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## **A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference**

Laura Bryant

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Laura Bryant entitled "A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Educational Psychology.

Mitsunori Misawa, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Ralph Brockett, Dorian McCoy, and Keith Carver

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**A Narrative Inquiry on the Experiences of Title IX Coordinators  
in the Southeastern United States**

A Dissertation Presented for the  
Doctoral of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Laura Renée Bryant

May 2021

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## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to the Title IX Coordinators who took the time to participate in this research study and share your experiences with me. Without your willingness to share your experience, knowledge, and insights, this study would not have been possible. Thank you for taking a chance on me, and trusting me to listen, learn, and share your narratives with the world.

To my family and friends, thank you for believing in me and for supporting me in this journey. Thank you for being there to celebrate this accomplishment. Even though you may not have understood the process and the reasons behind my quest to complete this research, your support means more than you will even know. Thank you for continuing to check in on me, and cheer me forward on this journey. To my mom, Sara, my dad, Richard, my aunts and uncle, Peggy, Pat, and Ed. To Tom, my partner, and to Huck and Roan, the tiny people, to Atticus who my most loyal pup of over ten years, to Dr. Stoner, Ashley, Carman, Kelly, Anna, Lauren, and Lindsay– I am immensely grateful to you all. Your support, love, and friendship mean the world to me. To my cohort, the only folks who I think truly have understood this process – to Adam, Patricia, Nancy, Josie, Kathy, David, and Holley. To all the women who have gone before me and broken glass ceilings, you all are an inspiration to me. The lives you lived have inspired me to strive for more – my aunt, Nancy, my great-aunt, Bibby, to Ruth and Laverne my grandmothers, and Jane, Lidia, Elsie, and Bernice my great-aunts – these are the badass women who through their hard work, persistence, and achievements allowed me to believe that I too could achieve my goals with hard work, determination, and a bit (or a lot) of stubbornness.

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## **Abstract**

There is a lack of understanding about the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators in higher education. Title IX Coordinators are not only compliance officers; they are campus leaders positioned within the university's organizational structure with the authority to impact their institution around the issue of discrimination on the basis of sex. Currently, there is a lack of scholarly research about the experiences of Title IX Coordinators as they work to create and sustain living, learning, and working environments free from sexual misconduct. Therefore, the purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand the stories of Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. The research questions that guided this study were: 1) What are the stories of Title IX Coordinators that have brought them to their position as Title IX Coordinator? 2) What are the stories of the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators? 3) What are the shared stories of the learning experiences as they lead institutional Title IX compliance? This narrative inquiry focused on the experiences of seven Title IX Coordinators working at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. From the data analysis, four themes emerged: a) skillset and experience, b) evaluating the work, c) being human, and d) effective leadership. Each theme was addressed in detail through narrative excerpts from participant interviews. The study concluded with a discussion of implications for practice, policy, and research in the fields of higher education and adult learning.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

On June 23, 1972, President Nixon signed into law Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. 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” (1972). The foundations of Title IX can be traced to Civil Rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Its establishment followed the passage of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, which banned public school segregation; the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act which made discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin illegal in any program or activity receiving federal funding; and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act which prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin. While the Civil Rights Act and Title IV were enacted in 1964 to ban discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in federally funded organizations, it was not until Title IX passed in 1972 that discrimination on the basis of sex was outlawed in all federally private and publicly funded educational programs (Sandler, 2007). When issued, Title IX stated that discrimination on the basis of sex would not be tolerated, yet there was no guidance on how institutions should comply with the 37-word directive.

Immediately following the passage of Title IX, President Nixon ordered an update to the law so the legal language could be translated into details and procedures that clarified how Title IX would be upheld and enforced. Almost three years later, President Ford signed the update to Title IX, and on July 1, 1975, the updated Title IX guidance went into effect (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007). The 1975 guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education stipulated all institutions

of higher education were required to appoint a Title IX Coordinator to serve as the primary university employee responsible for Title IX compliance (U.S. Department of Education, 1975). Since 1975, the federal government has issued numerous updates to clarify how Title IX is interpreted and enforced. These updates have come as Supreme Court rulings that altered the interpretation of the law; “Dear Colleague” Letters that clarified the law; and, most recently, the 2020 Final Rule, issued by the U.S. Department of Education, updated the law with new Title IX regulations (2020). Title IX does not exist in isolation; there are multiple intersections between Title IX other pieces of federal legislation such as Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics of 1990 Act (Clery Act) and the Violence Against Women’s Act (VAWA), in which the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE) was embedded. As updates to Title IX have unfolded since 1972, the Title IX Coordinator’s role has become increasingly challenging for both the campus and the greater community to understand (Wiersma-Mosley & DiLoreto, 2018). This doctoral dissertation seeks to understand the experiences of Title IX Coordinators as they lead institutional compliance to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

The first chapter of this doctoral dissertation begins with a background of the study, which focuses on the foundations of higher education institutions, equal access to higher education, leadership, and the role of the Title IX Coordinator in higher education. This is followed by the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study for the practice of Title IX Coordinators, the field of adult learning, and higher education. Lastly, I will provide definition of terms, and the chapter concludes with an overview of the study.



## **Background of the Study**

Higher education institutions in the United States are organizations with rich cultural heritages, heavily influenced by Western European institutions of higher learning such as Oxford and Cambridge (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007). When first established in the American colonies, higher education focused on the teaching, learning, and the holistic development of men (Ashton, 1998; Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Thelin, 2011). Harvard, the first higher educational institution in the United States, was established in 1636 to engage and educate young men in a higher level of learning (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Quincy, 1860). The establishment of Harvard and other institutions thereafter such as William and Mary, Yale, and the College of Philadelphia provided a means by which gentlemen in the colonies could create structure and take seriously their commitment to study, learn, and maintain their Christian faith (Rudolph, 1962; Thelin, 2011). The men who attended higher education institutions represented a select percentage of the United States population who could afford to attend college, considered attending higher education important, and understood the value of both developing themselves and then disseminating learning to future generations (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Graham, 1978; Rudolph, 1962).

In 1837, when Oberlin College opened its doors, women were allowed to attend higher education with men (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Graham, 1978). With this, coeducation was established, meaning members of the opposite sex could come together to develop intellectual relationships and learn together (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007); however, coeducation was not without its critics. Those opposed to men and women learning together believed women were inferior to men intellectually, would suffer physical and emotional distress as they were not strong enough for advanced learning, and belonged in the home (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007;

Rudolph, 1962). Contrary to the liking of the critics of that time, women persisted in pursuing advanced degrees through higher education. Following Oberlin's lead, other colleges began to admit women, and women's only colleges such as Wesleyan Female College, Radcliffe, Barnard, and Evelyn proliferated (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Solomon, 1985). By 1870, women made up 21 percent of the total undergraduate population, and coeducational colleges outnumbered women's only institutions; by 1900, two-thirds of colleges and universities admitted both men and women, and by 1920, women made up 47 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment at 14 private and thirty public universities (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Graham, 1978). This time was an important period of change and growth in higher education as women claimed their place in higher education through their commitment to learning and growing through a higher level of learning that had once only been available to men.

**Equal access to higher education.** The 1954 Supreme Court ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education*, required all public education institutions to desegregate, and in 1956, the court extended the ruling to higher education via *Florida ex. rel. Hawkins v. Board of Control* (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). These Supreme Court cases were critical in paving the way for the Civil Rights Act, which passed in 1964 and further prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, and sex. It was in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in which the words "sex discrimination" were used for the first time; however, it was not until Title IX passed in 1972 as part of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that women, regardless of their minority status, were finally granted protections on the basis of their sex in education (Sandler, 2007). Since 1972, new legislation, increased federal guidance, and Civil Rights investigations have operationalized how Title IX is applied to educational programs to include the prevention and response to discrimination on the basis of sex. These activities

include athletics; science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education; access for pregnant and parenting students; and the prevention and response to sexual misconduct (National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, 2017). For the purposes of this study, I focused on the role of the Title IX Coordinator to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

For decades, sexual misconduct has been a public health and safety issue on university campuses. The most recent national data indicate that one-in-four to one-in-five women and one in 16 men experience attempted or completed sexual assault during their college careers, and those assaults rates are the highest among undergraduate females and students who identified as transgender, genderqueer, non-conforming, and questioning (Cantor, Fisher, Chibnall, Townsend, Lee, Bruce, & Thomas, 2015; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Krebs, Lindquist, Berzofsky, Shook-Sa, & Peterson, 2016; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007). Today we know more about the issues related to sexual misconduct than at any other point in history, yet the prevalence of sexual misconduct in higher education has not changed since the late 1950s (Cantor et al., 2015; Fisher, et al., 2000; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957; Koss et al., 1987; Krebs et al., 2016). The impact of sexual misconduct is far-reaching and can include devastating short-term and long-term physical, psychological, and academic effects on the victim, friends, relatives of the victim, and others who feel unsafe or fear victimization in their community (Vladutiu, Martin, & Macy, 2011). Sexual misconduct is not only a crime; it also interferes with the right that every member of the university community has to access education free of discrimination (Ali, 2011). Thus, the Title IX Coordinator has both an incredible challenge and opportunity to lead Title IX compliance at their respective institution to create policies, practices, and organizational structures to prevent and respond to this issue.

Higher education in the United States is over three hundred years old. No longer limited to private institutions that enroll only a finite number of white men born into an elite class, today, higher education is available to those with the resources and academic background required to attend the institution to which they apply. Presently, there are over 4,500 degree-granting institutions in the United States, including public, private, liberal arts, community colleges, and for-profit institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Those who attend higher education are educated by professionals who prepare them for the job market by developing their ability to solve real-world challenges with creative, collaborative, and diverse processes, including ethical reasoning and effective communication (Sutton, 2016). However, these institutions function not only to educate, prepare, and graduate students and to provide jobs to faculty and staff; they also serve as a valuable community resource with the potential to positively impact the health and lives of students, faculty, staff, and the greater community (Dooris, 2001; Stock, Milz, & Meier, 2010; Tsouros, 1998). If institutions fail to appoint a Title IX Coordinator with the ability to lead Title IX compliance, they will not be successful in meeting their requirement under Title IX to ensure students, faculty, and staff can equally access their educational rights and participate in educational activities both inside and outside of the classroom free from discrimination on the basis of sex.

**Leadership.** For thousands of years, leadership theories have been heavily researched and debated (Bass, 2008; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). While the word leader has existed in the English language since the fourteenth century, the word leadership was not utilized until the nineteenth century, when it appeared in texts about the politics and power of the British parliament (Stogdill, 1974; Stogdill & Bass, 1981). To date, there is not a widely accepted definition of leadership, as the term has myriad definitions, meanings, and

interpretations (Bass, 2008; Northouse, 2019; Rost, 1991; Stogdill, 1974). Stogdill's assessment of leadership remains as accurate today as it did in 1974, "there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it" (1974, p.7). While there is not an agreed upon definition of leadership, this has not thwarted the extensive study of leadership within the field of higher education.

***Leadership in higher education.*** As stated by Barnard (1946), "leaders lead" (p.17), and higher education leaders do so in an effort to positively impact the living, learning, and working environment across the institution. In higher education, formal leadership is highly structured through organizational charts and chains of command. The highest-ranking leader or executive officer, otherwise known as the president or chancellor, reports to the institution's governing board and maintains a close working and supervisory relationship with the provost, who serves over academic affairs, and chief financial officer, who oversees budgets and finance (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013; Pusser & Loss, 2008). Depending on the institution's reporting structure, the president may oversee other institutional leaders and administrators responsible for a variety of other areas which likely include student affairs, diversity, auxiliary services, facilities management, institutional compliance, and human resource (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Pusser & Loss, 2008). Higher education institutions are complex organizational structures with a variety of stakeholders; thus, serving in a leadership role at a university can have a variety of unique challenges and opportunities.

Higher education leaders should be able to practice leadership with an understanding and appreciation for the unique social ecology of their institution: the microsystem (immediate surroundings), mesosystem (the relationship between microsystems), exosystem (systems that do not directly impact the individuals), and macrosystem (the culture in which the individual is

situated) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Understanding the context in which one leads allows the leader to serve as the change agent and intentionally engage others in a group process to move from the present state to the desired state (Astin & Astin, 2000) by utilizing their strengths, gifts, and personal experiences to build capacity as they motivate, inspire, and work in tandem with others to achieve a common goal (Komives, Dugan., Owen., Wagner, Slack., & Associates, 2011). As illustrated above, leaders do not work in isolation; they work cooperatively with others both internal and external to the organization. Therefore, leaders must be able to stay attuned to the changing internal and external environment to ensure organizational goals and objectives are achieved.

***Four-frame model by Bolman and Deal.*** Regardless of where the leader is positioned within the organization, leaders must be able to navigate increasingly complex situations, such as the hierarchies found in work environments, and can benefit from utilizing various perspectives to understand challenges faced and operate efficiently (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Kezar, 2011; Thompson, Farmer, Beall, Evans, Melchert, Ross & Schmoll, 2008). One way for leaders to view the challenges they face more clearly and develop strategies to create effective solutions is by using the four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017). The four frames – structural, human resource, political, and symbolic – can provide a “prism or lens” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 44) through which leaders can evaluate the challenges faced and avoid siloed or single-frame thinking that could impede solving organizational challenges in new and innovate ways (Palmer & Dunford, 1996). Following is a brief overview of each of the four-frames, which illustrates how the four-frames can be utilized by leaders to view organizational challenges in different ways.

The structural frame is rooted in management science and sociology, as Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) were influenced by Frederick W. Taylor (1911) and Max Weber (1947) when developing this frame. Those who lead through the structural frame see the importance of setting clear directions, expectations, accountability structures and solving challenges through policies, rules, and/or restructuring (Bolman & Deal, 1991a/2017). The structures put into place by those who lead through this frame are done so as these leaders believe in order for an organization to be productive, followers must understand expectations and be held accountable. The structural frame is very different from the human resource frame, which is more focused on the individuals who make up the organization or the organizational human resources.

In their development of the human resource frame, Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) were heavily influenced by the theorists Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, and Chris Argyris (Bolman & Deal, 2017). These three theorists were instrumental in shifting the sole focus of management on organizational productivity and efficiency to management practices that value and are concerned with the individual people, or human resources, who make up an organization. Individuals who utilize the human resource frame value relationships and see the organization as an extended family (Bolman & Deal, 2017). These leaders seek to change the organization to meet individual needs, or they seek to change the individual to fit the organization (Bolman & Deal, 1991a). The human resource frame is very different from the political frame, a frame that is focused on negotiating with others to secure scarce resources needed for organizational success.

The political frame arose from the work of Richard Cyert and James March in their 1963 text *Behavioral Theory of the Firm*. Here, Cyert and March (1963) describe organizations as mechanisms that work to adjust conflict and implement decisions. According to Augier and March's (2008) analysis of Cyert and March's work, organizations are made up of individuals

and groups of individuals who have different goals. Leaders who are drawn to the political frame tend to focus their time on networking, coalition building, and negotiating between various interest groups for resources (Bolman & Deal, 1991a). Those who work within the realm of the political frame are aware of hidden agendas, limited resources, and the need for difficult choices to be made (Bolman & Deal, 2017). While political leaders seek to solve problems through networks, negotiation, and compromise, symbolic leaders work to create a shared vision and mission that followers can understand, get behind, and work towards enthusiastically.

The symbolic frame was heavily influenced by the work of Geert Hofstede, a researcher who published about the influence of national culture on the workplace (1984). A leader who utilizes the symbolic frame can motivate a team to understand and feel the significance of their work praise performance and celebrate successes, and can be instrumental in developing a team that “discovers its soul” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 277). While the symbolic frame can be “vague and elusive” (Shirbagi, 2007, p. 19), it can also inspire shared vision and culture that pushes the work of a team to new heights (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Symbolic leaders have an opportunity to build followership dedicated to the values and beliefs of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017). When followers feel they are a part of something greater than themselves and that the leader and team value their work and contributions, they, in turn, can feel increasingly significant and are proud to be a part of the organization.

The four frames are critical for leaders, especially leaders in higher education, to recognize and understand. Research in the higher education field has illustrated time and time again that those who can utilize multiple frames and adapt their leadership style to the specific situations and circumstances will be more successful (Bensimon, 1989; Bolman & Deal, 1991a; Bolman & Deal, 1992; Kezar, Eckel, Contreras-McGavin, & Quaye, 2008; McArdle, 2013;



Monahan & Shah, 2011; Scott, 1999; Tan, Hee, & Paiw, 2015; Thompson et al., 2008). Title IX Coordinators may find the use of the four-frames beneficial in aiding them to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct in higher education.

**Title IX Coordinator.** The Title IX Coordinator is the institutional employee tasked with Title IX oversight and compliance. They are in charge of preventing and responding to allegations of discrimination on the basis of sex to create a campus climate in which all students, faculty, and staff are supported (EverFi, 2019). Every higher education institution that receives federal funding has been required to employ a Title IX Coordinator since 1975; yet it was not until the release of the April 4, 2011 “Dear Colleague” Letter (2011 Letter) (Ali, 2011) that higher education institutions began to take seriously the federal requirement to designate at least one employee to coordinate Title IX compliance inside and outside of the classroom (June, 2014). The 2011 Letter reiterated and clarified that every institution that receives federal funding is obligated to appoint a Title IX Coordinator to serve as the leading sex discrimination expert; oversee Title IX complaints and investigations; ensure compliance with federal mandates; protect the rights of students, faculty, staff; and protect the institution at which they are employed from grievances, undesirable publicity, and legal implications (Ali, 2011). On April 24, 2015, the U.S. Department of Justice released further guidance on the Title IX Coordinator role in another “Dear Colleague” Letter (2015 Letter) on Title IX Coordinators (Lhamon, 2015). The 2015 Letter (Lhamon, 2015) sought to remind and clarify the responsibility that higher education institutions have to designate a Title IX Coordinator with the knowledge, visibility, and authority to coordinate institutional Title IX compliance.

Following the release of the 2011 and 2015 Letters, Title IX Coordinator positions became one of the fastest growing roles in higher education (Block, 2015). In 2015, the

Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) surveyed more than 400 higher education institutions to understand more about how higher education institutions at which they were employed were complying with Title IX mandates (Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, Swinton, & Van Brunt, 2015). The survey revealed that 70 percent of Title IX Coordinators had been assigned to serve in the Title IX Coordinator roles as an additional duty to their primary institutional role. Current staff being assigned Title IX Coordinator duties were also working in the areas of human resources, diversity/equity/inclusion, student affairs, academic affairs, and disability services (Sokolow, et al., 2015). As Title IX Coordinators are positioned across various areas of their institution, the ways in which Title IX Coordinators execute Title IX mandates through resource allocation and reporting structures also varies.

There is not a mandate about where the Title IX Coordinator should be positioned organizationally within their institution of higher education. Similarly, there is no standardized requirement about the educational credentials or training credentials that the Title IX Coordinator must possess prior to being hired for the role. Thus, Title IX Coordinators represent a diversity of educational backgrounds including master's degrees, Juris Doctors, Doctor of Philosophy, and bachelor's degrees (Kelly, 2019; Wiersma-Mosley & DiLoreto, 2018). Regardless of where the Title IX Coordinator is positioned organizationally or the educational background of those serving in the role, Title IX Coordinators must be able to lead their institution, as well as continue their growth and learning as professionals to create and maintain an environment free from sex discrimination on their campus.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Title IX Coordinator role has become increasingly political, complicated, and scrutinized due to new legislation, increased federal guidance, and Civil Rights investigations.

Since the 2011 Letter was issued, the Office for Civil Rights has conducted 502 investigations of higher education institutions for possibly mishandling their responsibilities under Title IX (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2021). The problem lies in the lack of research about the ways in which Title IX Coordinators lead Title IX compliance to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct in higher education. The Title IX Coordinator position has been described as one in which the employee lives in “a constant state of uncertainty, in which new federal guidance, state laws, or court filings could abruptly upend the status quo” (Brown, 2019, p.12). Title IX Coordinators are not only compliance officers; they are campus leaders, positioned within the university’s organizational structure with authority to impact their institution around the issue of discrimination on the basis of sex.

There have been studies and doctoral dissertations which have sought to understand better the challenges, professional experiences, and competencies of Title IX Coordinators (Paul, 2016 ; Woulfe, Christenson, Tombari, Schlesinger, Birnbaum, 2018); Title IX Coordinator roles (Wiersma-Mosley & DiLoreto, 2018); Title IX Coordinator position definition, organizational positioning, and qualifications (Weber, 2016); institutional challenges in implementing Title IX (Cantalupo, 2014; Weis, 2015); best practices in preventing Title IX related issues (Banyard, 2014; DeGue, Valle, Holt, Massetti, Matjasko, & Tharp, 2014); training Title IX Coordinators (Watson, 2017). In addition, studies have been conducted to understand leadership in higher education through the four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (2017) about those who serve as university presidents (Bensimon, 1989; Bensimon, 1990; Bolman & Deal, 1991a; Kezar et al., 2008; Parry & Horton, 1998), community college leaders (McArdle, 2013), college deans (Merz, 2003), intercollegiate athletic leaders (Scott, 1999), and international higher education leaders (Tan, Hee, & Paiw, 2015). While these studies have provided insight into the Title IX

Coordinator role as well as the way in which the four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (2017) can be applied in higher education, no study has sought to understand how Title IX Coordinators lead their institutions in Title IX compliance through the lenses of the four-frame model.

Additionally, there is a lack of scholarly research about the experiences of Title IX Coordinators as they work to create and sustain living, learning, and working environments free from sexual misconduct. Therefore, this doctoral dissertation sought to understand the stories of Title IX Coordinators who lead Title IX compliance at public, Research 1: Doctoral University in the Southeastern United States.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand the stories of Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. The research questions guided this study were:

- 1) What are the stories of Title IX Coordinators that have brought them to their position as Title IX Coordinator?
- 2) What are the stories of the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators?
- 3) What are the shared stories of the learning experiences as they lead institutional Title IX compliance?

### **Significance of The Study**

This study contributes to the practice in the fields of higher education and adult learning. Through this study, policymakers, higher education stakeholders, and adult learning professionals can begin to understand the experiences of Title IX Coordinators working in higher education to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. A greater understanding of Title IX

Coordinators' experiences, practices, policies, and research can be improved and/or expanded upon to benefit the field of Title IX coordination as a whole.

First, this study contributes to higher education research by revealing how Title IX Coordinators utilize the lenses of Bolman and Deal's (1991a/2017) four-frame model to develop and implement strategies and tactics to aid them in overcoming obstacles they face in their respective roles. The insights from this study will benefit those who are serving in the role and those in the higher institution community at large as it allows for the reader to gain a greater understanding of what it means to lead Title IX compliance at a public, Research 1: Doctoral University in the Southeastern United States. Additionally, this study adds to the scholarly literature regarding the multi-faceted and dynamic role of those who lead Title IX compliance. Title IX Coordinators and campus administrators can learn what has been vital in preparing Title IX Coordinators for their positions; strategies that can be adapted and utilized at another higher education institution; and the experiences that have aided in Title IX Coordinators in being successful in their roles.

Next, Title IX Coordinators are not only responsible for leading Title IX compliance; they are also learners and educators. As such, this study is significant as it contributes to the field of adult learning. This study provides those who serve as Title IX Coordinators or supervise the role to understand the importance of providing Title IX Coordinators with the resources to grow and develop in the role and the collective institutional obligation to educate the campus community about protections under Title IX. Title IX Coordinators must continually learn to maintain current knowledge on Title IX regulations, state and local policies that impact their work. Additionally, they must continually discern and develop programs and training opportunities to impact the context of the environment, which is in a constant state of flux

politically, economically, and socially (Caffarella & Daffron, 2012). Therefore, as Title IX Coordinators learn about the changes in Title IX policy and accountability structures, they must take what they have learned, update policies and practices as necessary.

As the Title IX Coordinators represent a diversity of educational backgrounds (Kelly, 2019; Wiersma-Mosley & DiLoreto, 2018), they may lack knowledge and understanding of principles, models, and strategies of adult learning. This study is significant as it frames Title IX Coordinators' opportunities to learn and grow professionally and educate their respective campus community through a model of adult learning andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). Expanding their knowledge of adult learning principles, practices, and theories such as andragogy can allow for refinement of institutional approaches to provide campus-wide education that meets the learning needs of adults that are meaningful, engaging, effective, and practical. Therefore, this study is significant as it illuminates the opportunity for Title IX Coordinators to expand their understanding of adult learning as it can be applied to the field of Title IX coordination via partnerships with adult learning professionals and/or in advocating for hiring a training specialist to work with the Title IX Coordinator to develop training programs that meet the needs of their respective community.

Finally, this study is significant as it illuminates how frequently and abruptly federal Title IX policy changes occur and how quickly Title IX Coordinators must adjust their policies, procedures, and practices to become compliant with federal regulations. As President Biden is now in the White House and Miguel Cordona has been confirmed as the Secretary of Education, federal Title IX guidance will again change. Therefore, policymakers should note the ripple effects caused by previous updates to Title IX and how these changes to Title IX policy without funding or resources quickly overload and exhaust institutional resources. If and when Title IX

is again revised, the federal government should take the time to create supplemental resources, toolkits, and funding opportunities to support institutions of higher education in their transition to new regulations.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (Campus SaVE):* Campus SaVE updated the Clery Act through the Violence Against Women Act amendments to the Clery Act to include reporting, response, and prevention education requirements (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

*Clery Act:* The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics of 1990 Act (Clery Act) amended the federal financial aid laws to require all institutions of higher education to disclose campus crime statistics and security information, support victims of violence, and publicly outline the policies and procedures that have been implemented to improve campus safety (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

*“Dear Colleague” Letter:* A non-binding guidance policy statement document issued by a federal agency that is meant to aid in explaining and interpreting existing laws and regulations (Reese, 2016).

*Office for Civil Rights:* A United States governmental entity accountable to the Department of Education and responsible for enforcing non-discrimination regulations that apply to programs, services, and activities receiving Health and Human Services Federal financial assistance (Office for Civil Rights, 2020). The mission of the Office for Civil Rights is to “ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation through vigorous enforcement of Civil Rights” (Office for Civil Rights, 2018, para. 1). To accomplish its mission, the Office for Civil Rights provides technical assistance and clarification

for institutions on Title IX compliance through federal regulations, guidance documents, and “Dear Colleague” letters (Galles, 2010; Office for Civil Rights, 2018).

*Research 1: Doctoral University (RIDU):* A category designated by the Carnegie Commission. R1: Doctoral Universities are defined as having very high research activity, meaning that the institution has awarded at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees and had at a minimum \$5 million in research expenditures (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2019a).

*Sex Discrimination:* Discrimination covered under Title IX includes the failure to provide equal opportunity in athletics; college admissions; faculty hiring, sexual harassment, and unequal treatment of pregnant or parenting students and discrimination based on pregnancy (Rose, 2015).

*Sexual Harassment:* Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination covered by Title IX in which a school employee, student, or third party is engaged (U.S. Department of Education, 2001, p. 2). Sexual harassment is defined broadly to include any of three types of misconduct on the basis of sex, all of which compromise the equal access to education that Title IX is designed to protect: any instance of quid pro quo harassment by a school's employee; any unwelcome conduct that a reasonable person would find so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it denies a person equal educational access; or, any instance of sexual assault (as defined in the Clery Act) as dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking as defined in the Violence Against Women Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Examples of sexual harassment can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature” (U.S. Department of Education, 2001, p.2).



*Sexual Misconduct:* Forms of sex discrimination inclusive of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking (Jackson, 2017). For the purposes of this study, sexual misconduct will be inclusive of sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual violence.

*Southeastern United States:* For the purposes of this study the Southeastern United States are the schools in the Southeastern Conference (SEC) and the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). The *Southeastern Conference (SEC)* was established in 1933 to provide leadership on issues facing intercollegiate competition. The SEC comprises fourteen-member schools: University of Alabama, University of Arkansas, Auburn University, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, Louisiana State University, University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, University of Missouri, University of South Carolina, University of Tennessee, Texas A&M University, and Vanderbilt University (Southeastern Conference, 2018). The *Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC)* was established in 1953 when seven members of the SEC moved to create their own conference (Martin, 1999). The ACC has fifteen-member institutions: Boston College, Clemson University, Duke University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Florida State University, North Carolina State University, Syracuse University, the University of Louisville, the University of Miami, the University of North Carolina, the University of Notre Dame, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Virginia, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and Wake Forest University (Atlantic Coast Conference, 2020).

*Title IX:* Title IX protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance. Title IX protections apply to students, employees, third parties, and those who have applied for admission or employment at

the institution (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Title IX is enforced through the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, 2020).

*Title IX Compliance:* Title IX compliance is the way in which higher education institutions comply with requirements under Title IX. These requirements include appointing a designated Title IX Coordinator, notifying students and employees of their name and contact information, and providing a published notice of strong non-discrimination policies and grievance procedures that alert employees and students that sexual harassment is not tolerated. Violations must also be handled through a prompt and equitable resolution process (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

*Title IX Coordinator:* The Title IX Coordinator is the institutional employee responsible for ensuring institutional compliance with Title IX and serves as the resource for students, parents or guardians, employees, and applicants for admission and employment regarding their rights under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for policy development and implementation; managing Title IX investigations; and coordinating education, training, and prevention efforts for students, faculty, and staff. The Title IX Coordinator must be a full-time employee, be independent to avoid conflicts of interest, have support from institutional administration, be visible to the campus community, and receive adequate training to do their jobs (Lhamon, 2015).

*Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA):* VAWA is a part of the federal crime bill that addressed women's physical and sexual safety and provided funds and services for victims and training for officers. VAWA passed and was reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and in 2013. Currently, VAWA is expired. (Rueb & Chokski, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

## **Study Overview**

Chapter One presented an introduction to the study of the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. The background of the study provided an overview of the historical and current context of higher education, leadership, and the role of the Title IX Coordinator in higher education. The statement of the problem and purpose of the study sections explained the specific need for this study and what the study aims to accomplish, specifically a better understanding of the experiences of Title IX Coordinators as they lead their institutions in Title IX compliance. The chapter concluded with a section on the potential significance of the study as related to higher education practice, research, and the field of adult learning, and a definition of terms. Chapter Two will provide a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to this study to aid the reader in understanding the complexities of leading Title IX coordination in higher education through an in-depth review of the history of higher education in the United States; research about the prevalence of sexual misconduct in higher education; a review of the evolution of Title IX, beginning with the Civil Rights movements; and a chronological review of the literature regarding leadership in higher education. As the literature on leadership is expansive, this review will not be exhaustive but instead will focus on four leadership theories that are significant to higher education. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a review of the four-frame theory by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) within the context of higher education and Title IX coordination. Chapter Three will explain how narrative inquiry, the qualitative methodology, was utilized in this study in interviews with seven study participants. Chapter Four will present study themes: skillset and experience, evaluating the work, being human, and effective leadership. Chapter Five will conclude the study with a discussion of the findings and implications for practice, policy, and future research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of the Literature**

For decades, sexual misconduct has been a public health and safety issue on university campuses. Today, we know more about the issues related to sexual misconduct than at any other point in history, yet the prevalence of sexual misconduct in higher education has not changed since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Cantor et al., 2015; Fisher et al., 2000; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957; Koss et al., 1987; Krebs et al., 2016). The Title IX Coordinator is the institutional employee tasked with preventing and responding to sexual misconduct in higher education, and their work has become increasingly political, complicated, and scrutinized due to new legislation, increased federal guidance, and Civil Rights investigations. The previous chapter presented an overview of background information and set the context for this doctoral dissertation through an introduction of the gap in the literature, the research problem, and the research questions. The chapter indicated that while there are a number of studies about the experience of leaders in higher education, there has yet to be a study that examines the narratives or stories of Title IX Coordinators' leadership experiences as they work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to this study to aid the reader in understanding the complexities of leading Title IX coordination in higher education. First, I share an in-depth review of the history of higher education with an emphasis on the transition from male-only education to coeducation that took place 200 years after higher education was established in the United States. Second, I review the evolution of Title IX, beginning with the Civil Rights movements and ending with the present day. This exploration of Title IX will include the establishment, implementation, and enforcement of Title IX as the law

has been influenced through political changes and shifts. Third, I provide an in-depth examination of the research about the prevalence of sexual misconduct in higher education beginning with the first prevalence study about sexual misconduct in higher education, which was conducted in 1957. Fourth, I explore adult learning and the six assumptions of andragogy as a model that can be applied to the role of Title IX Coordinator. Fifth, I provide a chronological review of the higher education leadership literature, focusing on trait, behavioral, contingency, and situational leadership theories that have been developed and updated since the beginning of the twentieth century. As the literature on leadership is expansive, this review will not be exhaustive but instead will focus on these four major leadership theories as they are significant to the field of higher education. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of the four-frame theory by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) within the context of higher education and Title IX coordination.

### **History of Higher Education in the United States**

Higher education institutions in the United States are organizations with rich cultural heritages, heavily influenced by Western European institutions of higher learning such as Oxford and Cambridge (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007). First established in the American colonies, higher education focused on the teaching, learning, and holistic development of men (Ashton, 1998; Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Thelin, 2011). Harvard, the first higher educational institution in the United States, was established in 1636 to engage and educate young men in a higher level of study and learning (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Quincy, 1860). The establishment of Harvard and other institutions thereafter such as William and Mary, Yale, and the College of Philadelphia, provided a means by which gentlemen in the colonies could create structure and take seriously their commitment to study, learn, and maintain their Christian faith

(Rudolph, 1962; Thelin, 2011). The men who attended higher education institutions represented a select percentage of the United States population who could afford to attend college, considered attending higher education important, and understood the value of both developing themselves and then disseminating learning to future generations (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Graham, 1978; Rudolph, 1962). It was not until 1837, when Oberlin College opened its doors, that women were allowed to attend college with men (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Graham, 1978). With this, coeducation began, and men and women came together to develop collegial relationships in which they could learn and grow together inside and outside of the classroom.

**Coeducation.** Coeducation was met with opposition, and those critical of men and women learning together believed women were inferior to men intellectually; women would suffer physical and emotional distress, as they were not strong enough for advanced learning; and that a woman's place was in the home (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Rudolph, 1962). Contrary to opponents of the time, coeducation continued and women persisted in pursuing advanced degrees through higher education. Following the lead of Oberlin College, other colleges began to admit women, and women's only colleges such as Wesleyan Female College, Radcliffe, Barnard, and Evelyn were established (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Solomon, 1985). By 1870, women made up 21 percent of the total undergraduate population, and coeducational colleges outnumbered women's only institutions. When the University of Chicago was founded as a coeducational institution in 1892, a male administrator, who was a proponent of coeducation, stated coeducation benefited all members of the institution as "the young women refine and keep pure the young men; the young men make more sensible and thoughtful the young women; and the action and the reaction are alike good" (Crawford, 1905 as cited in Watson, 1977, p. 138). By 1900, two-thirds of colleges and universities were coeducational; in 1920, women made up 47

percent of the total undergraduate enrollment at 14 private and 30 public universities (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007; Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Graham, 1978), and by 1924, almost 75 percent of undergraduates studied at coeducational institutions (Goldin & Katz, 2011). Today, the vast majority of students enrolled in higher education in the United States study at a coeducational institution.

**In loco parentis.** In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the number of women in higher education in the United States continued to increase. This resulted in deans of women being hired to advise, counsel, protect, and to ensure women and men would keep their distance from each other (Schwartz, 1997). Deans of women served in higher education until their roles were systematically eliminated and transitioned out of higher education following the end of World War II (Parker, 2015). Deans of women, and later, deans of men or the dean of students, were the university administrators tasked for serving *in loco parentis* (Latin for “in the place of a parent”). *In loco parentis* refers to a “legal relationship in which a temporary guardian or caretaker of a child takes on all or some of the responsibilities of a parent” (Garner, 2009, p. 858). Rooted in English common law, *in loco parentis* was first applied to higher education by Blackstone:

The father may also delegate part of his parental authority, during his life, to the tutor or schoolmaster of his child; who is then *in loco parentis*, and has such a portion of the power of the parent committed to his charge, viz. that of restraint and correction, as may be necessary to answer the purposes for which he is employed. (1765, p. 413)

In the United States, *in loco parentis* policies maintained both public and private higher education institutions possessed the ability to regulate all aspects of students’ behavior beyond academics without due process, as educational institutions assumed complete parental authority over a student’s life (Kaplin & Lee, 2007; Lee, 2011). According to Lansley (2004), *in loco*

*parentis* policies were in place to “keep women respectable... responsible ... and to limit opportunities for sexual contact between men and college women on and off campus” (p. 109). Not only did *in loco parentis* policies put in place restrictions such as curfews and same-sexed housing, but these policies also limited students’ freedom to speak, demonstrate, and organize around ideas that were incongruent with the institutional views and beliefs.

*In loco parentis* remained in effect in United States higher education until the 1960s when it was challenged through the United States legal system. One of the contributors to the downfall of *in loco parentis* was the 1961 case *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education*. This case was brought to the Fifth Circuit Court following the expulsion of six African American students from Alabama State College, without due process, for participating in a civil rights demonstration in Montgomery, Alabama (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). In the case, the plaintiff argued that the expulsions violated the student’s equal protection rights as guaranteed under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the United States Constitution (Edwards, 1994; Kaplin & Lee, 2007). The courts ruled the college indeed violated the student’s constitutional rights, thus setting in motion the downfall of *in loco parentis* (Lee, 2011). With the fall of *in loco parentis*, many of the restrictions to student social life such as curfews for women, the prohibition of off campus living, and single-sex on campus housing ended (Goldin & Katz, 2011). Just as the Civil rights movements were providing an avenue for the end of *in loco parentis*, the foundations of Title IX were being established in both the K-12 and higher education systems of education.

### **The Evolution of Title IX**

Through the 1954 ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* and 1956 *Florida ex. rel. Hawkins v. Board of Control* Supreme Court cases, K-12 and higher education institutions were required to desegregate respectively (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). On July 2, 1964, the Civil Rights



Act was signed into law by President Johnson, and Title VII of this Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, and sex in employment (Block, 2012; Women’s Educational Equity Act [WEEA] Resource Center, 1997). While Title VII of the Civil Rights Act banned discrimination in employment, Title VII did not apply to educational institutions (Ware, 2014). It would take eight years before Title IX would be established under the educational amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965.

When President Johnson signed the Higher Education Act into law on November 8, 1965, it was the first-time federal funding was provided to help low-income, underserved individuals gain access to higher education (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007). The Higher Education Act of 1965 is an authorizing statute; therefore, it is reassessed and reauthorized periodically to ensure it continues to meet the demands of an ever-changing “social, demographic, and market forces that affect higher education” to ensure the law continues to meet what it was meant to accomplish (Brown, 2016, p.3), and it was through the amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1972 that Title IX was enacted into law. Historians postulate the majority of those in Congress who voted in favor of the 1972 Higher Education Amendments did not read nor understand Title IX and the future implications and impact it would have on education (Ware, 2014). Title IX, a mere 37-word clause, was overshadowed by the establishment of the Basic Education Opportunity Grants through the 1972 amendments, which were later renamed Pell Grants (Umbricht, 2016). The following section provides a review of the evolution of Title IX from the date it was signed into law June 23, 1972, through 2020.

**Title IX: The Early Years (1972-1979).** On June 23, 1972, Title IX was signed into law by President Nixon as part of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Under Title IX, women, regardless of their minority status, were finally granted protections in education

on the basis of their sex (Sandler, 2007). Title IX (1972) 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.” Shortly after Title IX was enacted, President Nixon ordered the legal language of Title IX to be translated into details and procedures that outlined how Title IX would be enforced (Ware, 2014). Approximately three years later, on May 27, 1975, President Ford approved the first Title IX regulations (Valentin, 1997). Higher education institutions were given three years to comply with the 1975 regulations which stipulated that every educational institution that receives federal funds must designate a Title IX Coordinator to oversee Title IX compliance and investigate complaints of sex discrimination (Busch & Thro, 2018; National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, 2017; WEEA Resource Center, 1997). By 1979, the Circuit Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court of the United States, and Office for Civil Rights, established by President Carter under the Department of Education, were deemed the means by which Title IX mandates would be clarified and held accountable (Busch & Thro, 2018). While the 1975 regulations put into place a structure for Title IX compliance, there was no way for anyone to comprehend the challenges, interpretations, and changes that would come through court rulings, legal proceedings, and updated guidance that would update Title IX. These updates that followed the 1975 regulations have greatly impacted higher education institutions as they have detailed that under Title IX they are held responsible for responding to and reducing discrimination on the basis of sex does not exist.

