT..... 151

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL..... 153

APPENDIX D: PRE-TITLE IX PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY..... 157

APPENDIX E: POST-TITLE IX PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY.... 161

APPENDIX F: TITLE IX PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT..... 165

APPENDIX G: PREGNANT AND PARENTING RESOURCES..... 177

LIST OF TABLES

1. Study Questions and Corresponding Questions on the Survey Instrumentation Table.....	79
2. University Department of Participants.....	91
3. Interview Participant Demographics.....	92
4. Study Question 1: Codes, Categories and Themes.....	97
5. Study Question 2: Codes, Categories and Themes.....	103
6. Study Question 3: Codes, Categories and Themes.....	115

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Action phases	12
2. Mezirow’s ten phases of a perspective transformation.....	48
3. Lewin’s Change Model.....	63
4. Employment duration.....	90
5. Student accommodation requests.....	95
6. Title IX engagement on campus.....	101
7. Effectiveness of engagement of Title IX professional development.....	107
8. Understanding of Title IX.....	108
9. What constituted reasonable accommodations.....	110
10. Willing to provide Title IX information in their classes.....	111
11. Understanding of correct office referral.....	113

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Throughout the decades, college admissions and the recruiting of prospective students in the United States have undergone significant transformations. Concurrently, the demographics of prospective students applying to and enrolling in college have become more diverse. Recent statistics reveal, for instance, that 26% of enrolled students are parents, and over 50% are at least working part-time (Noll et al., 2017; Sallee & Cox, 2019). In addition, over half of all undergraduate students who identified as parents were female, accounting for nearly one-fourth of all enrolled students (Nichols et al., 2017). Nevertheless, despite women's inclusion in higher education and the acknowledgment of their right to equal education, research on the impact of Title IX accommodations on the matriculation of pregnant and parenting students remains limited (Roy et al., 2018).

There is a need for heightened understanding and support for the dual responsibilities that pregnant and parenting college students must balance while pursuing their education. The increasing number of college students who identify as parents suggests that more research is needed to learn how to best help this student demographic (Roy et al., 2018). Their parental obligations may constrain their ability to dedicate additional time to academics outside the classroom, as many student parents must also work to provide for their families (Noll et al., 2017). The expense of affordable childcare is a significant concern for many enrolled parenting students (Sallee & Cox, 2019). Due to the increased financial strain experienced by student parents, it would be beneficial to initiate a dialogue regarding the provision of additional financial assistance (Noll et al., 2017).

These parenting students have expressed concerns about not having equal access to academic resources and support as their non-parenting peers due to their parenting status.

Student parents frequently expressed sentiments that their university did not recognize them or that they were invisible to the institution (Roy et al., 2018). Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 addressed sex-based discrimination by requiring federally funded schools to provide an equal education regardless of a student's sex (Busch & Thro, 2018). Despite implementing Title IX, numerous students continue to be subjected to discrimination regarding academic opportunities and support because they are pregnant or parents (McNee, 2013).

This chapter describes the systematic discrimination women often face and its impact on their ability to further their education prior to the creation of Title IX. This chapter will also discuss the significance of Title IX's academic directives in higher education and why its implementation is necessary on college campuses. The role of Title IX in protecting students against discrimination based on their parenting status is also presented. In addition, the study's methodology and the guiding study questions are presented and discussed. Also outlined are the theoretical foundation and framework. In conclusion, this chapter provides the educational significance of this study and the importance of Title IX pregnant and parenting support on college campuses.

Background of the Problem

The lack of inclusion and acceptance of women in higher education dates back to the 18th century, when the narrative focused on the repercussions of women in higher education (Parker, 2015). Since the admission of women into higher education in the 1800s, reservations around their marital status and pregnancies have led to the systematic exclusion of women students from higher education (Chambers, 2016). Despite being allowed into colleges, women could still not pursue certain professions or receive training for various reasons. These

restrictions included but were not limited to campus regulations, legal constraints, and quota restrictions placed on women (Parker, 2015). At the time, the standard practice for admitting students was to limit the number of female students to one for every three male students (Parker, 2015). While liberals contended that it would only enhance the contribution of women in society, conservatives expressed concerns that it would undermine the traditional roles of homemaker and mother (Parker, 2015). Furthermore, when it was discovered that a woman was pregnant, she was almost always denied admission and frequently faced the risk of expulsion from the school (Pillow, 2006).

Historically, women's admission into higher education was received with opposition, as they were frequently excluded and prohibited from actively seeking education outside the home (Allan, 2011). Fundamentally, women were marginalized from learning specific domestic skills to benefit household management (Solomon, 1985). In addition, women were limited to specific academic fields even if they were permitted to seek education outside the house. Furthermore, female students were routinely separated from their male counterparts inside and outside the classroom (Allan, 2011). Other considerations that restricted women's education and career advancement can be systemically traced back to the conventional roles and domestic responsibilities expected of women (Parker, 2015).

While Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972 is better known for addressing sex discrimination toward female students, it frequently overlooks the protections granted to pregnant and parenting students (Wadas-Thalcken, 2018). Prior to the implementation of Title IX, it was common practice to deny female students access to academic resources, academic counseling, financial aid, and extracurricular activities compared to their male counterparts (Allan, 2011). Female scholars were also subjected to sex discrimination and

frequently discounted for promotions or academic opportunities (Busch & Thro, 2018). For example, Dr. Bernice Sandler, the pioneer who was instrumental in creating Title IX, was discriminated against when she was denied a faculty position based on her sex. As a result of this experience, she became the driving force behind advocating for Title IX legislation that would eventually prohibit discriminatory behaviors and actions on the basis of sex (Rose, 2015).

Context of the Study

This research was conducted at the University of Southeastern Carolina (USC), a pseudonym. USC is a public university located in eastern North Carolina with the mission of fostering student success, public service, and encouraging regional transformation (The University of the North Carolina System, 2022). In addition, USC endeavors to discover and develop potential future leaders who will serve their communities and inspire others to do the same. USC is a public four-year institution with almost 29,000 registered students as of the fall 2022 semester (The University of the North Carolina System, 2022).

The basis for this study was that several students had disclosed to the School of Social Work at USC that they were pregnant and had requested academic accommodations following the birth of their child. Some inquiries centered on post-partum services, mainly information for on-campus lactation support. While the faculty and department wanted to support their students, they were unsure how, especially for nursing mothers whose class participation could be impacted. As a result, they sought guidance from the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) on accommodating the student's request.

In addition, the Dean of Students Office (DOS) was also invited to participate in this discussion because of the support and advocacy they provided for pregnant and parenting students on campus. As a case manager in the Dean of Students' Office at USC, I helped connect

students to available resources on campus and within the community. I also served as a liaison between faculty and students when they needed academic accommodations due to their parenting status.

Before this conversation, the university did not have a formally recognized Title IX policy. This meeting yielded several observations that would be beneficial for the university. One was the necessity for a written Title IX policy that faculty and staff could refer to in the event of future accommodation requests. The second focus was on defining what constitutes appropriate academic accommodations. Finally, there was a desire among college faculty to increase Title IX awareness.

As a case manager, I worked directly with pregnant and parenting students experiencing academic issues due to pregnancy or other childcare circumstances. Frequently, these students required assistance requesting academic accommodations in their classes and accessing campus resources. For instance, students with pregnancy-related issues requested academic accommodations such as extended assignment deadlines, as indicated by their medical practitioners.

Other students required assistance with securing financial assistance or requesting childcare necessities such as diapers. Due to this student interaction, I was already familiar with Title IX regulations and Office for Civil Rights academic recommendations (OCR). However, I wanted to ensure the institution complied with all the standards and best practices promoted by other educational institutions. To address this compliance concern, I contacted most schools in our designated university system about their Title IX policies. The educational system in this region officially recognizes seventeen public and private schools (The University of the North Carolina System, 2022). After speaking with other universities, I discovered several institutions

had developed and implemented a collaborative strategy that included several offices from diverse campus divisions. With this multi-office model, the appropriate resource office could address the students' specific needs and concerns.

Several educational institutions I spoke with have two or three offices dedicated to connecting pregnant and parenting students to various resources and assistance. The Office of Equity and Diversity, or OED, was essential in resolving discrimination concerns at each institution. The OED office also investigates discrimination allegations (Office of Equity and Diversity, 2022). In addition, they provide programming, enforce compliance, and assist in campus outreach to promote diversity and create an inclusive campus for all community members. Title IX also encompasses sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating, domestic violence, and stalking, in addition to pregnancy and parenting concerns (Office of Equity and Diversity, 2022).

Before starting this study, the institution had not officially implemented a Title IX accommodation protocol. If a student informed a faculty or staff member that they were pregnant, they would be referred to the Dean of Students Office (DOS) for assistance. Once that office received notification of the referral, I would contact the student to arrange a meeting to discuss how we could assist them. The students' requirements ranged from requests for academic modifications to inquiries for financial support. OED was consulted to evaluate if the requested adjustments were reasonable and followed Title IX rules. The student's faculty member would be informed about the suggested academic accommodations that were being considered for the student. Students were encouraged to discuss the requested modifications openly with their faculty.

Before this state system outreach, DOS helped implement Title IX academic accommodations for parenting students. DOS at USC assists students experiencing personal or academic difficulties affecting their academic performance or overall well-being (Welcome to the Office of the Dean of Students, 2022). As needed, this office serves as a liaison between students, academics, and other school entities. In times of struggle, these students may seek the assistance of an advocate (Welcome to the Office of the Dean of Students, 2022). Therefore, DOS was viewed as an appropriate office to assist pregnant and parenting students as they were known as campus advocates.

Beginning in fall 2014, students were encouraged to contact DOS of any pregnancy-related changes or concerns that could affect their academic performance. Faculty members were also referred to DOS for guidance regarding any Title IX academic accommodations questions or request they received. Unfortunately, despite the guidance provided by DOS, a lack of awareness of Title IX and confusion regarding the implementation of the requested accommodations persisted. Due to growing confusion about Title IX, specifically lactation accommodations, OED and DOS partnered to present to the faculty senate in the fall of 2017.

In addition, the absence of a standardized procedure for making requests for academic accommodations under Title IX led to the uncertainty and, at times, frustration felt by both students and faculty. Ultimately, this continued confusion inspired different departments to seek additional guidance from OED on how to best support their pregnant and parenting students. In the spring of 2019, OED and DOS met with some of these departments to begin the discussion of creating a Title IX policy specific to pregnant and parenting students. This Title IX policy intended to define and outline the specific provisions and supportive measures the university would implement for pregnant and parenting students.

Problem Statement

Historically, the purpose of higher education institutions was to educate unmarried, white, cisgender males ages 18 to 24. As a result, pregnant or parenting students were rarely acknowledged and received minimal support from their institutions (Cohen & Kisker, 2009; Rudolph, 1990; Thelin, 2011). Universities are still implementing academic policies and regulations based on educational pedagogies based on the traditional student model. Consequently, there is sometimes very little consideration given to students who identify as parents (Lindsay & Gillum, 2018).

Accordingly, these students frequently experience more significant educational challenges than their non-parent counterparts. The additional challenges and responsibilities of parenting contribute to the stress linked with academic difficulties (Shillingford & Karlin, 2013). Many students who are pregnant or are already parents have voiced the desire that their educational institutions recognize the challenges they face and support them (Lindsay & Gillum, 2018).

These students may feel alienated and alone on campus, which can negatively influence their academic performance, sense of community, and belonging (Pillow, 2006). In addition, according to the findings of several studies, faculty members' knowledge and comprehension of Title IX significantly impacts whether students view the university's assistance as positive or negative (Hardy, 2011). Therefore, in addition to the efforts being made on campuses to increase awareness of Title IX, a particular focus has been placed on mitigating potential risk factors. Efforts are being made to guarantee that all students, including those who are pregnant or caring for small children, have equal access to educational opportunities. As the number of parenting students continues to increase, institutions should consider creating a welcoming environment

that addresses their specific academic and parenting challenges (McNee, 2013). To accomplish this goal of equal educational access, universities must identify and remove these barriers.

Purpose of the Study

This study determined how college faculty members' perceptions of parenting students influenced their pedagogical practices and, in turn, impacted the educational equity of these students. This study also examined the degree to which the university implemented the most recent Title IX regulations and best practices within the state university system. Lastly, the study assessed how faculty's participation in Title IX professional development altered their attitudes toward parenting students and their willingness to implement Title IX accommodations in their classes.

Due to its systematic methodology, numerous educational practitioners favor an action research framework when investigating social injustices in the education sector. This framework is frequently utilized because action research often promotes and facilitates the transformation of participant perceptions and the associated learning process. (Mertler, 2019). It is anticipated those study participants directly involved in action research will be influenced by the study's intervention and will therefore reflect on and learn from their experiences in achieving transformation and change. Moreover, it strives to resolve conflicts by addressing the need for change through dialogue and educating its participants (Mertler, 2019).

Lewin (1946) sought answers to the following three issues throughout his action research model. First was defining the current condition followed by identifying the associated risks and lastly determining what actions are required to resolve those risks. Following Lewin's paradigm, three study questions were developed to examine the educational inequity experienced by pregnant and parenting students in higher education.

Study Questions

The questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. To what extent do faculty members understand their role under Title IX in providing reasonable academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students?
2. How engaged is the university towards implementing mandated Title IX regulations and adhering to best practices within the North Carolina State University System?
3. How does engaging in Title IX professional development affect faculty's perceptions of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students?

Study Design

Action research often includes an intervention phase that can significantly influence participants' decision-making and instructional processing. This research methodology was also designed to address concerns about the validity of the outcomes (Mertler, 2019). However, action research also emphasizes and supports participant development and reflection as evidence of transformative learning. Furthermore, action research recognizes and emphasizes the natural reaction to change (Beeler, 2016). Action research requires putting that knowledge into practice in order to change the participants' behaviors or attitudes. Therefore, campus stakeholders considered valuable change agents should strongly consider participating in action research (Mertler, 2019).

Mixed methods were employed for this study to gather data within an action research design framework. First, faculty members' knowledge and willingness to implement Title IX measures in their classroom practices were assessed before and after the Title IX professional development. These data were acquired through pre-professional development and post-professional development surveys and follow-up interviews. Throughout the study,

modifications to the Title IX professional development were implemented based on responses and feedback from faculty participants.

This study was conducted in three phases in accordance with Lewin's paradigm (see Figure 1). First, three study questions were developed after establishing the problem of practice. These questions centered on the identified inequities experienced by pregnant and parenting students. A survey based on these three research study questions was created. These questions were used to evaluate faculty members' understanding of Title IX before engaging in Title IX training. This study only included faculty members from the designated university. Finally, following the recruitment period, participants were asked to complete a pre-professional development survey.

After completing phase one, participants were presented with the intervention through Title IX training. During this intervention phase, participants received Title IX pregnancy and parenting professional development. Participants were also given the option to attend an in-person session or listen to a pre-recorded professional development session. During the professional development, participants learned about the institution's efforts to address students' concerns about Title IX discrimination. Following the professional development, they were also asked to complete a post-professional development survey. This survey measured whether the participants' dispositions toward providing Title IX accommodations for pregnant and parenting students had changed or shifted due to the professional development. It also assessed whether instructors were compelled to incorporate this knowledge into their instructional practices. Participants were also asked on the survey if they would be interested in a follow-up interview. Those who chose to participate in the interview discussed how the professional development

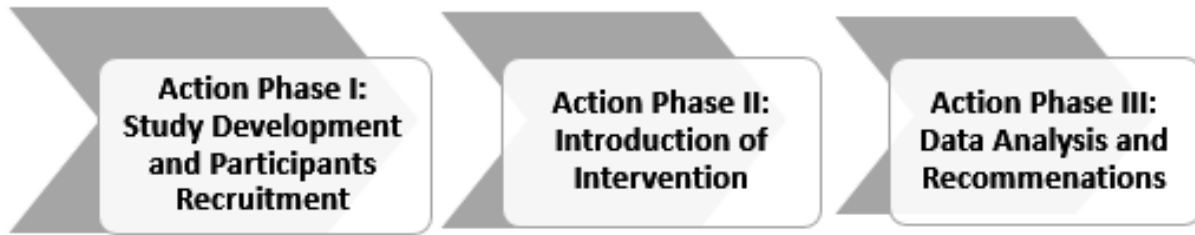


Figure 1. Action phases.

changed their current understanding of Title IX and how they intended to integrate it into their classroom practices.

After data collection, the survey and interview responses were coded and examined. The analysis yielded information about the effect of the Title IX intervention on faculty readiness to implement supportive measures. Furthermore, the data assessed faculty interest in participating in additional Title IX outreach and their assessments of the institution's overall Title IX compliance. Additionally, the survey results addressed the gaps in Title IX research regarding parenting students and the influence of faculty engagement. Finally, the third analysis phase derived future recommendations for the institution.

Collaborative Inquiry Partners

Best practices for pregnant and parenting students in the university system were found to promote a collaborative multi-office strategy. This collaboration frequently included their accessibility office in addition to their DOS or OED. The accessibility office at USC is called the Department for Disability Support Services (DSS). DSS ensures that people with disabilities have equal access to the university's programs, services, facilities, and activities. Furthermore, DSS raises awareness of disability and accessibility concerns among all university stakeholders (The Department for Disability Support Services, 2022).

Because of their experience and knowledge in coordinating academic accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), it was determined that DSS would oversee this process. It was decided that DOS would continue to be the primary point of contact for students and faculty regarding available services and resources. In addition, OED would continue to give Title IX recommendations about sex-based discrimination upon request. In addition to addressing discrimination complaints, the OED would continue providing Title IX

recommendations. With the collaboration of these three offices, USC was able to implement state-wide best practices for providing Title IX support and assistance with academic accommodations.

Student Resources

In conjunction with the statewide outreach of the UNC System schools, a review of local resources also occurred. Several other campus offices were contacted to compile a resource guide for pregnant and parenting students. Academic tutoring and counseling services were some of the resource offices identified. The Women and Gender Office (WGO) shared that, on occasion, they had donated prenatal vitamins and breast pumping equipment to students. Additionally, WGO accepts donations of baby supplies such as diapers and wipes, which are available to students. Currently, the Student Health Services office does not offer obstetric or gynecological care, although they can perform pregnancy testing.

If mobility issues prevent pregnant students from getting to the main campus, they can call the university's transit office for temporary assistance with transportation. Students can also request new seating arrangements in class through Disability Support Services if they have difficulties using the present options. Additionally, the university provides students access to many on-campus lactation rooms and resources to support breastfeeding mothers.

Local community resource offices were also identified as additional off-campus resource options for students. The local community pregnancy center is one of the options provided to students. In addition to offering parenting support groups, it also provides clients with free baby and maternity supplies such as clothing and diapers. A local non-profit organization provides information on local childcare providers and onsite early childhood care educational resources. The local county health department also offers parents a variety of resources, including support

in obtaining medical insurance for their children and financial assistance for daycare for those who qualify. This parenting resource guide is readily available to students through the Dean of Students' Office.

Transformative Learning Theory

This study is grounded in transformative learning theory related to adult education (Mezirow, 2000). Jack Mezirow developed the transformative learning theory in response to the escalating political and social turmoil surrounding discrimination against women in the 1970s. This theory examines how the human mind processes a new frame of mind and the subsequent changes that ensue once embraced (Illeris, 2014). Adult learning can be transformative, whereas learning in children is formative. An adult must reevaluate the world in light of new information after originally appraising it in a learned manner. Mezirow (2009) takes the biblical tale of Saul's transformation into Paul as an example, proposing that the Damascus Road meeting was a disorienting dilemma that caused Saul (later Paul) to reevaluate his life and viewpoint on his persecution of Christians. This reevaluation ultimately altered not only his life course but also that of Christendom.

According to Mezirow (1991, 2000, 2009), experiencing a disorienting dilemma is the first of the 10 steps toward adult learning transformation. When confronted with a perplexing quandary, the individual must decide how to integrate the acquired information and develop new thinking patterns to assimilate it. If transformational learning does not occur, the adult learner exhibits disconfirmation bias and disregards the information, resulting in cognitive dissonance (Edwards & Smith, 1996). Illeris (2014) said that cognitive, emotional, and social environments influence adult learners' identities during the learning process. This type of learning would mean

that the source of motivation is fundamentally essential in adult learning and that the learner must be invested for a change to occur (Illeris, 2014).

Definition of Key Terms

Adult Learner - a person who delays college enrollment for different reasons. These students frequently hold full-time jobs and are financially responsible for their education. Frequently, these students are responsible for dependent family members. Many adult learners also identify as parents. Adult learners were previously known as non-traditional, and the terms are frequently used interchangeably (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Shillingford & Karlin, 2013).

Attrition - In the context of educational institutions, the term "attrition" refers to the process whereby students withdraw from their studies before completing their program. (Willcoxson et al., 2011).

Executive Order 11246 - was a presidential decree that required organizations receiving federal funding to bar discrimination and affirmative action; however, it did not extend to women on the grounds of sex discrimination (Busch & Thro, 2018).

Executive Order 11375 - is a presidential directive that includes discrimination on the basis of sex; however, it did not extend to non-government organizations (Busch & Thro, 2018).

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) - requires covered employers to permit eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks of leave in any 12 months to care for a newborn, adopted, or foster child. It also allows the employee to care for a family member with a serious health condition; or employee's serious health condition (Mayer, 2013).

Gender - refers to the identities and duties that are socially constructed and assigned to individuals (Busch & Thro, 2018).

Gender Equality - equality of the sexes refers to treating men and women the same way, regardless of the gender roles that society has traditionally assigned to each (Chambers, 2016).

Higher Education Act of 1965 - Higher Education Act of 1965 – enacted law pertaining to the availability of financial resources for postsecondary educational endeavors (Chambers, 2016).

Office of Civil Rights (OCR) - The U.S. federal agency that is responsible for enforcing civil rights and addressing discrimination concerns in the educational context (Chambers, 2016).

Sex Discrimination - is discrimination that is based upon a person's sex (Busch & Thro, 2018).

Sex Equality - is the act of treating individuals equally regardless of their biological composition (Chambers, 2016).

Title IX - is a federal statute included in the Education Amendments of 1972 (Busch & Thro, 2018). Title IX states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - is a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on a person's race, color, religion, sex, or nation of origin (Chambers, 2016).

Title XI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - is a federal law prohibiting discrimination in the allocation of federal funds based on a person's color or race (Busch & Thro, 2018).

Traditional Student - is a person who is between the ages of 18 and 22 and enrolls in college upon matriculation from high school (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011).

Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) - an organization that was founded in 1968 that addresses concerns of discrimination against women in both employment and academic pursuits (Chambers, 2016).

Role of the Scholarly Practitioner

It is important to note that since 2015, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with faculty and staff members who have sought Title IX guidance on how to support their pregnant and parenting students. Many instructors said they were unaware they could provide these additional academic accommodations for their pregnant or parenting students. Several faculty members concurred, indicating that while they wanted to help their students, they did not know how to do it in a way that would be fair and equitable to all of their students. With direct access to pregnant and parenting students and professors, I was able to gain a first-hand understanding of the challenges and impediments that Title IX presents to both students and faculty. Because of this access, I could advocate for these students' needs and create a platform that allowed for change and increased the engagement of community members. It also allowed me to include faculty members and various resource offices in the discussion of increasing Title IX support and awareness throughout campus.

Furthermore, because of my current role and ability to interact directly with pregnant and parenting students on campus, students have been able to share their stories and any issues they have encountered due to their parenting status. Several students described how they felt they were denied the opportunity to demonstrate themselves academically because of their pregnancy and parenting status. Several students expressed the experience of being invisible and uninformed of available options and support on campus.

One student described how she learned she was pregnant and was worried about how her family would react to her unexpected pregnancy. Despite her reservations, she informed her family of her pregnancy. They showed their full support and encouraged her to pursue her education. In contrast, the student expressed disappointment at the university's lack of assistance. She reported that she was questioned about her ability to complete her education as a single parent during a meeting with a university representative. As a result, the student felt unsupported and discriminated against due to her pregnancy. Following this discussion, the student expressed her concerns to her father, who informed the school that they would seek legal action against the university if the incident was not immediately addressed. As a result, the OED was consulted to address this student's discriminatory concerns. Ultimately, this was a formative learning experience for the staff member; nonetheless, the fact that a student had to experience this discrimination first remained a concern.

Another student described how she had given birth during her finals. However, her faculty did not permit her to make up the missed course work, nor did they excuse her absences. As a result, this student was denied the mandatory academic accommodations required by Title IX for her pregnancy and the subsequent birth of her child. The absence of adjustments resulted in a detrimental impact on the student's cumulative GPA and class failure. In addition, her eligibility for financial aid for the upcoming academic term was also jeopardized.

In response, the student was instructed to submit an appeal to the university's Academic Appellate Committee over the failing grades she received due to her pregnancy and delivery. Initially, the appellate committee was unaware that, according to Title IX, the student should have been permitted to make up any missed assignments or tests related to her pregnancy. Therefore, the initial inclination was to refuse the student's request, but after discussing Title IX

requirements, the committee allowed and approved the student's appeal. This scenario resulted in the establishment of a precedent for subsequent appeals regarding pregnancies.

