



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Theses and Dissertations


Graduate School

2023

Resident Assistants and Title IX: Perceptions, beliefs, and experiences impacting RA help-seeking behavior

Beth Paris
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Gender Equity in Education Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#)

© The Author

Downloaded from

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/7253>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

© Beth Paris _____ 2023

All Rights Reserved

**Resident Assistants and Title IX:
Perceptions, beliefs, and experiences impacting RA help-seeking behavior**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Educational Leadership, Policy, and Justice at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

Beth Paris

Bachelor of Science, Early Childhood Development and Education

University of Central Florida, 2011

Master of Science, Early Childhood Development and Education,

University of Central Florida, 2013

Director: Dr. Beth Bukoski

Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Leadership

Virginia Commonwealth University

Richmond, Virginia

May 2023

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to share my deepest gratitude and appreciation with the students who have trusted me with their experiences of prohibited conduct throughout my career, and the participants in this study who shared their stories for this research. This work is for you and all others who will follow you in search of help on their campuses and in their communities.

Second, I would like to acknowledge the support, feedback, and consistent motivation that have been provided by my adviser, Dr. Beth Bukoski, and my committee (Dr. Jeffrey Wilson, Dr. Jesse Senechal, and Dr. Tammi Slovinsky). I cannot thank you all enough for your time, expertise, and mentorship throughout my doctoral career and especially during this dissertation experience.

Finally, I want to specifically thank my village of friends, family, and doctoral colleagues who served as sources of inspiration, self-care, and reality-checking throughout this process. To the friends (Aimee, Cody, Kadie, Brittany, Lerone, Courtney, Samantha and Camilla) who offered their kindness, their patience, and sometimes their children (in frequently hilarious situations) for support and stress relief. To my family and partner Gabby for their unconditional support and belief that I would finish this project. To my supervisor and colleagues (Malorie, Dana, Dave, and Melanie) for your grace and understanding as I sprinted toward the finish line, often at a distance from my work and the office. And a huge thanks to my fellow and future doctors (Dr. Shenita Williams, Dr. Morgan Murray, Dr. Jaime Williams, Dr. Allison Toney, Fletcher, and Sherrelle) for joining me on this journey and paving the way.

(My dog also growled as I wrote this page to remind me to include her. So thanks, Jasmine.)

“Instead of praising people for being resilient, change the systems that are making them vulnerable.” - Dr. Muna Abdi

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Table of Contents	3
List of Tables and Figures	7
Abstract	9
Chapter One	11
Positionality	11
Problem Statement and Purpose	12
Study Design	14
Study Delimitations	16
Definitions	19
A Title IX Policy Primer	21
The Final Rule Grievance Procedures	26
Summary and Chapter Roadmap	29
Chapter Two	32
Title IX: Policy and Protocol	33
Reporting Options	34
Perceptions of Policy	38
Legal and Ethical Challenges in Policy Implementation	42
Summary of Policy and Protocol	45
The Role of Residence Life in Title IX	45
Responding to Disclosures	48
Mandatory Reporting	56
Supportive Measures	60
Summary	62
Title IX: Residential Practice	63
Perceptions of Mandatory Reporting in Residence Life	63
Role Conflict and Vicarious Trauma	65
Incident Response	71
Help-Seeking	73
Summary	78
Barriers to Title IX Access	79
Policy Knowledge & Perceptions	79
Experiences of Racial and Gender Minorities	82
Employment, Stigma, and Other Harms	85
Summary	87
Significance	87

Chapter Three	89
Epistemology	89
Methodology	93
Data Collection	98
Analysis and Interpretation	100
Statistical Analysis	101
Qualitative Analysis	104
Validity	106
Research Ethics	110
Chapter Four	115
Descriptive Statistics	115
Demographics	115
RA Experiences	119
Title IX Policy Knowledge	119
Trust in Title IX	120
Help-Seeking	121
Qualitative data: Reporting to Title IX.	122
Qualitative data: Reporting to residence life.	122
Qualitative data: Reporting to campus police.	123
Qualitative data: Reporting to off-campus law enforcement.	123
Survivorship	124
Survivor Reporting	125
Phase 2 Interview Summaries	126
Ash	126
Carl	128
Hermione	130
Luna	133
Peter	135
Victoria	137
Results: Research Question 1	138
Bivariate correlation: PolicySelf and t9PolicyScore	139
Bivariate correlation: t9PolicyScore and t9TrustScore	139
Independent samples t-test: t9TrustScore by IR_exp	140
Independent samples t-test: t9TrustScore by Report_exp	141
Results: Research Question 2	141
Independent samples t-test: t9TrustScore by SurvGp	142
Results: Research Question 3	142
Chi square test of independence: SurvGp and HS1 (Title IX)	143