**Updates to Title IX (1980-2010).** The first accountability test to Title IX came in 1980 through the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in the case *Alexander v. Yale University* (Strader & Williams-Cunningham, 2017). In this case, a college student alleged they were sexually harassed

by a male faculty member and argued that sexual harassment was a violation of Title IX (Bolger, 2015; Busch & Thro, 2018; Strader & Williams-Cunningham, 2017). While the plaintiff lost the case, it set the stage for future allegations of sexual harassment to be brought to court under the umbrella of Title IX (Bolger, 2015; Busch & Thro, 2018). Following the *Alexander v. Yale University* ruling, the Office for Civil Rights established that sexual harassment was indeed prohibited by Title IX (Lieberwitz, Jaleel, Kelleher, Scott, Young, Reichman, Runyan, & Levy, 2016). In 1982, another update to Title IX came following the Supreme Court ruling in *North Haven Board of Education v. Bell*. In this case, the court decided that, in addition to students, teachers and employees working in federally funded educational institutions were also protected under Title IX (Busch & Thro, 2018), thus, establishing that educational rights are rights to that individuals have to both learn and work free from discrimination on the basis of sex. The next interpretation of Title IX came through the 1992 Supreme Court ruling on *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools*. This ruling established that monetary damages could be granted to victims of sex discrimination under Title IX (Busch & Thro, 2018). It was proven that Gwinnett County Public Schools were aware of the sexual misconduct by a teacher against a student and did nothing to stop it from occurring (Block, 2012). By awarding the student monetary compensation, *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* set the precedent moving forward that institutions could be held financially liable for Title IX violations.

In 1997, the Office for Civil Rights, in tandem with the Supreme Court, issued *Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students or Third Parties (1997 Guidance)*. The *1997 Guidance* expanded Title IX to include sexual misconduct as a Title IX violation and stipulated sexual harassment was inclusive of gender discrimination. (Busch & Thro, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 1997). The *1997 Guidance* also detailed

information regarding how institutions could identify sexual harassment, procedures that could be utilized for investigating reports, and steps that could be taken to prevent the harassment from reoccurring (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). In 1998 *Gebser v. Lago Independent School District* case clarified institutional liability. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that an educational institution could not be held liable in cases of teacher-on-student sexual harassment unless an employee had direct knowledge of the harassment and failed to act (Busch & Thro, 2018; Silbaugh, 2015). Following this case, the three-prong liability test was established to clarify what must occur for an institution to be held liable for sexual harassment: one must be prohibited from participating in educational activities, an authority at the institution must have knowledge of the harassment, and that authority must show deliberate indifference in responding (Silbaugh, 2015). In other words, if the institution is never made aware of the harassment, they would not be able to act and hold members of the institution responsible for their behaviors and, therefore, could not be liable for damages ensued.

After the ruling in the 1999 Supreme Court case *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education*, institutions became accountable under Title IX if they knew about student-on-student sexual harassment, not just faculty- or staff-on-student sexual harassment. This case stated that schools must address student-on-student sexual harassment as students have a right to their education free of harassment. Following this ruling, institutions were liable for student-on-student as well as faculty-on-student sexual harassment, including sexual assault if school personnel knew about the harassment, school personnel were indifferent to the complaint or responded unreasonably, and the harassment limited the victim's educational access (Block, 2012; Strader & Williams-Cunningham, 2017). This case paved the way for how higher

education institutions would respond to future allegations of sexual harassment, and the term sexual assault would be cited in forthcoming guidance issued by the Office for Civil Rights.

In light of actions taken by Supreme Court rulings in the *Gebser* and *Davis* cases, the Office for Civil Rights issued the *2001 Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties (2001 Guidance)* as an update to the *1997 Guidance* (Busch & Thro, 2018; Miller & Cook, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The 2001 Guidance created a definition of sexual harassment, the first time in which sexual violence as a form of sexual harassment is suggested, stating that “sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature” (U.S. Department of Education, 2001, p. 2).

Additionally, the 2001 Guidance did the following:

- referenced the role of the Title IX Coordinator in receiving a Title IX grievance, ensure recording keeping of Title IX grievances filed, and resolving reoccurring violations;
- clarified the types of harassment for which institutions are liable, as well as the immediate and effective corrective action that must be taken by the school to end harassment, prevent it from reoccurring, and to remedy its effects;
- recommended training for all employees and age-appropriate education for students about how to identify sexual harassment and how to report harassment if it occurs;

- required institutions to update their policies to ensure students and employees understand the definition of and institutional intolerance to sexual assault and sexual harassment; and
- stated that institutions could risk losing federal funding if they fail to investigate and address student allegations of sexual harassment. (U.S. Department of Education, 2001)

As discussed previously, Title IX guidance regarding sexual harassment was regularly clarified through Supreme Court rulings and guidance issued by the Office for Civil Rights such as the *1997 Guidance* and the *2001 Guidance*. Title IX regulations again changed on January 25, 2006, when the Office for Civil Rights issued the 2006 “Dear Colleague” Letter (2006 Letter) with updated government expectations for how higher education institutions would comply with Title IX (Busch & Thro, 2018; Monroe, 2006). In the 2006 Letter, the Office for Civil Rights reinforced the 2001 Guidance, increased awareness about sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination, and reminded schools of their responsibility in responding to and preventing sexual harassment under Title IX (Busch & Thro, 2018; Monroe, 2006). The 2006 Letter was first of many “Dear Colleague” Letters to be issued by the Office for Civil Rights, the next of which was issued in 2011 under President Obama’s administration.

**Updates to Title IX (2011-2020).** Though there have been a number of updates to Title IX since 1972, none have been as controversial as the 2011 “Dear Colleague” Letter on Sexual Violence (2011 Letter). Dissimilar to the *1997 Guidance*, the *2001 Guidance*, and the 2006 Letter, the 2011 Letter was released without prior notice or public comment period for invested parties (Busch & Thro, 2018). Issued on April 4, 2011, by the Office for Civil Rights as a supplement the 2001 Guidance, the 2011 Letter brought to light the dissatisfaction the Office for

Civil Rights had with higher education institutions in their response to sexual harassment and sexual violence (Ali, 2011; Busch & Thro; 2018; Miller & Cook, 2017). The two overarching goals of the 2011 Letter were to minimize the stress experienced by victims of sexual assault and to investigate and punish those who were found responsible for committing the assault (Busch & Thro, 2018; Kaukinen, Powers, & Miller, 2017; Suarez, 2017). The 2011 Letter stated that “sexual harassment of students, including sexual violence, interferes with students’ rights to receive an education free from discrimination and, in the case of sexual violence, is a crime” (Ali, 2011, p. 1). Thus, readers of the 2011 Letter learned both sexual harassment and sexual violence are forms of sexual harassment and were therefore prohibited by Title IX.

In addition to clarifying the way in which the Office for Civil Rights would operationalize sex discrimination, the 2011 Letter also provided higher education institutions concrete details about how the institutional Title IX Coordinator should manage comprehensive Title IX compliance through enhanced prevention, training, and education; investigative standards and processes; complainant protection against retaliation; and recommendations for comprehensive victims’ services to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and sexual assault (Ali, 2011). As the 2011 Letter greatly expanded the role and responsibility of the Title IX Coordinator, institutions across the nation worked diligently to reorganize, relearn, and strategize the way in which they would ensure compliance under Title IX (Suarez, 2017). For many institutions, this was the point at which institutional organizational structures were adjusted, and Title IX Coordinator positions were created and given sole responsibility for Title IX compliance (Hargis & Roth, 2018) as institutions could suffer extreme penalties if they failed to comply with mandates as set forth in the 2011 Letter such as Office for Civil Rights investigation and/or being held financially liable for noncompliance.

In an effort to clarify the requirements as stipulated in the 2011 Letter, the Department of Education continued to provide Title IX guidance to institutions. On April 29, 2014, the Office for Civil Rights published the 53-page “Questions and Answers” (2014 Q&A) document to summarize its purpose and actions expected of institutions as a result of the 2011 Letter (Lhamon, 2014). The 2014 Q&A recommended the institutional Title IX Coordinator be a full-time position and clarified that the Title IX Coordinator cannot have another role on campus which could directly conflict with the duties of the role (Lhamon, 2014). While it was recommended that the Title IX Coordinator be a full-time position at each institution, this requirement was not mandated by the Office for Civil Rights.

More guidance for institutions came on April 24, 2015, when the Office for Civil Rights published a Title IX Coordinator’s “Dear Colleague” Letter (2015 Letter) to clarify and provide additional information on the importance and responsibilities that the Title IX Coordinator must fulfill (Lhamon, 2015). The 2015 Letter reminded higher education institutions of their responsibility to designate a Title IX Coordinator with the visibility and authority to coordinate institutional Title IX compliance, including continual institutional accountability for the oversight of allegations of potential sex discrimination to monitor outcomes; identifying and addressing any patterns; and assessing effects on the campus climate (Lhamon, 2015; Margolis Healy, 2019). According to the 2015 Letter, the Title IX Coordinator should be positioned so they will not encounter conflicts of interest and should report to the institution’s senior leadership, such as a university president (Lhamon, 2015). This reporting structure was advised by the government as a way to encourage institutions to provide the Title IX Coordinator with adequate authority to create and effect change across the institution to prevent and respond to sex



discrimination. Specifically, the 2015 Letter designated that the position of Title IX Coordinator must:

- be filled at all times to ensure there is continuous institutional accountability for the oversight of allegations of potential sex discrimination, to monitor outcomes, to identify and address any patterns, and to assess effects on the campus climate;
- have comprehensive knowledge of federal, state, and local policies that intersect with Title IX and receive ongoing training regarding laws, regulations, and federal guidance;
- be positioned so they will not encounter conflicts of interest and report to the institution's senior leadership, such as a university president; and
- have adequate authority to create and effect change across the institution to prevent and respond to sex discrimination. (Lhamon, 2015)

A recent survey of Title IX Coordinators across National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I institutions revealed that Title IX Coordinators vary in their higher education attainment and credentials. According to Kelly (2019), degrees held by Title IX Coordinators are varied to include master's degrees, Juris Doctorates, Doctorates of Philosophy, and Doctorates of Education. As there is not a program of study that prepares an individual to serve in the Title IX Coordinator role, it is highly likely that those serving as Title IX Coordinators have participated in both non-formal and informal training that has qualified them for their position. As stipulated by the 2015 Letter, the individual serving as the Title IX Coordinator must have the appropriate training as well as a comprehensive knowledge base necessary to carry out their role and fulfill the institutions responsibly under Title IX (Lhamon, 2015). Title IX Coordinators must not only be knowledgeable about Title IX, but they must also have a clear understanding of federal, state,

and local policies that intersect with Title IX and receive ongoing training as laws, regulations, and federal guidance is continually updated (Lhamon, 2015). The 2015 Lhamon Letter detailed specific training opportunities that Title IX Coordinators may want to consider, such as technical assistance from the Office for Civil Rights; training from educational agencies, private organizations, or advocacy groups; regional collaboration; and/or mentorship; however, Title IX Coordinators can choose the best way to stay abreast of training opportunities that meet their individual needs as learners.

In 2017, under the direction of President Trump’s Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, the Office for Civil Rights issued 2017 “Dear Colleague” Letter (2017 Letter) on September 22, 2017. The 2017 Letter did not add requirements to the law, but instead immediately withdrew the 2011 Letter and 2014 Q&A claiming they were unfair, did not allow for due process, and favored the complainant (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The 2017 Letter also stated that previous guidance issued by the Office for Civil Rights was confusing, counterproductive, and limited equity in education and that institutions should refer to the 2001 Guidance as the means by which they should comply and be held accountable under Title IX (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Following the 2017 Letter, a seven-page 2017 Question and Answer on Campus Sexual Misconduct (2017 Q&A) was provided as a supplement to the 2017 Letter. The 2017 Q&A provided clarity about the expectations and standard of evidence and investigation of sexual misconduct cases and the expectations around the investigation process, interim measures, resolutions, and appeals (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). After the dissemination of the 2017 Letter and 2017 Q&A, higher education institutions once again worked to interpret, understand, and apply a new set of guidance and what the implications of this guidance would look like for their institution.

On November 16, 2018 the Department of Education published an update to Title IX to the federal register (U.S. Department of Education, 2018) titled Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance (2018 Proposed Title IX Regulations). The public was given 60 days to provide public comment to the proposed Title IX regulations. The 2018 Proposed Title IX Regulations proposed the following changes to Title IX: reducing higher education jurisdiction of Title IX investigations to only incidents that occur on campus, increasing evidentiary standards from the preponderance of the evidence to more likely than not standard, allowing for the cross-examination of the complainant by the accused, and allowing institutions to use informal resolutions to Title IX cases, which could include mediation (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). During the comment period, 124,196 comments were posted to the federal register (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

After evaluating and applying public comment to the 2018 Proposed Title IX regulations the U.S. Department of Education published the 2,033-page Final Rule on Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance (2020 Final Rule) on May 6, 2020 (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The 2020 Final Rule was the first time in which sexual harassment was recognized as unlawful, and it is the first time Title IX mandates have had the full backing of the law. The 2020 Final Rule provided extensive information about the U.S. Department of Education's expectations for institutional Title IX compliance. All institutions had 100 days to read, process, update, and disseminate 2020 Final Rule complainant Title IX policies and procedures. The major stipulations under the 2020 Final Rule for higher education institutions include:

- providing institutions with the freedom to decide which employees should serve as mandatory reporters and confidential employees;

- updating the institutions' definition of sexual harassment as stipulated in the Final Rule and aligning the definitions of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking to align with Clery and Violence Against Women Act definitions;
- updating the definitions of complainant, respondent, formal complaint, and supportive measures as provided in the Final Rule;
- applying Title IX policies and procedures to the instances in which sexual harassment took place when the institution had control over the respondent and the context in which the harassment occurred (i.e. occurred in a building owned or controlled by the university or an organization affiliated with the university);
- expanding the school's obligation to provide accessible reporting (e.g. after hours and via mail);
- supporting and respecting the autonomy of complainants, meaning that in order to initiate a Title IX investigation a formal complainant must be filed with the institution's Title IX Coordinator;
- providing supportive measures for complainants even if the complainant does not want to initiate a formal investigation;
- barring the use of a single-investigator model and providing both complainants and respondents with their rights in a process that is transparent and inclusive of a grievance procedure, appeals process, and appointment of advisor if requested;
- facilitating live hearings and allowing for cross examinations;
- prohibiting retaliation; and

- providing annual training for all Title IX personnel on sexual harassment as defined in the Final Rule, investigations and grievance process, hearing, appeals, informal resolutions, and how to avoid prejudgment, bias, and conflicts of interest. (U.S. Department of Education, 2020)

### **The Intersection of Title IX with the Clery Act and the Violence Against Women Act**

Since established in 1972, Title IX has been updated through Supreme Court rulings, federal guidance, “Dear Colleague” Letters, and most recently, the 2020 Final Rule. These updates to Title IX have greatly impacted how the Title IX Coordinator must lead Title IX compliance at their respective higher education institutions. In addition to staying abreast of Title IX, Title IX Coordinators must also ensure Title IX compliance is in line with other federal legislation known as the Campus Awareness and Campus Security Act (Clery Act), and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The Clery Act and VAWA connect to Title IX as they speak to how higher education institutions must address sexual violence, a form of sex discrimination. While the Clery Act and VAWA focus on much more than just sexual violence prevention and response in higher education settings, it is imperative for the reader to understand the ways in Title IX, the Clery Act, and VAWA are interconnected in addressing campus sexual misconduct.

**The Clery Act.** The Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990, the federal legislation that would come to be known as the Clery Act, was signed into law by President George W. Bush as an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Congressional Research Service, 2014; Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). The Clery Act was established to increase institutional accountability and transparency in ensuring student safety (Congressional Research Service, 2014). While there is overlap between the Clery Act and Title

IX, these pieces of legislation are different, as the Clery Act applies to many more crimes than those that fall under Title IX (Engle, 2015). Institutions who are recipients of federal funding are required to comply with both the Clery Act and Title IX.

The Clery Act amendments of 1992, 1998, and 2013 were put in place to ensure institutional accountability and transparency around campus safety continues, and all of these amendments have intersected with Title IX mandates to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. First, the 1992 update to the Clery Act required institutions to develop and distribute a campus policy about the prevention and response to sexual assault and sex offenses (American Association of University Professors, 2012; Congressional Research Service, 2014). Then, in 1998, the Clery Act was renamed the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act) in honor of the female student, Jeanne Clery, who was raped and murdered in her dorm room by a fellow student at Lehigh University in 1986 (American Association of University Professors, 2012; Miller & Cook, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The 1998 update to the Clery Act also required higher education institutions to add residence halls to their crime reportable geographic locations, maintain a public crime log, and publish an annual report so that students, families, and invested stakeholders could be able to understand the specific crime statistics of a singular higher education institutions (American Association of University Professors, 2012; Congressional Research Service, 2014; Miller & Cook, 2017). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), the most recent update to the Clery Act was established via the VAWA of 2013, which expanded institutional requirements to include disclosure of statistics, policies, and programs related to dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

**The Violence Against Women Act.** The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was signed into law by President Clinton on September 13, 1994 as a part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. VAWA was the first comprehensive federal legislative package to include federal funding dedicated to ending violence against women through the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women. The initial legislation of VAWA created the Office of Violence Against Women within the Department of Justice to oversee funding awarded through VAWA grants (Stupakis, 2019). As established, VAWA had to be continually reauthorized through legislation (Miller & Cook, 2017). VAWA was first reauthorized in 2000 via the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act and again in 2005 through the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act. The most recent update to VAWA was signed by President Obama on March 7, 2013. The VAWA Reauthorization Act of 2013 included the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (Campus SaVE) Act provision, which amended the Clery Act. The Campus SaVE Act provision required higher education institutions to report domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking under the Clery Act, as well as provide prevention education to new students and employees, utilizing a victim-centered approach to:

- effectively communicate policies and procedures for complainants regarding sexual violence (including domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking);
- protect the complainant during investigation processes;
- provide written notice of investigative processes to both complainant and respondent;
- provide prevention and training opportunities for students and employees; and

- increase awareness of domestic violence, dating, violence, sexual assault, and stalking across the campus community. (Miller & Cook, 2017; Powers & Kaukinen, 2017; Suarez, 2017)

On December 21, 2018, VAWA expired during the federal shutdown. It was temporarily reauthorized on January 25, 2019, but expired again on February 15, 2019. While organizations who are VAWA grantees, some of which are higher education institutions, had access to funding, the future of VAWA is unclear (Stupakis, 2019). At this point in time, organizations who are VAWA grantees remain funded but unsure about how they will continue to serve the individuals and families who have long been served and protected under VAWA.

### **Sexual Misconduct in Higher Education**

The Title IX Coordinator's leadership is imperative to maintaining institutional compliance in new and innovative ways. Rates of sexual misconduct have not decreased over time, and higher education institutions cannot continue to "reproduce the same systems and process" [but instead work to] "continually expose and critically analyze the complexity of campus sexual violence...[and] consider... avenues for practice" (Weis, 2015, p. 284). Sexual misconduct has been a public health and safety issue on university campuses for decades. Not only a crime, sexual misconduct also interferes with the right that every student has to access education free of discrimination (Ali, 2011). The impact of sexual misconduct is far reaching and can include devastating short-term and long-term physical, psychological, and academic effects on the victim, friends and relatives of the victim, and others who feel unsafe and/or fear being victimized in their community (Vladutiu, Martin, & Macy, 2011). Today, we know more about the issues related to sexual misconduct than at any point in history, yet the prevalence of sexual



misconduct in higher education has not changed since Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) conducted their seminal research.

Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) examined women's reports of male erotic aggressiveness (necking, petting above the waist, petting below the waist, sexual intercourse, and attempts of sexual intercourse with violence or threats of violence in dating-courtship relationships on a university campus). Their study revealed that over 20 percent of women reported, "forceful attempts or aggressively forceful attempts at sex[ual] intercourse in the course of which menacing threats or coercive infliction of physical pain were employed" (Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957, p.53). When questioned about what the women did after experiencing sexual misconduct, only 15.6 percent of women stated they would report the incident to someone to help them such as a parent, academic authority, civic authority, or clergy (Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957). In 1982, Russell replicated the Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) study and found that of women who experienced forcible or attempted rape, 88 percent knew their attacker, and relatively few women reported the incident to authorities such as the police.

Koss and Oros (1982) built upon the work of Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1975) and published about the development and implementation of their Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. The SES was a series of two, 12-question yes/no questionnaires about sexual intercourse as associated with coercion, threat, and force. One survey was administered to women, and the other was administered to men (Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1975). Following the confirmation of the reliability and validity of a slightly reworded SES tool by Koss and Gidycz in 1985, the SES was used by Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski in their 1987 nation-wide study of 6,159 university students age 18-24 at 32 higher education institutions across the United States. The study was the first of its kind that was generalizable to

college students and revealed that 27.5 percent of college women reported experiencing an act of attempted or completed rape since the age of 14, a form of sexual misconduct (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). Since this pivotal 1987 study, research has proliferated about sexual misconduct in higher education that have:

- confirmed sexual misconduct in higher education exists despite a victim's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity (Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen, & Stevens, 2011; Cantor et al., 2015; Kilpatrick, Resnick, Ruggiero, Conoscenti, & McCauly, 2007);
- revealed one-in-four to one-in-five undergraduate women and one-in-16 men experience sexual misconduct while in enrolled in college and most students do not report the misconduct or seek campus resources for supports (Cantor, et al., 2015; Krebs et al., 2007);
- showed historically marginalized and underrepresented groups often experience greater rates of sexual violence (Black et al., 2011) and that there are greater barriers to reporting the misconduct and accessing resources than non-marginalized groups (Fisher, et al., 2007); and
- illustrated over 75 percent of females who experience sexual misconduct know the perpetrator. (Sinozich & Langton, 2014)

Sexual misconduct in higher education and society at large are issues that have not been resolved or decreased in number over time. What has changed are the laws and regulations by which higher education institutions are mandated and Title IX Coordinators are responsible to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. The scope of work, accountability structures, and ways in

which Title IX Coordinators must lead Title IX compliance is under a microscope, highly litigious, and constantly changing.

### **Adult Education and Adult Learning**

Eduard Lindeman, author of the 1926 text *The Meaning of Adult Education*, was a pioneer in the United States adult learning movement and provided a sound foundation on which the fields of adult education and adult learning are situated. To Lindeman, “*education is life* - not a mere preparation for an unknown type of future living...the whole life is learning, therefore education can have no endings” (1926/1989, p. 6, italics in original). As the entirety of life is learning, education should undergird all aspects of life, revolve around non-academic and non-vocational ideas, start with the lives of learners, and look to the learner’s own experience as its most valuable resource (Lindeman, 1926/1989). In living life, individuals have both a “desire and a need to learn – to use experience for learning;” therefore, “the aim of adult education is that of encouraging, facilitating, and nurturing the desire for learning that is innate within the individual” (Stewart, 1987, p. 104). Lindeman believed that all adults could be learners and all are worthy of learning and growing into the best version of themselves because learning is an “evolving whole of interacting parts” (Lindeman, 1926/1989, p. 131). In his work to introduce, inspire, and advocate for learning throughout adulthood, Lindeman developed the following assumptions about adult learners: adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy, adults’ orientation to learning is life-centered, experience is the richest source for adult’s learning, adults have a deep need to be self-directing, and individual differences among people increase with age (Lindeman, 1926/1989).

Since Lindeman’s time, countless scholars have expanded the field of adult education and adult learning, and they have attempted to define the field Lindeman refrained from defining as

he believed adult education should meet the “changing needs of adult in a changing society” (Stewart, 1987, p.13). Scholars today agree that defining the field is challenging as all education involves learning, but not all learning involves education (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982).

Merriam and Brockett (2007) define adult education as “activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults” (p.8). It is “deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, or skills” (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982, p.6) by the direct involvement of an instructor to achieve specific learning outcomes that create change (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). In contrast, adult learning is “a cognitive process internal to the learner; it is what the learner does in a teaching-learning transaction” (Merriam & Brockett, 2007, p. 6) to gain “knowledge and expertise” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 174). Adult learning can take place through a teacher-learner interaction or can occur as a continuous part of life when a learner develops skills and knowledge relevant to their current context without a formal educational institution or instructor. Adult learners are as complex as and as unique as the individuals who are engaged in the process of learning, and just as there are varied definitions of adult learning, there too are a breadth of theories, frameworks, and models associated with the field. Merriam stated:

There will likely never be a single theory of adult learning powerful enough to capture the complexity of this phenomenon. While a grand theory of adult learning might seem to make our task easier in explaining our field to others, it would have to be so broad it would ultimately explain nothing. (2001, p. 95-96)

As previously mentioned, Title IX coordinators are not required to hold specific educational or training credentials; however, they must maintain appropriate training as well as comprehensive

knowledge necessary to carry out their role and fulfill the institutions responsibly under Title IX (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). As such, in light of changing federal mandates and guidance, part of the role of the Title IX coordinator is to continue to learn and grow in their knowledge and application of the requirements under Title IX or put the institution at risk for falling out of Title IX compliance. Andragogy, is a model of adult learning through which the learning needs and goals of the Title IX coordinators can be framed.

**Andragogy: An integrated model of learning.** One of the most popular and highly contested models of learning in the adult education field, andragogy, has had “an enormous and far-reaching influence on the field of adult education practice (Brookfield, 1989, p.21). The andrological model of adult learning is known as the “art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). First introduced in the United States by Malcom Knowles in the 1970s, andragogy is different from pedagogy as adults learn differently than children and require a different type of education (Roberson, 2002). This is due to the ability adults have to draw on past experiences to create new learning knowledge based on previous understandings (Cox, 2015; Daley, 2000). Andragogy is grounded in the belief that adults must be actively engaged in their learning to “construct their own knowledge, to make sense of the learning, and to apply what is learned” (Chan, 2010, p.34).

When first introduced, andragogy was based on four assumptions about how adults learn; today there are six assumptions: (1) the learner's need to know, (2) self-directed learning, (3) prior experiences of the learner, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learning and problem solving, and (6) motivation to learn (Knowles, 1970, 1984, 1989; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). While there are six assumptions in the model, not all adults will fit these assumptions as all adults live and operate in different situations and circumstances

(Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012); therefore, the andrological model is “a system of elements that can be adopted or adapted in whole or in part. It is not an ideology that must be applied totally and without modification. In fact, an essential feature of andragogy is flexibility” (Knowles, 1984, p. 418). This model is appealing as educators can “readily relate the assumptions to their own learning and in so doing, transition to planning meaningful instruction for adults” (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 56). The following further details the andragogical model’s assumptions.

The first assumption of andragogy is that learners need to know why they need to learn something (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). If an adult learner can learn something they perceive to be of value and relate what they are learning to a real-life challenge they are facing they will be more likely to invest time and resources into learning what they need to know (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The second assumption of andragogy is that learners are self-directed (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). As people grow older, they move from being dependent on others to learn to self-directed learning as they increase in their autonomy and accountability for their own decision-making and learning process (Cox, 2015; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). Mezirow (1981) stated that “andragogy is an organized and sustained effort to assist adults to learn in a way that enhances their capacity to function as self-directed learners” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 21). Thus, self-directed learning is an andrological process in which the learner is aware of themselves and their own needs, is in control of, and has the responsibility for, planning, executing, and evaluating their own learning (Caffarella, 2000; Forrest & Patterson, 2006; Hiemstra, 2000). Self-directed learning can be carried out in a formal educational setting with an instructor or teacher, or it can be carried out independently by learners. A great deal of learning in the workplace is self-

directed within the context of the learner's profession. Thus, learning is contextual, meaning that "the context itself shapes the learning...[and] learning occurs as people interact with other people in a particular context" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p.118). From their post-secondary education, to on-the-job training and ongoing professional development and growth, professionals continue to grow and develop in their respective roles. Being able to self-direct learning within the context of one's role and to critically reflect and problem solve individually or with others is a skill that can benefit not only the individual but the organization they serve as well (Kasworm, Rose, & Ross-Gordon, 2010).

The third assumption of andragogy is the prior experience of the learner (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). The third assumption of andragogy is the prior experience of the learner, and as individuals grow older, they have more experiences on which they can draw from that can become a source for learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). A learner's prior experience, or life experience, can allow them to relate existing knowledge to what is being taught, but can also become a barrier if what is being learned is challenging to the learner (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The fourth assumption of andragogy is that adults will learn when they are ready, need to know, or desire to learn to address better the roles and responsibilities relevant to their current situation (Forrest & Patterson, 2006; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Thus, adults will seek out learning opportunities when learning opportunities are relevant to their current situation. The fifth assumption of andragogy is related to the learner's orientation to learning and problem-solving (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Adults have an increased motivation to learn when they have to work through an immediate concern they are facing (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Problem-based learning can allow learners to bring with

them into the learning process prior knowledge and experience through group discussion, case study, debate, and reflection to help understand, retain, and utilize information (Norman & Schmidt, 1992). Adults are motivated to learn if they believe that the learning activities in which they engage will help them accomplish tasks or solve problems in their lives (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). The sixth and final assumption of andragogy is andragogy is an adult's motivation to learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). Motivation is defined as “the natural human capacity to direct energy in the pursuit of a goal” (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009). According to Wlodkowski (2008) responsibility is key to motivation, and as adults have more responsibility than children, adults are motivated out of their mere responsibilities as an adult to learn. Motivators for adults to learn can be both intrinsic, such as problem solving, and/or extrinsic such as receiving a promotion or salary increase (Cox 2015; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). A meta-analysis of 128 studies about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in settings such as education, sports, and work found that, when examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation, those without extrinsic rewards had greater benefits such as overall competence and maintaining motivation which in turn led to greater learning, creativity, persistence, and improved well-being (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999).

Andragogy is a model that has been widely adopted and utilized by adult educators across the world; yet, it is not without its critics. While andragogy acknowledges the needs, experience, and self-directedness of adult learners it fails to account for the social, cultural, political, and historical factors in which an individual is situated (Pratt, 1993). In what Pratt (1993) refers to as psychological reductionism, andragogy does not consider the social structure, identities, and specific experiences of an individual. In addition, researchers such as Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner (2007), Taylor and Kroth (2009), and Pratt (1993) cite the limited empirical



evidence of the theory itself. While these critics do not doubt that andragogy provides a valuable addition to the adult learning field, without empirical evidence, critics believe that the legitimacy of the theory cannot be proven. In light of these criticisms, andragogy remains a model that has been widely accepted by the educational community. This model, when coupled with the social, political, and historical factors related to the role of the Title IX coordinator to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct, provides a means by which Title IX coordinators' learning and development can be framed to more fully understand how they could operate and lead institutional Title IX compliance.

### **Leadership Theory**

Leadership is one of the most heavily researched and highly contested topics in the literature. A statement by Bennis and Nanus remains as true today as it did in 1985: leadership is “the most studied and least understood topic of any in the social sciences ... like the Abominable Snowman, whose footprints are everywhere but who is nowhere to be seen” (p. 20). Today, scholars and practitioners alike still have not reached a consensus on the definition, and as research on leadership has evolved over the twentieth century, a variety of definitions have presented themselves in the literature. Over time, leadership theories have moved away from the idea that a leader is someone who controls events and people (Bass, 2008). Today, leadership is seen more as a relational process between leader and followers towards goals to create change (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007); a relationship in which leaders are influencers amongst collaborators to effect mutually beneficial change (Rost, 1993); and a process in which the leader influences others to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2019). The following is an exploration of the development of five major leadership theories that are relevant to both the four-frame

model by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017), as well as the field of higher education leadership over the twentieth century.

**Trait theory.** Trait theory emerged in the early twentieth century. Trait theorists assert that leaders possess traits different from non-leaders that allow them to lead naturally (Bass, 2008; Kezar et al., 2006). Thus, leadership is not entirely based on genetics as suggested by Great Man theory; instead, leadership can be learned and developed (Northouse, 2019). Leaders have distinctive traits such as intelligence, self-confidence, determination, etc. that set them apart from followers (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Northouse, 2019). Over time, many researchers such as Stogdill, Katz, Mann, and Kirkpatrick and Locke have been credited with expanding trait theory (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Ralph Stogdill conducted two major leadership trait studies (1974). Stogdill identified traits that separate a leader from a follower, and he also found that merely possessing leadership traits alone does not mean an individual will become a leader (1974). Therefore, according to Stogdill (1974), leadership is not about traits alone, but instead the traits a leader possesses must be relevant and actionable in the situation in which they are leading.

Katz (1955) planted the idea that leadership could be learned through the development of human, technical, and conceptual skills. Other theorists such as Mann (1959) sought to explain leadership skills, and Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) affirmed that leaders are different from non-leaders in certain traits they possess. As research on trait theory continues, researchers continue to expand the list of traits that one who seeks to lead others may hope to possess innately or develop (Northouse, 2019). Critics of trait theory maintain that leadership traits are difficult to measure, that the theory does not consider the context in which the leader operates, and that it waters down leadership into to a myriad of individual characteristics, which can lead to oversimplification (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989; Kezar, 2006).

**Behavioral theory.** The inadequacy of trait theory in defining leadership paved the way for the emergence of behavioral theory in the mid-twentieth century (Kezar et al., 2006; Harrison, 2018). Behavioral theory focuses on the behaviors of leaders as opposed to the traits that leaders possess. Behavioral theorists believe that leadership behaviors are not innate, but instead can be taught and learned; thus, leadership can be learned and leaders can be made (Uslu, 2019). According to Northouse (2019), leader effectiveness is correlated to the behaviors of the leader in relation to their followers. Thus, positive behaviors the leader uses when interacting with followers guide followers to success and in turn bring the leader success (Uslu, 2019). The major critiques of the behavioral theory are that situational factors are not considered when explaining leadership (Harrison, 2018) and the group process of leadership is overlooked (Komives et al., 2007). Additionally, as with trait theory, research on behavioral theory has not been able to prove how leadership and outcomes are related (Harrison, 2018; Northouse, 2019).

**Situational theory.** Following behavioral theorists, the situational theory of leadership was established. The premise of situational theory is that leaders are not defined by their genetics, traits, or behaviors, but by the ways in which they make decisions on a day-to-day basis as they interact with followers (Bass, 2008; Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976). Simply stated, leaders who utilize the situational leadership theory believe that in order to be an effective leader one must adapt their leadership style to the situation at hand (Northouse, 2019). Situational leadership theory first emerged in the 1960s through the work of Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard. Their situational approach to leadership asserts that there is not a best style of leadership but that successful leaders can adapt their leadership style to meet the needs of their unique situation. Situational leadership is:

An interplay among (1) the amount of direction (task behavior) a leader gives, (2) the amount of socio-emotional support (relationship behavior) a leader provides, and (3) the “readiness” level that followers exhibit on a specific task, function, activity, or objective that the leader is attempting to accomplish through the individual or group.

(Schermerhorn, 1997, p.6)

Thus, the type of leadership that one needs to provide to staff will vary based on the task at hand, the amount of support needed by the employee, and the employee’s level of maturity in being able to accomplish the task. Those who are successful in the situational approach to leadership are able to adjust their styles to meet the individual and group needs of followers that are both task and relationally relevant. Yet, while situational leadership accounts for the situations in which leaders lead, it fails to account for one’s leadership style in the context of a specific situation.

**Contingency theory.** Contingency theory was established by Fred Edward Fiedler. According to Fiedler’s (1967) theory, leadership can be characterized by leader-member relations, task structure, and position power. In his theory, Fielder suggested there is no one best way to lead and a leader can only be effective when their style of leadership fits the situation in which they are leading (Northouse, 2019). Contingency theory assumes that leaders are not made by their individual behaviors or styles; instead, as situations vary, leaders will utilize different leadership approaches or styles to manage situations effectively (da Cruz, Nunes, & Pinheiro, 2011). Critics of contingency theory cite the difficulty in finding consistent empirical support for the theory; however, most leadership theorists agree that leadership is contingent on circumstances in which the leader is leading must be assessed to determine leadership effectiveness (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Kezar et al., 2006). Each of these theories – trait, behavioral, situational,

and contingency – provide an opportunity through which leadership can be viewed and provided the groundwork from Bolman and Deal’s four-frame model.

### **Four-Frame Model by Bolman and Deal**

Bolman and Deal first published about a leadership orientation framework in their 1984 publication, *Modern Approaches to Understanding and Managing Organizations*. In this seminal work, Bolman and Deal shared that leaders could view organizational situations and challenges through various lenses. These lenses are a means by which leaders can break down challenges to understand complex issues and situations to solve organizational problems and create effective solutions (Bolman & Deal, 1991a/2017; Thompson, et al., 2005). Today, Bolman and Deal’s leadership orientation framework is known as the four-frame model. The four-frame model consists of the structural frame (rules, policies, procedures, systems, and hierarchies), the human resource frame (needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations), the political frame (bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and power), and the symbolic frame (culture, symbols, stories, history, and myths) (Bolman & Deal, 2017). As Bolman and Deal developed their leadership model, they were heavily influenced by cross discipline middle-to-late twentieth century management and leadership research (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The following is a review of the four-frames and the leadership theory by which each respective frame was influenced.

**Structural frame.** The first of the four frames is the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 1991a/2017). The individual who leads through the structural frame can be likened to the social architect of an organization, meaning they seek to create, maintain, enforce, and revise structures to ensure organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Bolman & Deal, 1991a/2017) Those who lead through the structural frame place value on concrete goals and objectives, efficiency and performance, coordination and control, rational thinking, problem solving, and restructuring the

organization as needed (Bolman & Deal, 2017). These leaders see the importance of setting clear directions, expectations, accountability structures, and solving challenges through policies, rules, and/or restructuring (Bolman & Deal, 1991a). The six assumptions that undergird the structural frame are:

1. Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives and devise strategies to reach those goals.
2. Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor.
3. Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh.
4. Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures.
5. Effective structure fits an organization's current circumstances (including its strategy, technology, workforce, and environment).
6. When performance suffers from structural flaws, the remedy is problem solving and restructuring. (Bolman and Deal, 2017, p. 48)

The six assumptions of the structural frame are rooted in management science and sociology. As they developed this frame, Bolman and Deal were influenced heavily by Frederick W. Taylor and Max Weber (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Taylor, a mechanical engineer, published on his theory of scientific management in his text, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911). Taylor's research focused on how work is performed. He asserted the primary goal of management should be to maximize success for both the employer and employee. Thus, work can be effectively managed through streamlining processes that will optimize productivity and thus prosperity in

the workplace (Taylor, 1911). Taylor (1911) stated effective management, which he also referred to as “task management,” is achieved by hiring the right employee for the job, motivating and training the employee to be effective in their role, clearly defined tasks, and monitoring the employee to ensure they are meeting role expectations and success in their work (p.30). Like Taylor, Max Weber, a German sociologist and philosopher, influenced Bolman and Deal as they developed the structural frame. In his *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1947), Weber propelled the idea of maximizing efficiencies and productivity in the workplace through a hierarchical organization, fixed division of labor, written rules and regulations, and supervision of workers. Thus, according to Bolman and Deal (2017), this workplace structure can provide the means leaders with the authority and legitimacy to carry out organizational goals.

**Human resource frame.** Bolman and Deal’s second frame (1991a/2017) is the human resource frame. Leaders who utilize the human resource frame value relationships and see the organization as an extended family (Bolman & Deal, 2017). These leaders either seek to change the organization to meet individual needs, or they seek to change the individual to fit the organization (Bolman & Deal, 1991a). The assumptions of the human resource frame are:

1. Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse.
2. People and organizations need each other. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities.
3. When the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer. Individuals are exploited or exploit the organization – or both become victims.
4. A good fit benefits both. Individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed. (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 118)

As Bolman and Deal developed the human resource frame, they were heavily influenced by the theorists Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, and Chris Argyris (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

These three theorists were instrumental in shifting the focus of management from a sole focus on organizational productivity and efficiency management towards practices that value and are concerned with the individual people, or human resources, who make up an organization.

Maslow (1954), an existential psychologist, developed and published about his hierarchy of human needs in *Motivation and Personality*. In this text, Maslow claimed that in order for humans to fulfill their potential in life, or self-actualize, they must first fulfill their basic needs of physiological and safety. After one realizes their basic needs, they can then progress to love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). Like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y are also grounded in motivation theory, and the motivation one has to achieve their highest potential. McGregor (1960) developed and published his Theory X and Theory Y in *The Human Side of Enterprise*. McGregor's theories of motivation and management illustrate dichotomous views about how employees should be managed. Theory X managers motivate employees through an authoritarian management style as employees dislike work; are unmotivated; need constant direction and supervision; and must be prompted, rewarded, or disciplined to achieve work-related goals (McGregor, 1960). Alternatively, Theory Y managers motivate and manage employees through a participative management style that emphasizes building relationships and encouraging skill development, creative thinking, and decision making (McGregor, 1960). Theory Y managers see employees as capable of respecting responsibility and ownership of their work, work that they find both challenge and fulfilling (McGregor, 1960). Unlike Theory X, in which the manager controls employees who are merely cogs in a machine, the Theory Y manager is guided by the principle that if employees are



supported in workplace to achieve their professional goals, not only will the employee benefit but so too will the organization (McGregor, 1960).

Argyris, a business professor, was another theorist whose work contributed to Bolman and Deal's development of the human resource frame. In Argyris' (1957) book *Personality and Organization: The Conflict Between System and Individual*, he examined and integrated behavioral science research available at the time to gain understanding about the behaviors of individuals in organizations. While Argyris claimed not to have all the answers, he sought to bring together the best research of the time to illustrate what was currently known about human behavior in the organization and to inspire readers to address gaps in the research of and frameworks for understanding human behavior in the context of an organization.