Assumptions

This study identified several assumptions regarding the participants, the key stakeholders, and the institution where the study occurred. The first assumption was related to the problem of practice, which suggested that pregnant and parenting students had experienced a higher attrition rate than their non-parenting counterparts. It was assumed that these parenting students faced increased educational inequity due to parental status. As a result, it was assumed that these students were unaware that they were part of a protected class under Title IX, which prohibits discrimination based on a person's sex. This study also assumed that certain faculty members still viewed and treated their students through a traditional student paradigm. As a result, it was assumed that some faculty members failed to recognize pregnant and parenting students' need for additional academic assistance.

It was also presumed that some faculty members were uninformed of the requirements of Title IX or the appropriate procedure to follow if a student parent approached them for accommodations. This study operated under the presumption that the study site did not comply with all the regulations imposed by the OCR regarding Title IX. In conclusion, this study assumed that faculty members would be willing to participating in Title IX professional development opportunities and would be willing to integrate the information they gained into their existing curriculum and teaching methods.

Scope and Delimitations

Students who are pregnant or are already parents are statistically more likely to drop out of college than their counterparts who are not parents (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Therefore,

it was essential to comprehend the factors that influenced this occurrence. Current studies suggest that students are influenced by a multitude of factors that may impede their academic performance (Shillingford & Karlin, 2013). One of these factors is the understanding and motivation of the student's instructors to integrate Title IX adjustments into their curriculum (Beeler, 2016). Therefore, this study focused specifically on the faculty members at USC and how their understanding and acceptance of Title IX directly affected the educational equity of students who were pregnant or had young children.

The primary focus of the study was on the learning process that USC faculty members underwent after receiving Title IX training. Therefore, the transformative learning theory served as the conceptual framework for this study. The study questions were focused on the faculty, and action research was utilized to evaluate any changes or advancements. Following the completion of the professional development, it was requested that the faculty members complete a follow-up survey that measured this learning. This survey evaluated the effectiveness of the Title IX intervention and assessed whether there had been a shift in the faculty's willingness to provide academic adjustments. Furthermore, this study explored whether the institution was implementing best practices for Title IX accommodations and campus support.

Limitations

Upon completion of the study, it was necessary to acknowledge the existence of several limitations that could alter the collected data. This study's limitations included a smaller sample size for statistical analysis, which was attributable to the restricted number of completed replies. The restricted sample size was another limitation of this study. Consequently, it is plausible that the numbers obtained do not correctly represent all faculty members on campus. In addition, the chosen instrumentation for data collection was subject to certain restrictions. This study, for

instance, utilized surveys and interviews solely, with the interview being limited to a semi-structured design. The limited response options for specific survey questions also constituted a potential limitation. The period during which the survey was distributed to participants and the amount of time it was accessible were additional constraints. The lack of comparative research also represented a limitation of this study.

Significance of the Study

Concerns regarding limited Title IX awareness and compliance at the university where the study was conducted demonstrated the need to address the educational disparity that affects pregnant and parenting students. Prior to the study, the school lacked a clearly defined procedure for establishing Title IX accommodations. In addition, both students and faculty expressed concern over the lack of Title IX awareness on campus. Title IX information is available on the university's OED website; however, many students are unaware of this resource. Visitors to the website can access the document "Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972" from the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Education.

This pamphlet comprehensively discusses the Title IX policy and its recommendations. The remainder of the page focuses on pregnant employees and their right to take time off from work per the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), companies are required to give eligible employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave if they are dealing with a severe health condition or the birth of a child (Mayer, 2013). In addition, information is available regarding the location and availability of lactation facilities on campus. However, due to the lack of clarity surrounding Title IX, students might have been unaware of the available academic support and services. This lack of information may have prevented

students from requesting Title IX support measures, negatively affecting their academic performance. In addition, because of the pamphlet's length and complexity, some students were confused about how their institutions could help pregnant and parenting students succeed academically under Title IX of the 1973 Education Amendments.

Advances in Practice

The advancement of practice in education considers not just the changing demographics of students but also the evolving pedagogical practices that influence educators. This study demonstrated the significance of addressing academic challenges that pregnant and parenting students confront daily. Furthermore, the transformational learning among the participating faculty suggests that launching a larger-scale outreach effort may be advantageous. By making Title IX information accessible to faculty and campus partners, institutions are furthering a culture of support for pregnant and parenting students.

The primary purpose of these advances in practice is to establish a more inclusive campus atmosphere in which students who are pregnant or are already parents can feel supported in their academic pursuits. In addition, institutions foster a culture centered on the student by providing opportunities to promote awareness and support for pregnant and parenting students. Finally, educators and campuses stay student-centered by introducing and incorporating modern, contemporary practices. The benefits can be evident in student retention, academic performance, student and faculty engagement, and community building.

Advances in Equity and Social Justice

Many underrepresented students have a long history of being excluded from various educational opportunities and subjected to discrimination based on their sex, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and disability (Riley et al., 2016). As practitioners, we frequently encounter

students who experience injustices because of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background. These circumstances may affect their overall academic performance and their capacity to finish their degree (McNee, 2013). In addition, students' abilities, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic status significantly impact how they learn, how engaged they are, and how much access they have (Riley et al., 2016).

Until these socioeconomic inequities are rectified, these students will continue to be at risk for increased attrition rates, lower academic performance, and a decrease in overall satisfaction with their college experience (Donohue & Wong, 1997). Recognizing the discrepancies that underprivileged populations frequently face in their pursuit of an education is necessary to address these obstacles on a systemic level. Underserved populations are less likely to have access to the resources necessary to overcome these obstacles. Students also expressed concern regarding the insufficient support provided by their institutions. Once institutions prioritize recognizing and eliminating these obstacles, students from diverse backgrounds will have the potential to thrive (Brown & Nichols, 2012).

Summary

The disconnect between pregnant and parenting students and their institutions has a direct impact on the academic success of these students (Lindsey & Gillum, 2018). This discrepancy highlighted the need for a published policy that is easily accessible to students and faculty and the implementation of additional Title IX professional development opportunities for faculty. Furthermore, as the number of parenting students grows, universities should consider creating a welcoming environment for these students that addresses their unique academic and parenting concerns (McNee, 2013).

This university did not have a current written Title IX policy that the university formally recognized. Instead, the Title IX regulations were available through the Office of Equity and Diversity. Nevertheless, there appeared to be a gap in implementing these regulations across campus and in the classroom. As a result, this study addressed the implementation gap and improved support for pregnant and parenting students at this school by increasing faculty engagement. In addition, this study demonstrated the need for additional Title IX Pregnant and Parenting professional development opportunities to increase awareness of the need for accommodations and campus support for pregnant and parenting students.

In Chapter 2, the historically significant events and political climate that led to the creation and approval of Title IX will be described. Furthermore, the theoretical foundations will be presented and explored. The methodology for this study will be introduced in Chapter 3. In addition, Chapter 3 will detail the data collection instrumentation and participant sampling. In Chapter 4, a comprehensive analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data will be presented. Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the study's findings' recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides an account of the history behind the societal practices and misogynistic ideologies that contributed to and perpetuated discrimination against women in society and educational pursuits. Additionally, the historical landmarks and political events that impacted and led to the establishment of Title IX are detailed. This chapter also focuses on how Title IX directly impacts college campuses and the specific guidelines it provides to institutions. Chapter 2 also examines the significance of Title IX's educational mandates in higher education and the legal implications for campuses. Also highlighted are the various difficulties and challenges experienced by pregnant and parenting students. In addition, this chapter introduces the theoretical foundations that address student attrition in higher education and the academic motivation of adult learners who, in addition, are also parents. Finally, the significance of faculty engagement in transformative learning is highlighted, as is its impact on educational equity for pregnant and parenting students.

Higher Education and Women

The historical establishment of U.S. colleges and universities was gender-restricted and restricted to men (Cohen & Kisker, 2009; Rudolf, 1990; Thelin, 2011). While scholars such as Thomas Jefferson attempted to identify academic areas suitable for women, women were usually prevented from pursuing a formal higher education (Wagoner, 1993). Access to higher education content was provided to women to the extent that it was strictly managed (Gilreath, 1999) or otherwise handled by men. With the establishment of women's colleges, a systematic academic investigation into the talents and skills essential to household management was formed (Chambers, 2016).

Heavily influenced by the Victorian era's gender roles, women remained mostly barred from learning skills other than domestic skills (Gordon, 1990). These skill sets included but were not limited to arithmetic and bookkeeping, which proved helpful if the male head of the house could not fulfill this function. Domestic arts such as embroidery, music, and painting retained their importance as essential housewives' and hostesses' abilities and were therefore still taught (Chambers, 2016). Even as some colleges opened their doors to women, they did so under the mounting tension from women's rights organizations.

Compared to their male peers, they frequently encountered fewer educational options (Gordon, 1990). Female students were admitted in some cases but were closely watched by the administration to assure separation. Women were frequently assigned household duties such as cooking and cleaning. In contrast, their male counterparts were encouraged to continue their academic endeavors. For example, at one educational institution, it was customary for female students to be responsible for doing the laundry of their male colleagues (Parker, 2015).

The first of seven prestigious private women's colleges in the United States were founded in 1836. These seven universities would become known as the "Seven Sisters," equivalent to the elite Ivy League schools that only admitted male students (Parker, 2015). Women held leadership positions at these seven colleges, even though men dominated the field. Additionally, more academic opportunities and resources were made available to women at these colleges than they would have been at any other type of institution (Parker, 2015).

While nationally inclusive financial assistance packages were not developed until the middle of the 20th century, scholarships and state grants provided ways for white men to finance their education. However, female students frequently had difficulty securing funding to cover the cost of their college education (Rose, 2015). It was permissible to deny women financial support

based on gender. It was common practice for families with little money to prioritize sending their sons to college over their daughters because doing so was a beneficial long-term investment. Many women leave the workforce after getting married, having children, and investing money into a woman's further education could be seen as a waste of resources from a financial standpoint (Rose, 2015).

In addition, the recognition of childbearing and childrearing as women's primary responsibilities and the perception of some scholars that higher education was harmful to women and families may have contributed to a decline in academic pursuits (Palmieri, 1987). Given this open and pervasive discrimination, female students' limited access to financial scholarships or part-time employment frequently hindered their ability to complete post-high school education (Rose, 2015). Furthermore, women allowed to attend college later encountered sex-based discrimination when they attempted to enter the workforce (Chambers, 2016). Finally, in the years after WWII, women experienced being terminated from the position they had held during the war. Their forced removal often led to many women returning to the home to fulfill domestic obligations and experiencing a significant increase in births (Parker, 2015).

"Separate but equal" became the accepted practice on campus despite the increasing number of female college students. In addition, restricting women's access to specific academic opportunities or degrees was a commonly accepted practice rooted in the belief that women did not need such distinctions (Chambers, 2016). The sexist and gender-based discrimination women faced in the educational system prompted the United States government to pass Title IX legislation. However, the roots of Title IX may be traced back to the feminist movement's successful adoption of the Civil Rights Act in the 1950s and 1960s (Valentin, 1997).

Before the creation of Title IX in the Educational Amendments of 1972, women found themselves the targets of discrimination based on their sex or gender. Historical evidence shows that women have historically been subjected to more significant discrimination when attempting to further their education (Melnick, 2018). In addition, women reported facing discrimination in the workplace and regularly being passed over for promotions and professional opportunities in favor of their male coworkers (Busch & Thro, 2018). Women also indicated that they were less likely to receive pay raises than their male peers. This prejudice was not unique to the workforce alone; instead, it was pervasive throughout the entire educational system. For example, female students were prohibited from participating in specific athletic opportunities and receiving athletic scholarships (Melnick, 2018).

Title IX can be traced back to Title XI of the Civil Rights Act of 1963, which prohibited discrimination in federally supported institutions. However, gender discrimination was not included, nor was it illegal to discriminate against females (Busch & Thro, 2018). Consequently, female students regularly encountered discrimination (National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, 2008). Within the higher education context, moral turpitude clauses within admissions policies excluded single parents without reference to gender specifically (Chambers, 2016).

Legalization Leading to the Creation of Title IX

Dr. Bernice Sandler, who was instrumental in establishing Title IX, was not considered for a faculty position at the University of Maryland. She had recently finished her doctorate and met all the other academic requirements, yet she was not offered a position despite being qualified. When a colleague told her, "She came on too strong for a woman," she realized the full extent and impact of discrimination against women based on their gender (Busch & Thro, 2018).

Sandler's pursuit of equal rights prompted her to examine past legislation and discrimination laws, such as those from the civil rights movement. In doing so, she learned that President Lyndon B. Johnson had amended Executive Order 11246 to include discrimination on the basis of sex, which justified creating a legal strategy to combat claims of sex discrimination (Busch & Thro, 2018).

Sandler gained momentum for a nationwide campaign to eradicate sex discrimination with the guidance and assistance of the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL). As part of Executive Order 11246, WEAL made history by being the first organization to bring a class action complaint against universities all around the country (Busch & Thro, 2018). What began with a small number of individuals swiftly gained the attention and support of female scholars from all over the academic profession. In addition, quite a few individuals volunteered to share their experiences of being discriminated against in higher education merely based on their sex (Busch & Thro, 2018). It also caught the attention of Representative Edith Green. As chair of the Subcommittee on Education and Labor, she was aware of the discrimination occurring in schools (Busch & Thro, 2018).

Even though Rep. Edith Green (OR) and the WEAL national advisory board were aware of the ongoing sex discrimination, there was very little data and evidence to support their claims (Busch & Thro, 2018). However, because of Sandler's campaign, Representative Green was provided the evidence that was so critically needed to substantiate the accusations that sex discrimination was common practice at institutions across the country. With this evidence, Green began developing the preliminary legislation draft that would be the foundation for Title IX (Busch & Thro, 2018).

Senator Birch Bayh (IN), another member of the WEAL Advisory Board, presided over the bill's discussion in the Senate forum. The preceding legislation, Title XI, served as a guide for Senator Bayh when he drafted Title IX of the Higher Education Act (Busch & Thro, 2018). The 14th amendment mandated that the government provide equal protection of the laws to all citizens. However, the 14th amendment provided minimal protection for women because it only applied to state and federal governments. Title IX provided protection and coverage for women at all institutions receiving federal funding (Busch & Thro, 2018). The trio worked tirelessly to ensure the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 into law. They drew inspiration from precedent legislation and anti-discrimination legislation. Instead of amending Title VI, Title IX was created out of concern that doing so would weaken established laws and regulations. On February 28, 1992, Bayh introduced the bill to the Senate (Rose, 2015).

However, some people opposed the amendment. Representative John Erlenborn of the House of Representatives expressed concerns regarding the federal government's participation in the higher education system (Rose, 2015). The issue of discrimination inside organizations receiving federal funding was addressed by President Lyndon B. Johnson's Executive Order 11246, issued in 1965. However, the first version of this executive order only addressed discrimination based on a person's race, religion, color, or nationality. It did little to address prejudice based on a person's sex or gender (Valentin, 1997). The phrase "on the basis of sex" was included in the Civil Rights Act of 1965 as a "poison pill," which was designed to create such indignation that it would put the passage of the entire measure in jeopardy (Chambers, 2016).

In addition, the phrase only pertained to women's employment in Title VII of the Act of Equal Rights for Women in the Workplace. However, Title VI prohibited discrimination in

academic settings based on a person's race, color, or national origin but did not cover discrimination based on a person's gender or sexual orientation. The passage of the Civil Rights Act occurred even though it included sexual orientation in its scope (Chambers, 2016). The development of a low-key strategy by advocates of more comprehensive support for women in higher education considering the intense controversy surrounding the inclusion of the 1965 Act. This technique consisted of attaching the provisions of Title IX to a group of relatively harmless amendments to education laws, referred to collectively as the Educational Amendments (Chambers, 2016).

The campaign to pass Title IX was primarily driven by mounting pressure and persistent discrimination against women. Finally, on June 23, 1972, President Richard Nixon gave final approval by signing the bill into law. On July 1, 1972, the 1972 Education Amendments became law, ushering in a watershed moment for women and the fight against the discrimination they had experienced up until that point (Rose, 2015). According to the provisions of Title IX, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 would not have been possible without Dr. Sandler's significant contribution (Rose, 2015).

Even after Title IX was formed and signed into law, school systems in higher education failed to embrace and implement it. Consequently, discrimination persisted in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools. In addition, female students reported experiencing challenges that prevent them from achieving academic success. These challenges included a continual lack of academic opportunities and scholarship possibilities. Female students also

reported a lack of financial assistance for extracurricular activities. Finally, on May 27, 1975, three years after they were initially proposed, the updated guidelines and prohibitions were formally proposed and signed into law by President Gerald Ford, who was in office then (Valentin, 1997).

Defining and Setting Guidelines to Title IX

This persistent disregard for Title IX in the educational setting resulted in several significant court lawsuits, expressly citing the school's lack of Title IX compliance. In the 1984 Supreme Court case *Grove City College v. Bell*, it was contended that schools that did not receive federal funding could not be held accountable under Title IX coverage (Weldon, 1990). The Supreme Court's ruling resulted in the 1988 Civil Rights Restoration Act. It required that all schools, regardless of funding source, be covered by Title IX and face repercussions if they did not follow its regulations (Weldon, 1990). Title IX makes it illegal to dismiss or coerce a pregnant student to withdraw from school. It also requires that schools offer these students the resources they need to finish their education (McLaughlin, 2014). Title IX made it illegal for federally funded institutions to discriminate against female students and ensured that all students, regardless of gender, received an equal education (Rose, 2015).

Particularly at the collegiate level, there was a great deal of opposition to accepting Title IX as the financial ramifications of the law became apparent. Ultimately, the Javits amendment was passed into law to make the main objective of Title IX as it related to athletics more explicit (Stevenson, 2007). Subsequently, during the administration of President Gerald Ford, additional regulations were established based on the findings and recommendations of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Finally, the law was enacted on June 21, 1975, despite

opposition and concerns regarding the negative implications the legislation would have on athletic programs (Emam, 2016).

In addition, the Office of Civil Rights communicated to the chief state officers that it outlined the standards for athletic programs that must be in accordance with Title IX. The purpose of the memorandum was to eliminate discrimination based on a person's sex or gender and to provide school administrators with a specific period to monitor these Title IX adjustments to remain compliant (Claussen, 2010). In addition, this mandate required schools to ensure that all students had equal access to athletic resources, including funding and scholarships, equipment and supplies, as well as games and practices (Claussen, 2010).

As a result of this memorandum, universities were instructed to reassess the athletic programs they maintain to demonstrate compliance with Title IX (Claussen, 2010). In addition, because of Title IX, the number of women who play sports and get involved in them has increased (Rose, 2015). However, in the past, their access to athletic scholarships has been severely limited. Title IX is often recognized for its provisions addressing sexual harassment and sex-based violence and protecting against athletic discrimination. However, less is known about the requirements covering pregnancy and parenting students (Bolger, 2015; Koss et al., 2014; Peterson & Ortiz, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Overseeing and Enforcing Title IX for Pregnant and Parenting Students

As a result of the civil rights statute, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) oversees the implementation of Title IX in educational institutions such as schools and universities (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The adoption of future civil rights legislation that addresses discrimination against other populations was made possible as a direct result of the passing of Title IX legislation. One of these was the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which

prohibited discrimination based on a person's disability (Valentin, 1997). In addition, it resulted in the passing of the Age Discrimination Act in 1975, which made it unlawful to discriminate against someone based on their age (Valentin, 1997). Starting in kindergarten and going through graduate and professional degrees, Title IX makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender. Over time, Title IX's protection has broadened to include preventing and prosecuting sexual harassment and sexual assault in institutions that receive federal funding (Valentin, 1997).

Implementing Title IX on secondary and college campuses has led to significant changes for formerly discriminated-against female students. In addition, the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) was created as a direct result of Title IX. This law enabled women to attain educational equity by encouraging institutions to work together to offer additional support and incentives (Valentin, 1997). In addition, it pushed Congress to create the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs (NACWEP), which dealt with sex equity legislation (Valentin, 1997). Despite advancements in political protection, pregnant employees continued to be subject to sexual harassment and discrimination (Busch & Thro, 2018). However, after giving birth to their children, women learned that they were not protected from legal action brought against them by their employers. The case of *General Electric Co. v. Gilbert* (1976), which the Supreme Court heard, was the catalyst for reform and led directly to the creation of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. This act was designed to protect women during their pregnancies, births, and subsequent recovery (Habig, 2008).

The original goal of Title IX was to prevent sex discrimination, and it used the threat of losing federal funds to ensure that institutions followed its provisions (McDevitt, 2018). Title IX has been amended and interpreted in various ways over the years. It has, however, accomplished its goal of creating educational equality for women by providing equal access and opportunities

within educational institutions. Furthermore, it helped set a precedent for other underrepresented groups who face discrimination regularly. The Pregnant and Parenting Student Access to Education Act of 2015 was introduced to the Senate in February 2015 to provide Title IX students with financial assistance to continue their education (U.S. Congress, 2015).

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the United States Department of Education drafted a document in 2013 that outlines the specific requirements and accommodations mandated by Title IX (Eckes et al., 2015). Students who are pregnant are required to have access to pregnancy-related accommodations under Title IX. These accommodations may include access to seats and desks that can adapt to any physical changes and unrestricted use of restrooms as required. In addition, the school must excuse pregnant students for medical appointments if those appointments are deemed medically necessary (Eckes et al., 2015). As outlined in Title IX, pregnant students have the right to be excused from absences for problems directly related to their condition. After returning to school, they are to be in the same class as they were before they were absent (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

After a student has informed faculty members of their pregnancy, the faculty members cannot force the student to withdraw from the class (Stallard, 2018). A pregnant or parenting student who believes they have been discriminated against because of their parenting status may file a formal complaint with the Office of Civil Rights. Additionally, this office can investigate any discrimination claims submitted under Title IX (Eckes et al., 2015). If there are any issues regarding sexual harassment or discrimination, the designated Title IX Coordinator is available to address those concerns. Despite establishing Title IX, many faculty members may be unaware of the Title IX standards that mandate the provision of academic accommodations for pregnant students or parents (McLaughlin, 2014).

For universities to comply with federal law, they are required to hire a Title IX Coordinator who is responsible for monitoring compliance with the legislation and resolving any complaints of discrimination (Wiersma-Mosley & DiLoreto, 2018). Title IX coordinator information must be readily available to the public, students, and workers. In addition, the grievance procedure must be clearly stated and made accessible to the public. Title IX Coordinators should be familiar with and understand the legislation to investigate all allegations of probable sex discrimination (Wiersma-Mosley & DiLoreto, 2018). Furthermore, it is the responsibility of educational systems to conduct their self-evaluations to detect potential areas of noncompliance. Finally, schools are allowed to implement preventative steps to address and reduce the effects of discrimination (Valentin, 1997).

Legal Implications of Pregnancy-Related Discrimination

When institutions disregard or deny Title IX support to students, they risk legal repercussions (Wadas-Thalken, 2018). Gough (2011) cites a lack of awareness of the Title IX regulations in higher education as a source of concern. In the 1985 case of *Wort v. Vierling*, a high school female student claimed that her admittance to the National Honor Society was revoked based on her pregnancy (*Wort v. Vierling*, 1985). In the 1990 case of *Pfeiffer v. School Board*, it was determined that pregnant students were not subject to discrimination because of their pregnancy. They maintained that the female student who had engaged in sexual behavior before marriage constituted the foundation for their decision. Pregnant students who wanted to participate in extracurricular activities were not permitted (*Pfeiffer v. School Board*, 1990). Consequently, female students are frequently subjected to more scrutiny than their sexually active male counterparts (Pillow, 2006).

In 2013, a pregnant student at the City University of New York recounted how she was unfairly discriminated against and unable to make up any coursework that she missed due to her pregnancy. She was subjected to discrimination that directly violated Title IX, which specifies that pregnant students should not be treated differently because of their pregnancy and prohibits such treatment. This student was successful in arguing her case. As a result of the settlement, the school implemented a Title IX policy (CUNY Settles Title IX Complaint of Pregnancy Bias Against Student, 2013). In the case of *Varlesi v. Wayne State University* (2012), a student complained that they were not provided with appropriate accommodations despite being pregnant. The university was ruled accountable for failing to provide reasonable accommodations, and the student was awarded \$849,000 (*Varlesi v. Wayne State University*, 2012).

In 2010, Ayesha Khan entered Midwestern University in Grove, Illinois, to study medicine. She found she was pregnant in 2013 and subsequently began having physical and mental health issues due to her pregnancy. Due to her pregnancy and subsequent medical issues, she sought academic accommodations from her school (*Khan v. Midwestern University*, 2015). According to the student, these pleas relating to her pregnancy difficulties were minimized and completely disregarded. Due to the university's failure to provide her with any Title IX-required accommodations, she did not perform well in her coursework, leading to her expulsion. After being removed from the medical school without cause, she filed a complaint with the local district court to challenge the decision (*Khan v. Midwestern University*, 2015).