**Political frame.** The third frame of the Bolman and Deal's four-frame model is the political frame (1991a/2017). Those who lead within the political frame are aware of hidden agendas, limited resources, and the need for difficult choices to be made (Bolman & Deal, 2017). They understand that policies and practices "emerge from an ongoing process of bargaining and negotiation among major interest groups" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 199). The political frame draws from the work of political scientist James G. March and economist Richard Cyert (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

In their book *Behavioral Theory of the Firm*, Cyert and March (1963) describe organizations as mechanisms that work to adjust conflict and implement decisions. According to Augier and March (2008), the core premise in Cyert and March's theory is that organizations are made up of individuals and groups of individuals who have different goals. These groups, known as coalitions, are then broken down into subcoalitions, in which members continuously negotiate and bargain to obtain scarce resources needed to achieve organizational goals. Their theory also

stated that “side payments” or incentives are needed to keep essential team members, as decisions made by organizational members will not be favorable to all employees (Cyert & March, 1963). Cyert and March (1963) developed four-main decision-making rules that organizations use to make decisions more manageable:

Quasi resolution of conflict (dividing complex conflicts into smaller parts and delegating to sub-coalitions to address), uncertainty avoidance (solve problems as they arise rather than predict and plan for future problems that do not exist yet), problemistic search (finding a specific solution to a problem when a problem transpires), and organizational learning (adaptation of goals and rules as needed). (p. 116)

The work of Cyert and March (1963) can be seen in the five assumptions of the political frame:

1. Organizations are coalitions of different individuals and interest groups.
2. Coalition members have enduring differences in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality.
3. Most important decisions involve allocating scarce resources – deciding who gets what.
4. Scarce resources and enduring differences put conflict at the center of the day-to-day dynamics and make power the most important asset.
5. Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying from their own interests. (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 184)

These five assumptions illustrate that power dynamics in an organization are inevitable. Thus, according to Bolman and Deal (2017), as there are differences both internal and external to the organization that disrupt homeostasis, power is key to move forward organizational goals through ongoing negotiation and bargaining for scarce resources.

**Symbolic Frame.** The final frame in the four-frame model is the symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 1991a/2017). The symbolic frame is focused on creating a shared vision, purpose, and commitment to work – in essence, a “shared sense of mission and identity” (Bolman & Deal, 1991b, p. 512). A leader who can motivate a team to understand and feel the significance of their work, praise performance, and celebrate successes, can be instrumental in developing a team that “discovers its soul” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 277). In the development of this frame, Bolman and Deal were influenced by disciplines such as organizational theory, sociology, political science, magic, and neurolinguistic programming (2017). One of the key influencers of Bolman and Deal in their development of the symbolic frame was Geert Hofstede. Hofstede (1984) published about his international research across 40 companies and 20 languages in *Culture’s Consequences*. The data collected in 1968 and 1972 illuminated the various “mental programs” that have developed over an individual’s life that they bring to the organization (Hofstede, 1984, p.11). Hofstede (1984) defined four main ways in which cultures differed: power distance (the measure of power inequality between supervisors and employees), uncertainty avoidance (the discomfort one has with ambiguity), individualism (how the individual exists versus the collective group), and masculinity contrasted with femininity (the degree to which the culture emphasizes achievement and ambition versus nurturing and caregiving in one’s career). Hofstede’s influence is seen in the five assumptions of the symbolic frame:

1. What is most important is not what happens but what it means.
2. Activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience situations differently.

3. In the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, symbols arise to help people resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith.
4. Events and processes are often more important for what they express or signal than for their intent or outcomes. Their emblematic form weaves a tapestry of secular myths, heroes and heroines, rituals, ceremonies, and stories to help people find purpose and passion.
5. Culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise to accomplish desired ends. (Bolman & Deal, 2017, pp. 241-242)

As illustrated above, Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) were highly influenced by a diverse representation of scholars and researchers as they developed the four-frame model. Influences of the four-frame model have also come from the dearth of research, literature, and theories about the nature of leadership.

### **Evaluating Leaders Use of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames**

Following the development of their four-frame model, Bolman and Deal conducted two similar mixed-methods studies, one in 1991 and the second in 1992 (Bolman & Deal, 1991b, 1992). In these studies, both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to learn how different managers and leaders in different sectors utilize the four-frames and which of the frames were used most often (Bolman & Deal, 1991b, 1992). The qualitative approaches in both 1991 and 1992 were identical. Each sought to assess narrative accounts of critical incidents in which managers and leaders had been involved (Bolman & Deal 1991b, 1992). Bolman and Deal's 1991 (1991b) study comprised 145 higher education administrators, most of which were located in the United States; 48 principals from Florida; 15 superintendents from Minnesota; and over 220 school administrators from the Republic of Singapore. Bolman and Deal's 1992 (1992)

study surveyed 50 principals from Florida, 90 principals and school administrators from Oregon, and 274 school administrators (mostly principals) from the Republic of Singapore. Both qualitative studies revealed that managers and leaders rarely use more than two frames (Bolman & Deal, 1991b; Bolman & Deal, 1992). Specifically, the 1991 study revealed that in all three groups of administrators, the structural frame was utilized about 60 percent of the time, while the symbolic frame was utilized only 20 percent of the time (Bolman & Deal, 1991b). Additionally, administrators in the United States utilized the human resource frame in over 70 percent of the cases (Bolman & Deal, 1991b). The 1992 study by Bolman and Deal had similar results that leaders rarely use more than two frames, fewer than 25 percent used more than two frames, and only five percent of leaders utilized all four frames.

The quantitative portion of the Bolman and Deal's (1991b, 1992) studies utilized the 32-item Leadership Orientation Instrument (LOI) (Bolman & Deal, 1990) to measure leaders' utilization of the four frames. In 1991, the LOI was utilized with a convenience sample of more than 285 administrators and their colleagues in the United States and abroad (Bolman & Deal, 1991b). After the mean score for each of the frames was calculated, the samples from the United States showed the highest utilization of the human resource and structural frames. In contrast, the international sample's mean scores were highest for the structural and symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 1991b). The survey administered also contained two questions about manager and leadership effectiveness. Using a regression analysis, Bolman and Deal (1991b) found that managerial effectiveness was most commonly associated with the structural frame, and leadership effectiveness was most associated with the symbolic and political frame. The outcomes of the study suggested that to be effective managers and leaders, one must understand the four frames and know how to utilize them in their work (Bolman & Deal, 1991b). Bolman

and Deal's 1992 study utilized the same statistical measures to assess leadership and managerial effectiveness. Results were similar to the results of the 1991 study in that the structural frame was most indicative of managerial effectiveness, while the use of the symbolic frame was most indicative of leadership effectiveness. Bolman and Deal's studies (1991b, 1992) illustrate that the ability for managers and leaders to utilize multiple frames is essential to effectiveness.

### **Use of the Four-Frame Model in Higher Education**

The four-frame model has been applied frequently in the area of higher education (Bensimon, 1989; Bolman & Deal, 1991b,1992; Kezar et al., 2008; McArdle, 2013; Monahan & Shah, 2011; Scott, 1999; Tan et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2008). Though most of the research has examined the four-frame model as it relates to higher education, there is one study, a doctoral dissertation, in which the researcher inquired about the use of the four-frame model within the context of Title IX coordination (Weber, 2016). The following is a review of the literature related to the utilization of the four-frame model in higher education.

Bensimon (1989) utilized Bolman and Deal's (1984) four-frame model in his qualitative study of 32-university presidents. In his study, Bensimon used a semi-structured interview protocol to inquire about presidents' definitions of good presidential leadership. Through the process of content analysis, he found that 13 presidents utilized one frame, 11 presidents utilized two frames, seven utilized three frames, and only one utilized all four frames. The research indicated that college and university presidents were more likely to use a multi-frame approach, while community college presidents were more likely to use a single frame approach. Additionally, the study found that novice presidents who had never served as a president at another institution were more likely to utilize single-frame leadership. Bensimon speculated that

this could be, in part, because those who are more experienced in presidential leadership have worked through more complex situations and decision making in their careers.

McArdle (2013) explored leadership frames of fourth-generation community college presidents, the administrators who report to them, and the way in which presidents and administrators can utilize multiple frames in a leadership challenge. This mixed-methods study included the administration of the LOI (Bolman & Deal, 1990), as well as narrative accounts of a leadership challenge experienced by the president and administrators. From an initial sample of 23 community colleges, a total of 18 presidents and 102 administrators completed the LOI (McArdle, 2013). In addition, six presidents who supervised three or more administrators provided a total of 25 narrative accounts of leadership challenges they had experienced. Quantitative results indicated 68 percent of presidents used more than one frame. Through phenomenological data analyzation methods, McArdle (2013) found that of the six presidents, two utilized four-frames, two utilized three-frames, and two utilized only one-frame. Of the administrators whose responses were analyzed qualitatively, five used all four frames, ten used three frames, and seven used two frames, and only three used one frame. Thus, McArdle (2013) concluded that qualitative data methods may be a more accurate means of understanding and reporting the utilization of Bolman & Deal's four-frame model.

Monahan and Shah (2011) examined the leadership frames of 254 university presidents at Carnegie Foundation classified Masters I institutions through quantitative data collection methods. Results indicated that the majority of respondents utilized all four frames. The utilization of the four frames did not vary based on gender, ethnicity, age, or marital status. According to the authors, the study confirmed that the use of multiple frames is essential to

university presidents, as they must work with internal and external constituents to quickly manage and respond to challenges they are faced with on a daily basis.

Scott (1999) evaluated the leadership and management of athletic directors through Bolman and Deal's four-frame model. The researcher utilized quantitative data collection methods in which leaders (athletic directors) and their colleagues (coaching staff) rated how frequently leaders utilized the four frames in leadership behaviors and how the employee perceived organizational dynamics. Results illustrated the majority of athletic directors utilized the structural frame; however, 100 percent of the athletic directors perceived themselves to lead through the human resource frame. The study highlighted that leaders may lack self-awareness of how they are perceived in a department, which could cause strained working relationships. Implications for practice include educating leaders and managers in sport about the four frames and how the utilization of multiple frames could have a positive impact on the organizational environment.

Tan, Hee, and Paiw (2015) utilized the four-frame model to study the frames utilized by a vice chancellor at a private university in Malaysia. The researchers employed qualitative data collection methods via interviews with the vice chancellor and six of his direct reports, document analysis, and direct observation. Data were analyzed via a total of four qualitative and quantitative methods with Atlas.ti software. First, deductive was used to identify the parts of the transcripts that met coding criteria for each of the four frames. Next, data were analyzed via constant comparative method and constantly compared to coding criteria. Then, researchers reduced the data and developed a matrix with the four frames as thematic codes. The final level of data analysis, a content analysis, consisted of researchers evaluating the quantitative output from interviews as related to the four frames. Study results revealed that the vice chancellor was



perceived to use three of the four-frames: structural, human resource, and symbolic. The frame that the vice chancellor lacked was the political frame. Researchers suggested a future study comparing vice chancellors at public and private institutions could be beneficial to better understand the differences in the public and private sectors of education.

### **Use of the Four-Frame Model within Title IX Coordination**

Through an exploratory approach with a phenomenological design, Weber (2016) examined the experiences of 12 Title IX Coordinators with a range of educational and work experiences from public, private, community, and religiously-affiliated institutions across the Midwestern United States. In her research, Weber (2016) sought to understand how Title IX Coordinators define their roles and are positioned organizationally and to learn about job qualifications Coordinators possess so she could provide the Office for Civil Rights with an in-depth look at the views and experiences of Title IX Coordinators across institutional type working to comply with federal Title IX mandates.

Weber (2016) utilized the structural frame of the four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (1991a) as the conceptual framework of her study as she was interested in the way in which the organization was structured and coordinated through hierarchy, power, and authority. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews, artifact collection, job descriptions, and a four-hour, direct observation of four Title IX Coordinators at each institutional type studied. Weber found evidence of four overarching themes as related to the experiences of Title IX Coordinators. First, Title IX Coordinators reported it was not until the release of the 2011 “Dear Colleague” Letter that institutions began to turn their attention to Title IX compliance in the area of sexual misconduct. Next, there remains a great deal of ambiguity from the Office for Civil Rights in stipulating what was required from institutional Title IX Coordinators. For example, there is a

great deal of variance in Title IX office structures and Title IX Coordinator training. Third, there is confusion across institutions about how the Title IX Coordinator should be supervised. Finally, as many Title IX structures are modeled after student conduct processes and offices, there is uncertainty around ensuring that the Title IX office is positioned organizationally to meet the needs of the institution as was intended by the Office for Civil Rights. From her research, Weber (2016) made recommendations to both the Office for Civil Rights and higher education institutions regarding Title IX compliance. Weber (2016) recommended the Office for Civil Rights provide clear expectations and directives to higher education institutions about their expectations for Title IX compliance as they did in the 2011 (Ali, 2011) and 2015 Letters (Lhamon, 2015). Additionally, Weber recommended the Office for Civil Rights provide support for those serving in the role of Title IX Coordinator through clear expectations of the job duties and expectations they have for the structure of institutional Title IX Coordinators using an enhanced website, training materials, and webinars. For higher education institutions, Weber recommended there be one, full-time staff member to lead institutional coordination and that universities follow the Office for Civil Rights' recommendation to have the Title IX Coordinator report to the highest-ranking university official as they hold the most power within and external to the university.

## **Chapter Summary**

Chapter Two provided a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to this study. First, the history of higher education was presented with an emphasis on the establishment, implementation, and enforcement of Title IX as through political changes and federal legislation as related specifically to the prevention and response to sexual misconduct. I provided a review of the model of andragogy as well as a review of the literature on leadership. As the leadership

literature is extensive, I focused on and provided a critical review of trait, behavioral, contingency, and situational leadership theories as they are leadership theories central to the field of higher education. Finally, I concluded the chapter with a review of the four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) within the context of higher education and the role of Title IX Coordinator. The following chapter will outline the methodology and methods that will be used in this study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

As Chapters One and Two discussed, sexual misconduct in higher education is a critical sociocultural and organizational issue. Title IX Coordinators at higher education institutions across the nation are federally mandated to prevent and respond to instances of sexual misconduct so that students, faculty, and staff can access their rights to education free from discrimination on the basis of sex. Currently, there is a lack of understanding about the experiences of Title IX Coordinators as they lead institutional Title IX compliance. Chapter One provided a background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions to be answered. Chapter Two provided a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to this study to aid the reader in understanding the complexities of leading Title IX coordination in higher education through the history of higher education in the United States; research about the prevalence of sexual misconduct in higher education; and a review of the evolution of Title IX, beginning with the Civil Rights movements to present day. In addition, Chapter Two provided a chronological review of the literature regarding leadership in higher education and the four-frame theory by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) within the context of higher education and Title IX coordination.

As a reminder, the purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand the stories of Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. The research questions that guided this study were:

- 1) What are the stories of Title IX Coordinators that have brought them to their position as Title IX Coordinator?

- 2) What are the stories of the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators?
- 3) What are the shared stories of the learning experiences as they lead institutional Title IX compliance?

This chapter will present my research process and research design including, epistemology, theoretical framework or perspective, methodology, and methods. I will include the research context and participant selection. Then, I will share my data collection methods, data analysis process and ways in which I ensured trustworthiness. I will complete the chapter with a discussion of my subjectivity, and the chapter will end with a conclusion.

### **Research Design**

Social science research is the investigation of human activity and interactivity that is utilized heavily in psychology, sociology, educational research, nursing, and health related fields (Black, 2002). As in all research, social scientists must develop a research design or “*a logical plan for getting from here to there*, where *here* may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and *there* is some set of conclusions (answers) about the questions” (Yin, 2014, p. 28, emphasis in original). In social science research, it is vital for the researcher to choose the appropriate research design that will allow for the research questions to be answered with the resources readily available (Black, 2002). Thus, beginning with conceptualization and ending with a written report (Creswell, 2007), research designs should be developed as executed so they are not overcomplicated but “systematic and manageable, yet flexible” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 6).

Social science research can be executed through a qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approach. Quantitative research utilizes statistical methods of data analysis to test a hypothesis through data in numerical form (Allen, 2017). Qualitative research can draw

conclusions from large samples, investigate relationships within the data set, examine cause and effect, control for bias through the testing of validity, and reliability (Creswell, 2015). Unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers are not limited in their approach to understanding the complexities of social phenomena through the testable observation, universal principles, and standardized knowledge; instead, qualitative researchers can choose to explore what it means to be human, not through controlling or predictive measures, but through understanding (Kim, 2016; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The detailed perspectives that can be gathered from participants through qualitative research methods allow for the voices of individuals to share their experiences from within the context of their unique life situation (Creswell, 2015). The mixed-methods approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to answer research questions and understand the research problem more completely than qualitative or quantitative research alone (Creswell, 2015).

For the purposes of this doctoral dissertation, I utilized a qualitative research design.

Qualitative research as defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as:

Multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter... qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 2)

Qualitative researchers use text instead of numbers to study and learn about the topic being studied from research participants who are experts in the context of their own lives (Flick, 2014).

Major genres of qualitative research include ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, case study, and narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2015). While these approaches to qualitative inquiry are varied, they each provide an opportunity for researchers to conduct inquiry that is interactive, emergent, and interpretative (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Regardless of the type of qualitative

research conducted, the researcher serves as the key instrument for data collection, as they interact closely with research participants to gather, analyze, and develop a comprehensive set of themes from data to answer the research question or questions being studied (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Likened to a quilt maker, the qualitative researcher pieces together the stories of individuals to understand how they interpret, make sense of, and attribute meaning to their experiences in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Epistemology.** Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge (Glense, 2016). It is how we can know about our reality and make sense of the world (Crotty, 1998; Willis, 2007). A study's epistemology provides the groundwork, or foundation, on which the researcher can determine which types of knowledge can be obtained and whether these forms of knowledge are adequate for the study being performed (Crotty, 1998). How the researcher understands knowledge and makes sense of the world has a major influence on both how the research study will be carried out and research findings presented (Glense, 2016). Thus, the researcher must identify, explain, and justify their chosen epistemology. Three major types of epistemology as referenced by Crotty (1998) are objectivism, subjectivism, and constructionism.

Objectivism is the belief that reality exists separate outside of the individual mind (Crotty, 1998). Objectivism assumes that to be considered legitimate and trustworthy, knowledge must not require justification or interpretation (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2015). For instance, a "tree in the forest is a tree, regardless of whether anyone is aware of its existence or not...when human beings recognize it as a tree, they are simply discovering a meaning that has been lying there in wait for them all along" (Crotty 1998, p. 8). Objectivists are detached from research subjects so that the interests and values of the researcher do not bias the generation of knowledge (Pratt, 1998). Thus, objectivists believe they can discover an objective truth that is empirically

verifiable, valid, generalizable, and independent of social thought and social conditions (Crotty 1998).

Subjectivism is the belief that meaning exists within the subject, and that the subject imposes meaning on an object (Crotty, 1998). Subjectivism is commonly associated with research frameworks such as critical inquiry, feminism, and postmodern perspectives and approaches (Crotty, 1998). Subjectivists do not separate the subject and object; instead, they assume that every individual observes the world from a specific place of purpose and interest. “We see the world as we are; that which we have inside, we see outside” (Pratt, 1998, p. 24). As subjectivists focus on the inner world, they seek to understand the knowledge, interests, purposes, values of individuals, and the meanings behind an action which are as important as the action itself (Schwandt, 1994).

Constructionism assumes that what constitutes knowledge depends on how people perceive and understand reality. Constructionism rejects the idea that the truth is waiting to be discovered. Instead, constructionism is based on the belief that meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with, perceive, and understand the world in which they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998). For constructionists, human beings construct knowledge as they engage with and interpret the world in a way that makes sense to them (Crotty, 1998; Pratt, 1998). For this study, constructionism was the most appropriate epistemology as this view of knowledge is grounded in that there is not an objective or absolute truth; instead, reality is a multifaceted social construct (Glense, 2016). In this sense, knowledge is not generalizable but is relative to a specific time and place in which an individual is situated, organizes, and experiences the world (Flick, 2014; Patton, 2015). Individuals construct meaning in different ways, and the construction of meaning is based on how the individual engages with and understand their world



through their cultural, historical, and social perspectives as they interact in the world (Crotty 1998; Creswell 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I conducted this qualitative research study, through the perspective of constructivist epistemology I listened to the stories of Title IX Coordinators, and I sought to understand and co-construct knowledge from information shared by study participants about their lived experiences. In doing this, I found the experience allowed for greater understanding, meaning, and ideas to emerge about the experiences of Title IX Coordinators.

**Theoretical framework.** According to Crotty (1998), a theoretical framework or perspective, is the “philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (p. 3). Simply stated, it is the scaffolding or boundaries for the study (Roberts, 2010). A theoretical framework is personal: it is how the researcher views the world; it provides a space in which one’s assumptions can be grounded; and it influences how one creates knowledge and derives meaning from research data (Crotty, 1998). Theoretical frameworks are influenced by the field in which the researcher is trained, their personal beliefs and assumptions, and their past experiences (Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998). According to Crotty (1998) some examples of theoretical frameworks qualitative researchers may utilize to guide their researcher are positivism, critical inquiry, and interpretivism.

Positivism is objectivist and is based on the belief that knowledge can only be gained through the scientific method, and scientific facts that are “both accurate and certain” (Crotty, 1998, p. 27). Critical theory is concerned with examining values and assumptions that are in place that cause conflict and oppression to exist. Critical theorists seek to challenge these oppressive social structures and bring about social action to empower human beings to rise above constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2015). For this

study, I selected interpretivism as the most appropriate epistemology. Interpretivism emphasizes that it is critical for the researcher to engage in social interaction with research participants so they can understand and interpret how they experience and make sense of the world (Glense, 2016; O'donoghue, 2006).

Interpretivism developed as researchers such as Immanuel Kant began to criticize the positivist approach to research. Kant argued there was value to be found in research conducted with individuals in which the researcher learns about their unique experiences (Glense, 2016; Schwandt, 1994). Other philosophers such as Weber and Husserl expanded the interpretivists' approach into the realm of social science research as they claimed their beliefs that individuals experience and interpret the world in very different ways (Glense, 2016). To interpretivists, research is interactive, and knowledge is co-constructed through discussions and engagement between researcher and participant in which the researcher asks participants about their experiences and perceptions of the world (Costantino, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interpretivists gather information from research participants through in-depth interactions such as interviews and site visits in which they learn from research participants (Glense, 2016).

In this study I utilized the interpretivist perspective and the four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) to guide this narrative study. As I was not looking to test a theory, or set up an experiment; instead, I was interested in understanding and interpreting the stories of Title IX Coordinators realities within the social, political, and historical context of their work (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As Title IX Coordinators are responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures at their respective institutions to ensure Title IX compliance, they must balance both internal and external factors to create necessary change.

The four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) is a means by which leaders knowingly or unknowingly navigate hierarchies found in work environments to understand challenges faced and operate efficiently and create effective solutions. The four frames – structural, human resource, political, and symbolic – can provide a “prism or lens” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 44) through which leaders can evaluate the challenges faced and avoid siloed or single frame thinking that could impede solving organizational challenges in new and innovative ways (Palmer & Dunford, 1996). The utilization of these theoretical frameworks allowed me to gain a deeper level of understanding of the experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern United States.

**Research methodology: Narrative inquiry.** A research methodology is a “strategy or plan of action” for exploring a phenomenon (Crotty, 1998, p. 7). The research methodology, or strategy, for this doctoral dissertation, was narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research procedure that focuses on stories, which are made of a beginning, middle, and end (Patton, 2015). Narrative inquiry emphasizes that the stories participants share are “a natural, obvious, and authentic window into how people structure experience and construct meaning in their lives” (Schram, 2006, p. 105). In the narrative inquiry process, the researcher collects stories about the lives of individuals via interviews. Following transcription and data analysis, the researcher tells the stories shared through written narratives about participant experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Through this narrative doctoral dissertation, I sought to understand and share through narrative the lived experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern United States.

Narrative inquiry is a methodology that is “flexible, open to multiple interpretations” (Kim, 2016, p. 11). It is a methodology that has been criticized as fantasy, immature, and

narcissistic as it lacks an agreed upon definition and rules about how narrative inquiry should be carried out (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008; Kim, 2016). As there is no agreed upon definition of narrative inquiry across individual disciplines, often times, the narrative approach can be disjointed in its application (Mertova & Webster, 2020). Additionally, due to the lack of one determined definition, and the complexity of stories being presented through narrative inquiry, it can be difficult for researchers to write up and present narrative research for publication (Kim, 2016). As narratives are retrospective stories told of the past from the narrator's point of view, they are stories that the narrator has chosen to communicate (Chase, 2005). Therefore, the stories shared by the narrator are not necessarily an answer to the researcher's question, but instead, they are the stories that the interviewee has chosen to tell. Narratives can be oral or written, and they can be topical, extended, or complete stories of an individuals' life (Chase, 2005). As narratives are the stories shared by those who have an experience, the individuals who share their stories have organized past events in their lives through their point of view; therefore, both researchers and consumers of narrative research alike need to remember that "narrative is not an objective reconstruction of life – it is a rendition of how life is perceived" (Mertova & Webster, 2020, p. 3), and it is the job of the researcher to reconstruct stories told into narratives (Kim, 2016).

In light of the criticisms of narrative inquiry, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) cite the research of scholars such as Bruner, (1986), Martin (1986), Polkinghorne (1988), and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to demonstrate the turn, or change in direction, among scholars from more empirical forms of data collection towards narrative inquiry. The four themes of the narrative turn, or change in direction to narrative research, as identified by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), are: (1) the relationship between the researcher and the researched, (2) moving from numbers to

the use of words as data, (3) moving from a focus on the general and universal to the specific, and (4) acceptance of alternative ways of knowing.

The first turn toward narrative inquiry identified by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) is a movement from positivistic research in which the researcher's objective is to observe and remain distant from research participants towards research in which the researcher interacts and engages with participants. This turn allows for the researcher and researched to understand and construct meaning within the context and culture of the participant's life through an open relationship in contrast to one that could seem detached and cold. In this turn, researchers build both a relationship and an understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

The next turn is one from data in the form of numbers to data in the form of words. Narrative researchers do not propose that narrative inquiry replace quantitative forms of inquiry, but they do purport that narrative inquiry provides rich data such as quotes of experience and the day-to-day told stories of individuals that could not be captured through empirical data collection methods (Creswell, 2007; Kim, 2016; Mertova & Webster, 2020). Data collected through qualitative stories of participant experiences can bring meaning, value, and integrity to research data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

The third turn in the field of narrative inquiry is from the general to the particular. In this turn, research shifts from generalizable data to a means by which one can gain a deeper understanding of context specific experiences (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). For example, the stories of those engaged in the women's and civil rights movements of the 1970s provided rich contextual information through which the experiences of individuals could be understood (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). In this sense, narrative inquiry provides a means by which the storied lives of participants can be honored and utilized as a basis for knowledge that is essential

for understanding the life of another, thus affirming that the explanatory power that comes through narrative inquiry can aid others in better understanding the human experience as a whole (Clandinin, 2013; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

The final turn toward narrative inquiry, blurring knowing, means that one accepts that there are multiple ways to know and understand the human experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This turn entails turning from positivistic and post-positivistic views of science that can be deemed valid and reliable to research through narrative that is authentic and trustworthy in its findings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). In this turn, there is a movement away from a singular way of knowing to an evolving knowledge based on context, culture, and frames of reference (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). As technology has advanced, items such as handheld recording devices, video cameras, cameras, and television have aided individuals and groups in their ability to share their personal narratives through television shows, blogs, podcasts, etc., (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Riessman, 2008). Hence, affirming narrative inquiry is a way in which the individuals of the world can be understood through their stories (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

The turn to narrative demonstrates that narrative inquiry is a unique and promising means by which qualitative researchers can delve into the stories and lives of research participants. Critical to narrative inquiry are the stories which are co-constructed and reconstructed through a trusting relationship built between the researcher and participant (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Mertova & Webster, 2020). This trusting relationship can be built between the researcher and participants over time. As the researcher is positioned in a place of authority in the interview process, part of building a trusting relationship is through active listening as the participant shares their story (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

In this study, I sought to capture stories of Title IX Coordinators who are currently working to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. I worked to build rapport with the study participants, and I kept in mind that the context, organizational culture, structure and backgrounds from which participants come is uniquely complex. Through the stories shared and the co-constructing meaning I sought to understand and learn from their experiences what it means to serve in the role of Title IX Coordinator.

**Research context.** Context is defined by Merriam-Webster (2020) as the conditions in which something exists or occurs. As qualitative researchers are concerned with gathering data from a natural setting, the context in which the research takes place is important as it provides a means by which the experiences of participants can be interpreted and understood at a point in time (Patton, 2015). This study took place in the context of the public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. For the purposes of this study, Southeastern United States includes the public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern Conference (SEC) and the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). The SEC was established in 1933, is comprised of 14 higher education institutions in the Southeastern United States (Southeastern Conference, 2018). Of the 14 higher education institutions in the SEC, 13 meet the study designation of public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities, as detailed in Table 1. The ACC was established in 1953 when seven members of the SEC moved to create their own conference (Martin, 1999). The ACC has fifteen-member institutions, nine meet the study designation of public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities, as detailed in Table 2.1.

Public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the SEC and ACC were chosen for this study as they presented an opportunity to understand the experiences of Title IX Coordinators from a

sample of individuals who lead Title IX compliance at institutions with similar missions, education and research agendas, funding structures, and cultural heritages.

**Participants.** This study utilized a purposeful sampling method with criterion-based sampling strategies. Purposeful sampling is utilized when the researcher seeks to select study participants because of their ability to purposefully inform an understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2015). The sample for this study was identified through researching the institutions in the SEC and ACC designated as R1: Doctoral Universities by the Carnegie Commission (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2019b). Criterion-based sampling means that participants must meet a predetermined criterion (Patton, 2015). To be included in the study, participants had to meet the following sampling criteria: 1) they must be currently employed as the lead Title IX Coordinator at a public, Research 1: Doctoral University in the SEC or ACC and 2) they must have served in the role for a minimum of one-year.

As detailed in Table 2.1, there were twenty-two educational institutions that met study criteria. One institution in the SEC, Vanderbilt University, and five institutions in the ACC – Boston College, Duke University, Syracuse University, University of Miami, University of Notre Dame, and Wake Forest University – did not meet the criteria of being a public, Research 1: Doctoral University, and therefore were not included in study sample. Additionally, only the lead Title IX Coordinator at universities who had served in the role for at least one year were included in the study.

This sampling criteria is important to note as some in the institutions may also employ Deputy Title IX Coordinators who share Title IX responsibilities. Therefore, I only sought to interview Title IX Coordinators who were serving in the lead Title IX Coordinator role for at



**Table 2.1***Public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States*

Institution Name	Conference	Public	Research 1: Doctoral	Study Inclusion
Auburn University	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Boston College	ACC	No	Yes	No
Clemson University	ACC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Duke University	ACC	No	Yes	No
Florida State University	ACC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia Institute of Tech.	ACC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Louisiana State University	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mississippi State University	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Carolina State Univ.	ACC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Syracuse University	ACC	No	Yes	No
Texas A&M University	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Alabama	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Arkansas	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Florida	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Georgia	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Kentucky	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Louisville	ACC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Miami	ACC	No	Yes	No
University of Mississippi	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Missouri	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Univ. of N. Carolina at Chapel Hill	ACC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Notre Dame	ACC	No	Yes	No
University of Pittsburgh	ACC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of South Carolina	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Tennessee	SEC	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Virginia	ACC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vanderbilt University	SEC	No	Yes	No
Virginia Polytechnic Institute	ACC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wake Forest University	ACC	No	No	No

least one year as they are the individuals ultimately responsible for institutional Title IX compliance. The following section illustrates the eight-month process I undertook to recruit and engage Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern United States in this study.

I obtained Internal Review Board (IRB) approval on June 2, 2020 (see Appendix A). Initially the study was designed to recruit Title IX Coordinators in the SEC, and I reached out via individualized e-mails to the thirteen Title IX Coordinators in the SEC who met study inclusion criteria to elicit their voluntary participation in the study (See Appendix B). In the recruitment e-mail, I provided potential participants with an overview of the study, informed them of the study's purpose and methodology, requested their participation in the study, and invited them to set up a time for an interview with me. To this e-mail I attached the IRB approved informed consent form which specified the details of the study (see Appendix C) and the interview protocol questions (See Appendix D). Of the thirteen Title IX Coordinators I e-mailed to participate in the study, three Title IX Coordinators responded almost immediately to my initial request for participation. The first individual stated they did not have time to speak to me and that they would not be able to participate in the study. I replied to them, and thanked them for letting me know. The second response came from a Title IX Coordinator who agreed to set up a date and time to meet with me later in the month of June via Zoom, and after a few e-mails, we were able to coordinate a time to speak. The third Title IX Coordinator stated they would be willing to participate in the study; however, they never responded to my four follow up e-mails requesting to schedule a date and time to speak.

After emailing potential participants three times as stipulated in my IRB application, and only being able to successfully recruit one participant, I realized that recruiting participants for the study was going to be more difficult than I had anticipated. After consulting with my

committee chair, I submitted what would be the first of five revisions to the IRB. In the first revision, I requested to use two prior interviews I conducted with Title IX Coordinators in the SEC during a class project in a Narrative Research and Learning course I completed during Spring 2020. The IRB revision was approved (see Appendix E) included an updated outreach e-mail (see Appendix F) an informed consent (See Appendix G) to use interview transcripts from a previous interview in which I utilized the same interview protocol (See Appendix D). Within a month, both Title IX Coordinators responded with signed informed consent forms which allowed me to utilize their interviews in the study.

Following further consultation with my dissertation chair, we developed a plan to recruit more participants for the study. In my new strategy to recruit study participants, I turned to a colleague and Title IX Coordinator in the SEC who had professional relationships with the other Title IX Coordinators in the SEC. This individual agreed to assist me in participant recruitment. Following a third approved revision to the IRB application (see Appendix H), they reached out to Title IX Coordinators via e-mail once (See Appendix I). This one e-mail did not elicit any responses, so once again I revised the IRB application a fourth time to obtain approval for the individual to reach out via two subsequent e-mails (See Appendix J). Following this outreach (see Appendix K), two Title IX Coordinators responded stating they would be willing to participate in the study. I followed up individually with each of these Title IX Coordinators three times. After the third outreach, only one responded to my request, and I was able to schedule an interview with them in late October.

In November 2020, another Title IX Coordinator in the SEC responded to one of my multiple recruitment e-mails and was apologetic for not responding sooner. They stated they would not be able to speak with me until December. We scheduled an interview during the first

week of December, but thirty minutes before we were supposed to speak they e-mailed stating they would need to cancel and reschedule the interview for the following week. I replied and asked to schedule the interview three times, but I never received a response. In January 2021, sent a final request for participation in which I stated my dissertation advisor asked me to send a final request to them. They replied within three hours, and we were able to schedule and complete an interview in January 2021.

As previously mentioned as of November 2020, I had only been able to recruit four participants for the study, all of which were from the SEC. Following consultation with my dissertation chair, I again revised the IRB application. This time, I added public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the ACC to the study, and this revision to the IRB was approved in November 2020 (see Appendix L). The ACC was selected as it was formed from the SEC, and ACC schools are in the eastern region of the United States; thus, the study expanded from public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the SEC to public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. Following IRB approval, I reached out via e-mail (see Appendix B) to the nine Title IX Coordinators who met participant criteria. Following my outreach, two ACC Title IX Coordinators scheduled an interview date and time with me in December 2020 and January 2021 respectively.

My goal for this study was to recruit six to eight participants; and due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and release of the 2020 Final Rule it proved to be quite difficult to engage Title IX Coordinators in this study. As there is no exact science for how many participants are adequate for a qualitative study my goal was not to generalize the information shared by participants, but instead to examine the phenomenon being studied, and reach data saturation

(Creswell, 2015; Given, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Following the seventh interview, I was confident that I had achieved data saturation.

**Data collection.** Marshall and Rossman (2016) cite four primary methods in which data can be collected in qualitative research studies: interviews, documents, setting participation, and observation. For the purposes of this study, my primary means of data collection was through interviews. As Title IX Coordinators work at institutions spanning thousands of miles across the Southeastern United States, traveling to each institution to conduct face to face interviews while working a full-time job in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic was not feasible. During my interviews and follow up communication with participants I asked them to share their most up-to-date resume and organizational chart for review and analysis. Setting participation and observation was not a means of data collection for this study due to the limitations of travel as previously mentioned due to both distance between institutions and the COVID-19 global pandemic. In addition, due to the extremely sensitive nature of the issues in which Title IX Coordinators operate, setting participation and observation were not feasible. Therefore, for the purposes of this study data collection consisted of interviews and document review and analysis.

**Interviews.** Interviews are a question-answer sequence between two or more individuals (Roulston, 2013). Interviews provide qualitative researchers the opportunity to build relationships, learn about the lives of individuals, and discover information such as feelings, thoughts, knowledge and meanings they attach to their experience which cannot be directly observed (Gemignani, 2014; Patton, 2015). Interviews can be highly structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2013). A highly structured interview contains a predetermined sequencing of questions that can be administered orally or in written format, a semi-structured interview allows for flexibility in both questions to be asked and the

wording and ordering of the questions, and an unstructured interview, the most flexible interview type, can be conversational in approach and used to explore a phenomenon in which the researcher may not have much knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2013). In determining the structure of an interview, it is vital for me to consider the research topic, research questions, and purpose of the study so the appropriate space for the researcher and participant to engage in information sharing can occur (deMarrais, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

For the purposes of this study, I utilized a narrative framework which included a semi-structured interview guide, that was based off of my research questions to guide the interview process (see Appendix D). My intention in utilizing a narrative framework was to allow for the stories of individuals experiences to be shared with the goal of generating thorough accounts of an individual's experience through a trusting relationship between the researcher and interviewee (Riessman, 2008). As I developed the semi-structured interview guide for this study, I followed the guidance of Kim (2016), and developed questions that allow for interviewees to freely share their stories from their perspective and experience in their own voice.

Aside from demographic questions, all questions on the semi-structured interview guide were open ended, which allowed participants to provide detailed answers and elaborate on questions asked of them in their own words (Roulston, 2013). The interview guide included scripted follow up questions to solicit more information from participants and allows for flexibility so I could ask questions in different order or utilize probes to follow up with the interviewee to solicit greater detail or more information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015; Roulston, 2013). The semi-structured interview guide for this study was divided into four sections or phases – introduction, listening, conversation, and conclusion (Anderson &

Kikpatrick, 2016). The first phase provided the opportunity for me to introduce the interview process, which included information about recording, reviewing the informed consent, and sharing my appreciation for the participants willingness to be a part of the research study. During this first phase, I also asked introductory demographic questions to allow for me to get to know the participant.

In the second phase of the interview, I asked participants to share stories about how they became the Title IX Coordinator at their respective institution, their experience as a leader, and about any major learning experience as Title IX Coordinator. During this phase, I sought to position myself as the listener and worked to refrain from interrupting participants so they have the space and time to share their stories. This phase of listening is referred to by Kim (2016) as the narration phase. During the narration phase, I worked on listening and engaging with stories shared by participants. As recommended by Connelly and Clandinin (1990):

Listen first to the practitioner's [participant's] story, and that it is the practitioner [participant] who first tells his or her story ... this means the [participant] who has long been silenced in the research relationship, is given the time and space to tell his or her story so that it too gains the authority and validity that the research story has long had. (p. 4)

With five of the participants I was able to listen to the stories they shared and during the interviews conducted via Zoom evaluate the way in which they talked, used body language, and expressed emotion. Two participants chose to leave their cameras off during their interview, one participant stated they did not have a camera on their computer and the other shared they were home with children and did not want the camera on during the interview. In interviews in which participants chose to leave their cameras on, I was able to use multiple senses as referred to by

(Kim, 2016) to engage with the participant and validate them as they shared their story. During this time, I sought to follow the direction the participant took in sharing their stories, keeping in mind that “although narrative interviewing requires us to give up control and follow the interviewee’s leads, it does not mean that we should enter our interview empty-headed” (Kim, 2016, p. 166).

The third phase of a narrative interview is known as the questioning or conversational phase (Anderson & Kikpatrick, 2016; Kim 2016). In this phase, I worked to co-construct information with the participant, rather than solely collect information. In this phase, I attempted to use the language of the participant to delve deeper into aspects of stories shared to create deeper knowledge and understanding. In this phase, I was able to use my experience as a Deputy Title IX Coordinator in these situations with participants. These opportunities to delve deeper were not linear, but instead I worked to shift between listening and questioning phases, all while seeking to remain mindful that the purpose of the narrative interview is to listen and observe, and then engage in conversation. As dialogue develops and knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and participant, the researcher should be mindful to allow for conversation to develop, structure conversations as needed, encourage the participant to talk about difficult topics and allow conversation to develop, share as learning occurs in the conversation, examine assumptions, and consider power-in-relationship (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007).