Brynda Ivan was a graduate student at Kent State University when she discovered she was pregnant in the spring of 1991 and had her first child in December of that same year. She claimed her termination from her employment was due to prejudice based on her gender and the

fact that she was pregnant (*Ivan v. Kent State University*, 1994). Ivan stated that she had experienced discrimination from her instructors and other students while enrolled in her program following the birth of her child in December. Consequently, she was issued an in progress (IP) notice, which resulted in her termination from her job. She also said several faculty members had speculated that she would not be as successful owing to the anticipated difficulties associated with caring for her children (*Ivan v. Kent State University*, 1994).

Rachel Darian, a senior nursing student in 1994, attended the University of Massachusetts in Boston. Unfortunately, Darian suffered from several serious medical issues during her pregnancy, which affected her physical health and her capacity to carry out her duties as a nursing student. Consequently, she applied for ADA accommodations through the institution for the aforementioned medical issues (*Darian v. the University of Mass. Boston*, 1997). She was concerned, however, that the university had violated the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991 by neglecting to provide appropriate accommodations.

Due to her medical issues, her doctor prescribed a week of bed rest for the duration of her pregnancy, followed by partial bed rest. Unfortunately, Darian missed some clinical components of her classes due to her physician's instructions (*Darian v. the University of Mass. Boston*, 1997). In addition, she asserted that she was not granted reasonable accommodations and was subject to verbal discrimination from faculty members because of her pregnancy. Ultimately, she dropped out of school without completing her coursework (*Darian v. the University of Mass. Boston*, 1997).

Under Title IX, students who believe they have been subjected to unjust discrimination because they are pregnant can pursue legal action against their respective educational institutions (Wadas-Thalken, 2018). If institutions do not comply with the standards set forth by the federal

Title IX program, they may be subject to both legal and financial repercussions. In addition, educational institutions risk legal repercussions if they lack clear and defined protocols for pregnant and parenting students. As a result, pregnant and parenting students face educational obstacles not encountered by their non-pregnant and non-parenting peers (McNee, 2013). With the proper support, however, a significant number of parenting students could achieve their academic goals (Hardy, 2011).

Barriers Impacting Pregnant and Parenting Students

Adult Learners

Universities generally divide their students into traditional and nontraditional students. Contemporary terminology typically refers to nontraditional students as adult learners. A traditional student is typically between the ages of 18 and 22 and enters college immediately after graduating from high school. In contrast to their nontraditional or adult learner colleagues, they frequently do not experience a pause in their educational endeavors due to personal or professional obligations (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Other characteristics that may be present include, but are not limited to, financial dependency on parents and part-time employment (Shillingford & Karlin, 2013).

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in adult learners enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs at institutions. However, this student population usually delays college enrollment owing to military, financial, personal, and family responsibilities (Shillingford & Karlin, 2013). In addition to different socioeconomic factors, external environmental issues frequently impede these students' degree completion. Furthermore, parenting students with dependent children may face additional financial challenges due to the cost of childcare and other child-related expenses (Noll et al., 2017). On the other hand, many

adult students have already established themselves in the workforce, either full-time or part-time. Moreover, while many of these students can financially sustain themselves, they also have family members who depend financially on them (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011).

Attrition

It is critical to include academic attrition or withdrawal of pregnant and parenting students when addressing the educational disparity. Tinto's theory of attrition attributes early withdrawal or attrition from classes to various causes. According to this theory, college students are susceptible to a wide range of internal and external circumstances, one of which has the potential to significantly affect their academic success (Willcoxson et al., 2011). Tinto's early studies and Cullen's assistance resulted in the creation of a theoretical model that contained six separate components, each of which had the potential to influence a student's academic success (Willcoxson et al., 2011).

These six aspects include a student's pre-entry characteristics, such as their previous level of educational experience. In addition, it investigates the student's internal motivation and level of dedication to their education. Along with a student's personal experience at their institution, the integration of the student's academic and social goals is another factor (Willcoxson et al., 2011). Additionally, it considers the student's intentions and any external commitments they may have, such as a job or obligations to their family. The final consideration would be the outcome, which would include the student's choice to either complete their education at their current school, switch to a different school, or forego further higher education entirely (Willcoxson et al., 2011). Therefore, when considering the attrition rate of parenting students, it is paramount to consider the variability stemming from these six factors, with particular emphasis on the student's individual experiences.

Psychosocial Barriers

Several parental students cited their children as the main factor behind their determination to continue their education, despite the numerous hurdles that this may have posed (Lovell, 2014). Because of their parental duties, these students face higher levels of stress and more challenging tasks than their peers who do not have parental responsibilities (Lovell, 2014). As the number of students who are parents increases, so will the need to identify and remove any impediments to academic accomplishment (Brown & Nichols, 2012).

Several characteristics have been identified as potential barriers to student advancement related to the student's status as a pregnant or parenting student. These challenges include a lack of resources, a pervasive culture on campus that revolves around pregnancy and the attendant social stigma, and financial constraints (Wadas-Thalken, 2018). Furthermore, a study examining challenges for pregnant and parenting students discovered that a lack of adequate and inexpensive housing options was a significant barrier to academic performance and retention. This study emphasized the need to provide accessible childcare choices on campus or through collaborations with local community daycare providers (Kava et al., 2021).

Students who are pregnant or who are already parents frequently experience financial hardship (Haleman, 2004). Students have remarked that the duties of parents make it difficult to seek financial support from them. It is not possible to modify a student's financial aid package to reflect a significant life event such as pregnancy or the birth of a child (Wadas-Thalken, 2018). When the student returns to school, these new parents frequently face additional financial issues, such as mounting medical bills and a shortage of affordable childcare (Nichols et al., 2017). Students who were pregnant or who were already parents reported feeling pressured by their

educational institutions to drop out owing to their increased educational needs (Steinkamp, 2017).

This quandary of whether to continue attending school or drop out is aggravated by the additional financial strain and the lack of peer support (Yakaboski, 2010). Pregnant students have said that academic modifications in the classroom and acceptance from both their educational system and their peers are critical to their academic learning outcomes (Hardy, 2011). Another possible barrier these students, particularly single mothers, may experience is the negative cultural stigma of being pregnant while attending college (Gough, 2011). Many students have stated that the climate on campus is not welcoming to parents.

In addition, these students mentioned that their institutions usually were not knowledgeable or comfortable when providing academic support and accommodations (Beeler, 2016). As a result, these students, who have most likely internalized the stigma of pregnancy, frequently hesitate before revealing their pregnancy in a public forum at their university (Gough, 2011). These students' perceptions of how acceptable they are on campus may be lower than those of their peers who are not pregnant because of the stigma associated with pregnancy and the numerous environmental challenges they face (Yakaboski, 2010).

Upon the student's return to classes, these new parents frequently face financial constraints ranging from medical expenses to daycare costs (Nichols et al., 2017). Pregnant students reported that they felt additional pressure to withdraw from college because of their circumstances (Steinkamp, 2017). Due to a lack of financial resources and peer support, students are faced with the decision of whether they should stay in school or drop out altogether (Yakaboski, 2010). When addressing issues of equal access to educational instruction, these

obstacles might contribute to a learning environment that is less inclusive for students who are pregnant or who are parents (Brown & Nichols, 2012).

Pregnant students feel that receiving assistance from their campus and support from their classmates is fundamental to remaining enrolled (Hardy, 2011). On the other hand, improved institutional recognition and reaction to these students' difficulties have been shown to boost the likelihood that they will feel supported and involved on their campuses (Zepke & Leach, 2010). According to students, having greater access to childcare facilities that are both affordable and convenient was critical to their ability to complete their degrees (Godfrey et al., 2017). Also contributing to stress is the challenge of finding and affording childcare while attending school. After childbirth, new mothers reported that restricted or nonexistent access to breastfeeding rooms contributed to their anxiety (Brown & Nichols, 2012).

According to Title IX laws, all institutions receiving federal funds are required to provide academic accommodations for pregnant students or parents (Gough, 2011). However, there is still worry about how institutions and faculty execute Title IX in the classroom due to a lack of clarity about what academic accommodations apply from one school to the next. This concern derives from the lack of a standardized definition of academic accommodation (McNee, 2013). This recently discovered gap in accommodations further underscores the need for additional research and work in this area (Pillow, 2006).

Physical Barriers

Pregnant students undergo numerous physical changes, some of which may impact the student's academic performance. In addition, a high-risk pregnancy may result in several complications at any time during the pregnancy and raise concerns about the birth (Bennington & Davidson, 2015). Even if a student's pregnancy is not determined to be high-risk, they will still

be obliged to undergo prenatal care, which requires them to keep regularly scheduled medical examinations. When students enter their third trimester, the frequency of medical monitoring examinations will increase weekly (Bennington & Davidson, 2015).

Another medical condition that affects one in every fifteen pregnant women is gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM). This type of diabetes is distinct from others in that it only appears during pregnancy (Utiger, 2019). GDM, which can impact between 2 and 9 % of pregnancies, can result in various medical issues for both the mother and the baby throughout pregnancy (Crowther et al., 2005). As a result, the woman is at risk for various potential issues throughout the labor and delivery process, including but not limited to uncontrolled maternal and baby weight increase and excessive sugar levels. Even if she receives medical care, a mother diagnosed with gestational diabetes may require additional medical monitoring (Utiger, 2019). These medical procedures may include monitoring the patient's diet, checking the patient's blood glucose levels daily, and administering insulin (Crowther et al., 2005).

If not addressed, a condition known as preeclampsia, characterized by high blood pressure, can lead to many pregnancy complications. Some of these difficulties can impact the central nervous system of the mother and can cause renal problems. Additionally, she may experience liver problems, diminished respiratory function, and increased swelling in the hands and feet. This disorder may also cause vision impairments and hypertension-related concerns. An elevated danger during labor and delivery threatens the health and well-being of the mother and the newborn child (Duley et al., 2006).

Preeclampsia is a disorder that, if left untreated, can endanger both the mother's and the unborn child's lives. However, the health and safety of the mother and newborn can be safely managed if they adhere to a comprehensive medical treatment plan and remain under the close

observation of their respective physicians at all times (Crowther et al., 2005). As there is also an increased danger of the woman going into labor before the due date, some medical professionals recommend bed rest for both the mother to ensure their health and safety. Additionally, a doctor may recommend inducing labor early to lessen the likelihood of the woman encountering additional complications throughout the delivery (Crowther et al., 2005). These additional medical procedures may result in enhanced surveillance of the pregnant mother and unborn child. Students who are pregnant and who are experiencing preeclampsia could discover that this makes it more challenging for them to attend class consistently.

After a high-risk pregnancy, some women may experience issues during labor and after delivery. These difficulties could include but are not restricted to things like persistent hypertension or problems with blood pressure. A typical issue in the postpartum period is the mother's increased risk of having high blood pressure after giving birth (Makris et al., 2004). A cesarean section, often known as a C-section, can be performed on a pregnant woman, either scheduled or unscheduled. However, this delivery method is typically associated with a slower recovery after childbirth. A C-section carries several dangers, including the likelihood of complications such as hemorrhage or damage to the uterus (Kok et al., 2014). If a woman experiences any medical complications during labor or the postpartum period this may result in additional medical expenses (Law et al., 2015). It is possible for students experiencing problematic recovery to experience additional stress if they return to their academic courses too soon.

One in ten women will be diagnosed with postpartum depression following the delivery of a child, making it a prevalent mental health condition (Jones, 2017). Studies have shown that women can experience an increase in depression symptoms not only while pregnant but also

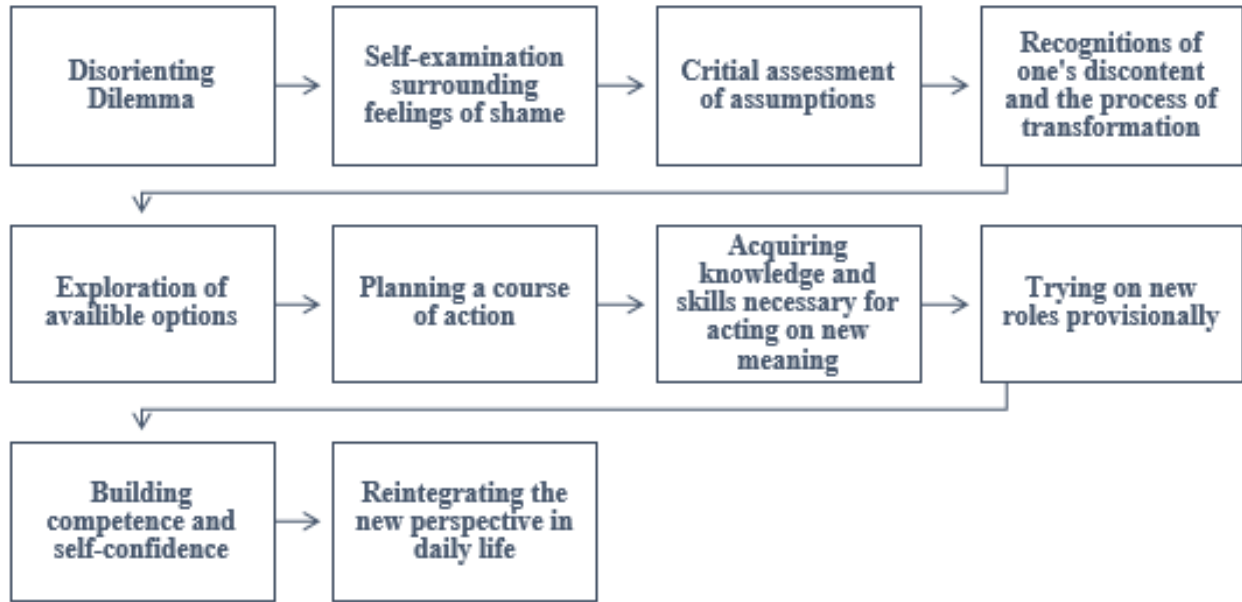
after giving birth to their baby. These symptoms can include changes in one's sleeping patterns, hunger changes (either an increase or a decrease), and a rise in thoughts of hurting oneself or suicidal ideas (Kammerer et al., 2009). Unfortunately, these new mothers frequently do not recognize these signs as being associated with postpartum depression and hence do not seek medical care for their condition. The absence of medical intervention may pose a greater risk to the mother and the newborn (Kammerer et al., 2009).

Furthermore, increased levels of psychoactive hormones after childbirth have been associated with increased depression symptoms (Kammerer et al., 2009). Some women have what is termed as a "heightened state of psychosis" when they have multiple episodes of enhanced depression symptoms. These episodes might last for a long time. This depressive mood can affect new mothers, including their ability to care for themselves and their newborn infants (Jones, 2017). This condition can create a highly stressful setting for new mothers who are striving to focus on their academics while recovering after childbirth. Institutions that provide the often-required additional academic support by allowing new parents time to recover from the traumatic experience of childbirth and associated medical difficulties such as postpartum depression.

Theoretical Foundation

Transformative Learning Theory

The transformational learning theory served as the theoretical foundation for this study. Thomas Kuhn's work is based on the idea of shifting paradigms, which is also the philosophical basis for Mezirow's Theory of Learning, which changes people's views (see Figure 2). The transformative learning paradigm is dominant in adult education. Adult learning can be



Note. (Kitchenham, 2008).

Figure 2. Mezirow's ten phases of a perspective transformation.

transformative, whereas child learning is formative (Mezirow, 1991). Transformative learning requires an adult to evaluate the world by how they were initially taught and then re-calibrate depending on the newly acquired information. According to Mezirow (1991), learning requires an adult to evaluate the world by how they were initially taught and then re-calibrate depending on the newly acquired information. According to Mezirow (1991), learning is equivalent to making sense of what has been offered to the learner. He explains that the significant purpose of adult learning is to promote the transition of previously held beliefs or assumptions into a more open-minded and all-encompassing way of thinking and believing (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow (2009) illustrates this learning theory with the Biblical tale of Saul's conversion to Paul, framing the meeting on the Damascus Road as a perplexing paradox. First, he employs the Biblical tale of Saul's transformation into Paul. This incident inspired Saul (later known as Paul) to reconsider his life, his point of view, and the persecution of Christians, leading to a change in his life trajectory and the direction Christianity took. According to Mezirow's (1991, 2000, 2009) thesis, the first ten stages of adult learning transformation are experiencing a perplexing problem. After being confronted with this bewildering predicament, an adult must determine how to use the new information and cultivate new mental routines to absorb the new data (Mezirow, 2000).

Alternately, an adult who does not learn in a transformative way may show disconfirmation bias (Edwards & Smith, 1996) and choose to ignore new information, causing cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Festinger posits in his theory of dissonance that cognitions, which correspond to various components of knowledge, might be relevant or irrelevant in comparison to one another. Festinger highlights the psychological discomfort

experienced when dealing with discord and the need to alleviate this discomfort while dealing with dissonance (Harmon-Jones, 2019).

Self-Determination Theory

The self-determination theory explores the impact of a person's environment on both the macro and micro levels and how it contributes to their personal growth and ability to pursue academic goals (Hove, 2017). This theory also considers the various types of motivation that a student may have to continue working toward their intended goals. For pregnant and parenting students, maintaining positive motivation through regular campus support and easily accessible parental resources is critical for self-efficacy improvement (Jeno et al., 2018). It also looks at how students can feel supported by their teachers while maintaining their independence to reduce dropout rates. The student's academic needs are met when faculty members recognize their students' parental status and make the required theoretical transformations (Jeno et al., 2018).

Several characteristics should be considered when examining student motivation, particularly when comparing traditional students to adult learners. First, these two types of students must be defined. A traditional student is typically a recent high school graduate who immediately enrolls in college and continues their education without interruption. These students may need outside funding to attend college and depend financially on others. They may look for part-time work, but their enrollment must be full-time (Shillingford & Karlin, 2013). Adult learners frequently experience a gap between high school and college, which they may attribute to entering the workforce or the military after graduation. Adult learners who enroll in college are usually required to work in addition to their academic duties. They frequently state that they have dependents, such as spouses or children. Furthermore, some may claim to be single parents (Shillingford & Karlin, 2013).

Adult learners may be driven or affected by different variables than traditional students. The motivations behind why they want to finish or start their education may differ. There is evidence that adult learners emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation more than regular students (Shillingford & Karlin, 2013). This motivation highlights the significance of transactional engagement between students and instructors in the academic setting and its influence on the likelihood of students completing their degrees (Zepke & Leach, 2010). According to several studies, there is a relationship between a student's high level of self-efficacy and their higher level of tenacity in both their academic achievement and their overall college experience (Shillingford & Karlin, 2013). Higher levels of intrinsic motivation among non-traditional students would be associated with greater autonomy and overall perceptions of competence in accomplishing academic goals (Kahu et al., 2013).

While enrolled in college, students are responsible for becoming well-integrated members of the communities on their respective campuses. These efforts have a beneficial influence on the students, making it more probable for them to continue their studies (Hove, 2017). Conversely, students that exhibit poor educational decisions, such as withdrawing from classes without requesting academic accommodations and lacking motivation, will experience increased dropout rates (Meens et al., 2018). During this stage, a student must continue to grow and build their sense of who they are. A pregnancy, whether planned or not, can have a considerable influence; similarly, if a student's devotion to their academic objectives is questioned by their peers or their institution, that student's motivation to continue can be significantly compromised (Means et al., 2018). When discussing the attrition rate of adult students, it is essential to consider this discrepancy in perceived levels of student support and satisfaction (Donohue & Wong, 1997).

A student's socioeconomic status can significantly impact academic achievement. Students who identify as black, indigenous, or otherwise a person of color (BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or otherwise a person of color)) may also face discrimination and receive fewer resources and support than their white peers (Schreiner et al., 2011). Additionally, first-generation college students may be at a disadvantage relative to their counterparts who come from households with a tradition of higher education completion (Schreiner et al., 2011). Lastly, students who are expecting a child or already have a child under their care need academic support in the form of appropriate accommodations to continue their education and stay enrolled in the institution. Pregnant students' motivation to continue their academic careers may be influenced, positively or negatively, by the institutional and peer support they receive or do not receive (Meens et al., 2018).

Bean and Metzner's Model of Nontraditional Student Attrition

The model of nontraditional student attrition developed by Bean and Metzner (1985) should also be considered because it focuses on why students abandon their planned studies before they are finished. This theory lays an exclusive emphasis on the external environmental factors and the impact they have on a student's academic performance (Bean, 1982). In addition, this theory established the groundwork for comprehending the factors contributing to the rise in adult students. Finally, Bean and Metzner examined and characterized the concept of the atypical student (Bean & Metzner, 1985). These students may experience more tremendous obstacles than their peers who do not have parental responsibilities; as a result, additional research would be warranted.

In the years leading up to the United States' involvement in World War II, employment possibilities for women were heavily limited. As a result, most women spent their time working

inside the home as housewives or in fields such as education and nursing. As a result of the military conscription, businesses were in desperate need of labor, which led to an increase in the number of women working in professions traditionally monopolized by men (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Despite the initial tolerance of women to fill vacant roles caused by World War II, women saw a rise in animosity following the war's conclusion (Parker, 2015).

Eventually, there was a gradual blurring of the barriers between what was historically perceived as traditional roles for men and women in the workplace. As a result, women began to work in fields that were usually considered more male-dominated. As time progressed, the family dynamic began to change, and both spouses were increasingly required to work to support their families. In addition, there was a shift in traditional child-rearing responsibilities and the opening of new childcare facilities (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

As a result of these shifting cultural norms and shifts in the dynamics of families, colleges discovered that their enrollment numbers had increased. However, due to their home environments, the demographics of these incoming college students ranged (Choy, 2002). For example, commuter students comprised most of the adult learner population because most of these students did not live on campus. Upon entering college, these students may not always possess a high school diploma but a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or another credential validating the completion of high school (Choy, 2002). Additionally, the age range of these students ranged from 24 years old and higher, compared to 18 to 24 years old for students who entered immediately after finishing high school (Bean & Metzner, 1985). In recent years, adult learner characteristics have broadened to include a later enrollment age, part-time enrollment status, being employed full-time, being financially independent, and, for some, identifying as parents (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011).

When it comes to the attrition of students, there are many different aspects to consider. According to one study, a college student's whole college experience significantly affects their retention rate and willingness to remain enrolled at their university (Bean, 1982). Positive and negative experiences can substantially impact a student's academic progress, increasing or decreasing the attrition rate (Donohue & Wong, 1997). Studies have shown that non-traditional students have an increased risk of dropping out of school compared to their peers. This attrition is likely owing to the additional external factors they face (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Some challenges those adult students must overcome include obligations at their place of employment, family duties stemming from concerns around childcare, and the financial burden of having children. Many adult learners who do not follow the conventional educational path frequently exhibit overlapping patterns of one or more of these traits (Choy, 2002). The extent to which non-traditional students are pleased with their educational experience is another factor that may affect their decisions (Donohue & Wong, 1997).

Faculty Learning and Organizational Change

The diversity of the student body at colleges and universities is increasing with the overall enrollment numbers. As a result, students' academic needs become more apparent, and institutions question how they will meet these demands (Ward & Selvester, 2012). As a result, faculty members are forced to think beyond their pedagogical perspective and engage in diverse conversations with their peers and academic learning opportunities. The institution's leadership plays an essential role in communicating to faculty the importance of student academic success efforts as campus-wide goals (Ward & Selvester, 2012). Allowing for further learning, adapting, and broadening faculty perceptions of parenting students' current learning needs may result in improved academic performance for the institution (Ward & Selvester, 2012).

Students who are pregnant or who are already parents may be affected by a variety of environmental elements that have the potential to affect their academic performance. These environmental factors include university policies, pedagogical techniques in the classroom, and the overall communication and interactions of faculty members with students (Beeler, 2016). According to some of these students, their faculty's perception of their parental status contributed to an unsupportive learning atmosphere and did little to motivate them to continue their studies (Beeler, 2016). Some students also reported that the instructional procedures on their college campuses did not consider the additional obstacles they frequently faced or their influence on their academic achievement (Daly, 2011). These students' concerns underscore the need to reexamine the current faculty perception of pregnant students and their educational needs, as well as the institution's organizational learning as a whole (Beeler, 2016).

In organizational learning, it has been determined to be a total of four distinct levels, each capable of supporting organizational learning (Guta, 2018). These levels include individual, group, organization, and inter-organizational. At the core of organizational change is the alteration and transformation of human perspectives (Guta, 2018). Nevertheless, learning objectives should reflect those of the institution and the needs and aims of the participating faculty in their roles as educators (Daly, 2011). Furthermore, changes to organizational culture are received more positively when all organizational levels are aware of the planned modifications (Martin, 2015).

This transformation in culture could lead to faculty members being even more aware of the educational needs of their pregnant students, which would assist in contributing to improved student learning outcomes at institutions (Daly, 2011). The change in the cognitive thinking process of the faculty has an impact on their subsequent behavior in the classroom towards

pregnant and parenting pupils (Guta, 2018). Enhanced organizational learning possibilities could potentially address educational access concerns in higher education (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016).