The final phase of the narrative interview is the conclusion (Anderson & Kikpatrick, 2016). During this phase, I thanked the participants for their time and the stories and information shared. I asked if there was anything else they would like to share, clarify, and/or if there are any final thoughts they would like to provide. All participants took me up on my offer to share a concluding thought out idea from our time together. I concluded each interview with information



about the next steps of the research process which included transcription information and opportunities for member checking.

Interviews ranged in length from 47 to 81 minutes. All seven participants were interviewed via Zoom Video Communications (Zoom) sessions, and as previously mentioned, five of the seven participants enabled their cameras which allowed for interview transcriptions to be enhanced through nonverbal cues, facial expressions, and other visual cues that would not have been possible without video feed (Tuttas, 2015). During interviews I recorded field notes electronically and created a record of reflective memos of my experience and take-a-ways of the interview process. Recordings were utilized to transcribe the interview, and identifiable information from interviews was de-identified and pseudonyms were used in lieu of the participants names. Participants were provided the opportunity to choose their own pseudonym, but only one of the seven participants chose their pseudonym, the remaining participants stated they wanted me to choose their pseudonym for them, and I agreed.

Interviews were transcribed within seven days of participant interviews and provided electronically participants via secure e-mail. In the e-mail to participants, they were notified they had 14 days to review their information and provide any feedback, edits, or changes they would like to see in the transcription (see Appendix M). In the e-mail, I also invited participants to a second Zoom interview in which they would have had the opportunity to clarify information provided in the first interview and/or provide more information to me about their experience as Title IX Coordinator. One of the seven participants, one replied within the fourteen-day feedback window to provide edits to the transcript and data they wanted redacted from the interview transcription. Unfortunately, none of the study participants agreed to a second interview with me. I attribute their lack of willingness to participate in a second interview was due to the high-stress

and demanding nature of their roles in an especially challenging year both from a health and wellbeing and Title IX perspective.

**Documents.** A document is a text file, photograph, chart, or other visual material gathered or created by the researcher or provided by others (Schensul, 2008). Documents provide a means by which interviews can be supplemented and can provide a plethora of rich information about an organization or program that can be classified, coded, and analyzed by the researcher (Patton, 2015; Schensul, 2008). Documents provide background or supplemental information that is relevant to the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). For the purposes of this study, I asked study participants to share the most recent version of their resume and an organizational chart so I could learn more about their education and career backgrounds as well as the organizational positioning and supervision lines within the context of Title IX. The purpose of obtaining these documents was to gain a more comprehensive understanding and opportunity to compare and contrast participant educational and professional background as well as their positioning in their institution. I requested these documents in the recruitment e-mails, during the interview, and in the follow-up e-mail with participant transcripts. All participants agreed to share these documents with me; however, only two of the seven participants provided me with a resume and only one of the participants provided me with an organization chart. Therefore, I was limited in my ability to conduct an in-depth analysis or comparison of resumes and organizational structures. However, the resumes were helpful in helping me to gain a more complete understanding of two of study participants educational and professional backgrounds.

**Data analysis.** Data analysis is an essential part of the qualitative research process as it is the interpretation and classification of material gathered by the researcher that is used to make meaning and extract understanding from study participants (Flick, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

As qualitative research is an emergent field, there is variety and diversity in processes for carrying out qualitative data analysis (Flick, 2014, Saldaña, 2016). The choices a researcher makes about what to include and how to structure and present transcribed text have implications for how readers will understand the narratives of study participants (Riessman, 1993). As there is no one right way to perform narrative analysis, it is imperative that the methods utilized by the researcher are based off of the study objectives (Riessman, 2008). Some of the most common ways in which narrative analysis can be conducted are through structural, thematic, dialogic/performance, and visual analysis (Parcell & Baker, 2017; Riessman, 2008). These four approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be adapted and combined (Riessman, 2008). Regardless of the type of analysis utilized, when analyzing more than one story, it is vital for the researcher to apply a constant comparative method throughout the data analysis process to allow for the commonalities or differences across stories to be identified (Parcell & Baker, 2017).

For this study, transcribed interviews were analyzed utilizing thematic narrative analysis. Thematic data analysis allowed me to identify themes that can be segmented, categorized, analyzed, and reconstructed to provide a rich and detailed description of participant experiences as related to the research question or questions (Ayres, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

During the data analysis process, I coded, categorized, and themed interview transcription data until saturation, or the point at which no additional themes emerged (Given, 2016). In this process I utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis process which allowed for the narrative interviews to be coded in a way that allowed for stories shared to be left intact as they were analyzed for themes. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stages include: 1) familiarizing oneself with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report.

Stage one of data analysis is familiarizing oneself with the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). During the data transcription process I began to gain a preliminary knowledge of the data that was collected. In this first-stage, I took care to read through each interview transcript at least two times before I began the coding process. In this stage, I began to think about and take notes of potential patterns I found in the data. I began transcribing and analyzing data as soon as I completed an interview. This allowed for me to begin the next stage of developing codes.

In stage two I began to develop initial codes from the data. Codes, as defined by Saldaña, are “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, or essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute” (2016, p. 4). The initial codes allowed data to be broken down into parts which can be evaluated and compared (Saldaña, 2016). As coding is cyclical, (Saldaña, 2016), I worked systematically through the data set to develop a comprehensive list of codes. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend coding for as many themes and patterns as emerge in the data, and I accomplished this through narrative and in vivo coding processes. In the narrative coding process, I analyzed qualitative texts through stories shared by participants (Saldaña, 2016). The stories shared by each participant were unique based on their own life experiences and they “express[ed] a kind of knowledge that uniquely describe[d] [their] human experience” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 8) In the process of narrative coding, I utilized a thematic process which “can generate significant findings” (Riessman, 2008, p. 73) and “keep the ”story” intact for interpretive purposes (Riessman, 2008, p. 74). I then went on to code the data through the process of in vivo coding in which I “prioritize[d] and honor[ed] the participant’s voice[s] (Saldaña, 2016, p.106). In vivo codes are a “word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record (Saldaña, 2016, p.105). I completed coding

when I located as many codes as possible relevant to the study's research questions and no new codes emerged from the data.

The third-stage of Braun and Clarke's (2006) analysis process is to search for themes. To accomplish this stage, I took the comprehensive list of codes and begin to sort them into categories of potential overarching themes. A theme is "an *outcome* of coding, categorization, or analytic reflection, but is not something that is, in itself coded" (Saldaña, 2016, p.15, italics in original), as it "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). As I worked through this phase, I analyzed my codes to locate overarching themes and I took care to record all themes and sub themes as they emerged.

In the fourth stage of the analysis process, I reviewed the themes that emerged to ensure there were "clear and identifiable distinctions between each theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). In this phase I focused on refinement, and I combined themes as necessary. In this stage, I utilized Microsoft Excel as well as large sticky notes in my attic in the process as I worked to ensure that meaning is reflected across the entire data set. I also created a thematic map so that I could visually see the themes that emerged from the data set. I then reread all transcriptions while actively reflecting on the thematic map to ensure the themes were accurate and to code for any additional themes I may have previously overlooked (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

After I developed a comprehensive thematic map of the data, I moved to stage five of the data analysis process, which was to determine the essence of each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this phase I returned to the data extracted for each theme, wrote a detailed analysis of the theme, and identified the story each theme tells. During this phase of analysis, I determined how themes were related to the overarching story being told by the data in relation to my

research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As necessary, I utilized sub-themes to provide structure and hierarchy of meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The sixth and final stage of Braun and Clarke's (2006) process is to produce the final report. Chapter Four of this dissertation provides vivid examples and data extracts to provide the essence of the story across themes so that a "concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the tell data - within and across themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.93). Chapter Five concludes the dissertation and I share with readers the story of the data to answer the study's research questions.

Throughout the data analysis process, I engaged in what Saldaña (2016) refers to as analytic memo writing and recorded my reflections on the coding process, including emerging patterns, themes, and sub themes that are emerging from the data. Additionally, as this study is framed through a constructionist approach, I considered interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts as I developed codes and themes from the stories co-constructed between the interviewees and myself (Esin, Fathi, & Squire, 2014).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study is dependent on a sound research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is a means by which qualitative researchers illustrate the parameters by which their research is credible (Given, 2016). As the researcher in a qualitative study is the tool by which data is collected and analyzed, ensuring trustworthiness means there have been measures taken to ensure the interpretations and findings of the research data by researcher in fact match the data coded (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Throughout the research process I worked to ensure trustworthiness through triangulation, thick description, member checking, peer review and debriefing, and clarification of researcher bias and subjectivity.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation allows a multi-method approach to data collection and analysis to increase study trustworthiness through the use of multiple sources of data, research techniques, theory, and/or researchers (Creswell, 2007; Glense, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Multiple sources of data can allow for a deeper understanding, interpretation, credibility, and quality of the data (Glense, 2016). A few ways triangulation can occur are through investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and triangulation of data sources (Patton, 2015; Rothbauer, 2008). Investigator triangulation means that more than one investigator is engaged in data collection and analysis (Rothbauer, 2008). Theory triangulation allows for the research to be examined via different theoretical lenses (Rothbauer, 2008). Triangulation of multiple data sources increases trustworthiness as researchers can gather information from varied sources such as interview, observation, documents, and photographs (Rothbauer, 2008). In this process the researcher checks the interview against program documents or other evidence that can verify what interviewees shared with the researcher during an interview (Rothbauer, 2008; Patton, 2015). In this study, I sought to triangulate data through two data sources. The primary source of study data came from interview transcripts, and I planned for the second source of data to come from the resumes and organizational documents provided by study participants. Because only two participants sharing resumes and one participant sharing an organizational chart, I was unable to carry out data triangulation; however, I was able to use triangulation in my analysis and comparison of interview data from participants as well as reviewing, reflecting, and studying my research notes.

**Thick description.** Thick description is a highly descriptive and detailed presentation of the setting and/or findings of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thick description provides a means by which the reader of a qualitative study can enter the study being described, as it allows

the reader to gain a greater understanding of the study context, participant interviews, and researcher observations (Glense, 2016; Patton, 2015). Thick description permits the reader to obtain enough description about the lives of study participants that they can both understand the interpretations of the researcher and appreciate the portrayal of the study participants (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Patton, 2015). Throughout this research process, I recorded thick and rich descriptions of study participants and my interactions with them in interview sessions thorough my field notes. In my presentation of research findings, quotes from participant interview and field notes are included. As a caution, Patton (2015) warned against too much thick description, which could result in a muddled research product, so I sought to achieve a balance of providing enough, but not too much thick description so that someone reading the study can understand the context and experience of the study participants.

**Member checking.** Member checking is the process of returning initial results back to study participants to determine if information is accurate (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that member checking is one of best ways in which the researcher can establish trustworthiness and credibility. Member checking can occur along multiple points of the research process: during data collection, transcription, interpretation and results phases of the qualitative research process (Creswell, 2007). In this study, I conducted member checks by soliciting feedback from study participants following interview transcriptions. Within seven days of the interviews, I e-mailed transcriptions to study participants and asked them to review and provide feedback about the data to ensure that the data recorded is an accurate representation of information the participant shared with me. In my communication via e-mail with participants, (see Appendix M), I let them know they had 14 days to review their transcripts and provide feedback to me. I also invited participants to a second Zoom interview with me to clarify or add



to any information in they previously shared. As previously mentioned, one of the seven participants provided edits to their interview transcription, and none of the participants chose to schedule a follow up interview with me. The participant who redacted information from did not share their reason for editing their transcription, and unfortunately, their edits removed a great deal of the narrative depth and stories of their experiences.

**Peer debriefing.** Peer debriefing is regarded as one of a complement of techniques used to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research through the use of external peers. Also known as analytic triangulation, peer debriefing, is a process in which the researcher requests a peer or peers external to the research project probe the researcher at multiple stages of the research process, including study design, coding, data analysis, and research drafts (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Nguyen, 2008). Through the process of peer debriefing, the researcher creates a space to be asked about processes and interpretations of data to ensure trustworthiness (Glense, 2016, Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). For this doctoral dissertation, I met regularly with my advisor, who also served as doctoral committee chair to review transcriptions, codes, categories, and themes to gain a second opinion about data findings.

In order to ensure trustworthiness of a study, “researchers need to develop strategies to manage, track, and review data throughout project implementation to maintain integrity during data collection and analysis” (Given, 2016, p. 76). In an effort to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of my study, I utilized triangulation, thick description, member checking, peer review and debriefing, and paying careful attention to and working to recognize and monitor my bias and subjectivity as the researcher.

**Subjectivity statement.** A subjectivity statement is a summary of who the researcher is in relation to what and whom is being studied (Preissle, 2008). Researcher subjectivity can

include the researcher's life experiences as well as social, cultural, and political factors that influence and contribute to a researcher's biases and assumptions (Louis & Barton, 2002). This study about the leadership and learning of Title IX Coordinators is of particular interest to me as I serve as a Deputy Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Title IX at a higher education institution in the Southeastern United States. When I began this study, I remained cognizant of:

The long journey we are embarking upon arises out of an awareness on our part that, at every point in our research – in our observing, our interpreting, our reporting, and everything else we do as researchers – we inject a host of assumptions. (Crotty, 1998, p. 17)

While I am not a Title IX Coordinator, I do have an insider/outsider perspective, or emic/etic, that slants my perspective and it was essential for me to consider and reflect upon as I progressed in my research. I have worked on issues related to Title IX since I began my career at the university in early 2012. I was hired at the university as a Coordinator, and over the past almost ten years, I have been promoted to the roles of assistant director, associate director, and then director at the institution's health and wellness office. In my work at the health and wellness office, one of my responsibilities was to build the institution's programming and capacity to prevent sexual misconduct. This was accomplished through establishing a peer health education program, creating active bystander trainings, developing and nationalizing large-scale campus wide events, and creating opportunities for engagement and learning for students, faculty, and staff. In 2015, I submitted a grant application on behalf of the university to the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women to reduce sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking on campus. The grant was funded and for just over three years provided in total \$299,821 to the institution to build capacity around the unique challenge's universities

encounter when working to prevent and respond to these issues. This grant allowed the university to create and institutionalize a Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator, a position that I supervised in my role as associate director. About two and a half years ago, I was recruited to apply for a Deputy Title IX Coordinator position in the Office of Title IX. In this role, I am responsible for the planning, training, and evaluation of all Title IX-related prevention, including the general student body, graduate student, and university employees. In the former roles I have occupied, as well as my current position, I work to discover ways in which the institution can more fully serve all members of the campus community to ensure access and retain students, faculty, and staff, and graduate students.

In my role at the Office of Title IX, I have to self-directed a great deal of my own learning as I have attempted to understand the nuances of federal rules and regulations around Title IX. In addition, I have had to learn new ways in which to navigate the campus community in my work to ensure institutional Title IX compliance. In this role, I have no direct reports, yet, as previously mentioned, I have oversight of a number of critical areas. The challenges I face in my work are minor in comparison to the breadth of challenges I see the Title IX Coordinator at my institution face daily.

My professional journey has brought me to this place, a place where I desire to understand more about how Title IX Coordinators navigate the challenges and opportunities faced in leading access to education under Title IX. To this research study, I brought with me my knowledge from the institution at which I work, as well as information I have about Title IX compliance at other institutions of higher education in the Southeastern United States and across the nation. This information has come in the form of research articles, news stories, and/or information shared at Title IX-related conferences, summits, and symposiums that I have

attended over the years. While I have been selected to present at numerous professional conferences across the nation, I suffer from imposter syndrome, hold myself to standards that can never be met, and constantly criticize my work.

I am not only a staff member; I am also a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee. I have both professional and classroom experiences which have aided me in gaining a well-rounded understanding and conceptualization of adult learning, higher education administration and leadership, and Title IX. I must remain cognizant of my subjectivity or bias as my positionality and experiences both personally and professionally could affect my research. As mentioned, this work is a part of my professional life; from my positionality, I view Title IX Coordinators as leaders. While I considered study participants to be leaders at their respective institutions, many of participants to whom I spoke had not taken the time to think about the way in which they lead Title IX coordination to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. Throughout the process it was important for me to pay attention to my thoughts, feelings, experiences, and assumptions about Title IX coordination and to pay attention to internal feelings that arose when speaking to Title IX Coordinators throughout this process. Instead of suppressing my thoughts, feelings, and emotions, I kept a record of them in field journal as this subjectivity has the potential influence data interpretation (Flick, 2014; Louis & Barton, 2002). As a researcher it was vital for me to remain acutely self-aware of the subjectivities I brought to research process, and remember that I cannot be entirely objective to this process, and just by being human, I will influence the interpretation of the data. As I reflect on my subjectivity and what I brought to the research, I sought to remain focused on the Title IX Coordinators as individual research participants as well as the personal, professional, cultural, political, and academic contexts that are present and interwoven throughout this study.

## **Limitations**

The first limitation of the study the time frame during which this study was conducted. I obtained IRB approval on June 2, 2020. This approval to conduct my study was obtained 27-days into the 100-days in which higher education institutions had to update Title IX policies, procedures, and training. During this period, Title IX Coordinators were under a great deal of pressure. They had to revise their Title IX policies, procedures, processes, and training to become compliant with the 2020 Final Rule. In June 2020, the world was three-months into the COVID-19 global pandemic. Scientists were working to understand the virus, and higher education was in a state of flux as institutions were wrestling with how to serve students during this unprecedented time. It is likely that due to these factors outside of my control, I limited the number of participants I was able to recruit for the study. The 2020 Final Rule and COVID-19 likely contributed to the study's second limitation, which was the length of interviews with study participants. As interviews for the study lasted from only 47 to 81 minutes, interviews were relatively short in length. If study participants had been willing to speak with me for longer, I could have gained significantly richer data.

Additionally, as none of the study participants agreed to a second interview with me, I could not delve deeper into areas discussed and stories shared in our first and only interview. A final limitation of the study was that I conducted all interviews via Zoom. Therefore, not meeting with study participants in-person at their respective office locations limited my ability to observe study participants in the context of their work environment, the potential to build a more in-depth level rapport, and engage on a more personal level with study participants.

## **Chapter Summary**

Chapter Three provided an in-depth review of this study's research design, methodology, data collection, and data analysis. It also included how I worked to ensure trustworthiness and I addressed my subjectivity as a researcher. Chapter Four will present the study findings through the four major themes that were identified. Finally, Chapter Five will discuss the research findings, implications of the study, and will make recommendations for future research and practice.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

This study focused on understanding the experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern United States as they lead institutional Title IX compliance. The previous chapters provided a background of the study and a comprehensive review of the literature, which was provided to aid the reader in understanding the complexities of leading Title IX coordination in higher education through the history of higher education in the United States, research about the prevalence of sexual misconduct in higher education, and a review of the evolution of Title IX from the civil rights movements to present day. In addition, a chronological review of the literature on leadership in higher education was provided, and specific attention was paid to the four-frame theory by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) within the context of higher education and Title IX coordination. Chapter Three addressed the study's research design, methodology, data collection, data analysis, assurance of trustworthiness, and my subjectivity as a researcher.

This chapter begins with a summary of the data collection and data analysis process utilized in this study. Next, a narrative introduction of each participant is provided to allow the reader to better understand each participant and the context in which they lead Title IX compliance at their respective institution of higher education. Then, I highlight the four major themes from the study, and the chapter ends with a conclusion.

#### **Summary of Data Collection and Analysis**

Using a purposeful sampling method with a criterion-based sampling strategy (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2015), I recruited seven participants for this study over ten months. Four study participants were recruited relatively quickly and were eager to participate in the study. The remaining three participants took a great deal more time to recruit, the longest of which took ten

months to schedule and keep a planned interview with me. Study participants were able to select the date and time of the interview and participate from the location of their choosing to ensure privacy. Utilizing a narrative interview structure, I conducted interviews following a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C). All interviews were recorded via the Zoom platform and ranged from 47 minutes to 81 minutes in duration. During each interview, I took field notes of my thoughts, feelings, and gestures made by the study participants.

Upon participants' arrival at their scheduled Zoom session, I greeted them warmly, welcomed them to the session, and thanked them for taking the time to speak with me. I checked in with each participant to ensure the date and time still worked within their schedule, and I asked them if their technology was working appropriately. After confirming their technology was working appropriately, I reviewed the informed consent they signed and e-mailed to me before the interview date and time to ensure they were fully aware of the study parameters and what they agreed to by participating in the study. I asked for their consent to begin recording, and once I received a verbal yes, I started recording the session. Once participants were ready, I began the interview sessions and followed the semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C). During the interview process, I followed Kim's (2016) recommendations in which questions were posed in a way that allowed interviewees to freely share their stories from their perspective and experience in their own voice. After each interview, I reviewed participant transcripts and field notes, and after seven interviews, found evidence of data saturation.

As I moved into analyzing interview transcripts, I utilized a narrative process. Narrative analysis can accommodate various analytical techniques (Esin, Fathi, & Squire, 2014), and analysis is accomplished by interpreting stories shared by research participants (Parcell & Baker, 2017; Riessman, 2008). As there is no one right way to perform narrative analysis, I was mindful



to utilize methods based on the study objectives (Riessman, 2008). For the purposes of this study, thematic narrative analysis was most appropriate for answering study research questions. In addition, because I analyzed more than one story, I took care to apply a constant comparative method throughout the data analysis process to allow for the commonalities and differences across stories to be identified (Parcell & Baker, 2017). Consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process referenced in Chapter Three, I conducted two rounds of coding: first, narrative and second, in vivo. Narrative coding allowed for chunks or "big gulps" (Dieste & Lightfoot, 2004, p. 2), of the participant voices to be shared through story in the narrative process, and in vivo coding allowed me to use participants' language rather than words that I generated as the researcher (Saldana, 2016). This process allowed me to identify themes that I then segmented, categorized, analyzed, and reconstructed to provide a rich and detailed description of participant experiences as related to the research questions (Ayres, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Narrative Introduction of Participants**

This study included seven participants, as detailed in Table 4.1. The table includes participant pseudonym, gender, age, years in higher education, years in Title IX Coordinator role, and highest degree earned. In the narrative introduction, Title IX Coordinators share a brief background of coming into the role and their institutional responsibilities. These introductions provide a foundation and bring to life the study participants.

**Alex.** Alex is a researcher-selected pseudonym for a 54-year-old female who has served as the institution's Title IX Coordinator for four years. Alex's title is the Executive Director for Equity Compliance and the Title IX Coordinator. Alex referred to herself as "the compliance woman." In her role as Title IX Coordinator, she has oversight for Title IX initiatives and

compliance in terms of ensuring the institution is compliant as related to "investigations related to sexual harassment, sexual discrimination, that we're doing education and training, that we actually are providing opportunities for supportive measures, ensuring that we're taking care of our faculty, staff, and students."

Alex has worked in the higher education field for 29 years, and 24 of those years have been at her current institution. Before becoming Title IX Coordinator, she was the Student Conduct Office Director, the Associate Dean of Students, and Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students. In her current role, Alex reports to the Assistant Vice President for Access and Equity. When asked about the responsibilities that fall under her as Title IX Coordinator, she shared that her role has evolved:

Initially, [I was] responsible for the compliance investigations and the education and training piece. Now, pretty much, [I] ensure that we are in compliance with education training and supportive measures. The investigation adjudication piece are out of human resources for our employees and then the [conduct office] for students; however, [I] still have to monitor [and] ensure that they're providing a fair and equitable process that is impartial and that it is being handled in a prompt and timely manner. So [I am] still very much involved in that process. [I] have to take all reports as it relates to Title IX.

Alex shared she is responsible for "anything Title IX related" which includes:

Trying to be proactive: annual reports, ensuring that we provide that information, notice to the campus on an annual basis about Title IX, ensuring that our faculty have the right information to provide in their syllabi. They put that information in the syllabus so students will have that information, the correct information. Mak[ing] sure our employment materials are accurate.

Alex is a seasoned professional and describes herself as experienced in:

**Table 4.1***Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Higher Education (Years)	Title IX Coordinator (Years)	Highest Degree
Alex	Female	54	29	3	Master of Science
Becca	Female	42	12	3	Doctorate
Leslie	Female	44	20	4	Juris Doctorate
Penny	Female	45	4	4	Juris Doctorate
Reggie	Female	41	4	3.5	Juris Doctorate
Sam	Female	36	6	3	Juris Doctorate
Taylor	Male	n/a	20	n/a	Juris Doctorate

*Note.* n/a reflects information that participants requested to be omitted from the study.

Planning, directing, and assessing comprehensive and integrated programs for faculty, staff and students in higher education...[her] work is framed by a commitment to empowering and advocating for staff and faculty, fostering an environment committed to inclusivity and diversity, and utilizing a student-centered approach for the successful engagement of all students.

Her direct reports include an Interpersonal Violence Prevention Coordinator, the Director for ADA Compliance and Response, a Case Manager, and an Office Manager.

**Becca.** Becca selected her pseudonym for the study. She is a 42-year-old female who has served as her institution's Title IX Coordinator for three years. She is a social worker by training at both the master's and doctoral levels. Becca has worked in higher education for 12 years, and her entire career in higher education has been at the institution where she is currently employed.

Just before being promoted to Title IX Coordinator, Becca was the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Life. She worked in this capacity "for a brief period of time [and] oversaw health and wellness, student counseling, student health, the prevention part of health and wellness, and then student conduct, and student disability services." She was hired as Title IX Coordinator when a former chancellor made a "dedicated commitment" to Title IX work by creating the Office of Title IX. Becca explained the office was created during a time in which the university was working to understand and respond to "what people want, what do they expect, how can you meet those expectations and manage them? And, I think one of the ways you can do that is make a dedicated commitment to something."

Currently, Becca serves as the Title IX Coordinator for her campus and the university system. The campus at which she is the Title IX Coordinator is one of the system's five-member institutions. In her campus role, she reports directly to the university's Chancellor, and she works

daily with the Chancellor's Chief of Staff. When asked about her responsibilities as the campus Title IX Coordinator, she shared:

I think what I'm actually responsible for versus what I choose to engage in are probably two different things. But I think it's why I was selected for this position [as] the university's expectation [is] that I do more than what is the [2011 Dear Colleague] Letter... I think compliance is my responsibility, and then everything on top of that's been a choice the institution has taken on as additional responsibility around prevention and that sort of thing.

Becca went on to explain her responsibilities as the institution's Title IX Coordinator.

"Ultimately, the policy is my responsibility, the implementation of the policy, the regulatory compliance for the institution, compliance for the campus, and then monitoring and evaluating everything implemented...patterns and trends. One of the requirements of a Title IX Coordinator is monitoring patterns and trends." She went onto explain her responsibility in the role is also to:

Ensure that our prevention is connected to our policy. I think that's one of the gaps that you see at some [universities] that prevention messaging will be very progressive, and then the policy will be very legalistic. And I think my job is to marry the two to ensure our students, if they see a prevention message, that they're not going to be surprised about a policy language. I think part of our responsibility in the prevention messaging is to use our patterns and trends to inform it. So, we're not just using the nation[al] issue. I think we have to think really locally, and I think that's our responsibility, and I think [because of] Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) [and the] VAWA re-authorization requirements that I need to ensure happens. And so that's sort of the ongoing prevention messaging, ensuring people know where to find the policy.

She also shared that describing her role to individuals outside of the university can be challenging. Therefore, she states she is in a compliance role because "most people know what that word is... which is weird, because I don't think of myself as a compliance officer," To those who work at the university, she explained, "you just say Title IX, and they know." Becca's direct reports include a Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Support, a Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Prevention, Training, and Evaluation, and an Office Manager.

**Leslie.** Leslie is a research-selected pseudonym for a 44-year-old female who has served as Title IX Coordinator for four years. Leslie is an attorney by training, and has worked in higher education for 20 years. During that time, she served in student affairs roles at different campuses in the South- and South-Central regions of the United States. She has worked at her current institution for 12 years. After leading case management at the institution role for a little over three years, Leslie decided to apply for and was hired for the Title IX Coordinator role as she recognized that positions in student affairs were limited. She shared, "to be able to move up meant that somebody else would have to leave." She also had a child, and she "was looking for a little bit more... [for more] stable hours... and to move myself financially in a better spot."

Leslie's current role is as the Title IX, Clery, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator for the institution, and she oversees Title IX coordination at nine system campuses across the state. In her campus Title IX role, Leslie reports to the Vice President of Legal Affairs and General Counsel. She described her role as Title IX Coordinator of the campus as "mak[ing] sure that, we're doing multifaceted efforts." The efforts she directs are more than meeting training requirements, which she referred to as the "compliance floor." She is committed to going above and beyond the required training, "checkoffs at the very minimum." Her role in responding to sexual misconduct is "much more action-oriented on my part. So, meeting with

individuals who have experienced something that would identify them possibly as a survivor ... making sure that I'm connecting them [with resources] so that they know the [Title IX] process.” As Title IX Coordinator, Leslie supervises an investigator and a graduate assistant.

**Penny.** Penny is a researcher-selected pseudonym for a 45-year-old female who has served as the Title IX Coordinator at her institution for “almost five years.” Penny is an attorney by training. Her entire career in higher education has been as her institution's Title IX Coordinator. As Title IX Coordinator, she is responsible for institutional Title IX compliance, intakes, investigations, and oversight of all those policies. Penny was the only Title IX Coordinator interviewed who conducts investigations. In addition to her role as Title IX Coordinator, she also has oversight of the university's Consensual Relationships Policy and the Supervision of Minors Policy.

Before coming to the university, Penny was a prosecutor. At that time, she owned her practice and focused on family law and custody cases. She shared she did not enjoy owning a practice. The Title IX Coordinator role was appealing to her as she had an "investigative background, and I was really interested in keeping the community safe too, so I thought well, this will be a great opportunity for me." She learned about the position from another attorney. She shared, "I thought it would be perfect because in my formal role I had worked prosecuting cases...at the end, I was doing everything, but at the beginning, I was prosecuting, child sexual assault cases [and] domestic violence cases."

As Title IX Coordinator, Penny reports to the Director of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance. Penny described her responsibilities in the role as overseeing both prevention and response. She shared:

Prevention is the training and education on our policies. We also discuss bystander intervention, you know, and that's really I think pretty much what every university does.

The responses are gonna be our intake investigations and we also generate, a report at the end of our investigation, and we move that onto conduct.

Penny supervises three direct reports: two investigators and one administrator.

**Reggie.** Reggie is a researcher-selected pseudonym for a 41-year-old female. She is an attorney by training. Reggie shared her experience in leading Title IX coordination at her institution. Reggie served in the Title IX Coordinator role for three and a half years before leaving the position in December 2020 to take a promotion at another higher education institution. Before working in higher education, Reggie spent 12 years at the United States Department of Education in the Office for Civil Rights (OCR). She shared, "I'd been working with higher education institutions the majority of my legal career...but not within the higher education context."

When asked about what brought her from the OCR position to higher education, she shared:

I wanted to do more. I wanted to do more either within the Department [of Education] or at a university who was doing this work and so it kind of aligned with my career goals when position [the university] came up and, um, I thought, "Well, let's just what's an opportunity." Um, Title IX had always been a place that I was really interested in but what has been my career arc in something that was important for me and why I landed here.

During her three and a half years working in the Southeastern United States as Title IX Coordinator, Reggie's official title was the Assistant Vice President for Title IX Complaints and



Title IX Coordinator. In the role, she reported to the Associate Vice President for Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights. As Assistant Vice President for Title IX Complaints and Title IX Coordinator, Reggie was responsible for overseeing university Title IX compliance in the area of sexual harassment and sexual and gender-based violence. Her responsibilities included investigating, responding to all reports of sexual or gender-based harassment and violence involving students, faculty, staff, and medical center complaints. She was also responsible for all of the university's proactive training efforts, including online training modules and in-person training.

During her last five months at the institution, she served in an interim capacity as the Associate Vice President for Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights after her supervisor vacated the role to work at another university. Reggie oversaw the broader Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights Office in her interim capacity, which consisted of "about 15 employees." During this time, her staff supervision expanded beyond her Title IX team of three full-time investigators, a Deputy Title IX Coordinator, and an administrative assistant to supervise all university employees tasked with preventing and addressing discrimination and harassment.

**Sam.** Sam is a researcher-selected pseudonym for a 36-year old female who has served as the Title IX coordinator for three years. Sam is an attorney by training. She worked as a private practice attorney after graduating law school and has now worked in higher education for six years. During her time in higher education, she has worked at two universities. Her roles at both institutions have been in a Title IX capacity. Her first role at her current institution was as a Deputy Title IX coordinator. She was promoted to the Title IX coordinator role three years ago. Her official title at the institution is Executive Director and Title IX Coordinator. She shared, "the easiest way to describe it is investigation coordinator for all equal opportunity matters." She

went on to share, "when I'm ... explaining what the office does, I let people know that our office is in charge of ensuring compliance with various Civil Rights laws, and it's our job to address and respond to people's concerns about discrimination and harassment."

In her role, she is responsible for understanding the prevention efforts in which the university is engaged. Yet, "that's not my primary responsibility" as there is another university office in charge of prevention and ensures "all of our students get trained on what used to be called HAVEN but is now Sexual Assault Prevention for Undergraduates and Graduates." She also shared, "if it relates to sexual misconduct or treatment on the basis of gender, gender discrimination, that comes through my office. I work closely with athletics in terms of athletics compliance with Title IX, but athletics that mainly oversees that." In regards to the response to sexual misconduct, Sam's office is "by policy ...the office to respond to, all complaints of any type of sexual misconduct. So, we're typically the office a complainant would have the first contact with."

Sam reports to the Associate Vice President for Institutional Equity, which falls under the institution's Finance and Administration's area. In her role, Sam supervises four Equal Opportunity Investigators. One of the investigators also serves as a Deputy Title IX coordinator, meaning they are in charge of Title IX investigations.

**Taylor.** Taylor is a researcher-selected pseudonym for a male who declined to share his age and the amount of time he has served as Title IX Coordinator. Taylor is an attorney by training. He has worked in higher education for approximately 20-years, and before assuming his current role, he worked in the university's general counsel office. Taylor is the director of his office, the Title IX Coordinator, and the ADA Coordinator at his institution. He reports to the university president, but he reports to the general counsel for administrative purposes.

Taylor described his responsibilities in his role, in which he focused on his responsibility in providing training to the campus community:

Traditionally, this office has provided live training to university employees on anti-harassment, anti-discrimination training, which of course, included Title IX training as well as Title VI training and Title VII training. A few years ago, we started offering electronic anti-harassment, anti-discrimination training for all faculty and staff. That covers Title VII, Title VI, Title IX, the ADA, and other anti-harassment, anti-discrimination laws. Several years ago, the university started a training program during the early teens aimed at providing training to all university employees and staff that had involvement with students and all new employees. Alcohol EDU is offered to all incoming students. That's not under our supervision, but it's under the supervision of student affairs, and we also require that all of our entering undergraduate students take the sexual assault prevention for undergraduates, which is an EverFi course.

Taylor moved to the role of Title IX Coordinator because "it's an interesting area, a role that I felt I had the background to be able to perform. And I felt it would be an interesting position, and it did turn out to be very interesting." His direct reports include the Deputy Title IX Coordinator and Assistant Director of the office, four investigators, and two support personnel.

The Title IX Coordinator role is a position unique to each higher education institution. As Title IX Coordinators reflected on their positions, their roles' intricacies and nuances became exposed. As this study seeks to depict the experiences of those who lead Title IX coordination, the background and nature of their roles are essential as it provides a foundation for this study.

## Study Themes

The narrative, thematic analysis of the interview transcripts illuminated four key themes: a) skillset and experience, b) evaluating the work, c) being human, and d) effective leadership. Skillset and experience include the categories of educational background and employment experience. Evaluating the work includes the categories of assessment practices, both formal and informal, and external reviews. Being human includes the categories of serving others, managing expectations, and creating lasting change. Lastly, effective leadership contains the categories of leadership is, growth and development, and having professional relationships and supports. Table 4.2 illustrates the emergence of the themes through my coding process.

**Theme one: Skillset and experience.** The first theme that emerged from participant narratives was *skillset and experience*. Skillset and experience represent the participant's experiences in building skills and experience through education and employment that prepared them to become, transition to, and successfully serve as Title IX Coordinator. The theme includes the categories of educational background and employment experience. These were the experiences in which Title IX Coordinators gained skills and experience to qualify and succeed in carrying out their roles.

***Educational background.*** Each participant shared how their educational background was a part of their journey to becoming their institution's Title IX Coordinator. Without postsecondary degrees, these individuals would not have been eligible to apply, interview, and serve in their current roles as Title IX Coordinator.

Penny, a Title IX Coordinator in the SEC, is a lawyer by training. She earned three postsecondary degrees and is an alumnus of her institution. She shared that each degree has served her well in her role as Title IX Coordinator:

I was a journalism English undergrad, and I got my master's degree in journalism. I think that [journalism/English major] actually helped give me some perspective, and I think the journalism background helped with writing skills. After I had children, I actually went back to law school. I think the legal, you know, being a lawyer, probably helped my ability to apply policy to facts, you know? I think that is really helpful because we look at policy, and we know that that's what you have to look for, so it helps in, you know, in those questioning of both the complainant, respondent, and witnesses, so I think that's been really helpful for me.

Sam is a Title IX Coordinator in the SEC, is a lawyer by training, and an alumnus of the institution at which she now is employed. She shared that she was a double major in English and French. "I really enjoyed my undergraduate degrees. They're very interesting subjects. They're useful to me in that we really can't do much with those degrees other than go to law school unless you also want to be a teacher." As she was not interested in becoming a teacher, she went to law school. She shared that law school taught her a great deal about how to be a Title IX coordinator. "If I did not have the legal background, legal training, I don't think that [the role] would come as easily as it does." She went on to share; she believes it is:

Entirely possible to be a Title IX coordinator and not be a lawyer. I know a lot of good Title IX coordinators who are not lawyers. But I do think that there has to be some level of understanding of the law and ability to, again, extrapolate from what is written into best practice. So, you know, if you don't have the legal training, you need to have a really good relationship with your general counsel.

Becca, a Title IX Coordinator in the SEC, is a social worker by training. She, like Penny, has

**Table 4.2***Examples of Coding Process*

Themes	Categories	Codes
1) Skillset and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Educational background</li> <li>b) Employment experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Law, social work, terminal degrees, alma mater</li> <li>ii. Doing extra work, "lagniappe", former positions, former experience</li> </ul>
2) Evaluating the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Assessment (formal and informal)</li> <li>b) External reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Climate study, 360-degree survey, assessing prevention; open door policy, direct phone calls, should always be questioned,</li> <li>ii. State audit, federal audit, Office for Civil Rights investigations</li> </ul>
3) Being human	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Serving others</li> <li>b) Managing expectations</li> <li>c) Creating lasting change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Providing a menu of services, parents, complainants, and respondents</li> <li>ii. Human beings are involved, you can never make everyone happy, Title IX carries a stigma, there is the potential to be sued</li> <li>iii. The work is not done in a vacuum/silo, it's a pendulum, it is risky, the work should be educational not punitive, and the work includes education, policy, strategic planning</li> </ul>
4) Effective Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Leadership is</li> <li>b) Growth and development</li> <li>c) Having professional relationships and supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Defining success, brings others along, has integrity, goes above and beyond, making the tough decisions, courage, transparent, mistakes, makes decisions that are in the best interest of the organization, builds relationships, reorganizes, recruits, sets boundaries, open to new ideas</li> <li>ii. We don't know everything, learning in the role, there will be challenges and it important to grow from those challenges</li> <li>iii. Support of supervisor, Title IX groups, colleagues, staff, professional organizations and development, supervision in work, trusted, trustworthy, relationships through prior role</li> </ul>

earned three postsecondary degrees. While she does not have a law degree, Becca also believes that her educational background prepared her for her position. Her undergraduate degree was in special education, and both her master's and doctorate are in social work from her current institution. She shared:

Most of my learning was about individuals with social work. I did the clinical versus the community-based master's [program]. But I think that was really important. I what social work teaches you, it's basically everybody comes with a whole lot of stuff, and so the idea of working with human beings especially in this space, and not talking about complainants or respondents, but their parents, or the university, or the administration, or whatever. I think social work is a great foundation for that. When I did my doctorate [of social work], I think what that taught me was perseverance, in a way that I've never experienced before. I've never been cognitively challenged that way. I've never been emotionally challenged that way. It taught me how to read articles and how to get information out of something that I would've never learned another way. And for this role [a Title IX Coordinator] to be successful, I think you have to engage in literature - I didn't know how to do that. I wouldn't have known how to do that. And so, I think that skill, getting that skill out of that program, was worth it.

Alex is a Title IX Coordinator in the ACC. She shared she earned a Bachelor of Communications and a Masters of Political Science with an emphasis in Public Administration. Currently, Alex is enrolled in "grad school, getting my Ph.D. - I'm working on policy studies because I love the political world." She stated in policy studies, she is learning about "policies like Title IX... and how the law and how it impacts college campuses." She is also studying the "policies that create systemic racism or inequity... the policies we're supposed to use that should address some of

these issues, but I think continue to um, create that divide." Alex will be starting the third and final year of her Ph.D. program in August 2021.

Leslie, a Title IX Coordinator in the SEC, is a lawyer by training and an alumnus of the institution at which she is now Title IX Coordinator. After graduating from high school, Leslie earned a Bachelor's in Social Work. Leslie shared her reasoning for wanting to be a social worker:

I thought that I wanted to do drug and alcohol or gang rehab, which I've never been an addict or a family that's been touched by addiction, um, not in my immediate family. And then...I've never been in a gang either, but I was just so intrigued by this theory of it. So, I went into my social work with this, and I'm going to rehab and change lives.

Leslie went on to earn a graduate degree in student affairs. Both her bachelor's and master's degrees are from her current institution. She recognized that if she wanted her career to continue to progress in the field of higher education, she needed a terminal degree:

I knew I needed an advanced degree to be able to move up. So, I changed from the idea of a Ph.D. in Student Affairs to the idea of JD (Juris Doctorate), which would be marketable if I needed to change different locations if I ever decided to leave higher ed and a lot more people in higher ed were...earning JDs as well. So, at 29, I packed up my life from the deep South and moved to the very North one hour from Canada, and started my law degree in a place that I had never seen until I moved in. And, I'm a first-generation college student in my family, nobody had gone, so everything was new, so it was all on a whim of, "Oh, I think this is a good idea." Like, "Okay, go ahead with the plan," which seems not necessarily well-thought-out, but somebody has to go through it,



and that was me. So, I just thought, "Here we go." So, I quit my job and moved up, [and] I went through the full-time program.

Reggie, a former Title IX Coordinator in the ACC, is a lawyer by training. Reggie shared:

I have a Bachelors in English Literature and Communication from a small liberal arts school. I knew going in that I likely wanted to go to law school, that that was something that interests me. I'd always been someone who was fascinated by the law and arguing and wanting to do that, so I went to law school at the [large midwestern university], which is where my family had moved when I was in high school.

Like Penny, Reggie, a Title IX Coordinator in the SEC, also earned a JD, and he is a "graduate of this university's law school." All seven participants in this study have sought out education to advance their knowledge and careers, and all became Title IX Coordinators from different, yet in some ways, similar educational paths.

***Employment experience.*** Each study participant shared how prior work experience has been meaningful in aiding them in their role as a Title IX Coordinator. None of the study participants had a direct path from education to employment as Title IX Coordinator role, just as none have been shy about taking risks and trying new positions throughout their careers.

After earning his JD, Taylor transitioned through several roles. First, he joined the military for several years. Then, Taylor transitioned to private practice; next, he took a position with a state agency, and then was recruited to the university by general counsel. He worked there for several years before going back to private practice. Finally, Taylor returned to the university several years later before being hired as the institution's Title IX Coordinator. While Taylor practiced law and has had many important roles throughout his career, he shared teaching

graduate students as an adjunct faculty member was the most educational, rewarding, and useful experience in preparing him for his Title IX Coordinator role. He shared the:

Opportunity to approach higher education legal issues from an academic perspective and to associate with students in a role that was not a role in which I would typically interact with students. I thought that was very useful and very helpful because, as you know, the overwhelming majority of the cases that an office such as this handle are student-oriented or student-to-student cases. So, I think that role as an instructor/faculty was very useful to me just being able to interact with students in a role other than as a "lawyer "or viewing things from a legal perspective."

Leslie shared the value of her past employment experience, beginning when she was a student leader. "As a [undergraduate] student worker, I got assigned to Student Affairs for the Vice President's Office. I started working in orientation as a student leader. I would do campus tours or campus activities, wherever they needed somebody to fit in." When she started her master's degree, "I transitioned into a graduate assistantship in orientation." After obtaining her master's degree, she worked in the Division of Student Affairs as an Admissions Counselor, Coordinator of Enrollment and Academic Advisor, and as an International Student Advisor. She stated this is where she discovered her passion for policy work as she was engaging, assessing, and learning more about international students. She knew she was good at providing a quality orientation experience for students. Still, she found her passion when working with students around "cultural acclimation, the help, and support, [and then] I figured out I was really, really good at reading all of the new regulations, looking at the congressional record for intent, interpreting the code of federal regulations."

When considering the role that had the most significant effect on her career trajectory, Leslie shared:

I think the work with international students was really most impactful for me because that was preparing me for the [case management] role in that, people had questions about immigration piece, workpiece, and family piece. So, it was really kind of serving in a [case management] role for international [students]. So, [I was working with a] smaller population before I went to the full-on big deal, later in my career.

Leslie left her role with international students to enter a law program as a full-time student. After completing law school, Leslie began working at her current institution and served for seven years with [the] Dean of Students in a [care role] role before becoming the institution's Title IX Coordinator. Leslie was responsible for Threat Assessment, Behavioral Intervention, and running the Crisis Assessment Response Evaluation Team (CARE) Teams in her care role. She described this work as "doing all of the ad hoc [work] that didn't necessarily fit somewhere else when someone was in crisis, distress or of concern." In this role, she was the first university employee to work with "victim-survivors" of sexual misconduct. She was known as the employee who would consistently go above and beyond. "[I was] always doing something a little extra, "always doing something a little out of the norm... doing a little bit of this work and that work." Leslie referred to the extra work as "lagniappe," meaning she would pick up additional tasks such as assisting students with academic appeals or answering financial aid questions. Leslie shared that the CARE role was the position that has been most beneficial to her as Title IX Coordinator. She went onto explain it was:

A startup role. It was the first of its kind on that campus. This is the same with Title IX. It was a startup, [I was] the first in the role. So [in both roles], there was a lot of

marketing to get people to know what this is, what to do, how to do it. Um, but it also taught me about formal and informal power systems.

Sam described her professional journey leading to her role as Title IX coordinator position as "a long road." Her career began in private practice focused on education law and Civil Rights law. Sam shared the "key thing" she liked about private practice was being able to "look at cases [and] try to figure out what really happened and then find a way to either advise my client on try and fix it, or, you know, whatever the appropriate remedy might be." In 2013, her world changed after she had a baby. She shared, "litigation in particular, which is what I was engaging in, is not the best for having a newborn." In her role, she "would need to be all the way [one part of the] state one day and then the [opposite part of the] state the next day." While traveling that much is "difficult regardless, but when you are also taking care of a newborn, it's pretty hard."

In 2014, during the midst of significant changes in Title IX coordination, Sam was contacted by a university of which she was an alumnus "with a job posting that they were about to post for an equal opportunity investigator specifically to work on employment matters and Title IX matters." She knew she would be an excellent fit for the role as "one of the things that I'd been doing was helping institutions rewrite their Title IX policies." She went on to share, "so, when I saw that position come up, I applied for it." She was offered the position and "made the decision to move in-house for higher education."

She went on to explain that her background as a practicing attorney has:

Served me well both as Title IX coordinator and in my role as equal opportunity side of things, because being able to really look at something and say, "This is where it went wrong," or "This is where it's going wrong," is important in how to fix things before they

actually become a big problem. And if I did not have the legal background, legal training, I don't think that that would come as easily as it does.

Additionally, skills she was able to build in private practice that have helped her in this role include:

Mediation, working with other attorneys, working with judges and clerks, et cetera [has been] really helpful because it help[ed me] understand how to put [my]self in someone else's shoes and how to look at the situation from all sides and come to a resolution that is best for the situation.

As she continued to reflect on other skills she has built throughout her career, she referred to them as the "basic lawyering skills that you learn in your first couple of years in practice." These included learning how to take a deposition, which she stated is:

Basically, the same as conducting an investigation that's not something that is really intuitive. You have to have the practice and doing it over and over again before you actually know what to do, [and] other things like document retention. Again, this is like basic investigator stuff, but it's also really key to practicing law.

Within one year, she was promoted from an equal opportunity investigator to the office's associate director and one of the Deputy Title IX Coordinators. While Sam was not necessarily looking to leave the institution, another institution from which she is an alumnus reached out to let her know that there was a Deputy Title IX Coordinator position opening there. She explained, "I had worked with the Title IX coordinator at [the university] ... on several matters while I was in private practice. So, we had a pre-existing relationship, and she knew who I was and what kind of work I was doing."

She went on to explain, "they asked if I'd be interested in applying. I did apply, and I did end up getting that position and started at [my current institution] in 2015 as the Deputy Title IX coordinator." In her deputy role, she "essentially created our Title IX program as it exists today." When her supervisor retired, Sam stepped into the interim Title IX Coordinator role for about six months, during which the institution searched for someone to fill the role. Sam decided to apply for the role, "and I was ultimately successful in that, and that's how I'm here."

Through her role as an assistant DA, Penny learned about the Title IX Coordinator position when "another attorney reached out to me and told me that there was a position open." She believes her "great relationship with law enforcement," she has passion for the work and "keeping the community safe." She shared the position was "a great opportunity for me...I was really interested in coming to the [university], and then it just worked with my skillset." Her "skillset" included her background as a lawyer, owning her own business, and her work as a prosecutor and an assistant district attorney (DA) were invaluable employment experiences before becoming the Title IX Coordinator. She shared:

I was a prosecutor for six years, and then I wanted to have my own practice. I was doing mostly family law, custody cases, and just trying to figure [it] out. [To] be honest with you, I really didn't like having my own practice. I mean, I was doing well. But [as a prosecutor], at the end, I was doing everything, [and] at the beginning, I was prosecuting child sexual assault cases, domestic violence cases, stuff like that.

Penny shared how her experience as a mother has helped her in the Title IX Coordinator role.

While not a formal employment experience, being a parent is a full-time job. Penny shared:

I have a son, and I have a daughter ... so when I walk into these cases, I don't come in with any preconceived notions about what happened, you know? I always know there's

gonna be two sides, and I think it helps me. I mean, now I would say that I'm getting a little bit older, so they see me more as a mom - you know, because I have a college-aged child. But I think that's really helped me with the balance, you know, in my life to be more compassionate with both [complainant and respondent]. So, I think being a mother to a boy and girl has helped me... Oh, and understanding their [parents] frustration with the system, you know. Like, when they [parents] get angry or call me I'm like, "Look, I get it like I'd do the same thing.", so I think that's [being a mom has] been really helpful for me.

Similar to Penny, Reggie was the only other participant who had not worked in higher education before serving as the Title IX Coordinator. After law school, Reggie "spent a little over a year at a plaintiff employment law firm so representing individuals who've been terminated because of discrimination and harassment." She went on to explain, "I did a lot of litigation during that year and some change and realized that litigation wasn't exactly the fit for me, and so I started looking for ways I can, could be in the space around, employment discrimination." She then went onto work at the United States Department of Education for 12 years. That experience:

Really answered a lot of what I was looking for in a position because it was administrative in nature so we weren't litigating. It really looked at the area [of] the law that was most focused [on] how to ensure people have access to quality education and employment because OCR looks at both education and in some contexts within the educational environment, employment decisions.

During her tenure with the Department of Education, Reggie worked in two regional offices with the Office for Civil Rights. Her first position was as an Attorney Investigator. In that role, she investigated complaints involving Title IX, Title VI, Section 504, the Age Discrimination Act,

involving elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions. Reggie then advanced into a position in which she supervised the team leaders, who in turn supervised the teams of investigators. She shared, "I had been at the Department of Education for a number of years and had risen through the ranks to essentially being the person who oversaw the majority of the investigative work."

Following the release of the 2011 Letter, her work shifted to focus on various complaints ranging from athletics, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions within the region to those cases involving sexual violence. She explained that it was during this time when the OCR was:

Expanding our efforts from looking at Title IX [on] an individual basis, like what happened to this one person in this one process, to a systemic process, which is what is a university doing to ensure that their policies and procedures are non-discriminatory and their students who may experience sexual or gender-based violence have an avenue for recourse.

She was interested in a move to higher education as:

I had been at the Department of Education for a number of years and had risen through the ranks to essentially being the person who oversaw the majority of the investigative work. What drew me to higher education and being a Title IX Coordinator was I had been looking at this work from a 30,000ft view, you know, looking back and telling universities what they had done was not correct. I wanted the opportunity to do that work, to be the one who actually was responding in the moment and was making those difficult decisions.

She went on to share:



I had some significant experience investigating higher education institutions while at the Department of Education. I specifically ran a fairly large-scale compliance review at a [private university in the south] and then, worked on [several major higher education investigations] and several other pending matters and so that experience is kind of what brought me from the bureaucracy of the Department of Education to the on the ground work at a university.

Becca stated that every employment experience she has had prepared her for the role of Title IX Coordinator. "Obviously, you don't know what you're doing 20 years ago for today...I swear, and this sounds whatever, but I think every job I've ever done." After earning her undergraduate degree, Becca worked as a special education teacher:

I think being a special ed teacher was one of the best things I could've done to prepare for this role. I think being an educator, like learning to educate, being formally trained in education, is super useful because I learned to communicate with people, to figure out what they could learn, their learning style, and what their learning goals were. And in Special Ed, it's particularly important because the individuals typically deal with certain barriers. And so, if you can help someone who's dealing with barriers to learn a skill or a task or something that will benefit them if you can connect the benefits... And in the work that I did, that was pretty the only way to get a student to learn. Because I was working with students who were coming from alternative school settings because of behavior and criminal justice settings. And so, trying to figure out how to make individuals who had a lot of life stuff happen be excited, or want to come to school, or that sort of thing, like, that was a huge challenge. And it also made me comfortable, or not comfortable, but started me young in public speaking.

She recalled her job as a server at a Mexican restaurant during graduate school:

I waited tables in a Mexican restaurant for two years, and I think about what that taught me about customer service, what it taught me about people. If you disappoint a person here, when you bring the chips and salsa, getting them back is so hard. If they're mad about drinks or whatever, getting them back is so hard.

She shared about her job at an attorney's office as a filing clerk:

I learned that if you don't have a system in place...you can't meet the goal. The attorney...was incredibly socially smart. He taught me rules that demonstrate respect to people without saying anything, and those have helped me so much. Like, you always wait until everyone else gets off the elevator, [and] you always let people get off the elevator before you try to get on. Just little things that tell people, "I respect you." In a meeting, always making sure everyone's comfortable, that sort of thing. And, I answered the phone there, and I worked with a woman who had [answered] the phone for years at law firms. How she talked to people made them feel like they were part of her family like straight away... I learned from her that, oh, okay, if people here in your voice you care, then it just breaks down so many barriers. And I'll forgive you for things when you make a mistake, because they know from the get that you're trying really hard.

After finishing graduate school, Becca's job before coming to the university working in inpatient and outpatient community health taught her many important lessons:

So, most of my work was [with] individuals when I started. [I] learned how to use resources, [I] learned how to navigate systems, [I] learned how to work for the individual. And then [in my community health role, [I] start[ed] seeing, "Okay, this individual represents a whole collection of individuals who are all having the same issue." "Okay, I

can work with this person who's having this problem," or, "Okay, there's 400 people that also have that problem."

Like Leslie, Becca held a significant role at the institution for a number of years before being hired as the institution's Title IX Coordinator. Becca was in charge of leading the institution's case management function in a prior capacity, which included Case Management and Threat Assessment Teams. She started the university's Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), as all student Title IX related cases fell under the university's case management umbrella at that time. Becca shared that she:

Started a SART, which we now call Title IX team...in 2012, because we started recognizing there was [a] coordination need that was unique to these [Title IX] cases. At the time, Title IX was in a different area ... so we just sort of took what we had learned from behavioral intervention teams and applied it to sexual assault.

While overseeing case management, threat assessment, and SART, Becca also served as the director of health promotion for students and employees. Following that role, she served for a short time as an Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Life and "oversaw health and wellness, student counseling, student health, prevention, the prevention part of health and wellness, student conduct, and student disability services."

As a director of the university's health promotion office, she learned about supervising staff and what she likes and doesn't like as a supervisor. She stated:

I would still say that [supervising staff] that is not my strength. I think it's why I will never, at least at this stage in my life, pursue a job where I have tons of oversight of human beings. I don't actually like that. I like a really tight, really smart team, and I like

to move... fixing, fixing, fixing, and you're going for it. And the idea of dealing with the sort-of everyday human resource stuff, that is just not interesting to me.

Alex started working at a Midwestern higher education institution after graduate school. While she had plans of going to law school, she chose a different path:

My goal was to go to law school and get my law degree. And as I always say, life took me a different direction because I got married that year, and then I wound up pregnant. So rather than leave my daughter at home because I had gotten accepted into law school - I didn't want to leave my family. So, I decided to defer for a year, and then the job opportunity came available with the [Midwestern university], and I took it.

At the Midwestern university, Alex served as a judicial counselor in the conduct office for less than two years before moving to an assistant director role in the same office. A few years later, Alex was looking at other opportunities in the field, and she applied for a position at the Southeastern university at which she is currently employed. She shared, "the position became available, and I really was just testing the waters. I really didn't have any inkling that I would be leaving the Midwest to come to the South." As she reflected on her move to her current institution, Alex shared:

I didn't know if I was ready to move South ... you hear things, and for me, it didn't seem to be as progressive as I would have liked it to be, and I did time trying to raise a family. I didn't want to raise a family someplace where they would have to deal with so many other stresses already on top of what we already deal with. So [applying to the Southeastern university] was just me testing the waters, and lo and behold, when I interviewed, it just felt right. [There] was something about being here that led me to believe that this would be the ideal place to come work.

Alex was hired into an associate director position:

Initially, [the position] was going to be in housing ... but before I stepped foot on campus, they promoted me to director because they were making some changes, so they were reorganizing... so I am the first director of [the university's student conduct office] ... 'cause they didn't have a department at first.

As she began her new role, Alex had her work cut out for her, "I created that department, established it 'cause it was, it was a one-woman shop as I like to say. So, it was me and my assistant and... I was able to establish the office as it is today." In addition to her role as director, Alex became the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students in 2011 and the Associate Dean of Students in 2014. She shared she gained a great deal of her experience in Title IX working in student conduct:

We've been actually working with these matters well before Title IX was identified as including sexual violence. So, from a conduct perspective, we had to address issues related to sexual type of incidents as long as I've been in the field. So, this is not new for me ensuring that we provide process, a way to ensure that we address the concerns of the complainant [and] making sure he or she, they have what they need as it relates to supportive measures. And so that's been something that I feel really good about, having been keen to throughout my career.

As participants shared the skillsets they had developed through both education and employment, it was evident that their education and work experience came together and put them in a position to be hired into their role.

**Theme two: Evaluating the work.** The second theme that emerged from participant narratives was *evaluating the work*. The theme captures that evaluating and testing the work

through various means is critical and should not be avoided. Throughout their narratives, Title IX Coordinators shared the importance of evaluating their work to ensure they are meeting their community's needs as well as their federal obligations under Title IX. The theme includes the categories of assessment, both formal and informal practices, and external reviews.

**Assessment.** This category is an important factor in this theme as assessment was highlighted as a critical component to a Title IX Coordinator's role. Title IX coordinators shared experiences with assessment practices, both formal and informal, in their work. One formal assessment practice familiar to Title IX Coordinators is a campus climate survey. Reggie noted that climate surveys are "one tool the toolbox because you're assessing climate based on the university communities' perceptions [of climate]." Reggie shared, "we do a climate survey every two years. So, we did one in 2015, 2017, and 2019." In 2015 and 2019, Reggie's institution was a part of the Association of American Universities (AAU) Cohort, and in 2017, they administered the survey on their own. Reggie shared that the university adapted the AAU instrument to meet the needs of the institution. She shared two "positive steps," the institution took to improve the 2019 instrument:

We added a few custom questions to address some needs that I had identified and that our prevention office had identified ... around healthy relationships. [We also asked about] knowledge [of] responsible employee versus confidential employee, so I think students have a lot of confusion in that area. [We also] work[ed] closely with our researchers, and so I'm hopeful that that'll give [the university] some good data.

Over time the institution has seen "some incremental change between 2015 and 2019, [but between] 2017 and 2019, not so much." She went on to explain what the climate studies

illustrated that "the awareness of the office went up [and] the trust in the institution response went up."

Reggie shared, one of the major benefits of a climate survey is the ability to "translat[e] that information into actual steps when you're just kind of drowning in the work in front of you." She then uses the information gathered to conduct strategic planning. But she also noted that "depending on your workload and your turnover, you may not have the time to devote to the strategic plan."

Penny shared, her office conducts "a climate survey once a year." She and her staff "read all the [comments]... and we take 'em to heart, and we try to, to correct some things that [we can]." Penny shared that one way the climate survey helps Penny measure success is by asking the campus community, "how many people are aware of who we are... aware of services [offered by the office and what the resources [are that we provide]. While this is just one of the annual climate survey questions, Penny uses this question as an important metric. She shared, "when we started it [the number of people] who were [aware] was like 30...[and] the last [survey] we had was like 87% knew. This increase in awareness illustrated to Penny that her team has "really gotten out there and got it [raising awareness]."

Yet, conducting a campus climate survey is not as simple as deciding to administer a survey; Title IX Coordinators must obtain institutional buy-in. Alex shared that she has not been able to conduct a climate survey at her institution, and that the lack of the ability to assess Title IX related issues has hindered her office's progress. While she is highly aware that conducting a campus climate survey is a best practice in the field, she expressed frustration as she has:

Been trying to get it done since 2014 under President Obama's leadership in the White House paper. [Under the recommendations of the 2014 White House Paper] schools

should have conducted [a climate survey]. We have the Administrator Researcher Campus Climate Collaborate (ARC3) [survey] that we can use, and it doesn't cost the institution anything to do that. And, so just, just helping 'em [university administration] understand that [a climate study] will help us identify what our climate is because not only does it help us in terms of identifying our climate, but we're addressing on how we can do our training and education, [ and] what we can actually focus on.

The lack of being able to test her work and understand the pulse of the campus has not only hindered the advancement of campus-wide training and education, but it has also limited her office's ability to apply for grant funding:

Certain grants because we don't have [campus specific] information to share because that's a lot of what we have found and what they're [funders are] asking is, "Have we conducted one and if so, what have we found?" And guess what? We haven't conducted one.

Recently, thanks to grassroots organizing by students, the university will conduct a climate study in the spring of 2021:

Finally, because our students did a march and then we had a sit-in ... it took that for [campus administration] to realize this is important...So we're doing a pilot in, in the spring. We got the, finally the support to do that.

While Sam's institution has done a campus-wide survey in the past, they have not conducted a climate survey recently. She shared her goal is to update what her institution refers to as a "campus safety survey" and administer the tool in the "next couple of years." As for now, her office is measuring success by the number of reports they get to their office. She explained,



"when we are getting more reports from students. I think that that is a sign that we are being successful in getting out our message."

Obtaining feedback about campus culture is one way in which Title IX Coordinators can formally assess their work. They can also evaluate their work by assessing complainants and respondents who have gone through a Title IX-related process. Becca shared about the unique way her office obtains feedback from those who have gone through a process is through a bi-annual 360-degree survey of complainants and respondents. To Becca, these anonymous surveys which are administered at the end of the spring and fall semesters allow her and her staff to ensure they stay true to their mission as they "measure success, one person, at a time." She reflected on the first time her office administered the survey to complainants:

I held my breath because you want to believe, and you want to think you're doing something, but until you test it, you don't know. So, I think that [getting feedback via surveys] has been really helpful to me personally, to feel like, Okay, this [work we are doing] is making sense.

Becca went on to share 360-degree survey results have been very helpful and "in some ways what you expect, but in some ways, it's not." She shared that she appreciates a formal feedback process because she believes that "people are not likely to tell you good things in person. Sometimes they'll be more willing to say the things they're not happy with or whatever." In evaluating the work via the 360-degree surveys, she initially "expected that [survey responses] would be at best sort of just okay." Yet since the office has been conducting surveys, she has consistently received feedback "that it's [Title IX supports] are actually more than okay, and that we are actually doing the things that help people get past something, or to help people stay engaged in their education."

While many of the Title IX Coordinators shared that formal assessment practices are essential to measuring overall campus climate and the support and resources offered to complainants and respondents, Reggie shared:

We've had a few students at the who'd gone through the process and said, very positive things and some who said it's very difficult and so, you know, I think we would, all of those pieces put together, um, is how you look at your assessment. You can't only look at your climate survey or only look at the individuals who have gone through the process. Yet, Reggie shared that obtaining this information can be challenging as "people who have gone through our process aren't necessarily gonna be very vocal about their experience that they were positive or negative, even."

Penny shared her office seeks to hear feedback via an open-door policy so "they can call us, come talk to us." She also shared that sometimes individuals share feedback with her boss, higher-level campus administrators, vice-chancellors, and university advocates. She is proud that she has built "really good relationships with most of our folks [university employees and her supervisor], and ... they'll just call me directly and say, "I'm hearing this." Penny specifically stated the "advocates are pretty direct, they'll call and say, "Well, this is how they [complainant or respondent] were feeling [when you spoke with them], and they felt like you were dismissive, or too lawyery." When Penny receives feedback, she takes the feedback to heart. She asks questions such as "how can I say that in a different way? What would you recommend?" and works to find solutions by asking "what we can do" to improve the process for future students and employees of the university.

***External reviews.*** In supervising a federally mandated area such as Title IX that is so open to scrutiny, Title IX Coordinators are not immune from experiencing external regulatory

reviews by state and federal agencies. External reviews of Title IX work can be quite daunting but can be instrumental in leading to positive institutional change. Becca, Alex, and Sam have led their institutions through the OCR investigations directly related to Title IX. Becca's experience with the institution's OCR investigation is still not resolved, and it began some time ago when she was in her Deputy Title IX Coordinator role. When the investigation opened, the university took "a very critical look at our roles [and] our work." Upon receiving official notice from OCR about the investigation, they sent the university notice with:

Eighteen items, and they say, "We need this information for the past five years." And, some of the items would be training that you did on X, Y, and Z [topics] for the last five years [and] you had to provide information about every single case from the timeframe they gave you. That's where "the list" [data tracking and management spreadsheet] started was because there were just factors that they [OCR] wanted for every case. And a lot of the factors we had tracked, I guess, or kept up with, but a lot of it I had to go to every single case file, open every case file, pull out the data, put it into the spreadsheet. And so, it's like cramming for an exam. I don't want to ever spend time in that way again.

Alex also has experience with a Title IX OCR investigation. As soon as she arrived at the university and began serving as the student conduct director, the first two cases that came across her desk were sexual assault cases. The visibility of these cases led to an OCR investigation.

Alex described the two events that lead to the investigation:

The first one was a young lady who had been assaulted by four football players, and that made national news. I'll never forget 'cause they put a newspaper article on my door about back at the [Midwestern university] to say, "Are you sure you know where you're headed?" You know, 'cause this was making the news. [The] young lady actually did a

press conference on the steps of [a campus] administration building where the president, the provost, all of our leader's offices are. Then on top of that, we had another situation, which occurred probably weeks apart, where a young lady had been [allegedly] assaulted by several members of a fraternity, and her mother happened to work for the Department of Justice. So, with that came a review from OCR. So that's what I walked into.

When the campus received the OCR investigation outcome, the report highlighted university inconsistencies in following policy and procedure. As Alex was new to her role, OCR asked for her opinion on the findings. She shared, "I actually concurred with some of those recommendations because we had to learn to stay firm and follow our policy because there were clearly examples of stepping outside of the policy." Ultimately, the OCR investigation outcome was positive, as it led to the university coming together and reviewing policy and procedures, and improving the university process.

Similarly, to Alex, when Sam arrived at the institution, an OCR complainant had been filed six-months prior. She shared, "when I started at, uh, [the university], I guess six months before I started, they had been notified that a complaint had been made to OCR." She was "involved with responding to that complaint [and the] OCR interviews, and that was a really interesting process because I'd never been involved with [Title IX] from that side... so that was really interesting." As a part of OCR's investigation, they requested several years of records. She went on to share:

They wanted really specific things about those records. Things like... demographic information of complainants and respondents but also like exact dates of complaints, exact dates of university knowledge, of where the complaint happened, any supportive measures that we put in place, whether there was a hearing, what was the outcome of the

hearing, if there wasn't a hearing, how was it handled. I mean, it was a list of probably like 30 different things they wanted about every complaint. And, we did not keep that level of detail in our records at that point. So, when I say I responded to that, I literally went through every complaint for that time period to pull out that information.

Sam went on to share, following the experience of the OCR investigation, "probably the biggest thing that we're still actually doing is ... we have just started keeping that type of information." keeping more detailed records. keeping around Title IX cases changed. "I mean, we haven't had a complaint since then, but if we do we've got all the information that they're gonna ask for."

When Reggie arrived at her institution in 2017, "we were at the tail end of the monitoring of [an OCR] agreement," meaning the institution had gone through a "Department of Education OCR compliance review, and entered into a comprehensive resolution agreement in 2015 to resolve that pending OCR matter." Under her watch, the institution's monitoring agreement with OCR ended in 2018. Following the release, the institution had to hire a consultant to ensure continued compliance. Therefore, Reggie and her team worked with the consultant to "review prior reports and respond to that monitoring agreement." Following this process, Reggie maintained responsibility for "the part of the monitoring agreement [around] internal processes and procedures [which included] monitoring and ensuring [the] training we were providing, whether it be through our EverFi module, or our in-person training [were] meeting our Title IX regulatory obligations."

OCR investigations are not the only form of external reviews that Title IX Coordinators may experience. Both Leslie and Becca shared their experience in being audits by entities external to their university. Like OCR investigations, these external audits also proved to

ultimately lead to outcomes that aided each campus in becoming better at serving their campus communities to ensure access to education under Title IX. Leslie shared:

We recently went through an audit, um, which was a really helpful experience so far. So, our institution is a grantee of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and we're a mid-level grantee and many of the external funding organizations [such as] the National Institutes of Health (NIH) or NASA, they're very interested in making sure that equity is happening on the campuses that they're funding. So, they sent a team of nine to our campus to audit our Physics and Astronomy Department. But since most of the services don't lie in physics and astronomy, um, it became kind of an audit of our equity regarding gender, um, overall. And so, we provided them information, documentation, policy, processes, and they came in, interviewed, uh, our stakeholders for Title IX, and then students, faculty, and staff in the department. And it was amazing. They're so very knowledgeable, and it was free. So other people get freaked out by the term audit. Um, we're gonna get a full report, although it takes about six to nine months, um, on some of our promising practices that we're engaged in and some of the areas for improvement.

The state conducted the audit that Becca's office went through. The audit was called a Sunset Audit of Safety and Security. It was requested by the state legislature and conducted by the state comptroller's office. Becca explained, "are any sort of government-funded entity is evaluated on what's called a sunset audit." In Becca's state, a sunset audit occurs every eight years at the state legislature's request. She went on to explain:

The sunset audit is, it's counterintuitive, but it says would we sunset [specific programs in the university] ...they're probably not going to sunset us, but [the audit] is an opportunity

for the state legislature to really get into specifics about the institution. They did a lot of work around safety and security, and Title IX is sort of an easy, interesting thing in that area. So, the audit was looked at our processes and procedures. It was pretty lengthy, it was incredibly detailed, and aspects of the audit required us to really learn how to talk about [Title IX] work to external parties. To [an auditor], a person who only looks at numbers [Title IX] is not an emotional issue, it's not a rights issue; it's not even an access issue for them - it's a numerical issue. So, [the process of going through the audit] was difficult, but also really super educational, about looking at this work from a different requirement.

Becca said the process of going through the audit "was terrible, but it was the single greatest education I could've gotten" as it allowed for her to reflect on the university's first sexual misconduct policy:

When we wrote the policy, the original policy, which was started about 2014, we used all guidance to build the policy. But once you do that [Title IX] process and then you're practicing it all the time, sometimes you lose just the memory of where [it came] from.

So, when Becca was compiling information for the auditors, she "had to go into the policy and find the guidance that told me that's why we are doing the policy. That was a huge... That's one of those non-classroom education experiences that I will forever appreciate." As time-consuming or painstaking assessment processes can be to endure, the learning that comes from feedback from campus and regulatory agencies can aid Title IX Coordinators in improving their practice.

**Theme three: Being human.** The third theme that emerged from participant narratives was *being human*. As an institution's Title IX Coordinator, they are the individual who bears the

responsibility for ensuring institutional Title IX compliance. Their role is multi-faceted, and they recognized that they are only human, as are the individuals they serve. This theme includes the categories of serving others, managing expectations, and creating lasting change.

*Serving others.* Participants consistently shared that the work is not about them but that it is about serving others. Serving others means serving complainants and respondents by adhering to Title IX policy and process to ensure they maintain access to their education. Penny is invested in making the community safer, and she believes that Title IX work is "a great service to the community... I mean, it's not perfect, you know? I think we're all doing the best we can." To be effective, Becca believes it is essential to have systems, policies, and practices in place to ensure an equitable process for all individuals engaged in a Title IX process. Federal requirements and guidance drive the policies that dictate the procedures that complainants and respondents go through when working through a Title IX process. Becca stated it is essential to get all the federal requirements into the university process while keeping in constant consideration the "human beings who are going to go through this process. How does this impact them?" And work backward... [the] response part has to be [a] compassionate process and procedure." To Becca, serving others is about conducting a process that is fair to all parties involved. She elaborated, "there's a respondent, complainant, [and] their support circles," which can include friends and family. She stressed that it is critical to meet all parties' needs, but that the process is fluid. Every case is unique, and she and her team must approach every case by asking, "how do you meet their needs and how do you make sure they have an understanding of process and procedures while still respecting the privacy of the two parties."

Like Becca, Sam also shared that meeting the individual needs of those involved in a Title IX process is essential. She shared, "even as a pretty experienced investigator, sometimes



you think you know what a student needs and what is best for them." She went on to elaborate that it is essential to follow a process and to:

Never skip the step of actually asking them, "What do you need? What do you think you need? Uh, what do you envision the next six months in your life to look at... look like?" Because asking those types of questions can really help you determine how you need to advise someone.

She stated that asking the questions and "learning and knowing how to have those conversations has been the biggest learning experience for me." While she has not been perfect, she has learned through "trial and error."

After moving from private practice to higher education, Sam has learned a great deal about an institutional Title IX process. She shared that seeing the process from an institutional perspective has caused her to "shift her view on the complainants' ability to choose whether they would like to [have a] formal investigation or not." Her experience in the role has changed her perspective, and she is now committed to a "complainant driven process." She went on to explain:

When I came out of private practice and was in my first equal-opportunity investigator role, it was my belief that if you had made a report to us that you were sexually assaulted, than we need to investigate that report period. Formal investigation regardless of what you want to do. Now what I learned in that role is that formal investigations are hard on people regardless of whether they want to do them or not. They're time-consuming, they're emotionally difficult, they're hard. Regardless of what the outcome is, win or lose, it is a difficult place to be in as either a complainant or a respondent. So, you know, seeing that process played out several times really shifted, for me, the necessity to do a

formal investigation all the time, regardless of what the complainant wanted to do and that's why I'm very, very strongly believe that a complainant driven process is the way to go.

Alex shared that critical to this work is following policy and procedure. This means there is "due process. Ensuring ... that we provide a process that works for the parties involved. She stated it is unacceptable to "tomp on folk's rights and not provide that due process or you just ignore the victims and, and side with the respondents ... and do nothing." To Alex, this is:

Compliance plus. As I like to say, go above and beyond, you will find yourself, probably it's not always going to be liked by everyone, but I can guarantee you're going to probably do a better job than if you try to just appease and either do nothing for one and everything for the other or vice versa. So, I think you always gotta be mindful to support, respond, but the due process is critical.

When working with complainants, Leslie shared that she provides them with what she calls a "menu" of services. Leslie explained:

Sexual assault response is much more action-oriented on my part. So [when] meeting with individuals who have experienced something that would identify them possibly as a survivor and providing them [with support], I always say the menu. People are unlikely to choose an option that they don't know exists. So, my role is providing the menu where people can choose help in ways that feel helpful. So, making sure that they know that this isn't a one and done, that you say yes today to a process or you say no today to a process and then that is your hard and fast rule. Um, making sure that I'm connecting them [to supportive services] or if they choose to go through [an investigative process] that they

know the process. So, providing all of the information the follow-up with are person-centered and [seek to] empower people who feel that they may have been disempowered. While responding to and supporting respondents is essential, Becca was adamant that institutions cannot lose sight of the overarching goal of Title IX:

The goal is access to education. The goal is educational. We are in an educational institution. There are going to be some people [those found responsible of a Title IX violation] we need to separate ourselves from, but it doesn't mean we can't educate them, or shouldn't try to.

Through the lens of her student conduct background, Alex shared the same sentiments as Becca about the necessity of education. She maintains it is imperative need to educate respondents through a Title IX process.

Alex believes Title IX Coordinators must take into "consideration th[e] development[a] level that students are in. [As] institutions of higher ed and we're supposed to have [a] higher standard in developing future leaders ... you know, our teachers and, individuals who should make a difference. In her opinion, "social work, sociology, psychology, higher ed - understanding that human psyche, the development, those type things, understanding where people are," are the professional fields best equipped to serve students in a Title IX process.

***Managing expectations.*** The category of managing expectations is about how Title IX Coordinators must manage the expectations others have of them while balancing their expectations of self and what they can and cannot accomplish in their roles. Penny shared the most challenging part of her role in managing the stigma of Title IX. She shared the stigma is very bothersome to her as her office is "supposed to be a resource – we're not supposed to be scary." For example, if complainants have a different interpretation of what they think Tile IX

does or what Title IX does not do, it can impede them from seeking help from the Title IX Coordinator. Penny shared that she has worked with complainants, respondents, and witnesses in Title IX cases who have had false information and expectations about the office. For example, Penny talked about when student witnesses get an e-mail from Title IX, "they're afraid ...to come in. They wonder if they're in trouble. Even after we assure them they're not in trouble, they really don't wanna get involved." Penny also shared that respondents are often even more difficult to work with than witnesses because of Title IX stigma. She explained that quite often, respondents "come in hostile, because they're automatically assuming that we have some preconceived [idea about them] ... And we're like, "We're trying to help you. We wanna know what you want.", and they're like, "I want you to leave me alone.", and we're like, "Okay, but if you need us [let us] know."...

She went on to elaborate on managing expectations of complainants and respondents when there is an investigative outcome. She elaborated "because there's always gonna be someone [who is] ...gonna be unhappy." She went on to explain, "when you're dealing with two people, and one of 'em can be in trouble" that it is tough to say "you're being successful in your investigations." What she maintains is critical for her and her staff to keep in mind is "you just have to really try to do the right thing, and make sure that you're in compliance, you know?"

Taylor also spoke about the stigma that surrounds Title IX work at his institution. He shared:

Sometimes in dealing with certain members of our clientele that we serve, we are approached with the attitude that we are, biased against victims of sexual assault... because of the fact that we have to apply [an] evidentiary standard that sometimes doesn't lend itself to findings that support or substantiate the complaint. Sometimes we are regarded by respondents who are brought into the picture because of the fact that we

received a complaint as being against them. We didn't file the complaint against them; however, they are offended by the very notion that we are investigating the complaint.

Taylor believes this stigma could be minimized if his office could "educate our students and make them aware of the fact that this office has a responsibility. We're not on anybody's side. We simply have a job to do, and our job is to try to get to the truth."

Reggie recalled a situation that involved multiple students in "a particularly difficult matter." Through the process of addressing the matter, she knew she and her team had to "really clearly adhere to our policy and procedures." She went on to share how challenging the cases can be for:

The individuals going through our process, whether it be as complainants or respondents, believe it is unfair and biased towards the other party and we hear it on both sides.

Complainants believe that we only trust and give attention to respondents. Respondents believe the exact same thing in the relationship and so I think managing that has been a tricky thing, especially when cases aren't always linear and cases aren't always clear cut and sometimes they evolve, especially in cross-claim intimate partner violence cases.

Sam shared that the biggest challenge in the role, both personally and as a compliance challenge, is that "everyone thinks you are against them in some way." She explained, "complainants tend to think that you are pro-respondent. Respondents tend to think you've already made up their mind that they're guilt[y]. Individuals' preconceived ideas about the Title IX Coordinator and the process can create an extra layer of difficulty." Sam shared when she is "trying to explain what your role is, what the policy is, and how we're approaching the policy because everybody's already made up their mind that you're not on their side." However, "the upside to that

[challenge] is that if everyone thinks you're against them, then you're probably doing a good job of being neutral."

Alex also has experience in managing expectations in her role. Alex found the pressure of managing expectations exceptionally challenging during a university investigation when the individuals involved expected her to provide special treatment for them because of their power and status. As these individuals were affiliated with prestigious groups, they had expectations that the investigation outcome would rule in their favor. Alex took career-altering risks to maintain her "integrity," as well as her duty to "treat everyone equally." The investigation was before her Title IX role when she was serving as the student conduct director. Still, it taught her a great deal about managing expectations and working with human beings. The investigation involved a campus group called Brotherhood. Brotherhood was:

Supposedly a [secret society] student organization. The only way you can join you have to be invited. So, you have to be tapped, and the way they tap you is because you have given so many years of service to the university- ... as a student or as an employee... Now, I say it's a student organization, but the people who actually organize[d] it and operate[d] it [were] alumni and these [were] pretty significant alumni. So, I say it's a secret society, but you had former presidents of the university, team members, coaches, provosts, faculty, I mean, [members] own businesses, and [members who were on the] board of trustees. They [were] affluent- ... members and so students were the ones being tapped and sometimes alumni, but they would continue to do rituals that were considered hazing. Well, of course, we got some complaints about the hazing. When I got complaints, we would follow up and investigate. So, the couple of times we investigated I recommended it go to a hearing 'cause of hazing, and so the first two times,

the former president came to the hearing, and this famous attorney...So, it intimidated the board [which was made up of] faculty members, staff members, and students. And I even had some faculty call me and say, "You're doing the right thing. They have done this for years. I support you. I support you." I'd say, "Well, can you come and speak on, on behalf?" "Oh, no, no, no. I don't want them to know 'cause they own, you know, they could determine if I get a loan for my home. They can determine uh if my child gets a job." I was like, "Oh, my goodness. You're kidding me." I feel like I'm in Yale or some place with this influence that they had. So finally, we got a third case, and it turns out that, um, the one who reported it happened to be the daughter of [an individual who was pretty high up at the university]. The Brotherhood had done some things to her that she just could not keep silent. We finally went to the hearing [and] I finally had enough evidence where they really were gonna have to be suspended.