Creating a culture of transformative learning that promotes individual growth inside an organization helps foster a supportive environment for every member (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). By incorporating faculty perspectives on students' educational needs and pedagogical methods into the classroom, campuses encourage faculty engagement and ownership of change (Daly, 2011). This shift in faculty views toward pregnant and parenting students contributes to a more significant cultural and organizational shift on campus that encourages equal educational opportunities for all students (Beeler, 2016). Finally, this encourages an institutional culture that supports learning on several levels and meets the requirements of all stakeholders, from students to teachers (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). Because students' requirements have changed throughout time, it is critical to assess organizational change via the faculty perspective to adapt to those changes (Guta, 2018).

Increasing Institutional Retention

It has been established that providing parental resources within the school context and developing academic adjustments are of the utmost importance for pregnant and parenting students to maintain academic success (Hardy, 2011). Parenting-specific counseling, academic modules, and a pregnancy-specific curriculum are additional support methods for pregnant students (Lovell, 2014). Inadequate daycare access and pricing have also been mentioned as impediments to enrollment (Nichols et al., 2017). This barrier could be easier to overcome if childcare services were more reasonably priced for student parents. Additionally, when addressing the needs of parent students, college campuses should explore child-friendly curricula

and family-centered programs (Lovell, 2014). Finally, students are encouraged to connect with Title IX and their faculty to develop an academic plan supporting their academic success and growth (Stallard, 2018).

When evaluating students' access to campus and community resources, it is crucial to consider campus services such as housing and transportation (Kava et al., 2021). Additionally, to begin having a meaningful impact on student retention and academic achievement, collaboration and participation from different resource offices, as well as communication from students, is essential (Steinkamp, 2017). Coordinated support from campus departments and resource offices may assist students in achieving academic success and feeling supported by their institutions (Varner, 2017). Studies show that students want campuses that are family-friendly in terms of accepting them and making sure they have the resources they need. They also want an environment that is welcoming to students who are parents (Wadas-Thalken, 2018). Mentoring opportunities on campus have also benefited pregnant and parenting students (Varner, 2017).

Title IX, which forbids discrimination based on a student's sex, mandates State Boards of Education to accommodate pregnant and parenting students. The following four provisions served as guidelines for schools implementing accommodations (Russo & Gul, 2016). They are as follows: schools are prohibited from discriminating against or excluding pregnant students, and they are required to offer an alternative comparable to the options available to students who are not pregnant. In addition, pregnant students must be afforded the same consideration as students who are temporarily disabled. Finally, their medical provider may recommend a medically necessary leave of absence (Russo & Gul, 2016). It is also recommended that students be provided leniency under Title IX regarding attendance and concessions regarding grading and

assignment rules (McNee, 2013). Finally, Title IX stipulates that student be given sufficient time to recover before returning to their academic obligations (Nichols et al., 2017).

To address the attrition of pregnant and parenting college students, universities should consider assessing their present Title IX knowledge and identifying potential obstacles that could impede its implementation on campus. For example, one possible explanation why pregnant and parenting students are denied access to limited resources is that it is deemed outside the institution's purview and responsibility to do so (Nichols et al., 2017). If it is not already, consideration should also be given to the students and their identified obstacles affecting their academic performance (McNee, 2013). Institutions could further consider increasing outreach and education regarding Title IX and providing resources (Senander, 2004).

From the perspective of disability or accessibility services, conventional pregnancy-related accommodations may include constraints on walking distance, the capacity or inability to sit for extended periods, and restrictions on potential chemical exposure, especially in a laboratory setting (Bedrossian, 2016). Additional medical accommodations may include frequent bathroom breaks and consideration of the impact of morning sickness on a student's ability to attend class in person. In addition to additional restroom breaks, various seating arrangements are another viable accommodation universities can provide (Bedrossian, 2016). Extending due dates for assignments or tests could be an extra concession. If attendance becomes an issue, one possible accommodation would be to examine the possibility of creating alternative ways to participate in the course (Stallard, 2018). It is important to differentiate that being pregnant is not considered a disability. However, some related medical conditions could lead to the need for accommodations (Hope, 2019).

Universities should also consider examining their current processes and implementing extra resources and support to mitigate potential Title IX student complaints (Hope, 2019). For example, universities may create a supportive environment by starting a conversation about how to help pregnant and parenting students (Shavers, 2005). Providing this academic help and medical accommodations will necessitate the participation and collaboration of multiple campus offices. Furthermore, pregnant and parenting students who receive comprehensive assistance for their mental health, academic, financial, and parenting requirements are more likely to have excellent academic outcomes (Lovell, 2014). A multi-office approach, on the other hand, can help ensure that colleges meet students' educational needs as advised by Title IX (Bedrossian, 2016).

Summary

A significant amount of groundwork was put into establishing and implementing Title IX, and its influences may be found in its predecessors, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As a result, Title IX has paved the way for creating a learning environment free of discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation (McNee, 2013). Despite this progress, the gap between students and institutions persists regarding Title IX awareness and how to execute it on their campus (McNee, 2013). In addition, the number of students who are pregnant or who are already parents is expected to continue rising, which means that schools will need to evaluate whether they are offering the required adjustments and resources to these students (Nichols et al., 2017).

To increase institutional support and promote the inclusion of pregnant and parenting students, universities might also evaluate the campus employees' perceptions of these students (Nichols et al., 2017). Campuses that respond to the shifting needs of their students demonstrate a readiness to listen to and meet those needs (Zepke & Leach, 2010). If institutions fail to

address the concerns of students who are parents, the enrollment of these individuals may fall (McNee, 2013). Parenting students receiving support for their mental health, academic, financial, and parental needs are more likely to have successful academic experiences (Lovell, 2014). Fostering an inclusive learning environment that gives pregnant and parenting students equal academic access and opportunities may increase their likelihood of academic success (Nichols et al., 2017). By providing and promoting a wide variety of help services around campus, universities can cultivate an atmosphere that is welcoming and supportive for these students (Zepke & Leach, 2010).

The third chapter will introduce the methodology used for this study, including designated procedures, investigational instruments, the study's participants, and the population under investigation. In addition, Chapter 3 will offer a review of the study's theoretical foundations, methodological assumptions, and limitations. Additionally, my role as the principal investigator in this study will also be explored. Finally, Chapter 3 will discuss methodologies for data gathering and strategies for understanding the collected data.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Through action research, this study examined the impact of faculty engagement in Title IX professional development on pregnant and parenting students' access to an equal education. The degree to which the university had implemented the most recent Title IX regulations and best practices within the state university system was another aspect investigated in this study. The study also examined how faculty participation in professional development around Title IX impacted their attitudes regarding parenting students and their readiness to implement Title IX adjustments in their classes. Data were collected using a mixed methods approach, using two separate data collection instruments: surveys and a semi-structured interview. The following study questions were posed:

1. To what extent do faculty members understand their role under Title IX in providing reasonable academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students?
2. How engaged is the university towards implementing mandated Title IX regulations and adhering to best practices within the North Carolina State University System?
3. How does engaging in Title IX professional development affect faculty's perceptions of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students?

The difficulties that pregnant and parenting students face are diverse and merit a further look into some of these barriers. The specific barrier that this study focused on was the perceptions of faculty members towards pregnant and parenting students and how it impacted their parenting students' educational equity as compared to their non-parenting peers. By using an interventional action research design, I was able to test and evaluate the level of knowledge held by the faculty on Title IX both before and after the implementation of an intervention. In

this study, I addressed one of the primary concerns of pregnant and parenting students: the lack of clarity on Title IX requirements on campus and how faculty are to implement these measures.

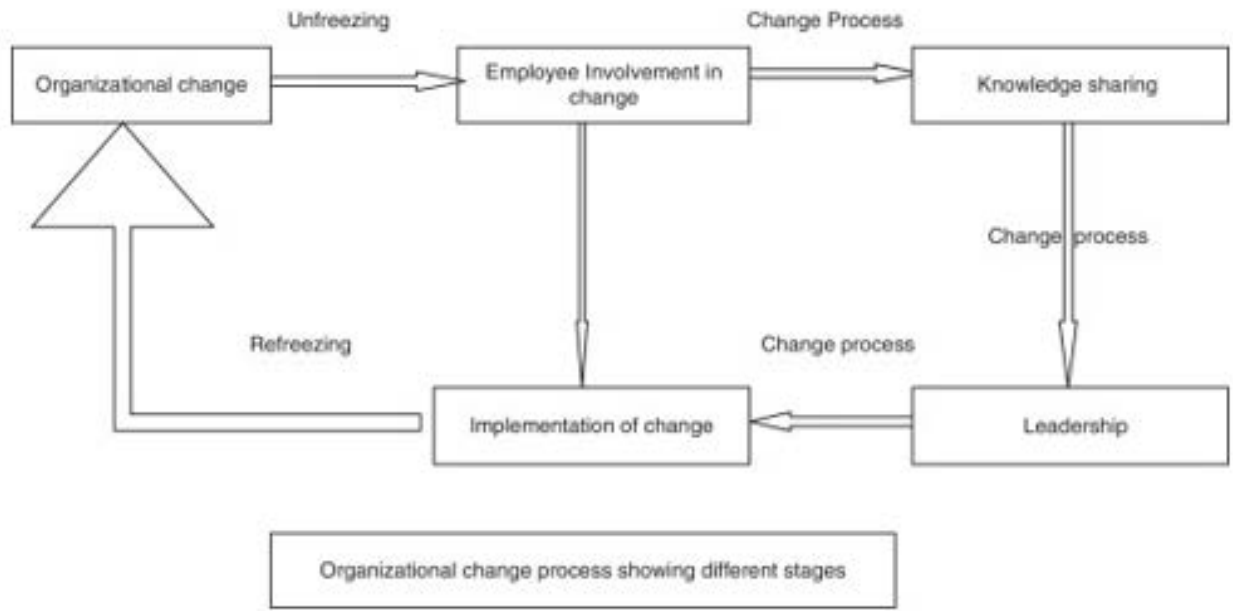
Study Design and Rationale

Action Research

Kurt Lewin (1946), considered the father of action research, focused on eliminating social injustices by introducing change and action among its participants. Within Lewin's Change Model, change can be implemented in three steps (Burnes, 2004) (see Figure 3). The following phases are compatible with Lewin's cycles: unfreezing, movement, and refreezing. These three steps address the need to unlearn behaviors or cognitive processes, to be pushed or driven to relearn, and ultimately to embrace new behaviors as the new norm (Lewin, 1946).

To properly understand action research, it is essential first to understand its foundation, which consists of three fundamental principles. The first is emancipatory experiential learning, and it involves the cognitive shedding or unlearning of conventional educational procedures that participants initially learned (Mertler, 2019). As faculty members mature and improve their instructional approaches, they frequently incorporate previously taught or learned theories or social constructs. A significant component of transformative learning is acquiring new skills and incorporating novel concepts into one's practice (Mertler, 2019).

The second concept is the relational construction of learning, which asserts that teaching and learning can be intertwined. This type of learning can be observed when instructors and students learn from one another. The third concept is extended epistemology interviewing, which goes beyond conventional first-or second-person narratives and focuses instead on third-person queries and broader social aspects (Mertler, 2019). In a study conducted, participants observed



Note. (Hussain et al., 2018).

Figure 3. Lewin's Change Model.

that action research benefited their schools while providing instructors with the capacity to reflect deeply on and grasp the underlying problem (Hine, 2013). For educators seeking a rigorous research approach to improve their school's practices and policies, action research presents a transformative opportunity for the professional growth of their participants and the community. In addition, theoretical and practical divides can frequently be bridged through action research (Hine, 2013).

In the context of this study, action research proved to be an effective and suitable method that measured the effectiveness of learning opportunities provided to faculty members as well as the overall progress made by the institution in terms of its provision of assistance for pregnant and parenting students (Calhoun, 2002). Following Lewin's paradigm, this study was conducted in three separate phases. First, the Problem of Practice was established, and then study questions were developed to further address this identified educational inequity. These questions focused on acknowledged disparities faced by pregnant and parenting students. A pre-professional development and post-professional development survey were designed to be distributed to participants before and after the intervention.

These surveys aimed to determine the extent to which faculty engagement in Title IX professional development opportunities contributed to implementing best practices on campus. After completing a pilot study, it was later determined that including a follow interview in gathering additional data on the effectiveness of the intervention was appropriate. These interviews focused on understanding faculty members' guiding perceptions and how they influenced their willingness to implement Title IX measures in their classes.

Frequently, action research involves an intervention phase that can significantly influence participants' decisions and instructional processing (Mertler, 2019). In phase two, participants

were introduced to the intervention, which was the Title IX professional development. Nonetheless, action research also highlights and encourages participant growth and reflection as evidence of transformative learning. As a result, it takes into account and emphasizes the human tendency to adapt to change (Beeler, 2016). Participants were presented with information regarding Title IX and existing accommodations, campus services, and support. The third phase, guided by transformational learning theory, assessed the impact of the intervention on faculty perceptions of parenting students.

This process is subsequently translated into behaviors that have the potential to alter participants' habits or views. Recognizing the significance of critical inquiry and discourse, which are typically associated with action research, can be accomplished by observing, listening, and experiencing the educational environment through the lens of individuals who have been impacted (Mertler, 2019).

Following the conclusion of the training, participants were instructed to complete a post-professional development survey. In addition, attendees were given the opportunity to complete an interview following the professional development. The interview allowed participants to discuss their experiences and changes in perspectives during the study. Not only does encouraging inclusivity and participation among community members aid in restoring attitudes of engagement and investment in the designated community, but it also affects educational policy (Mertler, 2019).

Mixed Methods

The gathering of data in a single study that employs mixed methods entails combining qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection (Wiśniewska, 2011). By using a mixed method approach to this action-based research, the collected responses and data were submitted

to more rigorous and unified assessments of the studied practical circumstances (Ivankova & Wingo, 2018). According to the underlying concept of mixed studies, the advantages of one procedure may outweigh the limitations of the other when two methods are applied simultaneously. For example, when qualitative data are used to clarify numerical information expressed in words or visuals, quantitative data can add accuracy to the qualitative data. This phenomenon is known as data complementarity (Wiśniewska, 2011).

Applying a mixed methods strategy in action research would be beneficial for conducting an empirical and evidence-based investigation. In addition, mixed methods allow researchers to address complex research questions, find answers to exploratory and confirmatory questions within a single study, and reveal a fuller picture of a problem in practice (Ivankova & Wingo, 2018). Therefore, the desire for data complementarity and triangulation is the most prevalent rationale for employing mixed methods technique in action research. In research, triangulation employs various data gathering methods to gain an in-depth understanding of a problem (Wiśniewska, 2011).

Procedures

Action Phase I: Planning and Development

The problem of practice was identified during the initial phase of the study, along with a specific barrier that could be addressed directly through an educational inequity lens. During this phase, a population sample of participants was also identified. The data instrumentation and interview protocol were also designed. The interview questions were designed to supplement the survey responses and provide further insight into the participants' perceptions of pregnant and parenting students following engagement in Title IX professional development. In addition,

ethical concerns and informed consent were addressed. During this phase, a pilot study was also carried out.

Population

This study focused primarily on faculty who are actively instructing students at the university level. The site of this study is the University of Southeastern Carolina, a public university located in the eastern North Carolina region. It is recognized as part of the University of North Carolina system. USC is one of seventeen public institutions that span the state of North Carolina. As of 2021, the approximate number of faculty, including instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors, was 1,997. This number of instructors includes part-time and full-time faculty members, tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track faculty (About ECU, 2022).

The School of Social Work, which offers degrees in Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW), was one of the programs I selected to include in my study. Previously, several faculty members from the School of Social Work had sought direction from the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) regarding a lactation policy for breastfeeding parents. This dialogue continued into a discussion on best implementing the Title IX mandates, ensuring students were afforded the appropriate academic accommodations and providing guidance for their faculty. Because of my role in working directly with parenting students who were seeking accommodations and offering guidance to faculty, I was invited to participate in this conversation.

This discussion evolved into a call for an official Title IX pregnant and parenting policy that would establish the necessary criteria for academic accommodations, including leniency in class, mandatory attendance, and adjustments to assignments and grading due to pregnancy and

parenting-related concerns. Another group of faculty members I chose to include in this study was the College of Business. They had previously expressed interest in learning more about Title IX and how to best support parenting students seeking academic accommodations.

The College of Business recommended reaching out to the Academic Advising Collaborative and selected personnel within the Student Affairs Division who taught COAD 1000, an introductory course for first-year students just beginning their college careers (COAD 1000, 2022). In addition, due to previous outreach regarding enrolled pregnant students from Graduate Program Directors, the Graduate School was also contacted for this study. Through its 11 colleges and schools, the University of Southern California offers more than 70 master's degree programs, two intermediate programs, and more than 60 graduate certificate programs. In addition, they provide 13 doctoral research programs and six first-professional programs and are recognized by the Carnegie Foundation as Doctoral and Research Universities (About ECU, 2022).

Sample and Sampling Procedures

The participants for this study were selected using a purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling allows researchers to limit participants in education-based studies, particularly those in the disciplines of the human sciences, to those with shared interests or commitment to the issue of inquiry (Tafur-Arciniegas & Contreras, 2018). Researchers frequently resort to purposive sampling when doing qualitative research (Etikan et al., 2016). The purposeful sampling method facilitates the identification of individuals or groups with in-depth knowledge or experience with a subject that is of interest to individual conducting the study. In addition to this, it takes into consideration the individual's capacity to communicate

their experiences and knowledge to others in a manner that is both perceptive and introspective (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Generally, researchers will avoid making general inferences in favor of concentrating their attention on participants who have the potential to comprehend and gain insight into the issue that is being researched (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Through homogeneous sampling, participants are identified based on whether they share a particular quality or attribute (Etikan et al., 2016). By focusing on these shared characteristics, researchers can determine how they may relate to the study topic (Etikan et al., 2016).

The shared characteristic of this study was being a faculty member who had taught at least one course or would be teaching in the upcoming academic term at the institution where the research was conducted. This study's sample comprised both undergraduate and graduate faculty. Purposive sampling identified several groups of faculty members interested in learning more about Title IX through previous campus outreach efforts or direct interaction regarding a pregnant or parenting student in their class.

Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

To assure the ethical treatment of participants in this study, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to proceed (see Appendix A). The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Ethic modules were also completed. The participants in the study's target sample group were offered the option to participate in the study and were allowed to withdraw at any time. Using an informed consent statement (see Appendix B), I could address any potential ethical concerns related to the data collection process. This statement was made available to participants during the recruitment phase when pre-professional development and post-professional development surveys were distributed. In addition, participants who chose to

complete a follow-up interview were also given an interview protocol (see Appendix C) in addition to the informed consent. The following information was supplied to the participants as part of their informed consent).

1. My name and contact information
2. Participation in the study is voluntary and the published results will remain anonymous
3. The purpose of the study and how the results may be utilized

Participants in this study were required to provide their names and work email addresses to allow additional follow-up on incomplete surveys and schedule an interview. The collected data were stored on a private data storage file that only I could access during the study and were deleted six months after the study's conclusion.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to establish the validity of this investigation and its instrumentation procedures and protocol (Mertler, 2019). Three faculty members were specifically recruited for the pilot study. Participants were instructed to complete the pre-professional development survey, watch the pre-recorded professional development presentation, and complete the post-professional development survey. The post-professional development study allowed participants to participate in a subsequent interview.

All three attendees completed the survey following the professional development. Two of the three individuals also participated in the interviewing process. Due to scheduling conflicts, the third participant could not complete the interview. After completing both surveys and interviews, participants were asked to provide feedback and identify any misleading or problematic interpretations of questions. The shared feedback allowed the survey questions to be

modified to generate higher-quality, research-relevant responses. See Appendix D for the pre-professional development survey and Appendix E for the post-professional development survey. Also, the professional development was modified in response to constructive feedback regarding the presented material. Additionally, the interview questions were modified to elicit more detailed responses.

Action Phase II: Intervention

During phase II of this study, participants were introduced to the intervention. Before the intervention, participants were asked to complete a pre-professional development survey. The intervention consisted of Title IX-specific professional development and its significance and influence on higher education. As a result, participants learned more about Title IX and specific USC and campus-specific provisions. Following the intervention, participants were asked to complete a post-professional development survey. During this phase, post-professional development interviews were also conducted.

Title IX Professional Development

During phase II, the faculty were asked to participate in Title IX professional development on how to best support pregnant and parenting students on campus. The professional development was created in response to previous interactions and questions from pregnant and parenting students and their faculty members. It also drew on current research and best practices from other UNC system institutions. In addition, the Title IX professional development provided historical context and significance of Title IX, as well as guidance on the current mandates and how best to implement them on campus. Faculty participants could attend the professional development in person or view a pre-recorded slideshow at their convenience.

Participants who could not attend in person had access to a pre-recorded PowerPoint professional development consisting of 12 slides lasting nearly 12 minutes. (See Appendix E).

During the 30-minute in-person professional development, participants learned about the history and significance of Title IX in higher education, as well as the impact it has on pregnant and parenting college students. The study questions, as well as the problem of practice surrounding pregnant and parenting access to an equitable education, were presented to the faculty participants. Participants also received information about The Office of Civil Rights and how engagement in Title IX initiatives on campus affects the educational equity of pregnant and parenting students. Data on the number of pregnant and parenting students enrolled in previous semesters dating back to 2015 was also provided to faculty participants.

Previous Title IX practices and processes were discussed, as well as the newly implemented Title IX accommodation referral system and where students needing additional campus support could be referred. Participants were also given information on whom they could contact if they needed additional assistance adopting and implementing Title IX provisions into their classroom practices and policies. Participants also gained an understanding of the resources that are readily available to pregnant and parenting students both on campus and in the surrounding community. Financial assistance was also offered to pregnant and parenting parents from the community and campus through the school's Student Treasure Chest program. Another opportunity for financial assistance was the John 3:16 foundation, which a local church in the community offered. Furthermore, participants learned about community programs to which students could be referred for parenting support.

Participants learned about campus community feedback from parenting students and faculty members, highlighting the need for additional campus resources and outreach. Faculty

participants were also presented with future recommendations for improving campus engagement in effectively implementing Title IX provisions and increasing campus awareness of pregnant and parenting students.

Campus Resources

During the study, several campus members, including non-parenting students and faculty, expressed an interest in supporting pregnant and parenting students and expanding campus resources. This study indicated that increased campus and faculty understanding of Title IX requirements and services was warranted. One identified Title IX provision was the development of a website where all relevant Title IX information could be easily accessed. In addition to this resource, information and access to resources on the submission of requests for academic adjustments would be made available.

It also sparked discussions about constructing a parenting pantry with supplies such as diapers, formula, and gently used toys and strollers. During the study, a student assisted with the collection of a variety of baby supplies. These items included baby shampoo and wash, diapers, wipes, and baby formula. A comprehensive listing of all the resources can be found in Appendix F.

These materials were provided to the Women & Gender Office for campus distribution. It was also discussed if an officially recognized parent-student group should be formed. This organization would provide students opportunities to connect while promoting campus awareness. This study supported the establishment of a Title IX regulation that the university would implement. The participants' responses revealed that increased Title IX understanding was not only necessary but also desired by professors. This observed interest led to the expansion of Title IX professional outreach.

Action Phase III: Data Analysis

Following the completion of the data collection, a comprehensive analysis of the raw data acquired from the pre-professional development and post-professional development surveys and the interviews were carried out. The raw quantitative data from the pre-professional development and post-professional development surveys were analyzed for frequency or variation in responses. The completed pre-professional development and post-professional development surveys were compared and verified to ensure that each participant had completed both surveys.

Additionally, incomplete pre-professional development and post-professional development surveys were excluded during the cleansing of the raw data. Several post-professional development surveys had to be eliminated due to incomplete responses. In addition, the responses to corresponding questions on the pre-professional and post-professional development surveys were evaluated.

The comparison of pre-professional development and post-professional development data focused on descriptive statistics and changes in the frequency distribution of responses. The descriptive analysis process drew correlations between the data and the original study questions (Mertler, 2019). During the analysis phase of the study, it was crucial to identify any potentially contradictory patterns or codes that may have emerged. The descriptive analysis method recorded the frequency at which a variable's value emerged during the collection of data (Mertler, 2019).

The interviews were conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. Each interview was recorded with the participant's permission, allowing a typed transcription of the interviews to be made available for subsequent analysis. The quantitative data captured from the interviews were reviewed and aligned with the recorded survey responses to ensure the credibility of the data.

Coding

For this study, I chose to implement the inductive coding process due to its straightforward method for analyzing qualitative data for various study designs (Thomas, 2003). The inductive coding procedure consists of the following five steps: data cleaning, thorough reading and analysis of the data; creation of the categories that emerged from the reading; identification of overlapping coding and uncoded text, and continued review and development of the categorization (Thomas, 2003). Inductive coding generally recognizes a framework with three to eight primary categories in the final report (Thomas, 2003).