When the Brotherhood was suspended, Alex shared: "I had a target on my back." They threatened her job, and "for about a year I had to deal with what I call retaliation." In this experience, Alex had to learn to protect herself. She gathered "what I call allies – people who could support me and my decisions." Before the retaliation, Alex believed, "if you just stuck with what was right and what was unright in the code then everybody would come onboard." But, she learned this was not the case. She went on to share:

I never really like playing what I call the political game, but there were just some things you had to prepare for in advance because if you didn't that was gonna be the outcome. Well, and I say that because I had to prepare for the aftermath of what was happening once that decision came back to suspend the Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood cases was a huge learning experience for Alex:

I had to understand when you make those tough decisions, and you stand on principle, your integrity, sometimes it comes at a cost. And when it comes at that cost you gotta be willing to decide how you want to proceed after that. So, what I had to do was put in writing what was happening to me and [I] made that, that part of my file, and then, I met with my supervisor who was giving me a lot of heat.

Like Alex, Taylor knows that by the very nature of the work with complainants and respondents, he will have to make "decisions [that] don't satisfy everybody. Because there's no way to satisfy everyone." He recognizes that:

If every decision came easy to me, I would probably not think that I'm doing the right thing... being able to recognize difficult decisions and being able to make those difficult decisions, having weighed the pros and cons and just doing the right thing [while] recognizing full and well that there's going to be some resistance to those decisions.

While Title IX Coordinators work to manage the expectations of those going through a Title IX process, they are also working to manage their expectations about what they can realistically accomplish in their roles. Becca shared that the investigative and response piece of Title IX is the greatest challenge of the work because of "the human beings involved." She attempts to "manage expectations" of all parties involved as best she can as she responds to allegations of sexual misconduct. She recognizes that "the response part is difficult because people have been harmed, whether perceived or policy violation. And I think sometimes it's trauma, and trauma comes across in so many ways."

Becca shared about an experience she had with a complainant, their parents, and an advocate from a local support agency, which challenged her to think about how she manages



both the expectations of others and the expectations she has for herself. She shared as she reviewed the complainant's file before the meeting:

On paper, everything looked ideal as far as the supports, the resources, the experience, the access. And then we had a meeting that I thought I was just attending, to like represent the [Title IX] office or something, with the parents and an advocate. And the parents for the entire meeting were very focused on me, on what they perceived to be my failures, on [my] personal attributes that they did not like, [and] their daughters experience under my leadership. That was devastating. I mean, really devastating. I had to work for a long time to figure out, number one, why is devastating? If I could objectively say, we [Title IX] didn't do anything wrong, why am I so upset? And I think it also reaffirmed the importance of a team. Because had I been in that work by myself, having that experience, I don't know that I would've kept doing this work. I mean, it was that upsetting and hard.

After a period of reflection and conversations with close colleagues, Becca realized what she had experienced was not about her, but instead about expectations that the complainant and her family had. Becca explained:

They had an experience, their daughter had experienced a harm that they felt was unacceptable, and I represented for them a whole lot of other things. And so, I know it wasn't about me personally, and I think you can say that in these roles. But I think if you care about the work it feels personal. So just recognizing, oh, this is going to happen. As much as you try to explain expectations, as much as you try to explain prevention, as much as you try to be compassionate, as much as you try to set up the structures, you are going to have people who will look at you and say, "You are the problem, and you

failed." I think that that is something that I understand why people maybe don't do this work long term.

Reggie also shared how difficult working with human beings can be, especially with those who have been through or have supported someone through a Title IX process. She shared, while she knows she is "doing great work" and has "the skills [and the] background when people come to this process, it's in the most difficult times of their lives, and they're not trusting a lot of people, and so you have to really work hard to build trust." She went on to explain:

People may lash out at you even, and it's not your fault, right? You haven't done anything wrong. You have followed your policy. You've followed your procedure. You've been empathetic. You offered resources, but it's difficult. Whether it's there in a complainant role or a witness role or a respondent role, this [an investigative process] is not an easy thing to go through so.

Reflecting on her experience, Reggie continued to share:

Now I think, when I started as a Title IX Coordinator, I kind of internalized everything that was happening. I felt for the complainants, I felt for the respondents, I felt for the angry parents, I felt for the, you know, crying parent. I felt for the witnesses. I felt for everything, and I really took a lot of that in, and I had to develop and distance. Um, that doesn't mean that I'm not empathetic and I'm not understanding, I'm not here to offer resources. But I can't feel all the feels. So really finding that balance of how you can help support in a neutral and equitable way and not just take in everything and so I think that is one of my biggest advice to my new investigators is, you know, we don't want you to be 100% in investigation all the time.

Reggie works to ensure her staff have time to find step away from Title IX investigative work to “give a training and attend a community event.” Stepping away can allow staff to refocus and remember their work is one part of the larger piece of individuals maintaining access to their education.

*Creating lasting change.* The category of creating lasting change is about the Title IX Coordinators' commitment to continually work to prevent and respond to discrimination on the basis of sex in their campus communities. Creating lasting change is an ongoing process that requires Title IX coordinators to update campus policies and procedures under new federal guidance frequently. Creating lasting change means Title IX Coordinators must bring others alongside them to ensure the community is a part of the process and buy-into and understand why institutional policies and procedures must change, sometimes drastically, and with little notice.

Becca shared her belief that Title IX Coordinators must be committed to saying, "I want to do this work. I want to do this work because I believe that communities are better, and institutions are better without these gender-based issues. How can I affect that change?" To her, creating this means "figure[ing] out how to talk about [the work] in a way that is accessible." She believes Title IX Coordinators must make sure they are well-matched with the organization. Meaning the person who serves in the Title IX Coordinator role must do the work at an institution that is "compatible with you." She went on to share that she is:

Recruited probably once a week now. I mean, and that's just because I have done the work for so long, not for any other reason I don't think. I got a call about a large system school last week, and I was like, "The idea of me [there]. What a disaster that would be. So, doing this work ...I think is knowing your institutional culture and knowing your title

IX person culture. I think those need to match. I think it's one of the things that's worked well here, is I match here. I fit here.

The Title IX Coordinator must "fit" with the culture of the institution. Becca encourages those considering working in Title IX to think about the work differently and ask themselves: "What's your cultural fit? Do the institutional values align with your cultural fit? And can you execute successfully in that environment?" Long term, she challenges Title IX Coordinators to consider the "greater social communities when working to create significant social change." She talked about an example of one of the most detrimental cases she has seen in which, "you have two individuals who have an experience, but their experience is then lived out in their social groups." Then, since the friend groups are aware of the situation that took place, social groups can become divided, and questions start being asked, "Like, who believes who? How is that communicated? How do people make decisions and choices? Who gets rejected by those groups?" I mean, there's just so much social impact that the response process.' Creating lasting change from this institutional perspective is vital for individuals, groups, and the greater community.

Penny shared, Title IX is a "tough area to work," and creating lasting change can be even more challenging because "every time we all feel like we're getting comfortable in the area the ground shifts beneath us." Alex reflected on her first significant experience in shifting Title IX-related work when she was the director of student conduct. It was during this time the 2011 Letter was released. The university had recently adjusted their policy and procedure following the outcome of their OCR investigation, "that put us really in a good – place. So, we didn't have to backtrack 'cause a lot of what was recommended we were already doing." She also recognizes that her office must "always maintain a balance." Balance to Alex means following a process that follows university policy that is fair for both complainants and respondents. Following the 2011

Letter, she knew that the regulations would again change in time, and "the pendulum would swing." Then, when the Trump administration released the Proposed Rule in 2018:

I knew the pendulum was going to swing [again] because of what happened in the past with schools not providing that balance. So, the federal government stepped in and said, "These things will occur, should be occurring"... and so-here we are.

When the 2020 Final Rule was released, Alex looked to the support of her campus community to develop and institutionalize new Title IX policies and procedures. She shared:

So, I decided to put together a steering committee ... and that steering committee represented members of the entire campus who had some stake in the [Title IX] process, and so it actually worked out really well. So, we got that, that group together... [and we] identified the areas that we needed to address. Our student code [was] in a really good [place] already so [made] very minor revisions, but we had to create a whole new employee process. So that took a little bit more time but we also had to address if we were going to continue with our responsible employees and who that was. We had to come up with the, the threshold process in terms of how we would determine what's Title IX, what was not. [We had to figure out] the training aspect, [and] who was gonna lead our training, [share] the message, and how are we gonna communicate [the message] to the campus. So, it was a great endeavor. It was probably about I'd say 15 to 20 people, and then we had our different subgroups under the steering committee who focused on specific areas. So, I had a subgroup for faculty to deal with faculty issues. I had a subgroup for students. I had a subgroup that focused just on communication and making sure that that piece was done looking at our websites, our messages, getting the word out to the different constituents like our staff senate, faculty senate and our, our graduate

student government and undergraduate student government. Then we a Title IX administrative group just look at if we needed a new staff or if we needed to reposition people you know, do the things like that 'cause we had to talk about advisors. We had to talk about who the decision makers was gonna be. Um, our roles from a Title IX perspective, how this included HR, what training they were going to need. So, it was a whole endeavor. And so that took us clearly up until the last day-... to implement that. So we were ready to go. We did all that. Felt really good. I got a lot of good accolades. I had to present to our executive leadership team where we were, was doing really, really well.

With new leadership in the White House, Alex predicts that the pendulum will swing again in the near future. After the 2020 Final Rule release, Reggie also took proactive steps to elicit the university stakeholders' engagement and support in Title IX work. She shared, "every Title IX office across the country handled this summer, we had 100 days to, to change our policy." Coming into making the necessary policy changes, her institution had a "policy that met a lot of the boxes, but we didn't have an appeal [process]. And so, we had to create a process. We also didn't have direct cross examination by an advisor." She and her team had to make critical decisions about "how we [were] going to engage the community knowing that there are things we have to put in this policy that they don't want." For example, "they didn't want [the policy] to have direct cross examination by an advisor - but that's not really an option for us." In light of the challenges presented by the 2020 Final Rule, Reggie decided to hold listening sessions. First, there were, "internal sessions with stakeholders - our Provost Office, our HR Office, our Student Affairs, those who provide direct support to students, like the Women's Center, our Multicultural Center, our LGBTQ Center." Next, there were "open sessions for students and employees and

faculty members to join. And community members. We had some alumni join in." Both the internal and open sessions provided:

The opportunity for us to say, "We may not agree with everything [with] these new regulations, but here's the things we want to ask you about. Um, and here are the things we want to know more from [you]." And then opening it up for anything else [they had to share].

While she wishes she had more time to build support in the process to "have a series of policies out for input and comment" under the 100-day timeline of the 2020 Final Rule, Reggie believes "by front loading those interactive sessions, we got better buy in from our, our university community, knowing that this is, you know, these are things [under the 2020 Final Rule] we actually have to do."

Sam shared her approach to negotiating various interests across campus when updating the institution's Title IX policy. She first reflected on her time as an attorney. "I will say it is much easier as a private attorney to draft a policy because you're literally drafting what the law is and then handing [it] off to your client and letting them do all the negotiating about it. However, when working on revising policy internally, the process becomes more difficult as "on the one hand you have to write in the policy [based on] what the law is, but then there are still a lot of, I would say, political ties to negotiate within the university." During her tenure at the university, she has now revised institutional policy "on three different occasions." However, she "think[s] that our policy keeps gets better through every version that we go through, but it's never an easy thing to try to balance all the competing interests that people have and that are valid concerns to raise." Sam has negotiated various interests and concerns at the institution:

In meetings with various people and really listening to what they are saying and having a discussion about, you know, somebody is concerned about, let's say, mandatory reporting "Okay. Tell me what your concerns about that are and have you thought about this? You thought about, you know, the reason we have it and what would happen if we didn't?" And really just having those conversations.

Sam shared a recent experience about the mandatory reporter policy on campus:

I spent probably six months on a group with faculty and staff where we mainly just talked about mandatory reporting and the pros and cons of it. And eventually, after all that and bringing in several experts on campus to talk about it, I was able to bring the group around to the idea of, "Mandatory reporting is not bad. I would understand your concerns about it, but, in reality, all it does is connect people with resources that they need to move forward that you as the faculty member probably don't know about."

Taylor also believes that being collaborative and bringing people along in Title IX related work is essential. He shared:

When you're given a task to do, you say, "Hey, I've got to get this done." And sometimes in the process of having that mindset, you don't realize that some collaboration is necessary. And it's just a matter of bringing people along with you and being able to convince them of the necessity of doing it. Sometimes accepting their input when you didn't necessarily think it was something that you needed to do. But, as it turns out, it was the right thing to do, to be able to fulfill the responsibilities that you were tasked or charged with, in a manner that really was in the best interest of the university. In other words, that there was more than your way of getting things done.



Leslie shared creating lasting change, what she called "changing the culture" is all about communication. Her approach is to educate the campus community about "culture change - let's talk about this in ways that we can prevent things from getting [to a policy violation] and invest [in] and know our parts of what we can do." She went on to explain it's about "the language that we use, the language that we permit our peers to use has a great impact on down the road." For example:

If the senior faculty member hears junior faculty members talking about a person in a way that wouldn't necessarily be professional, it may not be actionable in a Title IX way, but you can intervene and change your culture. So, teaching people that this isn't about responding with a [Title IX] policy and a process, although sometimes it is, it's about like really intervening in smaller ways we can't prevent them from rising to [a Title IX policy violation].

Penny, too, believes creating culture change starts with critical conversations. An example she provided was about providing sex and consent education before students arrive at college.

Education must begin in the K-12 grade levels. Penny went on to explain:

I mean we have some people [who arrive at college] who've never had any sex education or very little, or because if they're in-state folks ... they teach abstinence [education]. And, so [when they arrive at college] and we talk about sex [and consent] in general in an open environment that may make 'em uncomfortable. So I'd say that's been a challenge because if you're just trying to get to the basic sex conversation going to that next level, it has been kind of a challenge, you know? And a lack of understanding about what consent looks like, you know, um, because they've never had the conversation before.

To create lasting change, Title IX Coordinators shared they must be ready and willing to step up to the ongoing challenges in their role, bring others along beside them, and have critical conversations to teach others about the importance of the work.

**Theme four: Effective leadership.** The fourth theme that emerged from participant narratives was *effective leadership*. As participants explained, leadership in this area is not an easy task; still, there are strategies and approaches Title IX Coordinators can take to effectively lead their institutions in Title IX compliance. This theme includes the categories of leadership is, growth and development, and having professional relationships and supports.

*Leadership is.* Each of the participants expressed their understanding of leadership. The category of leadership represents the diversity of ways in which Title IX Coordinators believe that individuals in their positions can lead in this work. Becca believes "leadership happens in every position in an organization." To her, leadership is:

Taking your part of the puzzle and defining what success looks like. It's not just the product, right? So, you have a thing that you have to do, whatever your role is in an institution. But it's also the attitude, how you do it, and it's the expectation you set for. Becca shared, those who serve as Title IX Coordinators must be trustworthy. Becca elaborated about trust and shared:

Most people I work with trust me. I think they trust that I have the best interest of the institution in my decision-making. And that's true. That's a truth about me, I think. I mean, I'm sure sometimes I probably think about myself, or I think about whatever. But ultimately, they know that my test is the mission, is this mission-driven. I think they trust that.

To Reggie, leadership is "be able to earn trust with the university community." through clear communication and transparency in what [one] can be transparent [about]." Alex also talked about trust, "I think people have to trust the Title IX Coordinator in the decisions that they make um, the reasons, and the rationale that they have to make it." Taylor also shared his thoughts:

A leader has to possess the courage to make the decisions that must be made that are in the best interest of the institution or the organization in which that leader serves.

Recognizing full well, that anytime a decision is made, that is made in the best interest of the organization, he or she is going to be met with resistance. So, the mark of a good leader is, notwithstanding, those challenges I just described, nonetheless, making the decision that he knows is the right decision to make and be willing to accept, I won't call it fallout, but the challenges that come with making those decisions.

In the same vein as Taylor, Becca explained leadership is:

Doing the right thing. And my test is always for the university. So, is it the right thing for me personally? We can't let ourselves think about it that way. You can think about the right thing for your unit or wherever you are working, but ultimately you have to think for the institution. Because the right thing for your unit may not be actually the right thing for the institution, and so you have to think institutionally what's the right thing. I think that's how I lead is like, "Okay, what's the right thing for the institution and how do we facilitate that?"

Penny believes leaders must have the "ability to listen, understand and effectively communicate, what your goals are, and what your expectations are. I also think you have to be mindful of the needs of others." Leslie believes, "being able to work with a, a group, whether that's small or

large, to be able to influence people to work in a cohesive manner toward an achievable goal or both.

Participants also shared that a leader must be able to communicate effectively. Becca believes a Title IX Coordinator must be able to communicate the value of their work. Those who:

Cannot talk about things that are difficult to talk about and teach people. Because if you can't talk about it, you can't do anything about it. And so, until you can get people to talk about it in a way that, that makes it valuable and they connect with, then you can't move anything.

Becca believes Title IX Coordinator must be able to:

Articulate the benefits of prevention...and willing to say things that people could question later. You can do Title IX compliance and prevention. You could do it with an e-mail every year. But it's [more than that] it's being willing to have the conversations that are the fundamental [to the] issues.

Penny shared, "I can tell you having worked at the university the most effective leaders here are constantly communicating, you know?" In the vein of communication, Reggie believes that leaders must communicate clearly, but in their communication, they must be mindful of communicating and being transparent "in what [one] can be transparent [about]." A way in which Reggie clearly communicates Title IX work is through publishing an annual report. Her office began publishing the reports because:

We had been hearing from our students that more people were expelled for honor charges, which is lying, cheating, and stealing in the honor code than Title IX. And it simply wasn't true. But [the students] didn't have the facts to be able to, to know that.

Now the annual reports released by her office communicate:

The number formal investigations we had. These are the number that have results in the finding responsibility versus finding not responsible. These are the type of complainants who responded by race, gender, affiliation, [such as] student [or] employee, [as well as] the sanctions [from] the last academic year.

The data that is shared in the annual reports is done so in "a very disaggregated way. So we [aren't] actually saying, "This student who engaged in this behavior was disciplined in this way." Rather, we were saying, "These complaints, which involved these potential policy violations, were resolved in this manner." She explained the annual reports are extremely valuable because when she gets pushback from campus or community constituents and when she is questioned about her work, she can refer to the annual reports to clearly communicate how she and her team are carrying out Title IX.

Becca also shared that communication is critical in her work:

Being able to communicate the value of that is where you begin to lead in this area.

Because how easy that is, you can have all these expectations or you can have all these goals [but if you] ... can't talk about it, you can't do anything about it. And so until you can get people to talk about it in a way that makes it valuable and they connect with, then you can't move anything.

Alex explained a leader must be:

Willing to speak for those who can't do it for him or herself. So, you serve as their voice.

You serve as that, that individual who will ensure that the right pieces are in place -to organize it, to make sure the initiatives are being addressed.

Leaders are also decision-makers. As Alex stated, leaders "make tough decisions." Penny shared how she has grown as a leader in her decision-making processes:

I like to plow ahead sometimes, and I think working at an institution of higher learning has been really eye opening for me is that there's so many other factors to consider in decision making. It's not just about going and throwing your ideas and making sure people implement 'em, 'cause there's a lotta great ideas out there. So, I think you have to listen too, um, but in the end, you have to have, you have to ... Because you're gonna have a lotta people throwing things at you you've gotta be to make hard decisions too, you've got to land somewhere, and, and be transparent about why you're making those decisions.

Leadership is building and developing a team. Alex looks at leadership through her experience as a basketball coach:

I coach basketball. As that coach, my job is to develop, encourage, trust, and allow others to take the lead and be a part of a team. So, and I just kind of guide it and point out errors that I say, "Well, have you thought about this? Have you, have you tried this?" Um, and then provide that support and the resources to make sure that they can achieve it because it's one thing to point it out, but if I'm not there to help 'em and support 'em, then what's the point? And so from the starters to what I call your second string to your managers, the people who keep your books, all are very much part of this, this team. So, you find a place for everybody, and that's your job as the leader.

Becca shared, "And so I think a leader when they're developing their team, whatever that looks like, they use the strengths of the people that they show up with, and you just build on those." To Becca, a leader can say:

"Here's where we're going." A leader helps create the map to get there. And then a leader hires or engages with competent people and lets them do their work, and then checks in. a

leader says, "Here's our goal," whatever it is, and depending on the people and what you're doing, how specific it needs to be. But then says, "Here's where we're starting, here's where we're going," um, and helps people to establish, okay, here's sort of the benchmarks for how we'll know if we're getting there. And then just let people do their job.

It's about delegating work to team members. Alex explained it is essential to:

Delegate so that the right people can make it happen. Sometimes people think being a leader means "I have to do it all." And I think that's a faulty perspective because I think being a great leader means you're willing to trust others.

As she reflected on her work, Reggie shared that she believes she is a great partner and collaborator when it comes to delegating work to others, "I'm not always the best." She went on to share, "if I think something is gonna take a little bit too long to do if someone else does it, I tend to just do it myself... [which can] result in, kind of, overload of work. As she has recognized this opportunity for growth, she is working on "when I can engage others to do the work that needs to be done."

Leslie, too, admitted delegating can be a challenge, but she is working on it. Historically, she has been the person who has done everything. She labeled herself a "worker bee." She explained:

Go and do this task. Start this program. I started the food pantry, I started the CARE Team and those were things that I was doing. I was the person carrying it out. I tend to think, "Oh, if we're going to start this program, I need to be the person to do it." And I can't do that because there aren't enough [of me] to do that right now.

As she has moved into the Title IX Coordinator role, she added:

I have to ask for things that I need help with, which I'm not always very good at doing. And some of that comes from, I should do more, I should be more, I should be able to do this. So, those are some of the internal struggles that I have. Some of that comes I think as well from being first generation [college student], I don't want to ask questions that other people think I should know. I don't want to ask something because I don't want to look like I don't know and probably everybody else knows the answer to this which logically I know isn't true, but emotionally if that's part of the baggage that I carry. So, I'm working on that. But I think the managing piece and pushing out of. I don't have to sit on every committee. I don't have to be in every project for those to be successful ... I have other campus personnel relying upon me to be the expert to help them do their job.

However, working as a team isn't all about delegation. Alex went on to explain the leader of a team is:

Willing to do what they're asking their team members to do. So, you can't be at a point where it's above you. So, you're like, "I'm asking you to do it, but I'm not gonna ever do that." So you gotta lead by example. You gotta be willing to do the work as well. So, if you're asking your staff to do it, then you should also be willing to do it too.

Similarly, Sam believes "leading by example." by "set[ting] a tone" by "acting that way myself" is a critical part of leadership.

***Growth and development.*** Participants spoke about the need for ongoing training, education, and professional development. Title IX Coordinators shared it's imperative to stay on top of training and development. To grow and develop in the role, Alex believes that Title IX Coordinators:



Have to stay abreast and current [in] your own training-... you have to be on [the] cutting edge. So, you have to, you know, complete your training. Sometimes people say annual training, but I think the training needs to occur throughout the year because something can change that quickly.

She went on to share:

Training is so important. So, when I say it's, you know, trying to identify and locate the training that's actually gonna be beneficial 'cause there's a lot of folks out there that's trying to do the training but it's not necessarily the best training So you just gotta pick and choose what's gonna be extremely helpful as you're learning about certain aspects. So I think that's the learning curve and, and staying abreast of the laws and the case law.

She also shared it is imperative in her role to review what she has learned to make sure she is interpreting the information correctly:

You can forget [what you learned], and you just have to constantly remind yourself it's okay to you know, take time to go back and review and, and say you know, "Let me go back and, and look at this and make sure I understand it before you do that." You've, you've gotta you know, stay in tune with the pulse, what's going on, on your campus, looking for those trends. Um, because we're gonna be that first line of defense. People are gonna look to us to have the answers, and it really doesn't help to say, "I just don't know." You know, why don't you know?

Taylor shared about the growth and development he thinks is essential in this work. Title IX

Coordinators must:

Be willing to do what's necessary to stay abreast and learn, such as these new regulations [2020 Final Rule] -that we're, we're all confronting and dealing with now. So, being

willing to learn, willing to adapt to changes, having an open mind and being able to recognize that you can always learn from others. Even people who aren't necessarily in the profession of handling Title IX cases. There are a great many things you can learn from people who don't necessarily have the "credentials" to be involved in Title IX work.

Taylor and his staff have been trained extensively by:

ATIXA and a number of other organizations that provide educational instruction for university employees that do what we do [such as] law firms and other organizations that specialize in higher education law offered many webinars after Title IX regulations were issued. My staff and I attended or participated in those almost on a weekly basis for a while.

Leslie believes in the importance of training through professional organizations. Although membership is expensive, through membership to professional organizations such as the National Association of College and University Attorneys (NACUA), ATIXA, and the [conference-wide Title IX group]:

Those are my choices," they are "really helpful [because] someone [is] filtering cases, breaking news, et cetera. That's extraordinarily helpful because to go and search case law. There's just not enough time to do that on your own. So, to have an organization that filters to you the most relevant [information] is very helpful. I don't know everything, but I know people who know a lot. Relying on those networks [and] professional development opportunities are not a luxury. They're a necessity. So, even though [going to conferences or other professional development opportunities] is time away and it's expensive, it's necessary.

Penny shared:

Ongoing education is super important. Nowadays everybody's like, what training are you gonna use? I don't even know if there's an effective one out there. I've seen some webinars that were completely unhelpful to me.... And a lot of the student affairs stuff I've sat on they were like, "We were really angry about this [2020 Final Rule]." I'm like, "That's wonderful-"...but we're past that."

Recently, the 2020 Final Rule has been a considerable part of Penny's role. She shared she is:

Not only learning the new regulations for ourselves, but we're also having to educate our campuses and all the leaders ... This is the time now where I feel like everybody's kinda trying to figure things out, and I'm having to kinda step into that role, you know? All eyes are on us; I mean this is we're gonna try to navigate these same regulations, try to evaluate, um, our policies and procedures. You're constantly having to tweak and figure out because with your policies, you gotta figure out if somebody says, you know, this is really not working. Or we have, um, we're kinda still working to get somebody permanently, but talk to our advocates for complainants and respondents. So, I think that's another big like in responding or even training and education, like training and education, is like what's working, what's not working. Um, and then with the flip side of that is, and the response is, it's like this is how people are feeling. I think it's the ability to take constructive criticism.

Reggie shared, she believes Title IX Coordinators should "make sure they have broad learning opportunities." She went on to explain, "sometimes, you know, if you're a lawyer, you tend to focus on accredited lawyer training." She shared, "I attend quite a few conferences and certifications [training]. So I've definitely done ATIXA certifications, [and] I also attend professional conferences, such as NACUA or Student Affairs Administrators in Higher

Education (NASPA)." She went on to elaborate that she has "really stepped out of the box" to obtain "really beneficial learning opportunities outside of my comfort zone and outside of my traditional trajectory as a trained lawyer." Reggie has attended conferences such as the "NASPA Strategies Conference which tends to look at this from the lens of Student Affairs [and] health promotion." Additionally, she has "attended and presented at the Puzzles Conference North Caroline State, which I think is a great conference as well because it does bring together advocates, practitioners, Title IX Coordinators, and community members." She shared these learning opportunities were "really beneficial to me because my experience was very compliance-focused and so I looked at this work like a lawyer looks at the work." Looking forward, Reggie is very interested in looking at bringing restorative justice practices to her institution, but she is:

Hesitant [about] really taking it on [because she wants to] make sure that we do it well 'cause I think a lot of, um, practitioners [and students] think, "Oh, we want restorative justice but we don't really know what that means." So, this is an area I've been trying to get a lot more education on to see if we're gonna bring that in through our informal resolution [process and make sure] we do the right way.

Sam also shared that ongoing training is essential. For those who serve in a Title IX coordinator role, she believes those individuals should be training on both "changes in the law" and "general administrative training." For her office in particular, she and her staff attend training based on "what each individual needs." She has maintained her state's attorneys license, so she is required to complete continuing legal education. To fulfill those requirements, she chooses to focus on "different trainings both in equal opportunity and general employment laws, Civil Rights, education law, and then Title IX specifically." She went on to elaborate "when there is not a

pandemic," she and the deputy Title IX Coordinator "go to one of the ATIXA trainings... and she tries to do a refresher on the mechanics of being a Title IX coordinator once a year and then I get all of the legal refreshers." Sam also believes it is imperative for her staff to remain well trained to be effective in their roles. She sends investigators to training through ATIXA as well as other organizations.

*Professional relationships and supports.* Participants shared about the professional relationships and supports that have been critical to them as they have entered into roles at their institutions, grown and developed as professionals, and moved into and maintained their roles as Title IX coordinators.

Becca, Penny, Sam, and Reggie shared about former supervisors who were instrumental in acclimating them to the culture of working in higher education. Becca's first supervisor at the institution when she started the case management program set her up to succeed in her role and grow in her career at the institution. She shared:

My first supervisor at the university was probably the most beneficial for my career, period. He taught me so many things, and I think he had confidence in me. I think he got me into spaces and rooms and gave me access. That's what I tried to do for the people that I work with, is like, you can't make someone's job for them, but you can make sure they get in the room. You can make sure they get a leadership role. You can make sure they get on the search committee. He did that for me always. He made me important to other people by letting me be in spaces. Um, and I think that was huge.

Her supervisor cultivated her confidence and supported her in her work. She explained:

He would come in [my office], and I'd be like, "I really think we should try this thing." He'd be like, "Oh, you should try that thing." And I look back on it and, I don't know how

much he actually advised me at times more than he just told me I could be who I was in the work. Like, he was willing to take risks, and we weren't going to look like everybody else, and he was okay with that. But I think he knew when he hired me that's who I was. Penny also highlighted the strong relationship she established with her supervisor, which helped her transition into higher education. "She and I both come from a non-higher ed background ... I don't think I can explain it to people... When you're out in what we say, the real world versus the education world." The transition for Penny was not easy. She shared her appreciation for her supervisor, who helped her acclimate to her role:

I mean, just simple things that she's helped me with, like how to phrase an e-mail. Like, you know, you and I might send an e-mail, and somebody says, "Hey, I think this is a good idea.", and you don't, and you say, "No, I don't think that.", you know, you're, you're direct, or I've always been very direct. And she's like, "Well, people will think that's rude, that you might close some communications down." So she's been really helpful in kinda getting me used to, um, how to, how to talk to people in an education environment. The meetings drove me crazy when I first got here. I've never been to so many meetings in my entire life, but, um, I've seen the value in them now because it helps you in the future to get everybody on the same page. So, and she was really helpful ... mentoring me when I got here about how to manage those things, so yeah. She's been great.

When Sam started at the institution, she was a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. She shared that her then-boss, who is now retired, was "great to work with. She had been in the equal opportunity office, I think at that point for 15 years, so she had long-standing relationships with people around equal opportunity." Her supervisor was also the Title IX coordinator and mentored her in

her role. She shared, "when I first started, the Title IX coordinator made it a point to take me to meetings with her and to introduce me to people I didn't know."

Reggie also "benefited greatly" from her first supervisor at the institution. She referred to this individual as an "incredible mentor" to her. She shared:

She had the same career trajectory as me. [She] was at the Department of Education for 20 years, and she served as an Attorney, a Program Manager, and a Regional Director, and she became a Title IX Coordinator [at another university] and was, I think, maybe even their first Title IX Coordinator. [She] worked in some really difficult cases there and then came to the [university] where she saw the broader Civil Rights work. So, she had a really great perspective of understanding how to navigate the university community because that was something that I needed a lot of guidance on.

Like Penny, Reggie had not previously worked in higher education. She explained she had only "navigated the universities only from the Department of Education compliance perspective, I didn't fully understand and appreciate the nuances of facility, staff, medical center, [and] students." Therefore, having her supervisor's "perspective and mentorship was really valuable." She also shared her supervisor was a "really good partner... [and someone] who [she could] have as a sounding board, as she still is for me, was really helpful as well."

Participants also shared that ongoing support in the role is critical. Alex shared, her relationship with her supervisor has been instrumental in her role as he was the Title IX Coordinator before moving into the position:

I get full support from him, and I think it's because number one, he's done it [the Title IX Coordinator role], and he knows what it takes and what, what is needed. [He] also he

realizes the importance of it, and so he's an advocate, a strong advocate, for Title IX, and so I really do appreciate his support.

Becca has worked on Title IX related issues since 2012. Over the years, she has had to obtain support from those who have supervised her in this capacity. As she leads the Title IX work, she recognizes part of her role is to bring leadership along and help them understand both the legal side of Title IX and their importance of the work that she oversees. "We've had multiple chancellors. And so, I think with a new chancellor, you want to help them to understand the issue quickly. You don't want your chancellor to be vulnerable and not understand the issue." In helping others understand the issue, Becca has learned a great deal. She shared, "I feel like that's been really educational for me." In getting someone on board with Title IX work, she thinks critically about "how do I get someone from another structure to understand our structure, to support the structure, and to see the value in it?"

She shared the importance of having those in high ranking institutional position value the work:

When you have people who value the work, even if they don't fully understand it, you get that opportunity. It becomes part of what they think about when you're dealing with issues as opposed to, "Oh, yeah, that [required] training over there, that thing we do once a year," sort of thing.

She went on to share what it is like to report to the highest-ranking official at the university:

I think it's a very interesting thing to report to a chancellor. Because they have so many things to do, and so you have this finite period of time, so, you have to learn to be pretty independent. Like, I feel like that's one of the biggest changes in the last three years for me. And one of the most uncomfortable things is just basically being a very independent employee. And, I like to be supervised. I like to ask questions. I like to know where the



boundaries are, I like for someone to tell me, "That's enough, you've done the work." And I do not have that. So, that has been a huge adjustment.

Like Alex and Becca, Sam shared that having support from the university administration is essential. She explained, "You know, a lot of the things that we do for Title IX compliance, we couldn't do if our president and our provost did not fully support the idea of not just compliance but going beyond compliance." To Sam, going beyond compliance is going above "what the law says we have to do." Going beyond compliance "might cost, you know, a little bit more money but are still for the best interest of the students." She explained that her institution has an advocacy center on campus. "We don't have to have an advocacy center on campus. We have a community center where people could go, but our president and our provost are very supportive of supporting students who need help."

Reggie shared support systems across the institution are critical because the work is "hard. It's really hard." For Reggie, it is essential to approach the Title IX Coordinator role with both "the perspective of knowing the law and about knowing how to work with people." Title IX Coordinators must be able to "build relationships with students, with faculty, and with staff and that that takes time." Reggie shared her gratitude for the "great core group of people who do this work from across the institution. From university council to the dean of students, to our women's center, to employee relations." She shared that the folks working in these offices "have a great desire to do this work well." They are a strong team who have bonded together as they have "gone through difficult times, where their work was questioned and falsely written about in national publications. And so, they really valued the commitment [to Title IX] and the challenge[s] that they face as well."

Alex stated Title IX Coordinator must "have support." Alex is appreciative of her colleagues who work in counseling services. She shared that they will "refer students to Title IX for the supportive measures because they are not able to do a lot of the things that we can." She also appreciates the relationships she has established with, associate dean of students in student affairs. She shared:

Whenever something comes her way, and they try to, I guess, she'd say bypass Title IX she says, "Oh, no, no, no, no. We need to take it right back to, to Title IX." So even when she thinks that they don't want me to know, she makes me aware-... so I can follow up."

While Taylor has found success in building support systems on campus, she shared a challenging experience she had when trying to obtain support she needs from other campus groups to carry out Title IX related work. She went on to share:

When the Title IX Coordinator is requesting or needing [information] that it's a priority. Um, 'cause I'm not gonna request it unless it's necessary. I don't take that lightly so I'm not gonna burn bridges and just ask for stuff unnecessarily.

As previously mentioned, at Taylor's institution, student conduct conducts investigations in which the respondent is a student, and human resources conduct investigations when the respondent is an employee. Taylor shared that she has been able to build a support system with Student Conduct. She and the student conduct staff recognize:

We can't be territorial on what information is being shared. The student [investigative] part is not a hard part for me at all because we share our Maxient database. So, I have access to all student records. So, any information I need, I can just go in and look. That's not a hard thing. And we have what we call Behavior Intervention Team so we do, you

know, some schools, their Title IX Coordinators don't serve on there, but I do 'cause it's extremely helpful to get that information real time for me.

Yet, she shared when working with human resources:

When I'm requesting or need information, it's not as readily available, 'cause I don't have access to their database for whatever reason they won't give us access. I've asked for it. I've tried to talk to the leadership and who oversees both our areas to help them understand why that's so important and it's not even just about Title IX access and equity overall-... you don't have access to it and, and so for ADA purposes we don't have access to it. So, when we need to find out what's going on and make sure that things are moving the way it needs to we, we can't... It's, it's hard to, to get that information.

Leslie referred to an individual who has been a positive influence and significant support to her in her Title IX role, the Ombudsperson. She explained:

This position was re-instituted two years ago after a five-year hiatus. And she is extraordinary, she knows everything in the world it seems. She's like the care person for everyone. She's so knowledgeable, she's so kind, she's so helpful. And she has this wonderful, wonderful spirit about her.

Penny shared her experience establishing a good working relationship between Title IX and the university's conduct office. They began working on policy revisions well before the 2020 Final Rule was released. She shared:

We're working closely with conduct because we're looking to do is move everything that has to do with Title IX to an independent body. It's been really helpful, everybody's been really open-minded, but it's a lot to process. So, we're getting flow charts together, one of my investigators he's working on it right now.

Sam also spent a great deal of time, "probably 18 months," to build trust and relationships with campus offices and student organizations. She shared:

There was a lot of ground to make up with various partners on campus about what our [Title IX] role was and how I envisioned the compliance program working. So, I spent a lot of time building relationships our [advocacy] center, athletics, and student conduct.

She also spent "a lot of time talking to various student orgs." Her work to build relations has paid off, as the university community understands her role as Title IX coordinator. She shared:

Those groups know that I see my role as, "I'm going to offer support to people who need it. If you want to do an investigation, great, I'll tell you how to do that. If you are a respondent and you need help, fantastic, I can help you with that." All that to say, I think that they all understand that I'm neutral now."

Participants also shared the importance of having support from your team. Leslie shared she finds support with "my staff, always." Sam shared, "I think what's really important is having a supportive team within your office." Taylor shared an experience he had in building a support system within his office:

In our office, before the pandemic, our office would routinely meet and "staff cases" at our weekly meetings. And we would, if you will have a round table discussion of all the cases that we were handling. And each investigator would be asked to give a report of his or her cases. And the rest of us would be asked to provide opinions about what we thought was the appropriate next step, and provide constructive input or opinions about what we think the appropriate finding may be, or as I said, the next steps. I found that to be a very useful, a very informative, a very educational experience, because it enabled me to be able to look into the minds of the investigative staff and to see what they were

thinking. And, you know, invariably, no matter how smart you think you are- you can always learn from other people. And, so the opportunity to learn and gain from the experience of the investigators who are doing this daily grind, I thought was very useful and very educational, in terms of what is actually necessary sometimes in order to properly investigate some of these cases, which can be very challenging. So, I thought that was very, very useful. The, the exchanges that we were able to have with each other and the ability to of pick each other's brains and see what they were thinking, and then benefit from their approach and their perspective. One, be willing to recognize that, as I said earlier, no matter how smart you think you are, there's always opportunity to learn from others. Never assuming that because you are the Title IX Coordinator, that others who may be in supportive roles, can't teach you something, because they can. They can teach you a great deal.

Becca shared that professional relationships can change a "career entirely." She explained her relationships with team members have significantly impacted her career trajectory. She shared it is imperative to:

Find a person with who you have compatible strengths, who believes... Because sometimes [the other person] has to believe when I don't believe, and sometimes I have to believe when [they] don't believe. I think that has changed my whole life. But you have to find and recruit and retain people who have shared values.