The defined study questions were the determining factor for the qualitative data analysis, along with multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data. Additionally, the study questions and the results of the analysis of the collected data led to the identification of several emerging themes (Thomas, 2003). The inductive approach to coding attempted to condense the raw data from the interviews into a descriptive format. In addition, it sought to make direct comparisons between the study's objectives and the summary conclusions drawn from the raw data. Lastly, the perceptions or insights that the data revealed were used as the basis for identifying a guiding theory (Thomas, 2003).

Triangulation

Triangulation of data is vital for maintaining the validity of mixed methods research. Validity can be established by offering adequate evidence for plausible interpretations of the study's findings (Mertler, 2019). To confirm the validity of the data, the quantitative data from the pre- and post-surveys were triangulated with the data from the post-professional development interviews. Triangulation answered the posed study questions by confirming the authenticity of the data gathered from the two different instruments. Ultimately, this analysis method made it

easy to identify the various themes and patterns that emerged during the analysis of the raw data (Mertler, 2019).

Inquiry Rigor

In order to strengthen the rigor of this study, several aspects regarding data collection and analysis were considered and addressed where possible. This study used homogenous purposive sampling versus random sampling. This variance in sampling could lead to a possible risk to the external validity. Some researchers say that a problem with non-probability sampling is that it can be too subjective in nature (Etikan et al., 2016). Even though it has some disadvantages, non-probability sampling is practical when there is a large target audience, and individuals cannot be selected randomly. Another rationale for using this sampling method is that it takes advantage of the wide availability of study participants (Etikan et al., 2016).

In this study, the internal validity was potentially jeopardized due to the experimental mortality or attrition of a significant number of participants. Several participants filled out the pre-survey, but they did not fill out the post-survey, so their answers were discarded. The instruments used in the study could also be a possible threat. This study utilized a quantitative survey and offered a semi-structured interview that allowed for qualitative data collection. A possible testing validity concern that might have occurred was testing reactivity, which is when participants may be influenced by a question on the questionnaire and be motivated to answer in a certain way or feel influenced to answer a certain way due to association (Mertler, 2019). During the pilot study, the survey and interview questions were amended to address this potential concern regarding the testing validity.

Another possible issue for internal validity is the confirmation bias, which occurs when participant responses are used to corroborate the established hypothesis. A researcher might

counteract this potential bias in quantitative research by reevaluating the collected data through triangulation. Following the qualitative and quantitative data collection for this study, the raw data was subjected to triangulation. Efforts were also made to ensure that the questions were posed clearly, leaving as little margin for misinterpretation as possible.

I was aware that some participants might have had biases that influenced their responses, resulting in erroneous data. For instance, social desirability bias may change participants' responses by influencing them to respond in a manner that allows them to be regarded positively. I reduced this potential bias by designing objective questions that were unbiased and impartial in tone (Mertler, 2019). Additionally, the ethical considerations of a study must be addressed while conducting action research. Therefore, throughout the research, I conducted myself according to the ethical standards established for my field of work as a social worker. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the organization in charge of enforcing this regulation. Additionally, the results of the survey and the follow-up interviews were triangulated to strengthen their validity (Mertler, 2019).

Instrumentation

When addressing the educational disparities pregnant and parenting students face, it is vital to focus on areas over which the institution has direct impact or control. As a result, the focus of this study was on how faculty members' knowledge and willingness to implement Title IX in their classes affected pregnant or parenting students. This study employed a mixed methods approach to data collection that captured both quantitative and qualitative data. It also allowed participants to contribute their knowledge and experience as active members of the academic community in question.

To further explore this educational inequity concern, a pre-professional development and post-professional development survey was designed to assess the impact of this variable on the educational equity of parenting students. A Likert-type 5-point scale was used to model the surveys (Pogrow, 2018). The range of responses is from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The surveys were designed to be completed online via Qualtrics. In addition, the instrumentation for gathering qualitative data included the development of a protocol for conducting semi-structured interviews. Microsoft Teams was used to conduct the interviews virtually and for transcription.

Table 1 presents the three study questions and the relevant data collection instruments and instrumentation questions. Based on previous interactions with pregnant and parenting students and their faculty, the survey questions were developed to address currently identified Title IX concerns on campus. The survey questions were also revised in response to feedback from other campus collaborative partners, who assisted in refining the questions to better assess the current Title IX climate on campus. The interview questions were designed to provide a more in-depth analysis of the survey responses, bridge the gap, and identify any potential transformative growth and learning between the pre-professional development and post-professional development survey responses.

Summary

Action research, rather than seeking to solve a problem, focuses on reform by encouraging participants' personal development and continual education (Mertler, 2019). Participating in action research allows for discourse and the reciprocal exchange of knowledge and experience, all while actively acquiring and assimilation of new information. Faculty members can be active change agents by engaging with stakeholders and their academic

Table 1

Study Questions and Corresponding Questions on the Survey Instrumentation Table

Study Questions	Data Instruments	Instrument Questions
To what extent do faculty members understand their role under Title XI in providing reasonable academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students	Pre-Survey Post Survey Interview	Pre - Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6 Q7, Q8 Post - Interview - Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5
How engaged is the university towards implementing mandated Title IX regulations and adhering to best practices within the North Carolina State University System?	Pre-Survey Post Survey Interview	Pre - Q9 Post - Q8 Interview - Q6, Q7
How does engaging in Title IX professional development affect faculty's perceptions of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students?	Pre-Survey Post Survey Interview	Pre - Q10 Post - Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7 Interview - Q8, Q9, Q10

community through action research (Mertler, 2019). Furthermore, action research allows faculty members to perceive students in contexts other than the classroom, recognizing their multiple identities and duties outside of school (Mertler, 2019).

This study was conducted in three phases in accordance with the action research paradigm. During the first phase, the problem of practice that would become the study's focal point was identified. In addition, the study's design, participant identification, and recruitment were concluded. A pre-professional development survey and a post-professional development survey were designed to address the identified practice issue. In addition, an interview protocol was developed for the follow-up interviews. Participants were asked to complete the pre-professional development survey before the Title IX professional development.

During phase 2, faculty participants were allowed to attend an in-person Title IX professional development or were given access to a previously recorded professional development slide show. Participants were also asked to complete the post-professional development survey after the professional development. The follow-up interviews were also conducted during this phase. During phase 3, the survey responses were gathered and analyzed. During phase 2, faculty participants were given the opportunity to attend an in-person Title IX professional development or were given access to a previously recorded presentation. Participants were also asked to complete the post-professional development survey at the conclusion of the professional development. The follow up interviews were also conducted during this phase. During phase 3, the survey responses were gathered and analyzed.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of a mixed-methods study that examined the inequity that pregnant and parenting college students routinely encounter. This study focused primarily on faculty members' perspectives and their potential role in addressing barriers to equitable education for pregnant and parenting students. In addition, this study examined the impact of faculty engagement in Title IX professional development opportunities of campus Title IX practices. The following study questions were intended to be answered by surveys and interviews.

1. To what extent do faculty members understand their role under Title IX in providing reasonable academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students?
2. How engaged is the university towards implementing mandated Title IX regulations and adhering to best practices within the North Carolina State University System?
3. How does engaging in Title IX professional development affect faculty's perceptions of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students?

The majority of this study was conducted during the global COVID-19 pandemic, which presented several constraints and delays. In addition, the pandemic necessitated the modification of several aspects of the study to collect data and complete the research.

COVID-19 Pandemic

In December 2019, Wuhan, in China's Hubei Province, reported an alarming number of individuals with the acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), ultimately diagnosed as Coronavirus. As the number of individuals developing acute respiratory troubles increased, so did the urgency of efforts to contain this illness (McIntosh et al., 2020). However, in the months preceding up to December 2019, very little was known about the disease that would subsequently be identified as

Coronavirus or COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Jebril, 2020; Lane et al., 2021). Those who tested positive for COVID-19 exhibited a wider variety of medical symptoms than patients who tested negative for the virus and who were asymptomatic. Unfortunately, it was fatal for an incalculable number of patients. Healthcare, the economy, and educational institutions strained to keep up as the world faced this virus's outbreak and rapid spread (McIntosh et al., 2020).

Since the effects of COVID on people remain, for the most part, unknown, pregnant women were thought to be at potential risk. Due to the documented long-term medical effects of COVID, many medical professionals urge their pregnant patients to take extra precautions against the spread of suspected COVID exposure. Therefore, pregnant individuals were strongly advised to adhere to the guidelines (McIntosh et al., 2020). In addition, preventative steps, including maintaining a social distance, were taken to lessen the likelihood that the disease would be passed from person to person (Lane et al., 2021). As much about COVID-19 remained unknown; entire cities were quarantined and locked down. The educational system was not spared. As a result, colleges, and institutions all around the country went into lockdown and frantically attempted to figure out how to implement remote learning (Karakose, 2021).

Institutional Impact

As colleges transitioned to online learning, they relied mainly on technology to create course materials for students (Lane et al., 2021). The instructors were responsible for making their course materials accessible online and relied on virtual meetings (Daniel, 2020).

Asynchronous learning was a beneficial learning approach for many students as colleges became aware of the difficulties associated with the transition to distant learning. Students and teachers

were able to design a learning model that was representative of the continuing medical crisis using asynchronous learning (Daniel, 2020).

The epidemic brought attention to several traditionally underserved student communities and the influence of virtual learning and students' capacity to participate in it. One group that stood out was single mothers, who faced the additional challenge of supporting their children while moving to online schooling (Ajayi et al., 2021). For single mothers pursuing postsecondary degrees, a break in their education has had long-term consequences that are averse to their future careers (Ajayi et al., 2021). In the same vein, this pandemic has served as a prime example of the challenges parenting students, particularly single mothers, face daily while attempting to obtain an education. Integrating this knowledge could encourage universities to address educational inequity concerns and develop best practices to alleviate additional challenges such as access concerns (Ajayi et al., 2021).

The rapid spread of COVID-19 resulted in colleges suspending their typical operations and halting any research being conducted at this time. While institutions were dealing with the economic impact, many academics were also dealing with the impact in the form of postponed projects and funding (Radeck & Schonfeld, 2020). The return to campus was gradual, and, in many cases, a hybrid schedule was implemented. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) instructed people to maintain six feet apart and wear masks (McIntosh et al., 2020). During the pandemic, local universities saw a decrease in community members enrolling in their programs, and local unemployment rates rose to record highs (Radeck & Schonfeld, 2020). While the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic remain unknown, numerous measurements and best practices have emerged due to this shift in learning. Universities

determined that they could continue to deliver education; however, they acknowledged that a shift in the understanding of what students required would be necessary (Karakose, 2021).

COVID-19 expounded on the difficulties faced by new researchers as a result of the loss of access to research opportunities. The effects of the economy were felt within educational institutions, which led to hiring freezes and cuts in financing for programs. To ensure that institutions were able to continue their daily operations, positions and programs were reduced or terminated (Herman et al., 2021). In addition, concerns regarding staff furloughs and budget cuts added a layer of unpredictability to the future for many working doctoral students. As a result, many scholars had to find employment outside of higher education (Herman et al., 2021).

In a recent study, a consistent issue that arose from early-career scholars was the need for additional support during these unique times when COVID-19 disrupted research efforts. It was also proposed that more mentoring would have been advantageous for navigating scientific endeavors during a pandemic (Levine et al., 2021). This study also indicated that researchers were frequently tasked with additional labor responsibilities beyond their typical duties to counteract the escalating effects of COVID-19 on higher education. Additionally, many of these scholars struggled to balance work, home, and family obligations (Levine et al., 2021).

Another factor to be considered concerning early-career researchers was those individuals whose obligations to their families frequently took precedence during the pandemic. Numerous scholars had to reconcile their employment commitments with the distant teaching of their children (Herman et al., 2021). In a survey, 48% of female scholars, compared to 28% of their male colleagues, had more difficulties coping with these obstacles or identified themselves as the primary caretakers (Herman et al., 2021). This perceived imbalance of obligations could

provide insight into the impact of the primary caretaker's added burdens, consequently postponing any ongoing research attempts.

Research Impact

My ability to continue research was abruptly suspended as global efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 increased, and a medical pandemic threatened the world. In March 2020, I was notified that my institution would operate entirely remotely until further notice. At first, it was thought that the work-from-home edict would only be in effect for a week or two. However, as the weeks progressed and the intensity and number of COVID-19 cases rose, it became clear that the pandemic would continue into the late spring and summer months. As the institution focused on ways to continue providing education remotely as faculty and staff collaborated to meet the needs of their students, many campus programs and resources were either restructured or eliminated due to financial uncertainty.

During the summer, updates to Title IX were introduced under then-U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. As a result, discussions of working together for a joint Title IX pregnant and parenting professional development were paused as they focused on addressing the new regulations. Because of these adjustments, the study had to be revised to reflect the intervention changes accurately. In addition, due to concerns about COVID-19, in-person group settings were discouraged to help maintain social distancing mandates and avoid the campus-wide transmission of COVID-19. This restriction hindered my ability to present in person to faculty members about Title IX.

As the number of COVID-19 cases across the state began to stabilize, the university started discussing a timeframe for when faculty, staff, and students would return to campus. Unfortunately, however, the number of people infected with COVID-19 increased over the

summer. Simultaneously, the Delta variant of the virus, which was far more contagious than the original strain, was identified. As a result, concerns about campus safety were aired by both instructors and staff, which led to the establishment of masking requirements and continued distancing measures. Because of these restrictions, numerous university offices and their staff members transitioned to a hybrid work schedule, which allowed for the continuance of remote work when it was deemed suitable.

Virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams and WebEx became standard practice owing to university directives. This platform permitted me to resume my research and study remotely. Due to changes in university policy and the effects of COVID-19, I revised the study during the fall of 2021. The implementation of the study and the recruiting of faculty participants took place the following year, in the spring of 2022. Despite recommendations to return to face-to-face instruction, hybrid schedules were still permitted, allowing the study to continue utilizing virtual platforms in conjunction with face-to-face faculty interaction and engagement.

Introduction

Addressing concerns of educational inequity encountered by parenting students and promoting Title IX support and awareness on campuses, it would be advantageous for institutions to assess faculty members' perspectives toward pregnant and parenting students (Nichols et al., 2017). The problem of practice centered on the educational inequity that pregnant and parenting students regularly experience in higher education led to the development of this study, which investigated the influence of faculty perception and engagement in Title IX training.

The primary foci of the research were faculty members' perspectives and the potential role they could play in increasing access to equitable education for pregnant and parenting

students. In addition, this study investigated the effectiveness of the implementation of Title IX at the institution. The effect of faculty members' engagement in Title IX professional development was another variable examined. Two surveys and an interview protocol were developed using two data instruments to answer the study questions that guided this study. The following study questions were addressed:

1. To what extent do faculty members understand their role under Title IX in providing reasonable academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students?
2. How engaged is the university towards implementing mandated Title IX regulations and adhering to best practices within the North Carolina State University System?
3. How does engaging in Title IX professional development affect faculty's perceptions of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students?

All three study questions were answered using data from the pre-and post-surveys and responses to interviews that several participants elected to complete. The relationship and impact of phase II, or the introduction of the Title IX professional development intervention, were determined by analyzing the reported responses. Using a combination of different data collection instruments resulted in the generation of quantitative and qualitative data to answer the study.

Data Collection

Participants were invited to partake in this study through campus outreach via email. The data collection phase was completed over two months, from April 2022 through June 2022. Moreover 75 faculty members were provided information about the study during this time and were allowed to participate. The College of Business, the School of Social Work, and the Graduate School were also contacted. In addition, recruitment emails were sent to the office of Student Transition, which offers COAD 1000, a course for incoming first-year students that

supports students in making the transition to the university and lays the groundwork for students' academic success as well as personal success (COAD 1000, 2022).

The recruited faculty participants were given the option to attend a live professional development session for Title IX or listen to a professional development that had been recorded in advance. Prior to completing the Title IX training, a total of 19 faculty members completed the pre-professional development survey. However, due to incomplete post-professional development surveys after the Title IX training, six of the surveys had to be withdrawn from consideration, leaving 13 completed responses for further data analysis.

After completing the pre-and post-survey distribution, seven faculty members expressed interest in participating in a subsequent interview. Using Microsoft Teams, the interviews were conducted virtually. Before the interview, each participant was supplied with informed consent information, and the interview protocol was reviewed. All participants consented to have their interviews recorded. Microsoft Teams supplied a prepared transcript of the interview alongside the recorded session. The responses from the seven interviews were evaluated and categorized based on the identified codes. From the various categories, several pertinent themes were established.

Qualtrics was used to collect the pre-and post-survey responses from participants, and the resulting data were then exported to Excel for further analysis and discussion. Nineteen participants completed the pre-professional development survey, but only 13 of them completed the post-professional development survey. In addition, six participants had not yet completed the post-professional development survey; therefore, reminder emails were sent. Before their participation was considered invalid, participants were given a window of two weeks in which to

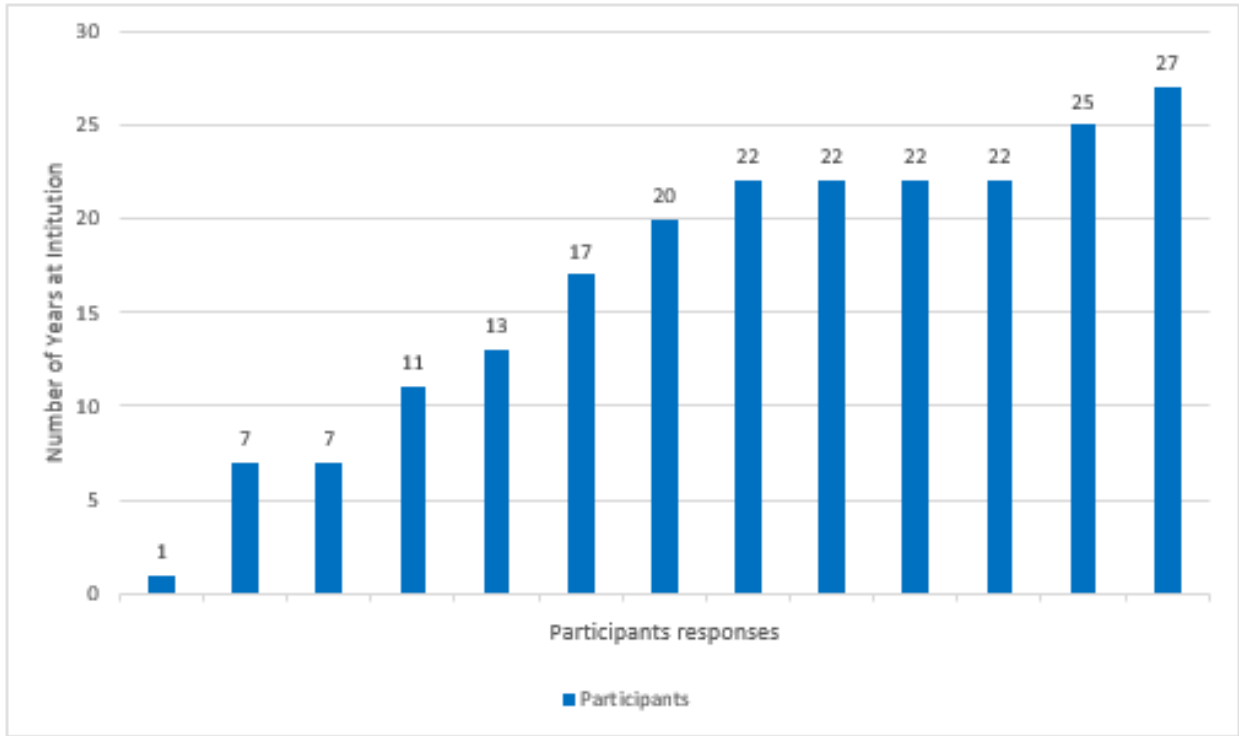
finish the post-survey. Following the conclusion of these two weeks, the total number of pre-and post-surveys that were completed was 13.

One of the measured variables was the duration that each participant worked at the institution. As seen in Figure 4, the length of time spent in the organization varied from a few months to 27 years. The university had employed two of the 13 people who responded for seven years. The following four participants' time at the university ranged from 11, 13, 17, and 20, respectively. Furthermore, four faculty members worked at the university for 22 years. Finally, the last two participants had been at the university for 25 and 27 years, respectively.

As shown in Table 2, the participants were comprised of five different departments or colleges. The represented departments were the College of Business, Science & Technology, School of Social Work, Sociology, and Student Transitions. Science & Technology and Sociology each had one participant, whereas the College of Business had three participants, and the School of Social Work had four faculty participants. Out of the 13 participants, seven indicated that they were interested in completing a post-professional development interview. Out of the seven participants, six responded that they identified as female. In addition, all six participants stated that they were White/Caucasian. The remaining participant stated that their identified gender was male and that their ethnicity was Black (see Table 3).

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine how participation in Title IX professional development influenced faculty members' perceptions of pregnant and parenting students and their subsequent implementation of Title IX provisions in their classes. This study used a mixed method approach to collect quantitative data by comparing pre-professional and post-



Participants Demographics

Figure 4. Employment duration.

Table 2

University Department of Participants

Department	Number of Instructors
College of Business	3
Science and Technology	1
School of Social Work	4
Sociology	1
Student Transitions (COAD)	4
Total	13

Table 3

Interview Participant Demographics

Participants	White	Black
Total 7	85.71%	14.29%

Gender		
Male	0	1
Female	6	0

professional development surveys. Post-professional development interviews were also conducted to collect additional qualitative data.

While analyzing the data, several codes were identified and placed into distinct categories per the development of themes. The raw data from the interviews gave additional insight into the faculty's awareness of Title IX and the critical factors for transformative learning and change. The interview followed a semi-structured format that fostered open conversation and participant engagement. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions or concerns about the presentation's topics or Title IX in general. This open conversation encouraged faculty to contribute and elaborate on their survey results.

Study Question 1

The first study question asked to what extent do faculty members understand their role under Title IX in providing reasonable academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students? The first study question examined faculty members' familiarity with Title IX guidelines pertaining to pregnancy and parenting. This study question evaluated each faculty member's current understanding of Title IX and perceptions of pregnant and parenting students prior to the introduction of the intervention. Both data collection instruments included questions to capture these data.

Survey Data

The second question on the pre-professional development survey asked users to report their level of familiarity with Title IX and the different academic accommodations recommended for pregnant and parenting students. Participants chose from five responses as specified by the Likert-type 5-point scale. These comments ranged from strongly disagreed, disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed.

Responses to the second question of the pre-professional development survey ranged from "strongly disagreed" to "strongly agreed." One participant strongly disagreed, another disagreed, and three others neither agreed nor disagreed. Seven respondents subsequently selected agreed, while the final participant selected strongly agreed. The collected survey and interview data were examined to determine the frequency and consistency of the responses. The interview questions one through five yielded evidence that aligned statistically with and answered the faculty's familiarity with Title IX and their pre-existing attitudes about parent students.

Question three on the pre-professional development survey asked if any participants had ever been approached by a pregnant or parenting student requesting academic accommodations in the class (see Figure 5). Five of the thirteen participants responded that they had been approached, while the remaining eight denied being approached with academic accommodation requests. As a follow-up to question three, question four inquired whether those who responded yes had provided the students with the requested accommodations. Some of these accommodations included extended deadlines for submitting assignments and agreeing to virtual learning because the student was unable to attend classes in person due to medical concerns.

Again, all five participants stated that they had provided accommodations to the students. Question five on the pre-professional development survey asked whether faculty members knew what constituted appropriate and reasonable academic accommodations as outlined by OED when working with pregnant and parenting students who had requested Title IX accommodations. Four faculty members stated that they disagreed, while two indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Six respondents agreed, while the remaining participants indicated that they strongly agreed.

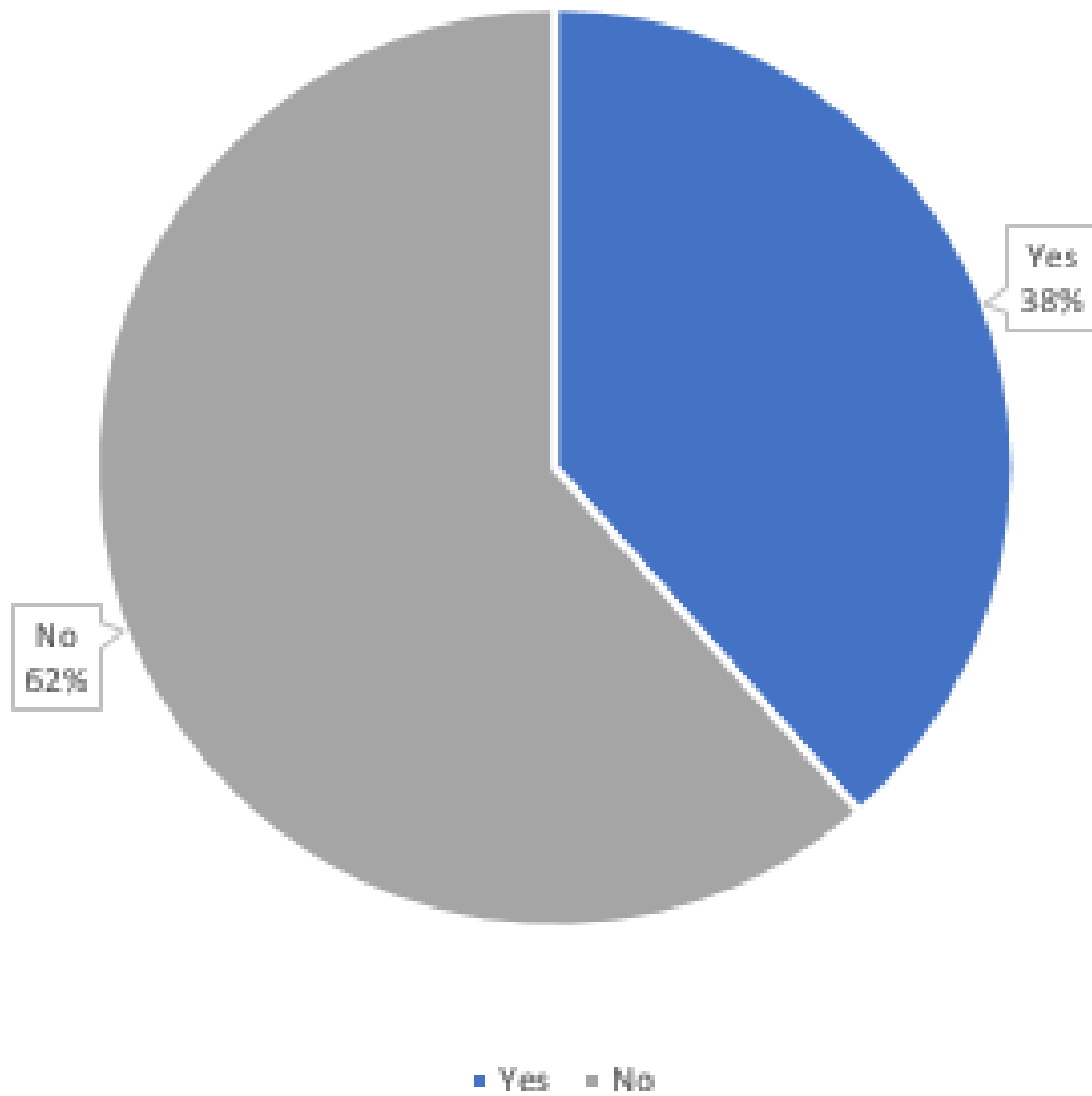


Figure 5. Student accommodation requests.

Question six on the pre-professional development t asked if faculty members had provided Title IX pregnant and parenting information in their classes. Two participants stated that they strongly disagreed, while two indicated that they disagreed. Five indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Two participants said they agreed, while the remaining four said they strongly agreed. Only six out of the thirteen participants provided Title IX material to their students.

Question seven on the pre-professional development survey inquired if faculty understood where to refer students if they needed further accommodation guidance and additional campus support. One participant said they strongly disagreed, while two others said they disagreed. There were no participants that opted to agree or disagree. Four participants said they agreed, while six said they strongly agreed.

Question eight asked whether faculty members knew the appropriate offices to contact for any additional questions about implementing Title IX accommodations in their classroom. Four faculty members answered that they disagreed, while two indicated neither agreed nor disagreed. Six participants agreed, while the remaining participant said that they strongly agreed.

Interview Data

The emerging theme for the first study question was the need for additional Title IX guidance (see Table 4). A secondary topic that emerged was the need for specific Title IX regulations to be made available to faculty members. Survey questions administered prior to the professional development revealed that some of faculty members were unfamiliar with the Title IX provisions for students who are pregnant or are parents. Furthermore, five of the interviewees were familiar with Title IX. However, they indicated that while they were aware of Title IX, they did not necessarily comprehend the specific accommodations guidelines for these students. One

Table 4

Study Question 1: Codes, Categories and Themes

Codes	Categories	Emerging Theme(s)
Pre-existing perceptions and attitudes towards pregnant and parenting students	Lack of Title IX Awareness	Faculty Interest in Additional Title IX Guidance
Prior knowledge of Title IX regulations	Familiarity of Title IX Regulations	A Desire for Specific Guidelines to be Made Available to Faculty
Prior experience working with pregnant and parenting students		
Duration of years teaching		
Associated Academic Department		
Participant Demographics		

participant indicated during the interview that, prior to attending the presentation, they did not fully comprehend what Title IX entailed and their responsibility to offer student support.

When participant G was asked if she was familiar with Title IX prior to the presentation, she responded,

No, I wasn't aware of that component of Title IX. I always thought of it as the sports angle." Participant D shared that "I mean, we wanted to help, but we didn't know what any of the guidelines were, and the only place we knew to go to was the Disability Office. Even then, that was questionable because was pregnancy really a disability? So, you know, it just wasn't clear at that time where to go exactly.

They also stated, "Until we started having conversations about it, I did not know anything."

Participant E stated, "For example, if you had just randomly asked me about Title IX and pregnancy accommodation is covered, I don't know if I would automatically know that."

Additional Title IX professional development opportunities could help faculty fully implement Title IX accommodations. Many faculty members were unaware of these additional measures, highlighting the necessity for this information to be specific in its implementation. Notwithstanding, the change in participants' replies following the conclusion of the intervention revealed that the professional development was beneficial and potentially fostered transformative learning. Participants who engaged in Title IX professional development were more educated about Title IX and its required academic standards for schools. It also allowed participants to gain a deeper understanding of pregnant and parenting students' challenges and academic difficulties that they experience while pursuing their degrees.

Several participants noted that some faculty members might not be as knowledgeable about Title IX and its specific guidelines due to their association with specific academic

disciplines. Several participants remarked that some departments, such as chemistry and biology, may not be aware of best practices for pregnant and parenting students because they do not encounter these issues as frequently. They did not, however, assume that these faculty members would be unwilling to aid students; they merely lacked the knowledge to do so. They noted that future efforts to implement Title IX provisions might necessitate a different professional development method or departmental support to engage some faculty members on campus fully.

Several faculty members inquired whether a formal Title IX statement or policy would be drafted that they could include on their syllabus or the Canvas website. Some interviewees also mentioned providing Title IX information on their department's webpage or academic handbook. When questioned about including Title IX information on the instructor's syllabus, participant F replied, "If you make it easy for them to obtain that information, I have no doubt that they will use it." Participant E commented, "There should be a formal procedure similar to the one for disabilities." Most participants agreed that if the university provided an official Title IX statement or regulation, they would include it as an additional resource for their students. In addition, many indicated that they would share this information at the beginning of the semester to allow students to communicate early about any Title IX issues or needs.

Study Question 2

The second study question asked how engaged the university is towards implementing mandated Title IX regulations and adhering to best practices within the North Carolina State University System. It sought to learn how effective current practices at the institution are compared to those throughout the UNC state system. Furthermore, the impact of campus-wide engagement in Title IX initiatives and implementation of supportive provisions and resources was also evaluated.

Survey Data

In the pre-professional development survey, question nine addressed this compliancy inquiry. It sought to understand how faculty perceived the impact of campus-wide engagement and acceptance of Title IX on their role in supporting pregnant and parenting students. Two participants chose neither agreed nor disagreed, while eight indicated that they agreed that the university was compliant. The remaining three participants indicated that they strongly agreed that the university was being compliant and implementing best practices. Question 10 of the pre-professional development survey asked faculty members if their participation in Title IX professional development, which detailed academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students, influenced their plans to implement Title IX classroom policies and practices.

Question eight on the post-professional development survey closely mirrored question nine on the pre-professional development survey. Furthermore, interview questions six and seven captured additional data that highlighted Title IX compliance and best state practices concerns. In the post-professional development survey, the replies changed following the introduction of the Title IX professional development intervention. The response shifted from five participants agreeing with the institution being engaged to the remaining eight expressing that they strongly agreed that the university was following best practices and the Title IX standards (see Figure 6).

Further examination of the pre-professional development and post-professional development surveys showed that several participants' responses remained the same despite the intervention. Three individuals who agreed that the university was implementing besting practices remained the same following the presentation. Another three participants said that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Following the professional development, their

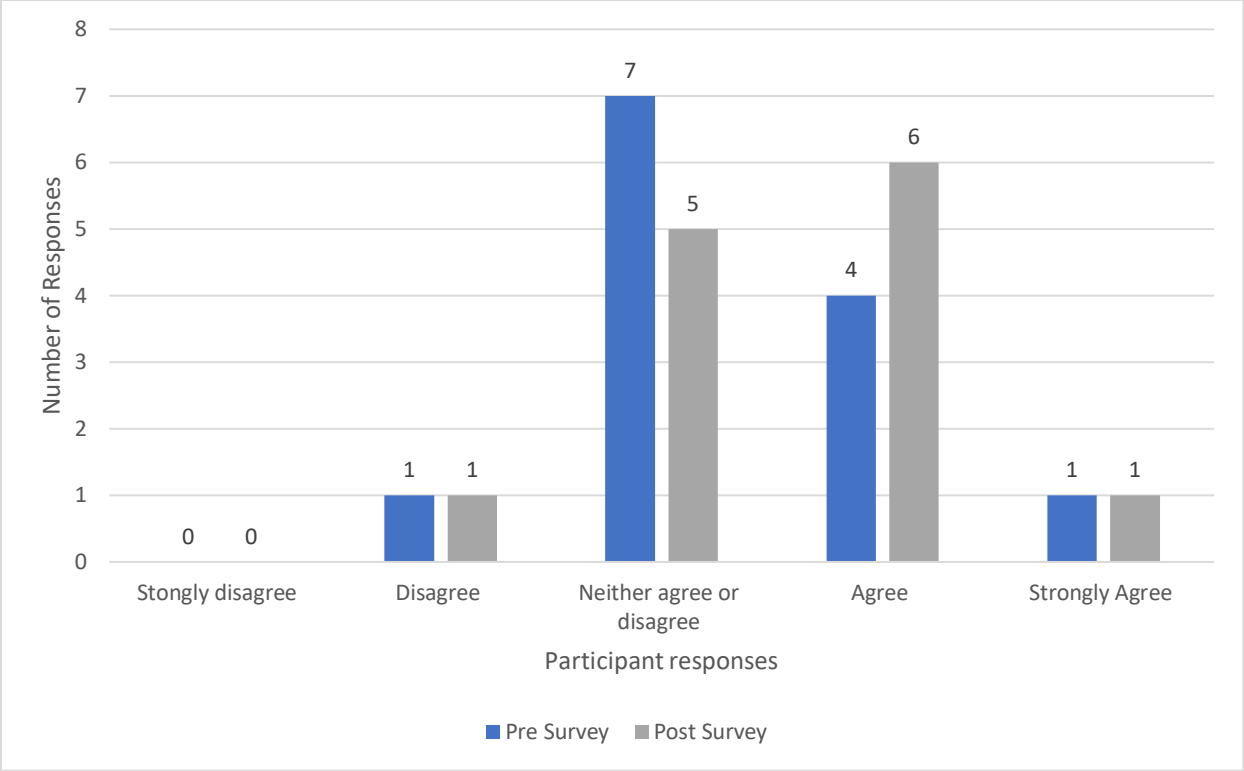


Figure 6. Title IX engagement on campus.

response remained consistent with neither agreed nor disagreed. Three participants had initially selected neither agreed nor disagreed, but their response changed to agreed following the professional development. One participant had indicated that they disagreed, and following the presentation, their response remained that they did not feel that the university was being compliant. Lastly, one person had picked neither agreed nor disagreed prior to the presentation, and following the presentation, their response changed to disagreed.

Interview Data

After selecting strongly agree on the pre-professional development survey, some participants changed their initial response from strongly agreeing to only agreeing on the post-professional development survey. Corresponding data from the interviews also support this shift in responses and understanding of campus-wide engagement in Title IX initiatives. The central theme that emerged was that the institution should consider providing additional campus engagement and outreach opportunities to campus community members to provide best practices relating to Title IX (see Table 5).

When asked if they thought the university was taking steps to implement best practices for Title IX provisions, participants' responses were either neutral or disagreed with this statement. For example, participant D stated,

I mean, we wanted to help, but we didn't know what any of the guidelines were, and the only place we knew to go was DSS. But even that wasn't clear. It was questionable because is pregnancy really a disability? I don't see [redacted] as a whole. You know, I see you and your office and the disability office working, you know to bring this about, but in terms of [redacted] as a whole, I don't really feel it is. I don't even think it feels

Table 5

Study Question 2: Codes, Categories and Themes

Codes	Categories	Emerging Theme(s)
Limited Campus Awareness Lack of Title IX Information available to faculty	Non-Compliance Concerns Silos	To provide best practices relating to Title IX, the institution should consider providing additional campus engagement and outreach opportunities to campus community members.
Campus Administrator’s Role		
Faculty Member’ Role		
Entire Faculty Body Needs to be Included		
Legal Concerns		

like they don't think about it. It is going to take individual professors and administrators across campus to really start thinking about this. They really need to start thinking of this in a way that is helpful instead of thinking about this as an inconvenience for them and their classroom.

Some participants voiced concerns about whether the university would provide financial or marketing support to continue Title IX outreach and increasing campus support for pregnant and parenting students.. Participant E commented, "You know, I guess the key will be does everything get implemented and does it continue to get supported with the resources it needs." In response to the past academic accommodation process that often-overlooked faculty members' role in implementing Title IX accommodations, Participant A stated, "I think the fact that you're, you know, just taking faculty feedback, it feels really good because we kind of feel heard, and I think that was one of the frustrations."

Several participants expressed a desire to support students while establishing boundaries and standards so that they understood their roles and responsibilities in the process. Several others expressed an interest in knowing the specific guidelines for accommodations because they had previously had a student request unreasonable modifications that were not necessarily recognized as medically necessary accommodations under Title IX. These included students requesting to continue virtual learning for the remainder of the semester following the birth of their child despite being medically cleared to return to their studies by their medical providers.

They also expressed concerns about how they could help these students while ensuring educational equity for all their students. There were concerns that they would be perceived as unfairly favoring pregnant and parenting students while denying similar requests from non-parenting students. In addition, several faculty members raised the issue of how to help students

work on group projects and ensure fairness for all group members. Another concern was how to assist students entering an internship who may lose hours due to having a child in the middle of the semester.

Study Question 3

Study question 3 inquired how does engaging in Title IX professional development affect faculty's perceptions of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students. The third study question sought to assess if faculty members' perceptions of pregnant and parenting students had shifted following engagement in Title professional development and, if so, how this change would influence their classroom practices in implementing Title IX.

Survey Data

In the pre-professional development survey, participants were asked if they believed Title IX professional development was beneficial for establishing classroom policies and procedures centered on pregnant and parenting students. In the post-professional development survey, questions two through seven and nine were used to analyze the effectiveness of faculty engagement in Title IX professional development and the influence on their classroom procedures. During the course of conducting the interviews, data were also collected. Questions eight through ten were designed to address the third study question. The qualitative data accumulated from the responses helped answer the third study question.

Question 10 of the pre-professional development survey asked faculty members if their participation in Title IX professional development, which detailed academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students, influenced their plans to implement Title IX classroom policies and practices. Five participants believed it was beneficial and responded that they agreed, while the remaining eight indicated that they strongly agreed. In contrast, the same question was posed

in the post-professional development survey question seven. Following the implementation of the intervention, the responses remained the same as before. Five individuals still agreed with the statement, while the remaining eight still indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement (see Figure 7).

In the post-professional development survey question two, participants did they feel like they had a better understanding of Title IX and how to support students following the professional development. One participant neither agreed nor disagreed, while six participants responded that they agreed. The remaining six participants responded that they strongly agreed with the statement. On the pre-professional development survey, one participant responded that they strongly disagreed, and another responded that they disagreed with the statement. Three participants responded that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Seven participants responded that they agreed, and the last one strongly agreed with the statement.

This shift in participants' responses after the introduction of the intervention lends credence to the belief that the Title IX professional development impacted this small group of faculty participants. These survey and interview responses supported the reported faculty participants interest for more Title IX professional development opportunities. Furthermore, this specific finding could serve as the foundation for expanding the study to the entire faculty population at the university, yielding similar results. Interview responses to questions one, two, three, four, and five were analyzed and compared to substantiate this claim further. Compared to their replies before the presentation, the seven participants' comments after the professional development suggested a shift in their level of awareness and a willingness to learn more about Title IX (see Figure 8). A survey and interview data triangulation were also conducted to confirm this assertion.

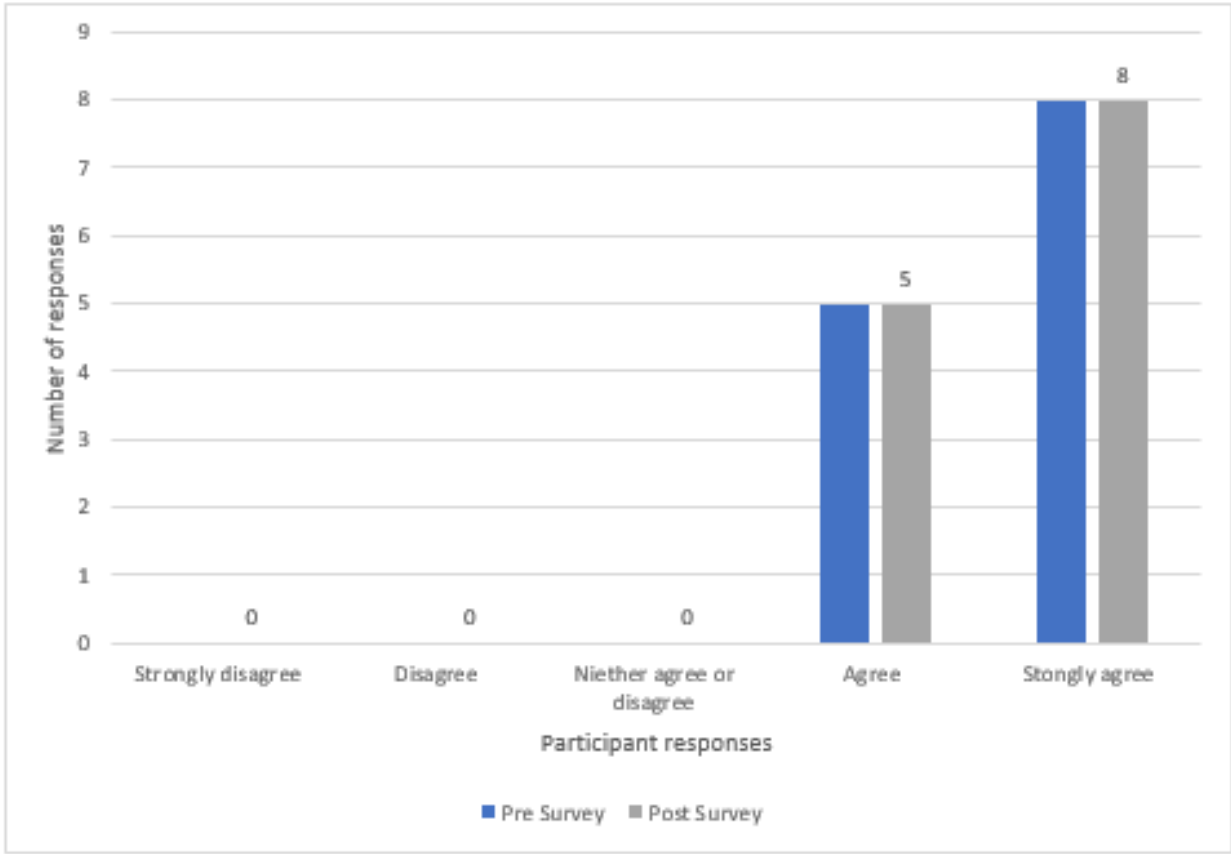


Figure 7. Effectiveness of engagement of Title IX professional development.

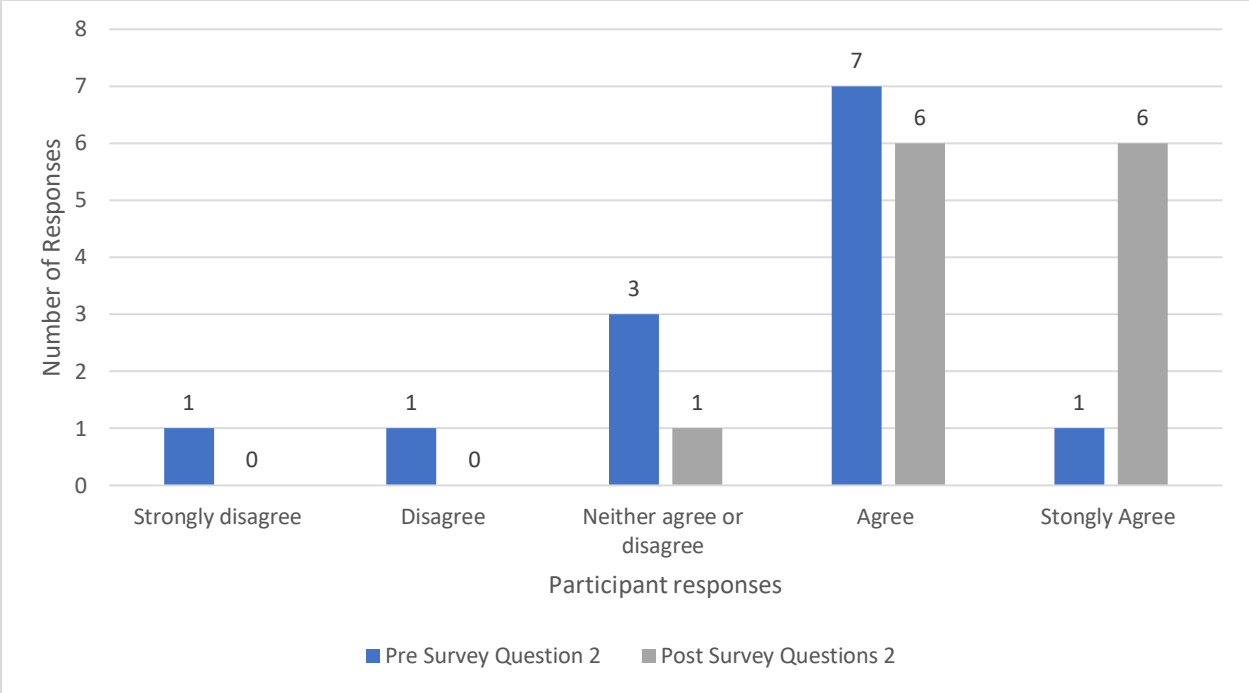


Figure 8. Understanding of Title IX.

Question five on the pre-professional development survey asked whether participants knew what constituted reasonable academic accommodations. The pre-professional development responses were the following: four faculty members answered that they disagreed, while two indicated neither agreed nor disagreed. Six participants agreed, while the remaining participants said that they strongly agreed. Question three on the post-professional development survey asked whether faculty understood what constituted appropriate academic accommodations and provided examples such as more time on class assignments.

One person indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Seven individuals agreed with this statement, while five strongly agreed with it. There was a noticeable difference between responses before and after the intervention, suggesting that the introduction of the intervention assisted faculty in learning what academic accommodations were considered reasonable (see Figure 9).

Question four on the post-professional development survey asked participants if they would be willing to include material regarding pregnancy and parenting Title IX in their course. Five participants stated that they agreed that they would be inclined to do so. The remaining eight responded that they strongly agreed that they were willing to provide Title IX information in their classes. In the pre-professional development survey, questions six asked participants the same question prior to partaking in Title IX training. The initial responses were as follows: two people stated that they strongly disagreed, while two stated they disagreed. Five indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Finally, two people said they agreed, while the remaining four strongly agreed (see Figure 10).