Lastly, participants shared that the support they find from colleagues in Title IX coordinator roles at other institutions are critical. Penny shared that the "conversations with your [fellow Title IX Coordinator] community is important. I think what we're doing with the [conference-wide Title IX] coordinators it's amazing. Every time I'm on one of those [conference-wide Title

IX coordinator] calls, I'm like I didn't think about that." She went on to explain that learning opportunities from webinars, legal firms, and ATIXA are helpful, but she gets the most from “[conference-wide Title IX Coordinators], you know? I mean honestly because, talking to people who are in the field and doing work every day, and see these weird issues that probably no one whose doing these trainings can even think about.”

Leslie also shared Title IX Coordinators from other institutions in the conference-wide Title IX group are an incredible resource. She explained:

Because when you're kind of the only on your campus, uh, it makes you question a lot about am I doing the right thing? Am I way off track here? So, a lot of times I'll call up on colleagues who have similar campuses, similar cultures and say, "Am I way off track on this or is this right?" Um, so that's been very helpful for me.

Sam had the same sentiments and shared:

Our [conference-wide] Title IX coordinator group is a really helpful group [as] it is always a good idea to have relationships with other Title IX coordinators because people who are not Title IX coordinators can't really understand the issues you're working on.

Taylor also shared, “the same things you grapple with, others are grappling with. So being able to learn from colleagues” is essential to him being most effective in his role as Title IX Coordinator.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter included a review of the study's data collection and analysis followed by a participants’ narrative introduction. The narrative introduction provided an overview of how each participant arrived in their position, how they explain their role, and how they are uniquely positioned at their university. This introduction provided a deeper understanding of each

participant's context, illuminating similarities and differences in their experiences. Next, the main themes of the study were introduced.

The four themes included skillset and experience, evaluating the work, being human, and effective leadership. Skillset and experience represent participants' experiences in building skills and experience through education and employment that prepared them to become, transition to the role of, and successfully serve as Title IX Coordinator. The categories included in skills and experience are educational background and employment experience. Evaluating the work represents how participants test their work through various means. Evaluating the work is a critical component of Title IX Coordination that can and should not be avoided. Categories included in this theme are assessment practices, both formal and informal, and external reviews. The theme, being human, is about how Title IX Coordinators work to manage the multi-faceted parts of their role, recognizing that they are only human, as are the individuals they serve. This theme included the categories of serving others, managing expectations, and creating lasting change. Lastly, effective leadership illustrated how Title IX Coordinators described how they have come to understand leadership in the context of Title IX, and the leadership experiences that have been beneficial to them in their roles. This theme contains the categories of leadership is, growth and development, and having professional relationships and supports. Then, the chapter provided examples of each of the four themes and categories. The final chapter will provide a discussion of the study, as well as implications for practice, the implications for policy, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion of the study.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions**

This dissertation focused on the narratives of Title IX coordinators working in higher education. Learning how these seven Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern United States work to create and sustain living, learning, and working environments free from sexual misconduct was an incredible opportunity. Through the stories they shared, their experiences illuminated their roles, how they serve individual members of the campus community, and their desire to create more equitable communities. These individuals have endured and persisted through a number of challenges to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at their respective institutions of higher education. The final chapter of this dissertation begins with a summary of the study followed by the research findings related to the three research questions. Next, the chapter discusses study implications for practice and policy. Then, recommendations for future research, Last, this chapter ends with a conclusion.

#### **Summary of the Study**

The Title IX coordinator is a federally mandated position at all higher education institutions that receive federal funds who are in charge of Title IX oversight and compliance (Busch & Thro, 2018; National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, 2017; WEEA Resource Center, 1997). In their role, they are in charge of preventing and responding to allegations of discrimination on the basis of sex to create a campus climate in which all students, faculty, and staff are supported (Everfi, 2019). It is a position that has been described as one in which the employee lives in "a constant state of uncertainty, in which new federal guidance, state laws, or court filings could abruptly upend the status quo" (Brown, 2019, p.12), Since its inception in 1975, the Title IX coordinator role has become increasingly political, complicated,



and scrutinized due to new legislation, increased federal guidance, and Civil Rights investigations.

Title IX Coordinators are not only compliance officers but Title IX Coordinators are campus leaders positioned within the university's organizational structure with authority to impact their institution around the issue of discrimination on the basis of sex. There is an absence of research on the experiences of Title IX coordinators as they work to create and sustain living, learning, and working environments free from sexual misconduct. Therefore, the purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand the stories of Title IX coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. The research questions that guided this study were:

- 1) What are the stories of Title IX coordinators that have brought them to their position as Title IX Coordinator?
- 2) What are the stories of the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators?
- 3) What are the shared stories of the learning experiences as they lead institutional Title IX compliance?

The theoretical framework for this study was the four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) to guide this narrative study. I was not looking to test a theory, or conduct an experiment; instead, I was interested in understanding and interpreting the stories of Title IX Coordinators realities within the social, political, and historical context of their work (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As Title IX Coordinators are responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures at their respective institutions to ensure Title IX compliance, they must balance both internal and external factors to create necessary change.

The four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) is a means by which leaders knowingly or unknowingly navigate hierarchies found in work environments to understand challenges faced, operate efficiently, and create effective solutions. The four frames – structural, human resource, political, and symbolic – can provide a “prism or lens” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 44) through which leaders can evaluate the challenges faced and avoid siloed or single frame thinking that could impede solving organizational challenges in new and innovative ways (Palmer & Dunford, 1996). The utilization of these theoretical frameworks allowed me to gain a deeper level of understanding of the experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern United States.

Narrative inquiry was chosen for this study as it allows for participants to share authentically about their experiences and how they construct meaning from those experiences (Schram, 2006). Through this process, I was able to collect stories from Title IX Coordinators and then share their stories through written narratives about participant experiences of leading Title IX Coordination in the Southeastern United States (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Participants were recruited using a purposeful sampling method with a criterion-based sampling strategy. This study's sample included institutions in the SEC and ACC designated as R1: Doctoral Universities by the Carnegie Commission (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2019a). Criterion-based sampling means that participants must meet a predetermined criterion (Patton, 2015). To be included in the study, participants had to meet the following sampling criteria: 1) they must be currently employed as the lead Title IX coordinator at a public, Research 1: Doctoral University in the SEC or ACC and 2) they must have served in the role for a minimum of one year.

Seven semi-structured narrative interviews were conducted with seven participants via Zoom. Interviews lasted from 47 to 81 minutes in length. I utilized an IRB-approved interview protocol (see Appendix D). Narrative interviews allowed participants to share their experiences through story. As I developed the semi-structured interview guide for this study, I followed the guidance of Kim (2016) and developed questions that allow for interviewees to freely share their stories from their perspective and experiences in their own voice. This study's semi-structured interview guide was divided into four sections or phases – introduction, listening, conversation, and conclusion (Anderson & Kikpatrick, 2016).

Approximately seven and a half hours of participant interviews were transcribed into 224 pages of qualitative data and analyzed utilizing thematic narrative analysis. During the data analysis process, I coded, categorized, and themed interview transcription data until saturation, or the point at which no additional themes emerged (Given, 2016). In this process, I utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis process that allowed for the narrative interviews to be coded to allow for stories shared to be left intact as they were analyzed for themes. From this process, I identified four themes from participant narratives that aligned with the research questions. Lastly, to ensure credibility and maintain my study's trustworthiness and credibility, I utilized triangulation, thick description, member checking, peer review and debriefing, paying careful attention to, recognizing, and monitoring my bias and subjectivity as the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Glense, 2015; Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; 2016; Patton, 2015; Rothbauer, 2008).

Chapter Four introduced study participants. Similar to the findings of Cruz (2020) and Wiersma-Mosley and DiLoreto (2018), study participants were primarily White women with a legal or student affairs background. One participant identified as male, one participant identified

as Black, and one participant chose not to identify his race. All participants worked in a Title IX capacity in which they had supervision over other Title IX-related staff. All had served in their roles for at least three years. Four key themes emerged from their narratives: a) skillset and experience, b) evaluating the work, c) being human, and d) effective leadership. Skillset and experience include the categories of educational background and employment experience. Evaluating the work includes the categories of assessment practices, both formal and informal, and external reviews. Being human includes the categories of serving others, managing expectations, and creating lasting change. Lastly, effective leadership contains the categories of leadership is, growth and development, and having professional relationships and supports. In the next section, I discuss the study findings of each research question and relevant literature.

## **Discussion**

As previously mentioned, the theoretical framework for this study is Bolman and Deal's (1991a/2017) four-frame model. The four frames – structural, human resource, political, and symbolic – can provide a “prism or lens” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 44) through which leaders can evaluate the challenges faced and avoid siloed or single-frame thinking that could impede solving organizational challenges in new and innovate ways (Palmer & Dunford, 1996). The discussion is organized with the overarching response to each research question as the primary heading. Research question one focuses on the experiences of the study participants before becoming Title IX Coordinator; research question two focuses on the leadership experiences of Title IX coordinators; and, research question three focuses on the learning experiences of the study participants as they have lead Title IX compliance in the Southeastern United States.

**Research question one.** Becoming Title IX Coordinator appeared in all the interviews, which related to the first research question of this study: What are the stories of Title IX

Coordinators that have brought them to their position as Title IX Coordinator? The intent of this question was to understand and learn how study participants arrived in their role and to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that have been instrumental in their journeys into their respective roles. The ways in which study participants became Title IX Coordinators was a culmination of both their education and experience.

As there is no federal guidance about the specific educational or training credentials a Title IX Coordinator must hold, the individuals who serve the role represent a breadth of educational backgrounds. What is stipulated in federal guidance is that Title IX Coordinators must have a clear understanding of federal, state, and local policies that intersect with Title IX (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, 2020). In this study, the seven participants came from an array of educational backgrounds. Six study participants held terminal degrees, five of which were JDs. Additionally, four of the seven study participants earned master's degrees, and the one Title IX Coordinator who did not have a terminal degree was pursuing her Ph.D. at the time of our interview. These findings are congruent with the work of Kelly (2019) and Wiersma-Mosley and DiLoreto (2018), which found that Title IX Coordinators represent a diversity of educational backgrounds, including master's degrees, JDs, Ph.D.'s, and bachelor's degrees. Interestingly, five of the seven study participants are alumni of the institution at which they now serve as Title IX Coordinator.

Most of the study participants shared how their post-secondary degrees were critical in their journey to becoming Title IX Coordinator. Specifically, two Title IX Coordinators with law degrees shared their legal education has been beneficial in the role. One participant articulated that while a law degree is not necessary to be a Title IX Coordinator, her professional training in law school prepared her to read, understand, and apply the law to build Title IX policies and

processes. This is consistent with the findings of Woulfe et al. (2018), in which a participant shared their law degree is helpful in the role and that Title IX Coordinator should have legal knowledge or know who to ask when the need for legal advice arises.

Following their obtainment of post-secondary education, none of the participants have had a direct path from education to being employed as a Title IX Coordinator. Instead, all participants shared about the experienced they gained *through* their career paths. This is congruent with the findings of Watson (2017), in which the majority of their study participants identified prior professional work experience as their best preparation for their current role. Many of the Title IX Coordinators with whom I spoke had been open to taking on new roles and responsibilities and building a portfolio of experiences via other higher education roles that prepared and benefited them in their roles as Title IX Coordinator. This finding is congruent with Woulfe et al. (2018), who also found that it is common for individuals who become Title IX Coordinator to work in higher education before becoming Title IX Coordinator. Specifically, five of the seven study participants worked in higher education before being hired as Title IX Coordinator.

Additionally, as Woulfe et al. (2018) found, it is common to be hired into the role from a previous position at the institution. Five of the seven study participants in this study were already employed at their institution when hired as a Title IX Coordinator. Additionally, they were all familiar and had experience with the institution's Title IX policies and processes. Working at the institution and having experience with Title IX compliance put them in an ideal position to move into the role.

Three participants shared their experience in establishing and expanding campus departments and developing institutional processes for working with and supporting students,

including students who had experienced sexual misconduct. Four of the five participants shared that their willingness to take on more and more responsibility in the Title IX areas, such as student conduct and case management, provided them with the experience needed to advance into the Title IX coordinator position. This finding is congruent with findings from Woulfe et al. (2018), and Watson (2017), who found it was common for Title IX Coordinators to enter the role with prior work experiences in law, student conduct, and student affairs.

Four of the five Title IX Coordinators who earned JDs spent time practicing law before moving to higher education. Participants who worked in this capacity reported having gained various experiences in conducting investigations and litigations that they have been able to draw from as Title IX Coordinator. These discoveries are congruent with Paul's (2016) findings: Title IX Coordinators come into the role from previous work experiences, and many of those experiences have come from a legal background. As illustrated by participants, there is no direct path from education or employment that leads one to serve as a Title IX Coordinator. Instead, one is more likely to be hired as Title IX Coordinator if they have both the education and employment experiences that have prepared them and show their commitment and ability to meet regulatory requirements under the law.

**Research question two.** The second research question focused on the leadership experiences of Title IX coordinators. The research question was: What are the stories of the leadership experiences of Title IX coordinators? The intent of this question was to understand the experiences of Title IX coordinators as they lead Title IX compliance and to learn from those experiences. To allow for a greater understanding of these leadership experiences, I utilized Bolman and Deal's (1991a/2017) four-frame model to guide this discussion. Bolman and Deal's (1991b, 1992) found that leaders should be able to utilize multiple frames to be most effective in

their roles, and since that time, there has been a considerable amount of research that has supported their theory. According to Bensimon (1989), leaders who utilize multiple frames, meaning more than two, have the ability to shift between frames depending on their specific circumstances. Additionally, as reported by multiple researchers in addition to Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017), research in higher education has illustrated time and time again that those who can utilize multiple frames and adapt their leadership style to specific situations and circumstances will be more successful (Kezar et al., 2008; McArdle, 2013; Monahan & Shah, 2011; Scott, 1999; Tan, Hee, & Paiw, 2015; Thompson et al., 2008).

Like the findings of McArdle (2013), a qualitative data collection approach allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the ways in which study participants shared the use of the four-frames (1991a/2017). In this study, six of the seven participants illustrated the ability to shift between three or more frames as they lead Title IX coordination: four participants were found to use all four frames, two used three frames, and one Title IX Coordinator used paired frames. Table 5.1 illustrates the frames utilized by Title IX Coordinators in this study through the stories they chose to share. Similar to the findings of Monahan and Shah (2011), Title IX Coordinators in this study were able to use multiple frames as they work with both internal and external constituents to quickly manage and respond to challenges they are faced with on a daily basis. The human resource and political frames were utilized by all seven study participants, and both the structural and symbolic frames were utilized by five study participants. These findings are congruent with the Bolman and Deal (1991b) that to be effective in their roles, leaders must be able to utilize multiple frames in their work.

The following four sections explain how Title IX Coordinators utilize the lenses of the four-frame model in their roles as Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern United States. Table



5.2 illustrates the ways in which Title IX Coordinators shared through in their narratives the use of the four-frames in leading Title IX coordination.

*Structural frame.* As noted in Table 5.1, five of the study participants utilized the structural frame in the stories they chose to share about their work in leading Title IX coordination. Through the experiences they shared, Title IX Coordinators illustrated the use of the structural frame in their work to create a policy that is fair and unbiased, to continually monitor and evaluate their policies and processes, and to utilize assessment data to direct their work.

Leaders who utilize the structural frame see the value in giving clear directions, setting expectations, putting into place accountability structures, and solving challenges through policies, rules, and/or restructuring (Bolman & Deal, 1991b). They are focused on structure and organization, and through this frame, leaders are social architects (Bolman & Deal, 1991b). Those who lead through the structural frame are able to "look beyond the individuals to examine the social architecture of their work" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 69). In my interviews with Title IX Coordinators, five of the seven participants shared experiences in which they utilized the structural frame in their work.

Study participants shared about two major instances in which they use the structural frame in their work: following updates to federal guidance and by assessing their work. A significant part of leading Title IX is the responsibility they have for ensuring institutional compliance with the federal government's ever-changing guidance, the most recent of which was the 2020 Final Rule. Similar, to the findings of Weber (2016), even though the 2020 Final Rule provided revised guidance for Title IX coordination in higher education, there is still a great deal of ambiguity and guidance to be interpreted in federal guidance by Title IX Coordinators. For

**Table 5.1**

*Frames utilized by Title IX Coordinators*

	Alex	Becca	Leslie	Penny	Reggie	Sam	Taylor <sup>a</sup>
Structural	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Human Res.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Political	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Symbolic	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> During the member checking process, Taylor redacted a great deal of his interview

transcript for reasons that were not disclosed to me. Therefore, he may have used more than two

frames; however, as information was redacted, I was unable to analyze data that may have

illustrated his use of more than two frames.

**Table 5.2**

*Four-Frame Model Central Concepts (Bolman & Deal, 2017) Applied to Experiences Shared*

Four-Frame Model Central Concepts	Title IX Coordinators
<b>Structural</b> Roles, goals, strategies, policies, environment	Create a policy that is fair and unbiased Monitor and evaluate policy and processes Utilize assessment data to direct their work
<b>Human Resource</b> Needs, skills, relationships	Skilled in working with others to succeed in their roles Ability to recruit and retain staff Ability to build and manage a team Builds on strengths of their team Seeks to meet the needs of those involved in a case (complaints, respondents, and support circles)
<b>Political</b> Power, conflict, competition, politics	Has the ability to make tough decisions Is transparent about decisions made and is ready to defend those decisions Includes campus stakeholders in their process to update campus and policy procedures Must be able to negotiate competing interests
<b>Symbolic</b> Culture, myth, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes	Leads by example Seek to "change the culture" through conversations with individuals and groups Seeks to get people to talk about [the issues] in a way that makes it valuable and they connect the work Works to create behavior change through active bystander programming Develops and utilizes annual reports to tell the story of the work

example, both Penny and Sam spoke about how critical it has been to lead their teams through a process to understand, interpret, and operationalize the new regulations and update the institution's policy with revised systems and procedures that are best practices. Once those objectives are achieved, they can develop a comprehensive plan to educate campus administrators, faculty, staff, and students on new policy and procedures.

This is congruent with Bolman and Deal's (2017) assertion that leaders who utilize the lens of the structural frame seek to ensure the diversity of work that they conduct comes together cohesively. Leading the work in tandem with others to achieve a goal was evident in the experiences shared by Reggie, Alex, and Becca. Title IX Coordinators must work with their teams to look beyond the individuals in the process and ensure they create policy and procedures that are systemic and ensure a fair, unbiased process for all parties involved. Yet, once the systems are in place, the Title IX Coordinators' work is not complete. As Becca and Alex shared, they must continue to monitor and evaluate the work to ensure policies and processes are followed and handled appropriately.

This ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the work is congruent with Bolman and Deal's (2017) fifth assumption of the structural frame, which states "effective structure fits an organization's current circumstances" (p. 48). Study participants also shared how they have been able to establish internal accountability structures through one "tool in the toolbox:" campus climate surveys. Reggie, Alex, and Penny shared their campuses' use the results of their respective climate surveys in their strategic planning processes to meet the community's overarching needs better. Similarly, while Becca and Sam did not mention climate surveys specifically, they did share assessment is critical to their planning and directing their work. Meaning, they are working to continually "fix" things that go awry and strategize solutions with

their teams to ensure they are responsive to the ongoing challenges that arise in the context of their roles.

*Human resource frame.* The human resources frame was utilized by all Title IX Coordinators (see Table 5.1). The use of this frame was illustrated in their experiences they shared of working with others to succeed in their roles in recruiting, retaining, building, and managing teams; building on the strengths of their team, and in meeting the needs of the human beings in a Title IX process inclusive of complaints, respondents, and their support circles. As evidence by the participants of this study, utilizing the human resource frame is critical in their work to carry out their roles as Title IX Coordinators at their respective higher education institutions. Similarly, studies by Scott (1999) and Sasnett and Ross (2007) found that the human resource frame is one of the most frequently used frames by leaders in higher education.

The first assumption central to the human leadership frame is "organizations exist to serve human needs and the converse" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 118). All study participants shared how they must be skilled in working with others to succeed in their roles of supporting their staff as well as the students and employees they serve who are going through a Title IX process. Working to serve others' needs means Title IX Coordinators must be able to build and maintain relationships. As Reggie shared, Title IX Coordinators must know "how to work with people." and "build relationships with students, with faculty, and with staff." Individuals who utilize the human resource frame value relationships and see the organization as an extended family (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Becca, Reggie, and Sam shared that building these relationships is not easy and can take a great deal of time as human beings are complex. Yet, building and maintaining relationships is critical if a Title IX Coordinator is going to be effective in the role.

Title IX Coordinators must be able to build relationships with the individuals engaged in a Title IX process: the complainants, respondents, and their support circles; the staff they supervise; and campus partners. One of the most critical ways in which Title IX Coordinators seek to meet and serve the human needs of others is when working through Title IX processes with complainants and respondents. Five study participants shared about the necessity of meeting the needs of the individuals involved in a case. Meeting the needs of those engaged in a process is accomplished by building trust in what Reggie described as "one of the most difficult times of their lives." As a Title IX Coordinator works to ensure an equitable process for complainants, respondents, or their support circles, all Title IX coordinators shared how they have been criticized for their work even though they have done their absolute best to provide support and be transparent about the Title IX process. Most Title IX Coordinators also shared that there will most likely always be someone unhappy with them due to the nature of their work.

As their roles are difficult to endure because of the nature of events and the human beings involved, Title IX Coordinators must ensure that they and their staff are a good fit to be effective in their roles. One's fit in their role is also congruent with Bolman and Deal's (1991b) assumption that when there is a good fit between individuals and the organization, it is a win-win situation. Additionally, Fox (2020) found that in order to effect change in an organization, the right person with the right skills must be in the role. Three Title IX Coordinators shared how it was essential to know they would fit in the role before becoming Title IX Coordinator. For Becca, she had to make sure the institution aligned with her "cultural fit," and she needed to know she could "execute successfully in the environment." As Bolman and Deal expressed, "people and organizations need each other;" and "individuals find meaning and satisfying work, and the organization gets the talent and energy needed to succeed" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p.148) when

there is good organizational fit. Becca, Alex, and Taylor spoke about how critical their staff is to their work. To these three Title IX Coordinators, having a supportive staff is essential. To develop a supportive staff, the leader must have the ability to support and care for their team. This is similar to the findings of McArdle (2013) that Title IX Coordinators must have the ability to build and develop teams. To Becca, this means recruiting and retaining staff with "shared values" who believe in and can elevate the work on her campus. Building on the team's strengths and shared values is instrumental in building a Title IX practice. Without the right people in the right positions, Title IX Coordinators open themselves and their institutions to risk and vulnerabilities in not handling Title IX work as stipulated under federal guidance.

*Political frame.* All seven study participants shared to varying degrees that way the utilizing of the Bolman and Deal's (1991a/2017) political frame in their roles as Title IX Coordinators. Those who lead through the lens of the political frame lens are aware of hidden agendas, limited resources, and the need for difficult choices to be made (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Political leaders seek to solve problems through networks, bargaining, negotiation, and compromise (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Through the stories Title IX Coordinators chose to tell, they focused on the ways in which they must make tough decisions that are transparent and can be defended, that they must be able to negotiate competing interests, influence, and work with stakeholders in their process in their processes to update intuitional specific policies and procedures under Title IX.

In my conversations with study participants, most shared how they work collaboratively across campus to accomplish their work through coalition building and managing the interests of stakeholders and those involved in an investigative experience. This is not surprising as their work is firmly situated in federal regulatory guidance, and requirements in their role are

continually changing. These changes were described as a shift in the ground by Penny and as a "pendulum" swinging by Alex and Reggie.

Congruent with the findings of Merz (2002), Title IX Coordinators must be able to balance responsibilities and consider the needs and requests of all their constituents. Balancing the demands of various stakeholders was recently brought to light during the Title IX regulation changes under the 2020 Final Rule. Under the new law, it was made clear that Title IX Coordinators have a responsibility to serve both complainants and respondents equitably and change their policies and processes as needed to ensure federal compliance. In conversations with study participants, Reggie, Alex, and Sam talked about how they included campus stakeholders in their process to update campus and policy procedures. The processes in which these leaders engage in the process of updating policies and procedures under the 2020 Final Rule reflects research of Bensimon, Neuman, and Birnbaum (1989) which found that through the political frame leaders build support from stakeholders, create shared goals and objectives, and build on mutual respect and understanding when navigating opportunities for negotiating institutional change. In the process of leading Title IX Coordination, Leslie shared one must be able "to work with a group, small or large, to be able to influence people to work in a cohesive manner toward an achievable goal." For example, Reggie enlisted help and support in the process of revising policy under the 2020 Final Rule by releasing "a series of policies out for input and comment," which provided the for her office to ask stakeholders what they wanted to share and to allow them to ask questions. Similarly, during the 100-day regulation update Alex put together a steering committee comprised of 15-20 campus stakeholders who divided into subgroups to focus on the areas of faculty, students, communication, and administration. She shared that working and negotiating changes to the Title IX policies, processes, and structure was



a "great endeavor" that took the entire 100-days, and that she was quite proud of the work that was accomplished. Sam also spoke about how she gained campus and community stakeholders' input during previous policy changes to discuss the "pros and cons" of certain aspects of policy. After coming to her institutions from a private law firm, she recognizes being on the inside of the organization means she is responsible for "negotiating" the details of policy and campus constituents' competing interests.

Participants also spoke about the responsibility they have to make tough decisions that are in the best interest of the institution. The experiences of study participants were congruent with Bolman and Deal's (2017) explanation of this frame that organization challenges viewed from the political frame means making realistic decisions for the organization in the midst of competing interests. For example, Becca shared in her role, it is not about what she wants personally; she focuses on "doing the right thing," meaning she makes decisions that are in the best interest of the university. She shared she challenges herself every day to think "what's the right thing for the institution and how do we facilitate that?" Utilizing the political frame can also include negotiating and competing to ensure one's own interests are met (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Taylor explained that while it might be easier to do his work alone and make the decisions he deems best for the institution, for long term success negotiating with stakeholders and "bringing people along with you and being able to convince them... [and] accepting their input when you didn't necessarily think it was something that you needed to do...[because] there was more than your way of getting things done." Like Taylor, Penny has to challenge herself to consider all the facts because "it's not just about going and throwing your ideas and make sure people implement 'em, 'cause there's a lotta great ideas out there." She attempts to slow down and listen to others

before she makes a decision, knowing she has to “land somewhere” and “be transparent” about the decisions she’s made.

*Symbolic frame.* The symbolic frame is the lens through which the leader sets the tone for the culture and meaning in organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Five of the seven study participants shared stories in which they have utilized the symbolic frame. Through this lens, Title IX Coordinators shared they seek to lead by example, change the culture through conversations and trainings, and work to tell the story of their work through publications such as annual reports. Bolman and Deal (2017) describe the frame as the understanding that what is most important in leadership is not what happens, but the meaning attributed to the activity. The majority of Title IX Coordinators in this study shared that they serve in their roles because they desire to increase equity in the communities they serve. They illustrated their use of the symbolic frame in how they lead their teams to portray their work's significance and purpose accurately.

Central to an individual who leads through the lens of the symbolic frame is the ability to communicate, tell the organization's story, nurture collaboration, communicate values, and lead followers into the future (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Yet, as study participants noted, this can be challenging as there is a Title IX "stigma," and there is a great deal of inaccurate information around the work. For example, both Penny and Reggie shared the preconceived ideas that both complainants and respondents can have when contacted by a Title IX staff member. They described these situations as ones in which there is a skewed perception of the function of their respective offices. This lack of understanding or misperceptions often results in students "being afraid, not wanting to get involved, and not wanting to be in trouble."

Study participants recognize that both the stigma and inaccuracies can overshadow any positive momentum they are making as they work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

Merz (2002) shared that leaders, especially those new to a role, should move slowly to develop symbolic leadership, so their work does not seem forced or unnatural. Leading Title IX coordination through the symbolic frame is an ongoing challenge and an opportunity for the leader, meaning Title IX Coordinators who lead through this frame spend a great deal of time and energy to ensure they consistently communicate accurate information about their work to their campus and community constituents. They do this to ensure false information that could damage the spirit of the work does not overshadow, distort, or stunt the work by creating barriers to individuals accessing support.

Creating a positive culture and climate in an organization can bring people together to achieve a desired goal (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Penny and Becca both shared how they are committed to dispelling inaccurate information, as they work to "change the culture" through conversations with individuals and groups. Becca believes you "begin to lead" in this area when critical conversations begin happening "to get people to talk about [the issues] in a way that makes it valuable and they connect the work." At that point, you can then begin to create change. The conversations that can begin to shift a campus culture should include information about behaviors and the language we use and permit others to use, which may not rise to a Title IX policy violation. Becca and Penny both agreed that behavior change can begin to happen by focusing on prevention and building skills for students and employees to act as active bystanders.

A characteristic of symbolic leaders is that they tell stories (Bolman & Deal, 2017). It is challenging for Title IX Coordinators to share "an accurate story about the work," as their work deals with some of the most intimate details of the lives of others. Therefore, Title IX Coordinators determine how they can best tell the story of their work while maintaining the anonymity of those they serve. One way Title IX Coordinators share their story is by publishing

annual reports that share data with the community, as Reggie described in "a very disaggregated way." Annual reports from Title IX Coordinators can allow for the office's work to be translated into a written format that is accurate and comprehensive and can illustrate how they have achieved institutional obligations under Title IX. Additionally, annual reports can be utilized to effectively communicate the office's work and serve as a resource for answering questions about how the institution is meeting its responsibilities under Title IX. For example, hosting a town hall style session in which the Title IX Coordinator brings the story of their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct can aid in creating momentum for the work by engaging stakeholders in the ways in which together to create campus and community wide change.

Finally, Title IX Coordinators also shared about how they lead their teams. Leaders who lead through the symbolic frame lens seek to lead by example, not command (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Alex, Becca, Leslie, and Sam all spoke to the necessity of leading by example. For example, to Becca this means creating the vision and direction for her staff to say "here's where we're going." Leslie shared she has learned to model asking for help when she needs it. Alex shared, this means "be[ing] willing to do the work as well. So, if you're asking your staff to do it, then you should also be willing to do it too." To Sam, leading by example means "setting the tone" for their teams to "work in a cohesive manner toward an achievable goal." Many of the Title IX Coordinators spoke about delegation as critical to being successful in their role in this same vein. While delegation can be difficult at times, it is essential to ensuring the multi-faceted work and responsibilities that fall under Title IX compliance can be achieved. Overall, the majority of study participants shared their experience in leading through the symbolic frame. As illustrated, leaders who utilize this frame are focused on creating a culture in which, through

symbols and ascribed meaning, community members can better understand the work and develop a vision for the future.

**Research question three.** The third research question focused on the learning experiences of Title IX coordinators. The research question was: What are the shared stories of the learning experiences as they lead institutional Title IX compliance? The intent of this question was to understand what has been beneficial for Title IX coordinators to learn as they are leading Title IX compliance. Learning in leading Title IX is the overarching response to the first research question. It includes three sub-responses: learning through supervisory experiences, learning through ongoing training, and learning from peers.

Of the seven study participants, only two individuals had not previously worked in higher education. As they were not familiar with higher education culture, they were grateful for their supervisors, who served as mentors and were instrumental in onboarding them into their respective university communities. For both women, adapting to working in higher education was more challenging than expected. With support from their supervisors, they were able to learn to navigate what Penny referred to as "the real world versus the education world." Their supervisors helped them "understand and appreciate" what Reggie referred to as "the nuances" of university life, which has helped them both in being successful in their respective roles. Both women shared that their supervisors taught them how to navigate the institution, effectively communicate with colleagues, and build relationships within the university community. Their experiences are congruent with Ulsu (2019) and other behavioral theorists' views that leadership behaviors can be taught and learned; thus, leadership can be learned, and leaders can be made.

Both Becca and Alex shared the importance of having a supervisor who understands, supports, and advocates for the work. While Alex's male supervisor was previously the

institution's Title IX Coordinator, she shared he knew "what it takes, what is needed ... he realizes the importance of it." Becca also shared how critical it is for her supervisor to understand and value of the work. Similar to the findings of Weber (2016), Title IX Coordinators in this study shared that there is a great deal of variance in Title IX structures and the way in which the role is supervised. Of the seven Title IX Coordinators interviewed, only two Title IX Coordinators, Taylor and Becca, reported to the highest-ranking officials. Other Title IX Coordinators shared they report to General Counsel and Vice Presidents/Chancellors of Equity and/or Diversity Offices. Reporting to the highest-ranking official is a recommendation of the 2015 Letter (Lhamon, 2015) as this reporting structure can allow for streamlined information sharing or information and supervision in the role. Likewise, Woulfe et al. (2018) found that Title IX Coordinators who report to the highest-ranking official such as a president, chancellor, or university provost illustrate both the value and importance of their work, as well as the institution's commitment to Title IX.

Becca shared reporting to the university's highest-ranking official has served as a significant leadership and learning opportunity for her as her institution has employed three chancellors during her three-year tenure as Title IX Coordinator. While the turnover has not been ideal, she has learned to quickly onboard her supervisor through these leadership transitions so they can understand and support the Title IX structure and not open themselves up to vulnerabilities. In this, she exhibited situational leadership (Northouse, 2019), meaning she must be ready to shift their approach to meet the situation's needs. For Becca, this has meant learning to shift when a new administration arrives to help them understand "the issue" in the university's specific context.

All Title IX Coordinators in this study expressed the necessity of ongoing learning and development as central to being successful in their roles. Similarly, studies by Watson (2017) and Woulfe et al. (2018) also found that continuous learning growth via professional development and training in the role is essential. This is not surprising as Lhamon's 2015 Letter clearly stated, Title IX Coordinators must have comprehensive knowledge of federal, state, and local policies that intersect with Title IX and receive ongoing training regarding laws, regulations, and federal guidelines. Additionally, as Title IX regulations have continued to shift, Title IX Coordinators must stay on what Alex referred to as the "cutting edge" of the work.

Similar to the findings of Weber (2016), participants shared varied ways in which they are trained. The two main ways in which Title IX Coordinators grow and develop professionally through training opportunities organized by professional organizations and law firms and by discussing issues and learning best practices in the field with and from peers. Most of the Title IX Coordinators shared how they have stayed abreast of changes to federal regulations and best practices in the field through ongoing training and development. Participants specifically named professional organizations such as the: Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA), National Association of College and University Attorneys (NACUA), and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA). Like the findings from Wolfe et al. (2018) in which Title IX Coordinators reported the necessity of ongoing training as the depth and breadth of the work is "extensive, constantly changing, and requires ongoing mastery" (p. 6), study participants shared that membership to professional organizations and making time for ongoing professional training opportunities is critical to stay current in the field.

The most referenced professional organization by study participants was ATIXA. Five participants shared that they and their staff received ongoing training and received Title IX

certifications through the organization. While professional membership and training are expensive, Leslie stated they are "not a luxury; they are a necessity" to Title IX Coordinators' learning, growth, and ultimate success in their roles. Title IX Coordinators shared their learning through these professional organizations is beneficial as they can stay updated on current events in the field. Some of the Title IX Coordinators shared that staying current in the field with new regulations and updated case law would be impossible on top of their daily responsibilities.

The third way Title IX Coordinators shared they continue to learn and develop in their roles is through relationships with other Title IX Coordinators. Title IX Coordinators in both the SEC and ACC shared about their membership in conference-wide Title IX groups. These groups include Title IX Coordinators from across their respective conferences that meet and communicate regularly about the challenges and opportunities they face in the role. As Title IX Coordinators are the only role of their kind on campus, conference-wide groups provide the opportunity for Title IX Coordinators to connect, communicate, and build relationships with others who are working in a similar context. Consistent with Watson's (2017) findings, Title IX Coordinators find support in learning and networking with their peer Title IX Coordinators because they are likely to experience similar challenges in their roles. Specifically, Sam finds the SEC Title IX group helpful because they can understand the issues she and her team confront daily at their institution.

In this vein, Penny and Alex both shared how having support from other Title IX Coordinators is essential as they are the only individuals on their campus tasked with Title IX compliance. They have a unique role and perspective of the work, that others at their institution cannot fully understand and appreciate. As Penny described she is "doing the work every day and see[ing] these weird issues that probably no one who is doing these [formal] training can



even think about." Taylor shared discussing and "grappling" with the issues with colleagues helps her learn and ensure he is not "way off track" and that she is "doing the right thing." These experiences are similar to Woulfe et al. (2018) findings that it is hard to explain Title IX coordination to those working outside of the field. Therefore, having a network of colleges in conference-wide groups can serve as a vital resource from which Title IX coordinators can seek guidance, feedback, and learn from one another.

This discussion focused on the experiences of Title IX Coordinators in coming into the role, leading Title IX compliance at a public, R1: Universities in the Southeastern United States, and the ways in which they continue to learn and stay current as federal regulations are continually updated. Specifically, the four-frame model by Bolman and Deal (1991a/2017) was utilized to better understand the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators. While each Title IX Coordinators' experiences have been uniquely theirs, there were a number of similarities in their experiences and responses to interview questions that have allowed for a better understanding of these individuals, their roles, and the challenges and opportunities they face in leading Title IX compliance to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. The next sections will focus on implications for practice, implications for policy, and recommendations for future research.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings from this study have implications for practice for the fields of higher education and adult learning. First, higher education institutions must provide increased support for Title IX Coordinators through their organizational structures, staffing, and resource allocation. Title IX is continually updated through Dear Colleague Letters, changes to the law such as the Violence Against Women Act, Campus SaVE, and most recently, the 2020 Final

Rule; it is inevitable that Title IX mandates will again change. When changes came in the form of the 2011 Letter, updates were required immediately, and with the 2020 Final Rule institutions were given 100-days to revise institutional policies, processes, and trainings. In an effort to adequately support this critical area, institutions must provide sufficient resources for Title IX compliance. As stated in Chapter Two, of more than 400 institutions surveyed, 70 percent of higher education institutions had Title IX Coordinators that served in another role additionally (Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, Swinton, & Van Brunt, 2015). This was congruent with the findings of this study as every Title IX Coordinator interviewed had additional duties in addition to serving as their institutions Title IX Coordinator. Institutions should establish standalone Title IX offices and hire Title IX Coordinators who are able to focus solely on meeting and even exceeding the current Title IX guidance under the 2020 Final Rule, adapting to ongoing updates to Title IX, and understanding the ways in which Title IX intersects with other laws and guidance to which institutions are held accountable. This would mean the responsibility for the institution's Title IX compliance would be designated to one individual with adequate funding to hire staff needed to fulfill the requirements under the law and receive ongoing training and support in their respective roles.

Title IX Coordinators are not only leaders in compliance; they are also learners and educators. They must continuously learn in their roles to maintain current knowledge on Title IX regulations, state, and local policies that impact their work, which means they must discern what Caffarella and Daffron (2012) referred to as the context of the environment in which they are working that can be in a constant state of flux politically, economically, and socially. As Title IX Coordinators understand the changes in Title IX policy and accountability structures, such as those that occurred with the release of the 2020 Final Rule, they must use what they have learned

to update policies and practices as necessary and then develop training and programs to educate their community on current policies, practices, and supports. When developing training and programs for their respective communities, Title IX Coordinators must learn to negotiate what Cervero and Wilson (2006) refer to as the physical or the metaphorical "planning table" (p.6), where decisions are made. As Title IX Coordinators carry out their roles, they should understand how every judgment and decision they make has implications for their practice and can impact learners, training facilitators, planners, institutional leaders, and the public (Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Wilson & Cervero, 1996). Therefore, in carrying out a democratic planning process, Title IX Coordinators will likely have to balance the power, interests, negotiations, and take on the responsibility to construct a training or program that meets the needs of stakeholders (Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Wilson and Cervero, 1996). A way in which Title IX Coordinators can plan during these times of programmatic changes is through six planning steps offered by Sork and Caffarella (1989): "analyze planning context and client systems, assess needs, develop program objectives, formulate an instructional plan, formulate an administrative plan, and design a program evaluation plan (p. 234). Another practical model that Title IX Coordinators could benefit from is Caffarella and Daffron's (2012) Interactive Model of Program Planning for adults. This model is comprised of eleven components and five critical areas for program planners to understand when developing and executing programs and training for adult learners (Caffarella & Daffron, 2012). As Title IX Coordinators develop training and programs, taking the time to understand and execute a planning process that works for their campus community can help ensure that learning opportunities are developed to meet learners' needs in a format that is accessible and relatable to their respective community.

As Title IX Coordinators have a great responsibility to ensure their campus community receives ongoing education about the institution's obligations under Title IX to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct, they must be able to engage and educate their campus communities effectively. Title IX Coordinators who understand the basic principles of adult learning and how they can provide meaningful, engaging, and effective educational opportunities across their campus community could be more effective in their roles. If Title IX Coordinators do not have the time or expertise to execute effective training, they should consider collaborating with a campus department with expertise in adult learning principles, curriculum, and program planning; hiring a staff member to spearhead campus training and development; and/or contracting with an organization who has the expertise to provide training and professional development.