On the post professional development survey, question five asked participants if a student requested Title IX accommodations, they would know where to direct the student for support and

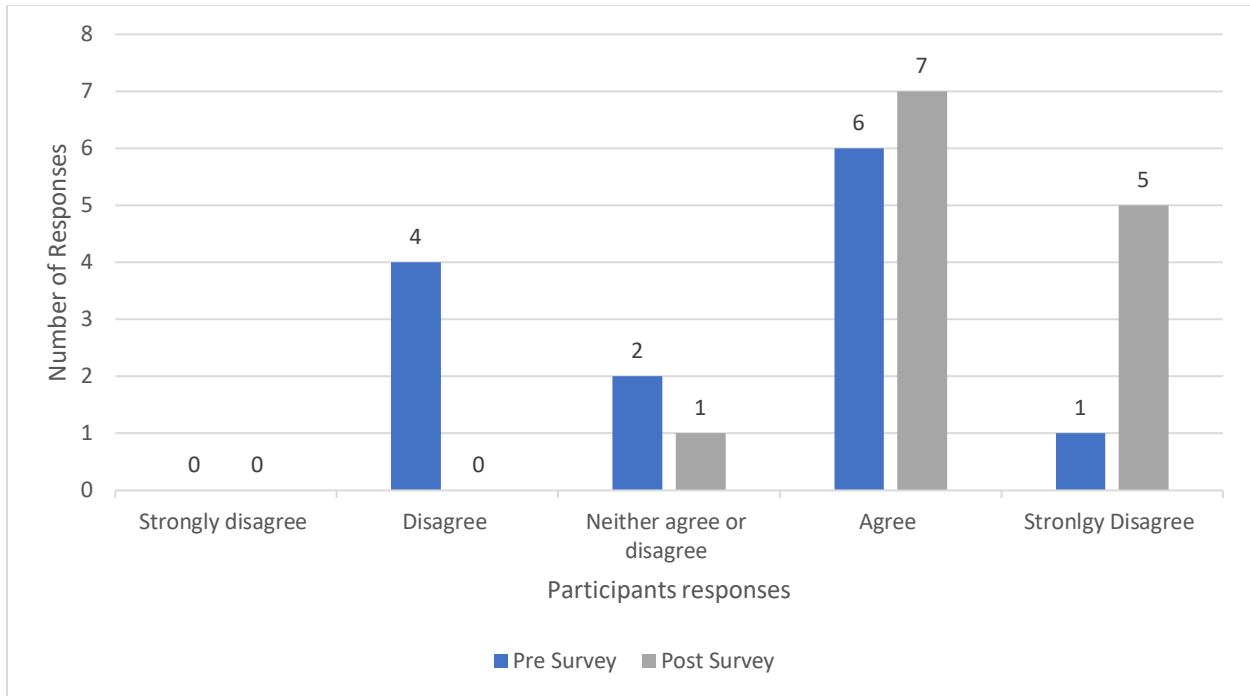


Figure 9. What constituted reasonable accommodations.

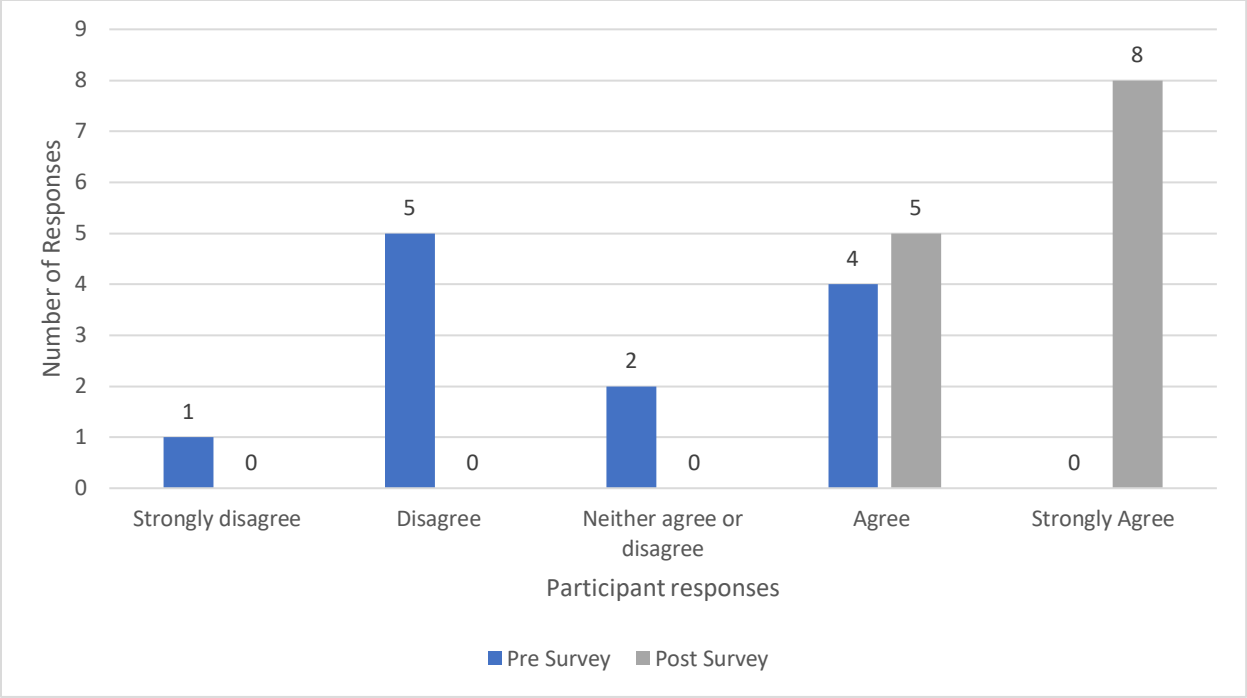


Figure 10. Willing to provide Title IX information in their classes.

resources. One participant responded that they strongly disagreed, while five selected that they agreed following the intervention (see Figure 11). Previous responses included the following: one participant stated they strongly disagreed, while two others disagreed. There were no participants who selected agree or disagree. Four people said they agreed, while six said they strongly agreed.

Question six asked participants whether they knew to contact the Dean of Students Office or the Disability Support Service office if they needed assistance with a Title IX concern. One person stated that they strongly disagreed, while two responded that they agreed that they knew whom to contact. The remaining 10 participants indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement. On the pre-professional development survey, question eight asked a similar question.

Question six asked participants whether they knew to contact the Dean of Students Office or the Disability Support Service office if they needed assistance with a Title IX concern. One person stated that they strongly disagreed, while two responded that they agreed that they knew whom to contact. The remaining 10 participants indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement. On the pre-professional development survey, question eight asked a similar question.

The responses are as follows: four faculty members stated that they disagreed, while two indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Six individuals agreed, while the rest of the participants responded that they strongly agreed. Although there were noted changes in responses in the pre- versus post-professional development surveys following completion of the Title IX professional development, the findings were compared between the two responses following the intervention. Previous responses included the following: one participant stated they strongly disagreed with the statement, while two others responded that they disagreed. There

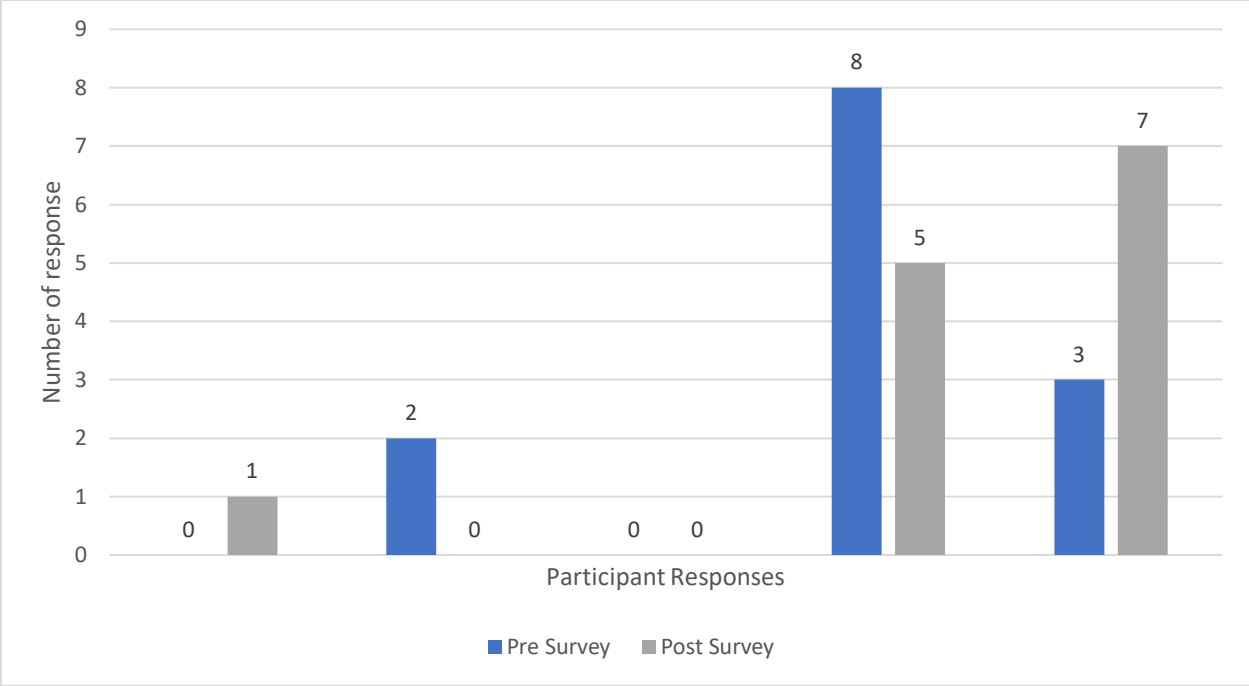


Figure 11. Understanding of correct office referral.

were no participants who agreed or disagreed. Four people said they agreed, while six said they strongly agreed.

Question six on the post-survey asked participants whether they knew to contact the Dean of Students Office or the Disability Support Service office if they needed assistance with a Title IX concern. One person stated that they strongly disagreed, while two responded that they agreed that they knew whom to contact. The remaining 10 participants indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement. On the pre-professional development survey, question eight asked a similar question. The responses are as follows: two faculty members stated that they disagreed, while eight indicated that they agreed with the statement. Two participants indicated that they strongly agreed. Following the intervention there was a subtle shift of more participants strongly agreeing that they knew which offices to contact for support.

Interview Data

During the interviews, several faculty members made suggestions on additional resources that could be made available to students. This line of thought could support the notion that the Title IX professional development was impactful and encouraging faculty engagement and investment in implementing Title IX provisions beyond academic support, such as advocating for the needs of parents outside of the classrooms. Table 6 presents the identified codes and categories for study question 3, with the emergent theme that faculty engagement and support are necessary to implement Title IX successfully.

In addition, this transformation in faculty members' attitudes towards student parents contributes to a deeper cultural and organizational shift on campus that promotes equal educational opportunities for all students (Beeler, 2016).

Table 6

Study Question 3: Codes, Categories and Themes

Codes	Categories	Emerging Theme(s)
Faculty Request for Additional Title IX presentations	Campus Implementation	Faculty Engagement and Support are Necessary for Successful Title IX Implementation
Changes in Faculty perception	Faculty's Role in Title IX	
Faculty Involvement and Support		
Student Equity		
Importance of Title IX		
Impact and change in classroom policies		

When asked about the willingness of faculty members to implement Title IX provisions in their classrooms, Participant F remarked, "If faculty have the information, then they would be more willing to accommodate. If they don't know, it's easier to say yes or no." when approached by a student asking for academic accommodations. Participant B stated, "Yes, I mean if they don't get it, they're not going to be supportive of it. It is crucial and assuming they will do it, then yes, I mean if you don't know what you don't know, right." Many participants expressed that some faculty members might initially resist integrating the newly acquired information. They cited the propensity of some faculty members to reject new information and adopt a more pragmatic approach in their interactions with students and classroom practices. However, if faculty engagement was regarded as a campus-wide strategy, it had the potential to garner increased support and participation from faculty members.

When asked about the significance of Title IX training, participant A stated, "Oh, absolutely. I mean, I think it's important to understand what the student's rights are and what our job as faculty is to make the accommodations. And I think training is needed. I think it will help students make sure their rights are met for that." Hearing faculty participants' perspectives on implementing student-centered practices during the interview suggest that a significant number of participants in this study supported Title IX professional development to create educational equity for all students.

When discussing faculty role in implementing Title IX accommodations, participant E stated, "You want to include faculty; otherwise, you risk alienating them, which doesn't work." Other faculty members also shared the importance of involving faculty in the implementation of Title IX provisions and practices in the classroom. According to several participants, most of their Title IX knowledge came from previous student referrals to the DOS office and the

guidance provided at that time. Numerous people expressed the opinion that, despite the usefulness of the information and recommendations, the university as a whole should adopt and put them into practice.

Participant D's response to the question of whether the university should provide additional Title IX assistance to faculty was, "You can work on ways to educate them, but you can't force them." Citing some faculty members' predilection to decline to learn new information and taking a more pragmatic approach to their interactions with students and teaching.

Participant G shared, "It was pretty remarkable what [redacted], and your office is doing to support students. I got to see that in action last week, and it was great. But the knowledge, I mean, I didn't know that we even had this available to us prior to your presentation. Not changing or enhancing the services but the awareness of them."

When asked whether faculty engagement in Title IX professional development opportunities impacted student access to an equity education, participant F remarked, "My first reaction is to say I certainly hope so, because obviously, the more they know right, the better we're able to help people. And that is human nature, right? And I think that if faculty know the information, then they're willing to accommodate." This statement supports the notion that additional Title IX professional development could compel more faculty members to adopt and implement Title IX provisions in their classrooms when approached by a pregnant or parenting student seeking assistance.

One participant indicated they were unaware of the location of the lactation room in their office building when assessing the available options for students. If faculty members are unaware of all available resources, it is probable that students are also oblivious to them. Most participants were interested in scheduling future presentations for their department's entire

faculty. Several respondents expressed a desire for additional professional development opportunities, whether through Cornerstone or in-person faculty development.

Summary

The findings of this study demonstrated a notable shift in the faculty's participants understanding of Title IX following Title IX pregnant and parenting training. Results also revealed an increase in the frequency with which professors would implement Title IX accommodations in their classroom instruction. This survey also assessed the faculty's perceptions of the university's engagement with Title IX and implementation requirements. The findings revealed that faculty who participated in the study believed the university to be compliant, however, there was still a need for additional Title IX outreach and support. In addition, faculty responses endorsed the need for increased Title IX professional development opportunities for campus personnel. The fifth chapter will explore and interpret the study's findings. The implications of the findings on educational practices and equity will also be highlighted. Chapter 5 will also include recommendations for university instructional practices and future research and recommendations for higher educational leaders.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the enrollment of pregnant and parenting students increases, universities need to consider creating a supportive campus environment for these students (McNee, 2013). In addition, the transition to parenthood for a student is frequently exacerbated by the student's increased responsibilities and obligations (Roy et al., 2018). Some students also reported that their university's teaching pedagogies did not account for the additional challenges they faced daily as parents or the influence these circumstances had on their academic performance (Daly, 2011). These students' concerns illustrate the need to reevaluate the current faculty perception of pregnant students and their educational needs, as well as the institution's organizational learning structure overall (Beeler, 2016).

This study investigated the influence of faculty participation in Title IX professional development on their perceptions of pregnant and parenting students and their willingness to implement Title IX provisions in their classes. Furthermore, the study sought to demonstrate how faculty participation in Title IX professional development contributed to the campus' adherence to Title IX best practices and overall campus community support of pregnant and parenting students. Lastly, this study also examined the impact of participation in the Title IX professional development on faculty's perception of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students. Therefore, the following study questions were asked.

1. To what extent do faculty members understand their role under Title IX in providing reasonable academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students?
2. How engaged is the university towards implementing mandated Title IX regulations and adhering to best practices within the North Carolina State University System?

3. How does engaging in Title IX professional development affect faculty's perceptions of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students?

Summary of the Findings

According to the findings of this study, the intervention successfully fostered transformative learning among the faculty participants. Pre- and post-survey findings and subsequent interviews were used to compile the supporting data. Changes in response frequency after the intervention indicated that faculty were responsive to learning about Title IX and implementing this new knowledge in their classes. In addition, while the survey findings indicated that all faculty participants believed the institution was attempting to comply with Title IX, interview responses revealed that several faculty members believed the university could be doing more to comply.

Participants stressed the need for the university to take a campus-wide approach to increase Title IX knowledge and support. Several participants remarked that my work and advocacy through the Office of the Dean of Students demonstrated compliance. Outreach efforts could be expanded and supported by the entire faculty body and administration to ensure that the needs of pregnant and parenting students are being met and that faculty have adequate knowledge of Title IX and its provisions. In addition, this campus-wide engagement could help support and sustain a culture of compliance. According to the findings, this might be achieved by increasing Title IX professional development opportunities for all faculty members on campus.

In addition, the findings revealed that faculty members were interested in additional Title IX presentations and desired an active role in the accommodation process discussion. Numerous participants felt faculty participation in this process was vital, as they play a crucial role in providing accommodations. The participation and investment of faculty members promoted

academic and campus community involvement. Universities are attempting to improve the campus environment by providing opportunities for faculty members to learn and broaden their current pedagogical methods and perceptions about pregnant and parenting students. In addition, faculty investment in their academic community allows for increased support and change in the pursuit of creating a campus that is equitable for all students.

Interpretation of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate how faculty participation in Title IX professional development learning opportunities impacted pregnant and parenting students' access to an equitable education. It also examined how the faculty's role in implementing Title IX mandates in their classes was impacted by their perceptions of parenting students and their willingness to engage in further Title IX outreach. Faculty perceptions of how campus-wide engagement in Title IX initiatives impacts campus-wide support for pregnant and parenting students. The interpretation of the findings generated several presenting themes, which will be discussed in conjunction with the previously identified frameworks and study questions.

Study Question 1

The first study question asked to what extent do faculty members understand their role under Title IX in providing reasonable academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students? During the analysis of the collected data, the faculty's desire for additional Title IX guidance emerged as the most prominent theme. Aligned with this theme was the faculty's desire for clear Title IX guidelines and guidance regarding implementing accommodations for pregnant and parenting students. Several respondents mentioned that they would like to support their pregnant and parenting students but were concerned about the legal ramifications of Title IX. Some participants were concerned that they could be held liable for not correctly implementing

the academic accommodations because they were not fully aware of all the provisions and mandates outlined in Title IX. Other participants expressed feeling pressured to accept all academic accommodations requested for fear of being told they were not complying with Title IX mandates. Due to these concerns, participants expressed a desire for official university instructions on implementing the requested accommodations.

During their interview, participant D expressed reservations about faculty awareness of Title IX and their willingness to incorporate it into their cognitive thinking toward pregnant and parenting students. They stated, "It is going to take individual professors and administrators across campus to really start thinking about this. They really need to start thinking about this in a way that is helpful instead of thinking about this as an inconvenience for them and their classroom." This statement alludes to the transformative learning theory in which individuals are confronted with a "disorienting dilemma" that they must decide how to integrate into their pre-existing cognitive thought patterns and practices (Mezirow, 1991).

According to Mezirow (2000), the primary goal of adult learning is to facilitate the change of previously held beliefs and principles into a more extensive and adaptable line of thinking and understanding. This study's findings illustrate the transformational learning process and comprehension of faculty members through their desire to learn more about Title IX and how to integrate this knowledge into their daily educational practices.

As students' needs have evolved, it is necessary to examine organizational change from a faculty perspective to adapt to such changes (Guta, 2018). Developing a transformative learning culture that encourages individual development inside an organization fosters a supportive atmosphere for each individual (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). Campuses encourage faculty engagement and ownership of change by acknowledging faculty viewpoints on students'

educational needs and pedagogical strategies in the classroom (Daly, 2011). This change in faculty attitudes toward pregnant and parenting students leads to a meaningful cultural and organizational transformation on campus that promotes educational equality for all students (Beeler, 2016). This shift ultimately fosters an institutional culture that supports learning on several levels and satisfies the needs of all stakeholders, from pregnant and parenting students to their faculty (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016).

Study Question 2

The second study question asked how engaged is the university towards implementing mandated Title IX regulations and adhering to best practices within the North Carolina State University System? The central theme that emerged for the second question was that to provide best practices relating to Title IX; the institution should consider providing additional campus engagement and outreach opportunities to campus community members. Other faculty members expressed concerns about the academic integrity of their classes being jeopardized by potentially unreasonable course adjustments when asked to modify their course instruction for Title IX accommodations.

Additionally, they questioned how to address the expressed concern regarding providing reasonable academic accommodations to pregnant and parenting students while preserving the integrity of their curricula. Furthermore, several participants stated that having all faculty members participate, rather than just a few, would be the most effective way to increase campus awareness and engagement. One strategy for increasing faculty engagement was to involve faculty department chairs and directors. For example, participant D stated, "If you can get the faculty to the training or their department chairs or directors to allow you to come in and present, it will make a difference, but not if it's not put in front of them."

Participants' concerns about the university not being compliant with Title IX mandates could be related to the sense of discomfort or cognitive dissonance experienced by adult learners (Harmon-Jones, 2019). Due to the lack of clarification regarding specific Title IX provisions, some faculty members may experience discomfort or cognitive dissonance. If the university provided faculty members with opportunities to learn about Title IX, they might feel more at ease incorporating, accepting, and implementing Title IX practices in their daily practices.

There are four primary levels of organizational learning, each of which has facilitated organizational learning and change (Guta, 2018). Included are the individual, group, organizational, and inter-organizational levels. For example, faculty buy-in and support frequently depend on university acceptance and support. Therefore, learning objectives should reflect those of the institution and the requirements and purposes of the contributing faculty in their roles as educators (Daly, 2011). Moreover, organizational culture changes are seen more favorably and are more effective when all organizational levels are aware of the proposed modifications (Martin, 2015).

Study Question 3

Study question three asked how does engaging in Title IX professional development affect faculty's perceptions of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students? The pre- and post-survey responses supported the data gathered from the interview. Several participants indicated that Title IX professional development was beneficial and positively influenced several faculty members to include it in their classroom practices. Because universities' conceptual habits are frequently and historically preoccupied with the model of the conventional student, adopting the most recent and relevant educational practice can be difficult and potentially calls for the opportunity of engaging in campuswide professional development

opportunities. Many faculty members at this university may consider students to be typically young adults (aged 18 to 24) who have never been married (Cohen & Kisker, 2009; Rudolph, 1990; Thelin, 2011). As a result, many faculty members find themselves in a perplexing dilemma after being approached by a pregnant or parenting student. First, they have to determine the type of support required and appropriate for the student.

These instructors may experience their preconceived assumptions about students who are pregnant or new parents being challenged and must decide if they are willing to receive new knowledge (Illeris, 2014). This new knowledge, presented through Title IX-specific educational training, allowed instructors to align their attitudes toward pregnant and parenting students with Title IX recommendations. Once the faculty members processed and assimilated the new knowledge, they were inclined to include it in their instruction and classroom practices through the inclusion of Title IX information in their syllabus or Canvas sites.

This study assessed faculty members' preconceived notions about pregnant and parenting students and altered their thought patterns and practice while engaging Title IX to improve professional development and classroom practices. If faculty are given the opportunity to learn, adapt, and widen their perspectives on the learning needs of today's parenting students, the institution may see improved academic achievement (Ward & Selvester, 2012). The student's academic needs are ultimately addressed when faculty members acknowledge their students' parental status and make the necessary theoretical adjustments (Jeno et al., 2018).

Limitations

Throughout the course of this study, I encountered several limitations that had the potential to affect the study and its findings. One of my most significant limitations was the period during which the study was conducted and completed. Due to unforeseen circumstances, I

could not complete the study by the spring semester of 2022 as initially planned. It was determined that I would need to extend the study through the summer of 2022. Consequently, this extension reduced the number of available participants to complete the study. During the summer, many faculty members choose not to teach to pursue their research interests or take personal leave. This condition necessitated a condensed timeline in which I had to complete all three phases to capture as many potential faculty participants as possible before they were unavailable for follow-up.

In addition, viewing a prerecorded professional development may have hindered participants' capacity to assimilate Title IX knowledge and engage in a more in-depth discussion. Those who chose to participate in a face-to-face professional development session had the opportunity to engage in open discussion and interaction about Title IX. In addition, they were provided the opportunity to voice concerns and ask questions for more clarity and comprehension of Title IX. Another possible limitation was using a purposive sampling method when recruiting participants for this study. This method possibly limited the number of participants in this study. It might also have limited the data and findings of the study and not provided an accurate representation of all faculty at the university.

Implications for Findings in Practice

A study found that a student's overall college experience profoundly influenced their retention rate and their inclination to remain enrolled at their current university (Bean, 1982). According to several studies, adult students have a considerably more significant risk of dropping out of school before graduation than their peers. This attrition is frequently associated with increased parental duties (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Collaboration and participation

from several resource offices, as well as direct communication from students, are crucial to achieving better outcomes in student retention and academic accomplishment (Steinkamp, 2017).

Institutions could minimize adult learners' challenges while completing their degrees if they focused more attention on the barriers that make it difficult for these students to do so. For example, educational institutions can foster a culture of acceptance by establishing a dialogue about the most effective strategies to help pregnant and parenting students (Shavers, 2005). In addition, it is necessary to include parenting students and those with the potential to impact their educational experiences, such as faculty members and administrators, in the educational process (Steinkamp, 2017). Institutions could also enhance Title IX outreach and education and offer additional resources (Senander, 2004).

If the university developed a forum for pregnant and parenting students to discuss their experiences as parents, they would have the opportunity to become more visible and acknowledged on campus. Allowing parenting students this opportunity would allow them to feel more integrated into the university and community. It would demonstrate to these students that they are valued community members and create a space for them where they are often commonly excluded. In addition, pregnant students or parents who receive comprehensive assistance for their psychological health, academic concerns, and parental obligations are more likely to have higher academic success (Lovell, 2014).