The learning processes of Title IX Coordinators and the communities they serve can be framed through the andragogical model (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Learning how adults learn could equip Title IX Coordinators with the knowledge to impact not only their learning and development but that of their teams and their campus as well. As stated in Chapter Two, andragogy consists of six assumptions: (1) the learner's need to know, (2) self-directed learning, (3) prior experiences of the learner, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learning and problem solving, and (6) motivation to learn (Knowles, 1970, 1984, 1989; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). This model is appealing as educators can “readily relate the assumptions to their own learning and in so doing, transition to planning meaningful instruction for adults” (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 56). The following discussion further details the ways in which

the assumptions of the andragogical model can be applied by Title IX Coordinators to impact their personal learning, as well as their practice, their staff, and the communities they serve.

The first assumption of andragogy is that learners need to know why they need to learn something (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Learners will likely invest the time to learn when they perceive the learning to be valuable and relatable to a real-life challenge they face by learning what they need to know (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Thus, Title IX coordinators must be aware of the challenges and opportunities they face in their work both on their campus and in the context of the ever-changing political, educational, and societal landscape around issues related to the prevention and response of sexual misconduct. Title IX coordinators that do not lead their institution by keeping up with their mandates under the law will quickly fall behind and risk being in breach of federal compliance; therefore, Title IX Coordinators must recognize that they and their teams are serving in a role that requires them to be situated in a constant state of learning and professional growth so they can ensure institutional compliance with Title IX mandates.

It is also essential for Title IX Coordinators to keep in mind the first assumption of the andragogical model when developing training for their community. As previously mentioned, Title IX Coordinators are not only responsible for ensuring their policies and procedures meet federal guidance requirements, they are also responsible for ensuring their communities are adequately trained on the policies of their institution. Therefore, when developing training for their communities, Title IX Coordinators should make sure to explain the importance and relevance of the training for the learner in the context of their role at the institution.

The second assumption of andragogy is that learners are self-directed (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). Self-directed learning can be a personal attribute of learners in which they

gain new knowledge, build skills, and/or seek to bring about social change (Ellinger, 2004; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Self-directed learning can also be the way in which instruction can be organized and carried out in a formal educational setting with an instructor or teacher (Ellinger, 2004; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Individuals who serve as a Title IX Coordinator must be self-directed in their learning, have an awareness of their own needs to increase their knowledge, and should be able to take responsibility for planning, executing, and evaluating their own learning (Caffarella, 2000; Forrest & Patterson, 2006; Hiemstra, 2000; Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Self-directed learning can be accomplished through various means such as professional coaching, lectures and discussions, goal setting, seminars, and individual work (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). Title IX Coordinators and others in the field should also consider developing an annual learning plan as a means to both hold themselves accountable to ongoing training and development and as a means by which their learning can be assessed. Developing a plan for learning through a learning contract or performance plan can allow for a formal process by which goals can be developed, learners can be held accountable, and learning can be assessed.

Title IX Coordinators can also create self-directed learning opportunities for the campus community. Self-directed learning can include, but is not limited to, internships; enhancing websites with information such as videos, graphics such as flowcharts, and guides to support visitors in gaining a greater understanding of Title IX policy and process; developing optional training modules that can be housed on the Title IX website or other campus training sites; providing optional workshops and trainings for the community; and developing a campus newsletter to provide monthly updates of Title IX-related initiatives and opportunities happening in the campus and greater community. Providing the resources and opportunities for learners to

self-direct in this area can allow for them to learn in a space that is safe, meets their needs, and can be conducted when the time is right for the learner.

The third assumption of andragogy is the prior experience of the learner (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). This assumption is essential for Title IX Coordinators to keep in mind as they develop training for their community, as prior experiences are a “rich resource” for learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 49). Considering learners' prior experiences, even though those experiences may be unknown, and recognizing that many of the students and employees they will educate have likely been impacted in some way by sexual misconduct either personally or through the experience of a friend or family member. The prior experiences of learners, which Merriam and Bierema (2014) referred to as “integral to an adult’s identity or self-concept” (p.50) can serve as an opportunity and an obstacle in the work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. For example, individuals may choose to become engaged in learning and development around this area because they are passionate to learn and effect change, but for those who have experienced sexual misconduct, it can be challenging and may bring back memories of an assault. While it is beneficial to include activities into training that can allow participants to draw on their former experiences through group discussion, case studies, and role play (Merriam & Bierema, 2014), Title IX Coordinators who develop training must consider how they will support those who may be triggered by training content. Supporting learners could be accomplished by providing a content warning to participants. The facilitator may take time to acknowledge the sensitive nature of the training topic in order to give learners permission to take care of themselves; participate as they are comfortable; and if they are triggered to leave the training physically or mentally. The facilitator should also consider providing resources and supports information both on and off-campus so individuals know where they can go for support.

The fourth assumption of andragogy is that adults will learn when they are ready, need to know, or desire to learn to address better the roles and responsibilities relevant to their current situation (Forrest & Patterson, 2006; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Title IX Coordinators who do not embrace a constant willingness to learn will be challenged to carry out their role effectively. Learning in the role can occur through supervisory relationships, reading and research, and attending professional development opportunities. A critical part of learning for Title IX Coordinators in this study was establishing a close supervisory relationship, and almost all of the Title IX Coordinators with whom I spoke described their relationship with their supervisor as a relationship that has been critical to their success in the role. This requires the supervisor to maintain open, transparent, and continuous communication with the Title IX Coordinator in which mutual trust is built and maintained. Establishing a strong supervisor/supervisee relationship can help ensure the expectations of the role are being met, communication lines remain open, and the supervisors understand how to advocate and ensure institutional buy-in and support of the work. It is also essential for Title IX Coordinators to recognize that members of their campus community and their support systems may not pay attention and seek to understand the policies, procedures, resources, and supports offered through the Title IX Coordinator until they have a need to know. Therefore, Title IX Coordinators will likely find themselves educating and reeducating the members of the campus community as well as stakeholders when they are ready to learn and need to know information because it is relevant to their current situation.

Training and learning opportunities around Title IX-related issues are abundant, but only if the individual in the role has the willingness to discover and inclination to take advantage of relevant learning opportunities. Staying abreast of current events such as those covered in *The*



*Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and other news media outlets, current research, case law, and trends, and attending conferences related to the field is not enough. Title IX Coordinators must learn about their specific campus community and culture to continually improve the campus climate. Ideas for assessing their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct include but are not limited to climate surveys, campus prevention efforts evaluations, listening sessions for the campus community and other partners, campus trend assessment, and consistent meetings with campus partners to share information learned and incorporate learning into future Title IX-related initiatives.

The fifth assumption of andragogy is related to the learner's orientation to learning and problem-solving (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Human beings are complex, and every situation is unique. Title IX Coordinators work with complainants, respondents, and the greater campus community to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct, and they continually have to problem solve and strategize solutions to the challenges they face daily. As such, Title IX coordinators should be engaged in constant learning and problem solving to understand the issues at hand and develop the appropriate responses and support for both complainants and respondents. One way in which problems can be solved and expertise can be shared is through the practice of problem-based learning. Adults have an increased motivation to learn when they have to work through an immediate concern they are facing (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Problem-based learning can allow learners to bring with them into the learning process prior knowledge and experience into a group discussion, case study, debate, and reflection to help understand, retain, and utilize information (Norman & Schmidt, 1992). Title IX Coordinators can build relationships across campus with individuals as departments and units who are invested in Title IX-related issues. Meeting and learning from

each other through teams committed to sexual misconduct prevention, scholarship, response, etc., can create the opportunity for relationships to be built and strategize solutions to inspire a deeper level of critical thinking, learning, understanding, and scholarship.

The sixth assumption of andragogy is an adult's motivation to learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). Motivation is defined as "the natural human capacity to direct energy in the pursuit of a goal" (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009, p.23). Motivators for adults to learn can be intrinsic, such as problem-solving, and/or extrinsic, such as receiving a promotion or salary increase (Cox 2015; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). Title IX Coordinators may find intrinsic motivation for ongoing learning beyond what is required by federal regulations, to work to ensure they are continually working to stay as up-to-date as possible with interpretations of the regulations and to best meet their requirements under federal guidance. In this study, Title IX Coordinators consistently shared they were engaged in their work to make their communities better, support individuals going through a Title IX process, and work to prevent sexual misconduct at their respective institutions. As the work that Title IX Coordinators perform daily is mentally and emotionally taxing, individuals who are not intrinsically motivated to create incremental changes to prevent and respond to sex discrimination will be challenged to execute their role effectively. As Title IX Coordinators consider the learning, development, and engagement opportunities for their communities, incentives may aid in motivating individuals to participate in training and development. Examples of ways individuals could be extrinsically motivating include offering course or continuing education credit; a certificate of completion; public recognition; and t-shirts, lapel pins, or other give-a-ways such as cash incentives.

Title IX Coordinators have a great responsibility to ensure their campus community receives ongoing education about their obligations under Title IX. The andragogical model is

applicable for Title IX Coordinators to utilize in their learning and teaching. It is flexible and can be applied in its entirety or parts (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The model allows the Title IX Coordinator to be creative in their learning and how they construct learning opportunities for their respective communities. Title IX Coordinators who understand the basic principles of andragogy and adult learning have the opportunity to more effectively engage and motivate the individuals who make up their campus community to participate in and take ownership for the part they in sexual misconduct prevention and response.

### **Implications for Policy**

There are implications for policy both at the federal level and institutional level. As discussed, Title IX federal guidance mandates how higher education institutions must comply with Title IX. Since 1997, the guidance has been revised numerous times, most recently under the Trump administration through the 2020 Final Rule (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). As the Biden administration is now in office, he and his staff may revise Title IX again. Another update to Title IX would cause a ripple effect across the field of Title IX coordination, resulting in institutions again having to update their policies, procedures, resources, supports, and prevention efforts. Title IX Coordinators and their support staff would again be required to quickly understand and operationalize federal guidance and then retrain their students, faculty, staff, and constituents on the new regulations, updated policies, and procedures to which they would now be accountable.

If history is a predictor of the future, it is inevitable that Title IX regulatory guidance to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct will again be updated. When Title IX guidance is updated, the Department of Education should consider providing a public comment period as the Trump administration did under the proposed rule. A public comment period allows the public to

provide feedback about the proposed changes to the law and policymakers to respond and make changes to a proposed law before it becomes final. When Title IX guidance is updated, the Department of Education should also consider issuing supplemental resources to help institutions develop new policies and trainings and transition accountability and staffing structures. With the most recent updates to Title IX via the 2011 Letter (Ali, 2011) and the 2020 Final Rule (U.S. Department of Education, 2020), institutions have had to do much of that without funding or clear guidance about how, which takes up an immense amount of institutional resources. In May 2020, when the 2020 Final Rule was issued, Title IX Coordinators and other campus leadership had to understand and operationalize the law quickly. To understand the over 2,000-page guidance, Title IX Coordinators turned to other individuals in the field, attended webinars, hired attorneys, and worked tirelessly to become compliant with Title IX in the 100 days before the 2020 Final Rule became the law (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Creating resources such as a toolkit to accompany new Title IX regulations could ease some of the strain and burden that universities experience following a Title IX regulation change. A toolkit could include example policies, procedures, training, prevention, and awareness information that meet the requirement of the law. Then, institutions can adapt the materials to meet the needs of an individual campus community. Providing resources that meet federal regulatory expectations could also ensure that Title IX policies and processes are compliant with Title IX mandates.

Federal guidance could also be updated to require those who hold the position of Title IX Coordinator to hold a certain degree, professional credentials, or to have successfully completed a certification program and also receive federally mandated ongoing training. Currently, under the 2015 Letter (Lhamon, 2015), Title IX Coordinators are only required to have comprehensive knowledge of federal, state, and local policies that intersect with Title IX and receive ongoing

training regarding laws, regulations, and federal guidance of their choosing. If the field of Title IX coordination were professionalized, a body of training practices and modalities could be created, and professional connections could be established with others who are committed to Title IX coordination. Requiring individuals to be adequately trained to fulfill the role could result in the campus community being more educated about Title IX policies, procedures, and resources. This could potentially result in a decrease of Title IX violations filed with the Office for Civil Rights. Finally, professionalizing the role could also prevent individuals from being assigned as their institution's Title IX Coordinator who do not want and/or are not prepared for the role.

As discussed, there are implications for policy at the federal level, and there are also implications for policy at the institutional level. Laws and stipulations that are provided by the federal government, such as the 2020 Final Rule (U.S. Department of Education, 2020), are full of legal jargon that is difficult to digest and then operationalize into a policy. Title IX Coordinators and the teams with whom they work should develop institutional policies and procedures that limit jargon and are clear, concise, and less legalistic so they can be understood and are accessible to their stakeholders. For example, the use of flow charts and other images can explain the Title IX formal complaint and investigative processes. Charts within the policy can also illustrate policy definitions, organizational structures, and resources – both confidential and private – in the campus and surrounding community. Posting institutional policies online is essential, and Title IX Coordinators must follow the Americans with Disabilities Act web accessibility standards. Title IX Coordinators should also consider developing policy resource guides that do not replace policy but can disaggregate policy for complainants and respondents to provide concise and focused information for the individuals going through a Title IX process.

The Title IX Coordinator or others can review these resource guides with individuals involved in a Title IX investigation to support their understanding of resources, supports, and the overall Title IX process. Title IX Coordinators should also consider how they notify and educate their campus community about Title IX policy and processes. Creating online and in-person training for students and employees to demystify institutional Title IX policies and procedures can help to build trust in a process that can be hard to understand and is easily misunderstood. Title IX Coordinators should be cautious of waiting for campus constituents to reach out to them for training and be proactive in developing a campus-wide training plan to reach students, faculty, and staff across the institution.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The current body of research on Title IX coordination is minimal. Therefore, there are many opportunities for future research that can add to the body of knowledge about this critical position that must exist at every institution of higher education in the United States. As this narrative study focused on the experiences of Title IX Coordinators at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States, it could be beneficial to understand the experiences of Title IX Coordinators through future narrative studies by studying a different sample of Title IX Coordinators. For example, a study could focus on smaller public and private institutions, where it is likely the Title IX Coordinator also serves in capacities in addition to their role as Title IX Coordinator, or the experiences of male Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. Like the study conducted by Wiersma-Mosley and DiLoreto (2018) who found Title IX Coordinators had only been serving in their roles for three-years or less, the longest tenure of a Title IX Coordinator in this study was four years. A future study about the tenure of Title IX Coordinators would be illuminating as it could aid in

understanding why the tenure of those serving in these roles is limited, and what higher education institutions could do to better support Title IX Coordinators in their respective roles. Furthermore, as this study focused on Title IX Coordinators' work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct, future studies could examine their roles in the context of their responsibilities around equity in athletics, pregnant and parenting students, and/or their role in preventing and responding to discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation.

A second recommendation for future research is to conduct an ethnographic study to better understand the culture of Title IX coordination utilizing Cervero and Wilson's (2006) Program Planning Model known as the planning table. A study utilizing Cervero and Wilson's (2006) Program Planning Model as a theoretical framework for a future study of Title IX Coordinators could illuminate how Title IX Coordinators negotiate and execute in their roles with real people, within complex organizations, with power relations, and in politics in which negotiations for power, interests, and responsibility are continually evolving. Gaining a deeper understanding of how Title IX Coordinators negotiate their positionality with stakeholders both internal and external to their position to meet requirements under federal guidance could illuminate their current work and opportunities for training, development, and ongoing support.

Another way in which more could be understood about the role and positioning of the Title IX Coordinator is through a case study. A case study of Title IX Coordination could aid in understanding what Yin (2018) refers to as seeking to understand the "how" or "why" of a phenomenon (p. 13). Studying each institution as a singular case could allow professionals to gain an in-depth understanding of the inner workings, connection points, relationships, strategies, successes, and growth opportunities. Additionally, a case study could illuminate the nuances of leading Title IX Coordination within the context of one institution.

As the work of Title IX Coordinator is continuously evolving, an action research study could also provide insights into their role leading teams through a process, allowing for an opportunity to learn from practice behaviors (McNiff, 2016). In this process of inquiring into one's own organization through action research, the researcher can study the work as "natives and actors, immersed in local situations, [which allows for knowledge to] emerge from experience" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p.4). Next, mixed-methods research could be extremely illuminating about the role of Title IX Coordinators. For example, if a study were conducted to learn more about a Title IX Coordinator's leadership through the four-frame model (Bolman & Deal, 1991a/2017), the researcher could utilize both qualitative interviews and gathering quantitative data via the Leadership Orientation Instrument (LOI) (Bolman & Deal, 1990). This would allow the researcher to better understand the frames utilized by Title IX Coordinators in their respective roles. It would also be illuminating to conduct a longitudinal study of Title IX Coordinators to check in at least annually to understand how their roles are evolving and changing over time, and to understand what they are learning that they have been able to apply to their practice.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand the stories of Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern United States. The use of a narrative research methodology allowed me to collect stories about the experience of Title IX Coordinators around their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. As narratives are retrospective stories told of the past from the narrator's point of view, they are the stories the narrator has chosen to communicate (Chase, 2005). I was able to collect and reconstruct the stories participants chose to



share into narratives about participant experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Kim, 2016). This methodology allowed a greater understanding of the experiences of Title IX Coordinators that could not be captured through empirical data collection methods.

This study contributed to the literature by expanding the scholarship about the leadership of Title IX Coordinators in higher education. The study illuminated the ways in which participants became Title IX Coordinators through both their education and experience; it provided insight into the way in which they lead their work through the lenses of Bolman and Deal's (1991a/2017) four-frame model; and it illustrated how Title IX Coordinators learn to be effective in their roles.

This study has implications for practice for the field of adult learning and higher education, and policy recommendations were included for policy makers both at the federal and institutional levels. Title IX Coordinators are not only learners who must be willing and able to continuously learn in their roles to maintain current knowledge on Title IX regulations, they are also teachers of adults. Title IX Coordinators who have a greater understanding of both how they learn and how they can most effectively teach using adult learning models and practices may be more impactful in their roles. Through the stories they shared, participants provided an opportunity for individuals working as Title IX Coordinators, supervising a Title IX Coordinator, or seeking to understand more about the Title IX Coordinator role to learn more about what it means to lead Title IX Coordination at a public, Research:1 Doctoral University in the Southeastern United States.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Initial IRB Approval

June 02, 2020

Laura Bryant,

UTK - Title IX

**Re: UTK IRB-20-05879-XP**

**Study Title:** A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference

Dear Laura Bryant:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for the above referenced project. It determined that your application is eligible for expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), Category 6: Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes Category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

The IRB has reviewed these materials and determined that they do comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects. Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval by the IRB of your application (version

**Approval Information:**

Categories 6 and 7

13 participants

Written informed consent

Continuing Review Required – PI is a student; sensitivity level of the research activity

**Approved Documents:**

Application version 1.1

Informed Consent - Version 1.1

Interview Follow Up E-mail with Transcription - Version 1.0

Recruitment E-mails 1.1 - Version 1.1

Interview Guide - Version 1.0

Approval of this study will be valid from June 02, 2020 to 06/01/2021.

In the event that subjects are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB.

Please note that restrictions are in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and all in-person contact with research participants is on hold until further notice.

- Newly-approved studies with in-person interactions may not begin enrollment until further notice from the IRB/HRPP.
- Newly-approved studies with no in-person participant interaction may begin after receiving IRB approval.

Please monitor the COVID-19 Updates at <https://www.utk.edu/coronavirus/faq/> for the latest information. Human Subjects Research updates are being filed under Information for Instructors/Research.

Any revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, **re-approval** of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,  
**Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.**  
Chair

## **Appendix B**

### **Recruitment E-mails**

#### **Recruitment E-mail One**

Dear, [insert Title IX Coordinator name],

My name is Laura Bryant, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville as well as a Deputy Title IX Coordinator at the University. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in a study regarding the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

If you choose to participate in this study, I will ask that you join me via Zoom for a 60-90-minute interview. I will record the interview session so data can be transcribed and utilized for research purposes only.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate in the study or if you have any questions about the study, please e-mail me at [lbryant7@utk.edu](mailto:lbryant7@utk.edu) or call me at 865-323-1909.

I have attached the informed consent and interview questions for your review.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,  
Laura

#### **Follow up Recruitment E-mail**

Dear, [insert Title IX Coordinator name],

I am writing to follow up about the e-mail I sent on [date] regarding a request I made to include you in a study regarding the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

If you choose to participate in this study, I will ask that you join me via Zoom for a 60-90-minute interview. I will record the interview session so data can be transcribed for research purposes only.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate in the study or if you have any questions about the study, please e-mail me at [lbryant7@utk.edu](mailto:lbryant7@utk.edu) or call me at 865-323-1909.

I have attached the informed consent and interview questions for your review.



I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,  
Laura

**Final Recruitment E-mail**

Dear, [insert Title IX Coordinator name],

I am writing a final time regarding the e-mails I sent on [dates] to include you in a study regarding the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

I would very much appreciate your participation in this study as you serve as a Title IX Coordinator in the SEC. If you choose to participate in this study, I will ask that you join me via Zoom for a 60-90-minute interview. I will record the interview session so data can be transcribed for research purposes only.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate in the study or if you have any questions about the study, please e-mail me at [lbryant7@utk.edu](mailto:lbryant7@utk.edu) or call me at 865-323-1909.

I have attached the informed consent and interview questions for your review.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,  
Laura

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent

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#### Consent for Research Participation

**Research Study Title:** A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference

**Researcher(s):** Laura Bryant, University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
Dr. Mitsunori Misawa, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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#### *Why am I being asked to be in this research study?*

We are asking you to be in this research study because you are the Title IX Coordinator at a public, Research 1: Doctorial University in the Southeastern Conference.

#### *What is this research study about?*

The purpose of the research study is to understand the leadership stories of Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at a public, Research 1: Doctorial Universities in the Southeastern Conference.

#### *How long will I be in the research study?*

If you agree to be in the study, your participation will last for approximately 60 – 120 minutes.

#### *What will happen if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research study”?*

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to share your stories about

- how you came to be the Title IX Coordinator at your institution.
- your leadership experiences as you worked to ensure Title IX compliance around the area of sexual misconduct.
- your learning experiences as you have lead Title IX compliance.

#### *What happens if I say “No, I do not want to be in this research study”?*

Being in this study is up to you. You can say no now or leave the study later. Either way, your decision won't affect your grades, your relationship with the researchers or the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

#### *What happens if I say “Yes” but change my mind later?*

Even if you decide to be in the study now, you can change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to stop before the study is completed, you can let us know you would no longer like to be a part of the interview. If this happens during an interview, we will stop and the recording and it will be deleted right away. If you decide following your interview that you no longer want to be in the study, we will delete the recording and not transcribe any information. After the interview is transcribed the researchers will provide the transcription to you via e-mail for you review. You will have seven days to review and approve the use of your interview

transcript in the study. If researchers do not hear from you within the seven day time frame, researchers will interpret this as you giving consent for your transcript to be used in the study.

***Are there any possible risks to me?***

It is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but we believe this risk is small because of the procedures we use to protect your information. These procedures are described later in this form.

***Are there any benefits to being in this research study?***

We do not expect you to benefit from being in this study. Your participation may help us to learn more about stories of Title IX Coordinators as they lead and learn in their positions to comply with Title IX mandates to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. We hope the knowledge gained from this study will benefit others in the future.

***Who can see or use the information collected for this research study?***

We will protect the confidentiality of your information by storing research records (e.g., consent documents and interview transcriptions) in separate folders on a secure University of Tennessee server that is only shared between researchers. Keeping transcriptions and informed consent documents separate will ensure there cannot be links made between transcription and interviewee. Interviewees will use a pseudonym during the interview and all identifiable locations or references to specific institutions will be anonymized. Interviews will be transcribed within seven days of recording, and immediately deleted.

If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, your name and other personal information will not be used.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what information came from you. Although it is unlikely, there are times when others may need to see the information we collect about you. These include:

- People at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville who oversee research to make sure it is conducted properly.
- Government agencies (such as the Office for Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and others responsible for watching over the safety, effectiveness, and conduct of the research.
- If a law or court requires us to share the information, we would have to follow that law or final court ruling.

***What will happen to my information after this study is over?***

We will keep your information to use for future research purposes about leadership and/or learning of Title IX Coordinators. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be kept secure and stored separately from your research data collected as part of the study.

***Will I be paid for being in this research study?***

You will not be paid for being in this study.



**Appendix D**  
**Interview Protocol**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference

**PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of this narrative study is to understand the stories of Title IX Coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at public, Research 1: Doctoral Universities in the Southeastern Conference. The research questions that will guide this study are:

- 1) What are the stories of Title IX Coordinators that have brought them to their position as Title IX Coordinator?
- 2) What are the stories of the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators?
- 3) What are the shared stories of the learning experiences as they lead institutional Title IX compliance?

**SCRIPT**

Hello, my name is Laura Bryant, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am currently conducting a research study about the experiences of Title IX Coordinators. Today's interview will last approximately 60-minutes and is completely voluntary. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or wish to stop the interview, please let me know and I will end the interview immediately. Please do not hesitate to ask for clarification about any of the interview questions. I want to remind you that I am recording the interview for transcription purposes, but your identity will remain confidential. Is this agreeable to you? Are you ready to begin?

Thank you for your time today, I sincerely appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to share your experiences with me. Is there a pseudonym that you would like me to use in place of your real name in my paper?

**DEMOGRPAHIC/INTORDUCTORY QUESTIONS:**

I'd like to start our time together by asking you a few questions about your background. Please remember, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

1. What is your current work role/occupation?
  - a. (when asked, to what do you “do” how do you respond?)
2. What was your former work role/occupation prior to Title IX Coordinator? (would you be willing to share your most recent resume with me?)
3. How old are you?
4. What is your gender identity?
5. What is your race/ethnic identity?
6. How long have you worked in the field of higher education?
7. How long have you served as the Title IX Coordinator at \_\_\_\_\_ University.
8. In the context of your role as Title IX Coordinator, how do you define sexual misconduct?
9. What duties fall under you in the role of Title IX Coordinator?
  - a. What are your job requirements as related to sexual misconduct prevention?
  - b. What are your job requirements as related to sexual misconduct response?
10. As Title IX Coordinator, who do you report to?
11. As Title IX Coordinator, who are your direct reports?

12. What other duties, if any, do you have in addition to Title IX Coordinator at \_\_\_\_\_ University?

**RESEARCH QUESTION 1:** What are the stories of Title IX Coordinators that have brought them to their position as Title IX Coordinator?

1. Briefly share with me how you became the Title IX Coordinator at your institution.
  - a. What made you want to be the Title IX Coordinator?
  - b. Tell me about the education you have pursued over the course of your adult life that lead you to this role.
    - i. How has this education prepared you for your work as Title IX Coordinator?
  - c. Tell me about your career path that lead you to this role.
    - i. How have these position(s) prepared you for your work as Title IX Coordinator?
2. What former experiences have benefited you as you have served in the role of Title IX Coordinator?

**REASERACH QUESTION 2:** What are the stories of the leadership experiences of Title IX Coordinators?

1. Share with me a time in which you saw yourself as a leader in your role as Title IX Coordinator at your institution.
2. How do you define leadership?
  - a. What makes a Title IX Coordinator effective in leading Title IX compliance?
    - a. In preventing sexual misconduct?
    - b. In responding to sexual misconduct?

- b. Tell me about the challenges you have faced in leading Title IX compliance.
  - a. In preventing sexual misconduct?
  - b. In responding to sexual misconduct?
- c. How do you know if you are being successful in your role as Title IX Coordinator?

**RESEARCH QUESTION 3:** What are the stories that Title IX Coordinators share about their learning experiences as they lead institutional Title IX compliance?

1. Tell me about a major learning experiences you had prior to serving as the Title IX Coordinator that have benefited you in this role.
2. Tell me about a major learning experiences you had while serving as the Title IX Coordinator, that have benefited you in this role.
3. Tell me about what or who has been the most beneficial to you in your position as Title IX Coordinator?
4. What learning opportunities do you need as Title IX Coordinator to effectively
  - a. prevent sexual misconduct?
  - b. respond to sexual misconduct?

**SCRIPT:** Thank you again for taking time to talk with me about your experiences as a Title IX Coordinator. I am very appreciative of your experiences, insights, and willingness to share your time with me today.

**FINAL QUESTIONS:**

1. Is there anything that you would like to add to our conversation that we have not discussed?
2. Do you have any questions for me?



**SCRIPT:** Following my transcription of our interview, I will contact you via e-mail to provide the transcription to you, and you will be able to provide feedback, thoughts, or further input to me.

## Appendix E

### Second IRB Approval

#### Permission to Use to Use Prior Interviews

June 09, 2020

Laura Bryant,  
UTK - Title IX

**Re: UTK IRB-20-05879-XP**

**Study Title:** A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference

Dear Laura Bryant:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for **revision** of your previously approved project, referenced above.

The IRB determined that your application is eligible for **expedited** review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(2).

The following revisions were approved as complying with proper consideration of the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects:

- Adding Exempt Category 5; will be asking two individuals who were originally interviewed for non-research purposes to use their interviews for this research study.
- Adding recruitment e-mails and informed consent for these individuals.
- Application version 1.2
- Category 5 Informed Consent - Version 1.0
- Recruitment E-mails - Previous Interviews Category 5 - Version 1.0

Approval does not alter the expiration date of this project, which is 06/01/2021.

In the event that subjects are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB. Any revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, **re-approval** of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,  
**Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.**  
Chair

## Appendix F

### Recruitment E-mails to Include Previous Interviews

#### Recruitment E-mail One

Dear, [insert Title IX coordinator name],

I hope this e-mail finds you well. My name is Laura Bryant, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, as well as a Deputy Title IX coordinator at the University. We spoke during the Spring 2020 semester about your role as a Title IX coordinator. I am writing to ask if you would consent to allowing me to utilize your interview transcript, resume, and organizational chart for my research about the experiences of Title IX coordinators in leadership and learning experiences as a Title IX coordinator in your work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate in the study or if you have any questions about the study, please e-mail me at lbryant7@utk.edu or call me at 865-323-1909.

I have attached the informed consent for your review. If you are agreeable to participating in the study, I can send the informed consent to you via Adobe DocuSign for your signature. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,

Laura

#### **Follow up Recruitment E-mail – will be sent twenty days after the recruitment e-mail.**

Dear, [insert Title IX coordinator name],

I hope this e-mail finds you well. I am writing to follow up about the e-mail I sent on [date] regarding a request I made to include your interview transcript, resume, and organizational chart for my research about the experiences of Title IX coordinators in leadership and learning experiences as a Title IX coordinator in your work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate in the study or if you have any questions about the study, please e-mail me at lbryant7@utk.edu or call me at 865-323-1909.

I have attached the informed consent for your review.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,

Laura

**Final Recruitment E-mail – will be sent seven days after follow up e-mail**

Dear, [insert Title IX coordinator name],

I hope this e-mail finds you well. I am writing a final time regarding the e-mails I sent on [dates] regarding a request I made to include your interview transcript, resume, and organizational chart for my research about the experiences of Title IX coordinators in leadership and learning experiences as a Title IX coordinator in your work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate in the study or if you have any questions about the study, please e-mail me at lbryant7@utk.edu or call me at 865-323-1909.

I have attached the informed consent for your review.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,

Laura

## **Appendix G**

### **Informed Consent to Include Previous Interviews**

#### **Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference Informed Consent Form**

You are invited to be part of a research study being conducted by Laura Bryant at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. You are being invited because you participated in an interview about your experience as a Title IX coordinator as a part of Laura's Narrative Research course during the Spring 2020 semester. Being in this research study is voluntary, and you should only agree if you completely understand the study and want to volunteer to allow your interview, resume, and organizational chart to be used. This form contains information that will help you decide if you want to be part of this research study or not. Please take the time to read it carefully, and if there is anything you don't understand, please ask questions.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the research study is to understand the leadership stories of Title IX coordinators in their work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at a public, Research 1: Doctorial Universities in the Southeastern Conference. I plan to use this information for my doctoral dissertation, to publish articles, and make presentations at conferences to share the results of this research.

#### **Participation**

If you choose to participate, I will analyze the interview transcriptions, your resume, and office organizational chart. Because these are all things that are part of your regular activities during the Spring 2020 interview, being in the research will not require any additional time unless you decide you would like to participate in a follow-up interview.

#### **Benefit**

You will not receive any direct benefit from allowing your interview transcription, resume, and office organizational chart to be used in the research project, but we hope to learn things that will benefit higher education and the field of Title IX in the future.

#### **Risks**

This research is considered to be no more than minimal risk, which means there is no more expected risk to you than what you might experience during a typical day. There is the risk of possible loss of confidentiality, as someone could find out you were in the study or see your study information, but I believe that risk is unlikely because of the procedures we will use to protect your information.

#### **Confidentiality**

If you agree to allow your information and materials to be used in the research, I will assign you a pseudonym (fake name) and use that instead of your name on all of the materials before I begin analyzing them for the research study. These materials will be stored in a secured password protected UTK database that is accessible only to the researchers involved in the study. No

information which could identify you will be shared in publications and presentations about this study or databases in which results may be stored. In the future, if I wish to include your name or other information that could identify you in publications or presentations, I will ask for separate written permission for this.

**Future Research**

Your information may be used for future research studies or shared with other researchers for use in future studies without obtaining additional informed consent from you. If this happens, all of your identifiable information will be removed before any future use or sharing with other researchers.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me, Laura Bryant, at lbryant7@utk.edu or 865-323-1909 or my advisor, Dr. Mitsunori Misawa, mmisawa@utk.edu, 865-974-5233. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, at utkirb@utk.edu or 865-974-7697. You may also contact the IRB with any problems, complaints or concerns you have about a research study.

**Voluntary Participation**

It is completely up to you to decide to be in this research study. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind at any time by contacting Laura Bryant for your information to be removed the study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer, or if you change your mind and stop being in the study later. If you do not wish to be in the research, it is not necessary to do anything, as I cannot use your materials without your consent.

---

**Consent**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I understand that my participation in this research study includes allowing name of researcher to use my materials/information/biospecimens for research purposes. I agree to be included in this study.

Participant's Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H

### Third IRB Approval Permission for Colleague to Recruit

August 18, 2020

Laura Bryant,  
UTK - Title IX

**Re: UTK IRB-20-05879-XP**

**Study Title:** A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference

Dear Laura Bryant:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for **revision** of your previously approved project, referenced above.

The IRB determined that your application is eligible for **expedited** review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(2). The following revisions were approved as complying with proper consideration of the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects:

- A recruitment Letter from [REDACTED], Title IX Coordinator has been added.
- UTK Knoxville Main Campus IRB Application - Version 1.3
- Recruitment E-mail from [REDACTED] - Version 1.0

Approval does not alter the expiration date of this project, which is 06/01/2021.

In the event that subjects are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB. Any revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, **re-approval** of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,  
**Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.**  
Chair

## **Appendix I**

### **Recruitment E-mail from Colleague**

Dear colleagues,

I hope you all are well. I am reaching out on behalf of my colleague, Laura Bryant. Laura is a deputy Title IX Coordinator here at UT Knoxville, and she is in the final stages of her doctoral program here at UTK in Educational Psychology, in which she is focusing on Adult Learning.

I believe her work is important to the future of Title IX Coordinators- the role, institutional responsibilities, and long-term professional sustainability.

Especially during this regulatory transition, it is important that research address our unique contribution.

Laura is seeking to interview Title IX coordinators in the SEC about both their leadership and learning. I participated in an interview, and it lasted just about an hour.

If you would be willing to speak to her about your role in Title IX coordination, I'd copied her on this e-mail so you can easily reach out to her to set up a time to speak.

If you have any questions about my experience, you can feel free to send me your questions.

With gratitude,



## Appendix J

### Fourth IRB Approval Additional E-mails from Colleague

September 22, 2020

Laura Bryant,  
UTK - Title IX

**Re: UTK IRB-20-05879-XP**

**Study Title:** A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference

Dear Laura Bryant:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for **revision** of your previously approved project, referenced above.

The IRB determined that your application is eligible for **expedited** review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(2). The following revisions were approved as complying with proper consideration of the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects:

- [REDACTED] will send up to two more recruitment e-mails to study sample with a cc to Laura Bryant in which she attaches survey protocol and informed consent. Application version 1.4 2nd and 3rd Recruitment E-mail from [REDACTED] - Version 1.0

Approval does not alter the expiration date of this project, which is 06/01/2021.

In the event that subjects are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB. Any revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, **re-approval** of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,  
**Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.**  
Chair

## **Appendix K**

### **Additional Recruitment E-mails from Colleague**

#### **2nd E-mail**

Dear [Insert Title IX Coordinator Name],

I hope you all are well. I am reaching out on behalf of my colleague, Laura Bryant. Laura is a deputy Title IX Coordinator here at UT Knoxville, and she is in the final stages of her doctoral program here at UTK in Educational Psychology, in which she is focusing on Adult Learning.

I am reaching out to see if you would be willing to meet with her via zoom for her research study about leadership and learning in Title IX coordination. I participated in an interview, and it lasted just about an hour. If you would be willing to speak to her about your role in Title IX coordination,

I'd copied her on this e-mail, and I have also included a copy of the informed consent as well as her interview protocol so you can view what she is asking of participants.

I believe her work is important to the future of Title IX Coordinators- the role, institutional responsibilities, and long-term professional sustainability. Especially during this regulatory transition, it is important that research address our unique contribution.

If you have any questions about my experience, you can feel free to send me your questions.

With gratitude,

#### **3rd E-mail**

Dear [Insert Title IX Coordinator Name],

I hope you all are well. I am reaching out one final time on behalf of my colleague, Laura Bryant.

Laura is a deputy Title IX Coordinator here at UT Knoxville, and she is in the final stages of her doctoral program here at UTK in Educational Psychology, in which she is focusing on Adult Learning.

I am reaching out to see if you would be willing to meet with her via zoom for her research study about leadership and learning in Title IX coordination. I participated in an interview, and it lasted just about an hour. If you would be willing to speak to her about your role in Title IX coordination,

I'd copied her on this e-mail, and I have also included a copy of the informed consent as well as her interview protocol so you can view what she is asking of participants.

I believe her work is important to the future of Title IX Coordinators- the role, institutional responsibilities, and long-term professional sustainability. Especially during this regulatory transition, it is important that research address our unique contribution.

If you have any questions about my experience, you can feel free to send me your questions.

With gratitude,

## Appendix L

### Fifth IRB Approval to Interview Title IX Coordinators in the ACC

November 13, 2020

Laura Renee Bryant,  
UTK - Title IX

**Re: UTK IRB-20-05879-XP**

**Study Title:** A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern Conference

Dear Laura Renee Bryant:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for **revision** of your previously approved project, referenced above.

The IRB determined that your application is eligible for **expedited** review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(2). The following revisions were approved as complying with proper consideration of the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects:

- Change Title of study to a Narrative Inquiry on the Experiences of Title IX Coordinators in the Southeastern United States  
Updated from SEC to include ACC and then titled "Southeastern United States"  
Increase number of participants from 13 to 24  
UTK Knoxville Main Campus IRB Application - Version 1.5  
Informed Consent - Version 1.2

Approval does not alter the expiration date of this project, which is 06/01/2021.

In the event that subjects are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, webbased advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB. Any revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, **re-approval** of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,  
**Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.**  
Chair

## **Appendix M**

### **Follow Up E-mails with Transcriptions**

Dear XXX,

Thank you so much for speaking to me on [DATE] about your experiences as a Title IX Coordinator. I really enjoyed learning more about you. I have attached the transcript from our time together. I have worked to remove any information that would identify you within this transcript. If you find any identifiers, information you are uncomfortable having in the transcript, if you have comments, or see any other changes you would like me to make, please feel to track changes in the document or send me your feedback in an e-mail.

If you would like to set up a second interview with me to clarify information provided in the first interview and/or provide more information to me about your experience as Title IX Coordinator, I would be happy to set up a second Zoom call.

Additionally, if you wouldn't mind to share your most up-to-date resume and an organizational chart as we discussed in the interview, that would be very helpful.

Finally, if you could please provide any feedback you have to me by [DATE -14 days from date e-mail sent]. I would be immensely grateful.

With gratitude,  
Laura

## **Vita**

Laura Renée Bryant was born to Richard and Sara Bryant on September 23, 1980, in Knoxville, TN. Laura struggled in K-12 education. Her parents questioned if she would even be able to learn to read. Laura graduated from West High School a semester early and, in 1998, moved to Chattanooga, TN, to attend college. In college, Laura flourished as a member of the rowing team and other campus organizations. She graduated with a 3.97 GPA, earning a Bachelor of Science in Food and Nutrition from the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga in 2002. In her first job outside of college, Laura learned she had a passion for working with and teaching emerging adults and working in the nonprofit sector to better others' lives. She earned her Masters of Science in Social Work from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 2008. Laura's prior professional experience includes working in the non-profit sector as a regional director of children's, counseling and education programs and in higher education. She has extensive professional experience in grant writing, managing and supervising staff, developing, marketing, and assessing educational programs and learning opportunities for adults. Laura worked full-time while pursuing her Ph.D., during which time she advanced through the positions of Coordinator, assistant director, associate director, and director of the campus health promotion office. Laura is now the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for prevention, training, and evaluation and will graduate with a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Research with a concentration in Adult Learning in May 2021.