Implications of Findings for Equity

As practitioners in the educational field, we frequently encounter students who experience educational disparities because of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background (McNee, 2013). On a systemic level, universities must recognize these disparities experienced by their underrepresented and disadvantaged students.

Underrepresented students will continue to suffer adverse consequences if institutions do not make it a priority to address the socioeconomic imbalances that exist.

Pregnant and parenting college students will continue to have a greater likelihood of attrition and withdrawal before completing their degree. There is a possibility that their academic performance in class will decline as a result, many students' satisfaction with their college experience may suffer significantly (Donohue & Wong, 1997). Once institutions prioritize recognizing and eliminating these obstacles, students from diverse backgrounds will have the potential to thrive (Brown & Nichols, 2012).

This decreased academic success can be linked to several factors, one of which is that these under-represented students often have reduced access or none to the campus's resources (Brown & Nichols, 2012). Many educational institutions fail to provide enough support and resources for pregnant and parenting students, a commonly underrepresented student demographic (Lindsay & Gillum, 2018). By providing parenting students with additional assistance on campus and access to more resources, educational institutions can eliminate some educational inequity concerns these students experience (Brown & Nichols, 2012).

This study identified a practice problem in which pregnant and parenting students frequently face educational inequity as a result of their parenting status and are frequently negatively impacted in their college progression and overall experience. By identifying and recognizing the circumstances that contributed to this disparity, the institution is taking the necessary steps to eliminate them and build an equitable campus for all students. Providing equitable educational policies and practices creates considerable opportunities for students and their communities and upholds their fundamental human right to an equitable and inclusive education (Riley et al., 2016).

Recommendations for Campus Leadership

The findings from this study highlight the need for changes in institutional practices and processes. Pregnant students stated that they faced increased pressure to drop out of school due to personal situations (Steinkamp, 2017). If the school designed and implemented additional protocols to accommodate pregnant and parenting students, perhaps many of these students would not be forced to withdraw due to their parental status. After the completion of the study, the findings, in conjunction with prior research, underlined the need for several changes to university policies surrounding pregnant and parenting students.

Additional academic barriers that pregnant and parenting students experience, such as financial constraints, have been identified due to faculty members' continued engagement in implementing Title IX provisions. Due to my work with pregnant and parenting students through this study, I was contacted by a group of faculty members working on a grant for childcare assistance that was available through the Department of Education. This grant would enable students to enroll their children at the university's on-site child development center on a sliding scale. Following the birth of their child, new parents typically encounter a range of financial pressures, ranging from healthcare expenses to daycare fees (Nichols et al., 2017). Students would receive subsidized evening childcare coverage through the grant, allowing them to participate in campus events or attend evening classes.

Due to the campus community's increased awareness of this financial barrier due to Title IX professional development, the university should consider establishing additional scholarships and grants for pregnant and parenting students. This funding would improve access to affordable, high-quality childcare for students who would otherwise have to withdraw from school.

Due to the unavailability of lactation spaces on their campuses, new mothers have expressed heightened concern about returning to school (Brown & Nichols, 2012). Although USC offers several lactation rooms that students can utilize, many students and staff members are unaware of the availability of this resource. Some of these Title IX provisions awareness could occur during student orientation events or through student email communication.

Additionally, instructors could be asked to include this information on their course syllabus or Canvas page. Another recommendation that some faculty members offered was to establish additional lactation spaces on the campus. Unfortunately, there are a limited number of lactation rooms on campus, and due to the dispersed nature of their locations, some students who have a tight schedule between classes may not be able to access them. Adding more lactation spaces would be a supportive step to address this issue.

Due to a lack of clarity among educational institutions on the interpretation of academic accommodations, there are still concerns surrounding how educational institutions and their faculty enforce Title IX in the classroom. This difficulty results from the lack of a widely accepted definition of academic accommodation (McNee, 2013). The university should define Title IX and clearly state what accounts for a reasonable accommodation to address this concern. In addition, instruction on implementing these accommodations should be provided to faculty members. With clearly established guidelines, there is little room for either misinterpretation or inconsistency in the subsequent implementation of those guidelines and standards.

Assuming the faculty remains motivated to continue obtaining new knowledge, modifying their instructional methodologies, and widening their perspectives on the educational needs of students, especially parenting students, there is a possibility that the overall academic performance of the institution will improve (Ward & Selvester, 2012). However, to develop a

genuinely supportive campus and be inclusive of all its students, universities must reframe their perception of the typical college student. In addition, they will need to prioritize providing additional support for these frequently marginalized students if they have access to educational equity.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the increasing number of parenting students, it would be in the university's best interest to conduct additional research to continue implementing best practices to support pregnant and parenting students (Roy et al., 2018). This study's findings promote continuing research into the factors influencing pregnant and parenting student's access to an equitable education. In addition, due to the limited number of participants in the initial study, it is recommended that this study be expanded to cover all university faculty members. This expansion would make it possible to capture a more accurate representation of the entire faculty body. In addition, it could help identify if any factors influence the understanding and acceptance of Title IX among faculty members in different departments of study. Finally, the findings of this study suggest that it would be advantageous for future research to include other key campus stakeholders, such as non-faculty staff members and administrators.

Another recommendation would be to extend the number of cycles or phases that were carried out while the action research study was being conducted. Because of this augmentation, it would be possible to carry out more in-depth research and evaluations to establish whether the participants in the study engaged in continuous learning. In addition, it would provide the opportunity to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the transformative influence of the intervention on the participants' instructional practices and viewpoints regarding pregnant or parenting students.

Additionally, universities should consider reviewing their existing procedures and working to implement additional sources of support and assistance to decrease the risk of Title IX complaints from students (Hope, 2019). A final recommendation is to consider expanding the scope of this study to include other UNC system universities. This research would comprehensively evaluate how the state system perceives pregnant and parenting students. In addition, the university could compare its current practices and instructional methodologies with those of other state schools. This research recommendation focuses on evaluating all institutions recognized by the North Carolina system. Ideally, the study outcomes would help identify and develop standard Title IX practices and policies at institutions throughout the state for pregnant and parenting college students.

Personal Leadership Development

When I think back to my first few classes in this program, I remember being concerned that I would not be able to find a topic or problem of practice that I was passionate about but, more importantly, could write and study about for the next three years. At the time, I was the chair of a student withdrawal committee and could easily collect data to conduct a study on attrition concerns. However, as a social worker and student advocate, I knew I wanted to work with a marginalized group that felt silenced and invisible. When I began this my doctoral journey, I was a single mother of two young children. I recall juggling a full-time job and being a present parent, all while working on school assignments until late at night after my children were in bed. It was challenging, but I had support from my parents, classmates, and program instructors. I soon realized that if I was having difficulties on occasion, it allowed me better to understand my students' challenges in their parenting.

While my original study plan would have been easier to complete, and I could have graduated with the rest of my cohort, I recognize that the delays I experienced were all part of the learning process. My journey, as stressful and humbling as it was at times, was where I experienced authentic growth and transformation, both personally and professionally. Even though I am the last of my original cohort to complete this dissertation journey, I recognize and value every step I have taken to get here. From climbing Manchu Picchu on a study abroad trip to presenting to upper leadership about campus engagement in Title IX initiatives, this journey has been transformative for me as a student and future leader. In addition, this journey has allowed me to advocate for our parenting students and to invite others to unite in creating a campus that is genuinely welcoming and inclusive to all students, especially our pregnant and parenting students.

Conclusion

"Too strong for a woman." This misogynistic statement became the catalyst for reforming women's rights in the workplace and the educational system. When Bernice Sandler, the main force behind the creation of Title IX, was told by a colleague that she came on too strong for a woman after being denied a faculty position at the University of Maryland, she recognized that this discrimination was not unique to her and was pervasive. Although the Fourteenth Amendment stipulates that all individuals have the right to equal protection under the law, when it was ratified, women were not provided the protection specified in the amendment (Busch & Thro, 2018). Through their hard work and dedication, Sandler and other pioneers of the Title IX movement were able to break down barriers that traditionally impeded female scholars. Through the implementation of Title IX, women have gained access to previously unavailable academic opportunities and resources.

Despite the implementation of Title IX in higher education, pregnant and parenting students are often overlooked or forgotten in this protection. The divide between pregnant and parenting students and their institutions directly impacts these students' academic progress (Lindsey & Gillum, 2018). Colleges and universities are seeing a rise in the diversity of their student populations in tandem with overall enrollment growth. Because of this increase, students' academic needs have become more evident, and universities will need to figure out how to meet these needs (Ward & Selvester, 2012). Recent studies indicate that pregnant students or parents who receive comprehensive assistance for their psychological health, academic concerns, and parental obligations are more likely to have higher academic success (Lovell, 2014).

Prior to the study, the university provided Title IX accommodations, but the institution did not have a Title IX procedure that was formally recognized. According to pregnant and parenting students at USC and their faculty, the lack of a formally recognized process frequently led to confusion and an inability to effectively implement accommodations. These students frequently expressed apprehension regarding their inability to locate support on campus and their reluctance to approach faculty members. Faculty members were also concerned that they did not know enough about Title IX to implement the requested academic accommodations without approval or direction from the institution. This study was prompted by systemic barriers that prevent pregnant and parenting students from receiving an equal education.

Specifically, this study identified and focused primarily on how faculty impacted or influenced the academic experiences of their parenting students. It was recognized that multiple campus entities and organizations are necessary for creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment. USC is working towards implementing a student-centered approach to developing and integrating modern teaching and learning strategies and policies as they relate to Title IX. In

doing so, it upholds the original intent of Title IX, which was to provide an inclusive and equitable educational environment for students who were routinely excluded and subjected to discrimination on the basis of their sex.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284
rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Stacy Stanford](#)
CC: [Crystal Chambers](#)
Date: 8/17/2021
Re: [UMCIRB 20-002155](#)
NARROWING THE EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY GAP

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 8/12/2021. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 1 & 2b.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
IRB Recruitment Script.docx(0.01)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Post training Survey.docx(0.01)	Surveys and Questionnaires
Pre training survey.docx(0.01)	Surveys and Questionnaires
Stanford proposal 2021 edit.docx(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Survey Consent Paragraph for Exempt Research (IRB).doc(0.01)	Consent Forms

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

You are being invited to participate in a **research** study titled “*NARROWING THE EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY GAP FOR PREGNANT AND PARENTING COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH FACULTY ENGAGEMENT*” being conducted by Stacy Stanford, a doctoral candidate at [redacted] in the Educational Leadership department. The goal is to survey 75 faculty members at [redacted]. Participants would be invited to complete a pre- and post-professional development survey. Each survey should only take 5-10 minutes to complete. Participants will also have the option to complete a 30-minute follow-up interview after completing the post-survey.

The purpose of this study is to examine how pregnant and parenting college students' access to an equal education is impacted by their faculty's perception of parenting students and their understanding of Title IX. In addition, this study will also assess to what extent the university is compliant with current Title IX mandates and best practices within the state university system. Lastly, this study also intends to examine the effect of participation in Title IX professional development on faculty's perception of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students.

It is hoped that this information will help us understand how faculty perception of pregnant and parenting students impacts their willingness to implement academic adjustments in the classroom and participate in future Title IX training.

Your responses will be kept confidential, and no data will be released or used with your identification attached. Your participation in the research is **voluntary**. You may choose not to answer any or all questions, and you may stop at any time. We **will not** be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study. There is **no penalty for not taking part** in this

research study. Please call Stacy Stanford at [redacted] for any research-related questions or the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at 252-744-2914 for questions about your rights as a research participant.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Date: _____ Location/Format: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interviewer: _____

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this study is to examine how pregnant and parenting college students' access to an equal education is impacted by their faculty's perception of parenting students and their understanding of Title IX. In addition, this study will also assess to what extent the university is compliant with current Title IX mandates and best practices within the state university system. Lastly, this study also intends to examine the effect of participation in Title IX training on faculty's perception of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you previously indicated a willingness to partake in a follow-up interview after the Pregnant and Parenting Title IX Accommodation presentation. Hopefully, the information captured in this interview will allow a better understanding of the relationship between the faculty's current perception and knowledge about pregnant and parenting students and how to best support this student population through faculty engagement. Your responses will be kept confidential, and no data will be released or used with your identification included.

This interview should take no longer than 30 - 45 minutes of your time, and you may choose not to answer any or all questions. Your participation in this interview is **voluntary**, and you may

stop at any time. We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study. There is **no penalty for not taking part** in this research study. If at any point after the interview you have questions, please contact me, Stacy Stanford, at [redacted] if your question is research-related, or you can call the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at (252)-744-2914 for questions about your rights as a research participant.

To facilitate this interview, I will be recording and transcribing our session through Microsoft Teams. This recording and transcription will be kept in a secured location and destroyed after the transcription and completion of the study.

Do you consent to this video recording? (If no, then end interview session and thank individual for their time; if yes, continue to next question.)

Do you have any questions before we begin? (If no, continue to demographic questions; if yes, answer questions accordingly and then continue to demographic questions.)

Participant Demographics :

Current Title/Position: _____

Associated Department: _____

How many years have you taught at the university? _____

What is your Race? _____

What is your Gender? _____

Interview Questions:

1. Prior to the Title IX professional development you attended, were you aware that Title IX provided recommendations on how to support pregnant and parenting students? If so, can you share to what extent that knowledge was?
2. As an instructor, has a student ever disclosed to you that they were pregnant? If so, did the student inquire about possible academic accommodations or campus resources?
3. As a follow-up to the previous question, can you share what your initial response was and whether you provided accommodations.
4. Have you ever experienced working with a parenting student and felt that additional guidance was needed? Accordingly, did you know which office on campus to contact?
5. If you will recall, the Office of Equity and Diversity collaborates with Disability Support Services and the Dean of Students to provide Title IX accommodations and support. Have you ever contacted one of these offices for additional Title IX guidance? If so, do you feel that you understand the referral process for granting Title IX accommodations?
6. Do you feel the university is taking the appropriate steps to implement best practices to support pregnant and parenting students? Why or why not? What if any could be improved?
7. Do you feel the university should provide more support to help faculty navigate student Title IX concerns? If so, what would this include?
8. Do you believe that faculty understanding of Title IX and participation in training impact pregnant and parenting students' access to an equitable education? If so, can you please elaborate?

9. What measures, if any, would you consider implementing to provide your students with Title IX information and resources? Some examples might be sharing a statement to your students about available resources or including this information on your syllabus.
10. In closing, I'd like to allow you the opportunity to share any additional thoughts you may have about the presentation.

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in my study, *NARROWING THE EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY GAP FOR PREGNANT AND PARENTING COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH FACULTY ENGAGEMENT*. Your time and responses are valuable. The information from this interview will help assess how the University can best support our pregnant and parenting students. The objective is that the information gathered will support the need for more on-campus faculty learning opportunities and instructors who adopt Title IX accommodations in their classes. Thank you for meeting with me and sharing how our institution can work towards implementing best practices relating to Title IX pregnant and parenting accommodations.

APPENDIX D: PRE -TITLE IX PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

Q1.

Please provide your name and a valid university Faculty email

Name

Email

Q2.

I am familiar with Title IX and the various academic accommodations that it recommends for pregnant and parenting students.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q3.

As an instructor, I have been approached by a student requesting Title IX accommodations.

Yes

No

Q4.

If you responded yes to the previous question, did you provide the requested accommodations?

Otherwise, skip to Question 5.

Yes

No

Q5.

I am not sure what constitutes appropriate academic adjustments when working with pregnant and parenting students who have requested Title IX accommodations.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q6.

Currently, I have included information in my courses about Title IX and pregnancy/parenting accommodations.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q7.

If a student discloses that they are pregnant, I know which office to refer them to for additional assistance and guidance for accommodations and campus support.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q8.

As an instructor, I know the appropriate offices to contact for questions about implementing Title IX accommodations in the classroom.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q9.

I feel that the university is adhering to Title IX Pregnant and Parenting mandates and implementing best practices on our campus.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q10. Being able to engage in Title IX professional development on academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students as an instructor may be beneficial in formulating classroom policies and practices.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

APPENDIX E: POST-TITLE IX PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

Q1.

Please provide your name and a valid university faculty email

Name

Email

Q2.

Following this presentation, I have a better understanding of Title IX and how students are covered underneath it related to Pregnancy and parenting concerns.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q3.

When working with pregnant and parenting students, I understand what constitutes reasonable academic accommodations, such as providing more time on class assignments.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q4.

I would be willing to provide resources/information about Title IX related to Pregnant/Parenting students in my course

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q5.

If a student requested Title IX accommodations, I would know where to direct them for assistance and resources.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q6.

I know that if I have any questions or need assistance with a Title IX issue, I should contact the Dean of Students Office or Disability Support Services.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q7.

Participating in Title IX professional development on academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students as an instructor could be beneficial in formulating classroom policies and practices.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q8.

As an instructor, I believe that the university adheres to Title IX Pregnant and Parenting mandates and implements best practices on our campus.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q9.

I would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

Yes

No

APPENDIX F: TITLE IX PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TITLE IX PREGNANCY AND PARENTING

WVU BOARD OF GOV.
WVU BOARD OF EDUCATION
WVU BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

CURRENT TITLE IX POLICY

- Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes pregnancy, parenting and all related conditions, in education and in programs and activities that receive federal funding.
- Title IX specifically prohibits discrimination against a student based on pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from any of these conditions.

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

- The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights pamphlet entitled [Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 \(PDF\)](#)
- This pamphlet includes strategies that can be used to address the educational needs of students who become pregnant or have children.

WHAT CURRENT RESEARCH TELLS US

Current research themes

- This population of students are underrepresented and experience a higher risk of attrition
- Decreased retention rates of these students
- Feeling unwelcomed or invisible on campus
- Students experiencing discrimination
- Significant Increase of enrollment of pregnant and parenting students
- Many are unaware that Title IX covers pregnant and parenting Students
- Need for additional support on Campus

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

- The educational inequity that many pregnant and parenting college students experience and how universities can better serve this demographic through increased campus support.

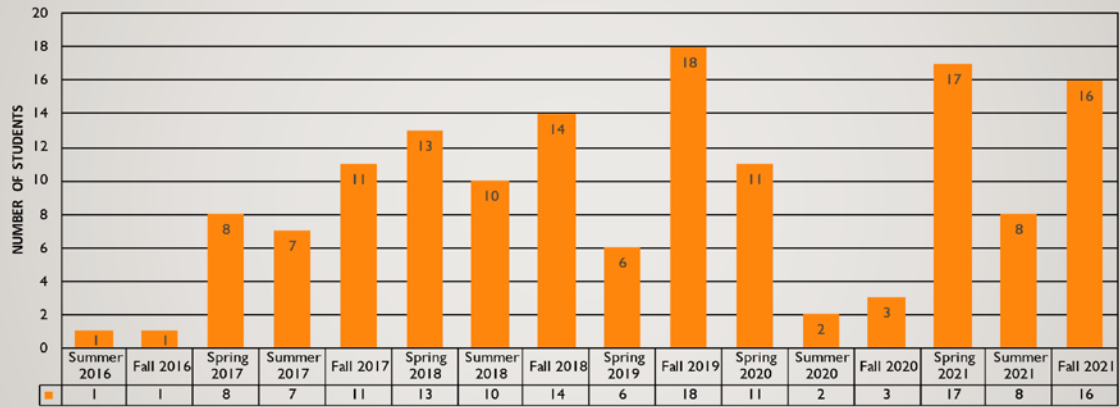
STUDY QUESTIONS

To what extent do faculty members understand their role under Title IX in providing reasonable academic accommodations for pregnant and parenting students?

How engaged is the university towards implementing mandated Title IX regulations and adhering to best practices within the North Carolina State University System?

How does engaging in Title IX professional development affect faculty's perceptions of and intended classroom practices with pregnant and parenting students?

PREGNANT/PARENTING STATISTICS



CURRENT PROCESS

Referrals to Dean of Students

Collaboration with Disability Support Services (DSS) and Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)

- DSS – Title IX accommodation Form
- OED - Concerns of discrimination
- DOS – Campus resources/student advocate

PREGNANT AND PARENTING RESOURCES

CAMPUS RESOURCES

- Academic Support
- Counseling Services
- Disability Support Services
- Dean of Students
- Lactation Rooms
- Office of Equity and Diversity
- Pirate Access
- Purple Pantry
- Student Health Services
- Student Treasure Chest
- Women and Gender Office

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Carolina Pregnancy Center
- Martin-Pitt County Partnership for Children (Smart Start program)
- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC-DHHS)

CAMPUS COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- Training and programming opportunities for faculty and staff
- Scholarship opportunities for students
- Increased campus awareness/support for pregnant and parenting students
- Additional childcare options
- Parenting resource donation center
- Student organization
- Family Friendly events
- Additional Lactation Spaces

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pregnant and Parenting Title IX Regulation
- Title IX Accommodation Letter through DSS
- Pregnant and Parenting Cornerstone Training
- Student Parenting Group
- Parenting Pantry

QUESTIONS

Contact Information

Stacy Stanford, MSW

Email:

[redacted]

Phone:

[Redacted]

APPENDIX G: PREGNANT AND PARENTING RESOURCES

Title IX protects pregnant and parenting individuals and requires equal access and equal participation for pregnant and parenting in educational programs and activities including work, clubs, sports, honor societies, student leadership opportunities and other activities. This university has many resources available to individuals who identify as pregnant or parenting.

This page has information and resources for all individuals on campus who identify as pregnant or have a pregnancy-related condition, followed by resources specifically for students and employees. Individuals can find information about the request process for accommodations as well as the complaint form for individuals who feel they have been discriminated against based on the basis of pregnancy.

Student Resources

Pregnant and parenting students can use the following resources to assist them.

- Academics - If students are experiencing any difficulties in their classes due to their pregnancy, they are encouraged to contact their faculty to discuss the possibility of setting up reasonable academic accommodations. Students may also wish to utilize the Pirate Academic Success Center (PASC) for additional academic support services. PASC is dedicated to fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment designed to help students achieve their academic goals. PASC works to provide equitable treatment of all students and fosters an inclusive environment for all students. Specific services include tutoring; digital tutoring services; peer academic

success coaching; study skills; learning communities; study groups; student employment; and community tutoring.

- Counseling Center - Some students may experience additional difficulties while balancing their dual role as parents and students. Students may experience difficulties as they transition into their parenting roles. Students have several options to address any psychological or adjustment concerns they are experiencing.

- *Counseling Center and Student Development (CCSD)*
- *Pass Clinic*
- *Family Therapy Clinic*

- Disability Support Services - Students experiencing any additional medical conditions related to their pregnancy may wish to contact DSS to discuss requesting reasonable academic accommodations through the Title IX accommodation process. Students should be prepared to present documentation from their medical provider as part of the intake process.

- Lactation Spaces

- There are multiple lactation rooms throughout campus available to use. The Women and Gender Office maintains a list identifying each of these spaces.

- Lactation Support Rooms

- Pirate Access - Students experiencing mobility issues related to their pregnancy are welcome to contact Pirate Access through the Transit Office.

- Purple Pantry - The Purple Pantry serves to increase access to food and hygiene items for students experiencing food insecurities.

- Student Health Services - Student Health Services provides reproductive and sexual health services to currently enrolled students. SHS offers pregnancy testing by appointment, or students can purchase at-home pregnancy tests through the pharmacy. Currently, SHS is unable to provide prenatal care, ultrasound, or obstetrical services. Providers can counsel regarding pregnancy options and refer students who need prenatal care to a local Ob/Gyn office.
- Student Treasure Chest - Students may contact the Dean of Students for additional information about The Student Treasure Chest. The Student Treasure Chest is a student-led, philanthropic fundraising organization supporting students who may need financial assistance.
- Women and Gender Office - The Women and Gender Office strives to cultivate a supportive, safe, and affirming environment for women, all genders, and gender equity allies in the community. Depending on availability, students may receive free prenatal vitamins as well as breast pump parts.

Available Community Resources

- Smart Start - Smart Start was created in 1993 as an innovative solution to a problem: Children were coming to school unprepared to learn. The Mission of Smart Start is to Advance a high quality, comprehensive, accountable system of care and education for each child beginning with a healthy birth.
- Martin-Pitt Partnership for Children – A non-profit in eastern North Carolina whose mission is to make meaningful and measurable investments in young children to enable them to achieve their fullest potential. The Martin-Pitt Partnership for

Children is proud to collaborate with families, childcare providers, early childhood educators and their students, local community organizations and nonprofits to achieve our vision of a bright future for every child in our community.

- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Childcare Subsidy
 - Parenting students may be eligible for a childcare subsidy. You may be eligible if any of the following apply to your situation:
 - you are working or are attempting to find work
 - you are in school or in a job training program (undergraduate students only)
 - your child is receiving child protective services
 - your child needs care to support child welfare services or if your family is experiencing a crisis
 - your child has developmental needs.

To Report Discrimination or Harassment Based on a Protected Class (including Pregnancy)

- Federal and state law and university policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, including pregnancy or pregnancy related condition. If you have questions, contact the Office for Equity and Diversity.
 - Report a Concern