Chi square test of independence: SurvGp and HS2 (Residence Life)	143
Chi square test of independence: SurvGp and HS3 (Campus Police)	144
Chi square test of independence: SurvGp and HS4 (Local Law Enforcement)	145
Qualitative Results: Help-Seeking by Survivor Group	145
Results: Research Question 4	147
Independent samples t-test: t9PolicyScore by RaceGp	148
Independent samples t-test: t9TrustScore by RaceGp	149
Chi square test of association: RaceGp and HS1 (Title IX)	149
Chi square test of association: RaceGp and HS2 (Residence Life)	150
Chi square test of association: RaceGp and HS3 (Campus Police)	150
Chi square test of association: RaceGp and HS4 (Local Law Enforcement)	151
Qualitative interviews: themes about race	152
One-way ANOVA: GenderGp and t9PolicyScore	152
One-way ANOVA: GenderGp and t9TrustScore	153
Chi square test of association: GenderGp and HS1 (Title IX)	153
Chi square test of association: GenderGp and HS2 (Residence Life)	154
Chi square test of association: GenderGp and HS3 (Campus Police)	155
Chi square test of association: GenderGp and HS4 (Local Law Enforcement)	155
Qualitative interviews: themes about gender	156
Summary of Results	157
Chapter Five	158
Discussion: Research Question 1	161
Discussion: Research Question 2	163
Discussion: Research Question 3	163
Do I Need Help?	164
What Can I Do?	165
What Will I Do?	166
Help-Seeking With Campus-Based Police	167
Discussion: Research Question 4	168
Limitations	169
Recommendations for Practice	172
RAs feel vulnerable without clear support	173
RA survivors are instrumentalists	175
Reputation and climate matter to RAs	177
Recommendations for Scholarship	178
RA experiences are unique in this policy context	179
Policy research would benefit from more diversity in perspective	180
Conclusion	181

References	182
Appendix A: Instruments	194
Phase 1: Survey Instrument	194
Phase 2: Interview Protocol	198
Appendix B: Title IX Prohibited Conduct Resource	203
Appendix C: Recruitment	204
Vita	206

List of Tables and Figures

- Table 1: Racial and gender demographics of survey respondents, p. 116
- Table 2: Graduation year of survey respondents, p. 117
- Table 3: Regional affiliation of survey respondents, p. 118
- Table 4: Survivorship by category of prohibited conduct, p. 124
- Table 5: Descriptive statistics for bivariate correlation: PolicySelf by t9PolicyScore, p. 139
- Table 6: Descriptive statistics for bivariate correlation: t9PolicyScore by t9TrustScore, p. 140
- Table 7: Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9TrustScore by IR_exp, p. 140
- Table 8: Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9TrustScore by Report_exp,
p. 141
- Table 9: Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9TrustScore by SurvGp, p. 142
- Table 10: Crosstabulation: Survivor and non-survivor help-seeking with Title IX, p. 143
- Table 11: Crosstabulation: Survivor and non-survivor help-seeking with residence life, p. 144
- Table 12: Crosstabulation: Survivor and non-survivor help-seeking with campus-based police,
p. 145
- Table 13: Crosstabulation: Survivor and non-survivor help-seeking with local law enforcement,
p. 145
- Table 14: Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9PolicyScore by RaceGp,
p. 148
- Table 15: Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9TrustScore by RaceGp,
p. 149
- Table 16: Crosstabulation: Help-seeking with Title IX by race, p. 150
- Table 17: Crosstabulation: Help-seeking with residence life by race, p. 150

Table 18: Crosstabulation: Help-seeking with campus-based police by race, p. 151

Table 19: Crosstabulation: Help-Seeking with local law enforcement by race, p. 151

Table 20: One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA): GenderGp and t9PolicyScore, p. 153

Table 21: One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA): GenderGp and t9TrustScore, p. 153

Table 22: Crosstabulation: Help-seeking with Title IX by gender, p. 154

Table 23: Crosstabulation: Help-seeking with residence life by gender, p. 155

Table 24: Crosstabulation: Help-seeking with campus-based police by gender, p. 155

Table 25: Crosstabulation: Help-seeking with local law enforcement by gender, p. 156

Figure 1: DeLoveh & Cattaneo's (2017) *Where to Turn* model, p. 78

Figure 2: Diagram of study design, p. 94

Figure 3: Network map of relevant codes, p. 159

Abstract

RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AND TITLE IX: PERCEPTIONS, BELIEFS, AND EXPERIENCES IMPACTING RA HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

By Beth Paris, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Educational Leadership, Policy, and Justice at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2023

Major Director: Dr. Beth Bukoski, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Leadership

Resident Assistants (RAs) are student employees on campus with significant responsibility for the safety and success of their peers. While studies are beginning to evaluate the effects of this complex peer leader role on the wellbeing of student staff, there is little discussion about their role in Title IX compliance or how they feel about the resources they are trained to provide to their peers following an incident of prohibited sexual harassment or assault. Tangential references to the impact of sexual violence response on student staff wellness, and evaluations of student perceptions of Title IX policy are frequent in the literature, but the RA is a casual participant in these evaluations, rather than the focus.

As Title IX compliance continues to shift at the federal level, it is important to consider how employees responsible for Title IX response are affected by this work. RAs provide a unique perspective on these issues as both student and staff, with several interesting observations to share about campus climate and policy implementation. This study sought to understand how RAs feel about Title IX services on their campus, and how their perceptions of this resource for their students affected their help-seeking behavior if they also experienced Title IX prohibited conduct while enrolled in college. A nationally representative sample of RA perceptions gathered via survey and subsequent interviews with RA survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct

indicated that this population has a different perspective of their resources for support after sexual violence and that they perceive barriers to access that may not be adequately addressed in the current literature. RAs in this study offered unique considerations for practitioners interested in supporting RA access to Title IX and other supportive services on-campus. These results provide both practitioners and scholars with novel data about this population, never before captured in the literature.

Chapter One

On June 23, 2022, I was driving up the coast of the Pacific Northwest to attend a friend's wedding, and wandered into a small local coffee shop. I noticed a morning news show's retrospective of Title IX on its 50th anniversary on the TV in the corner and chuckled because even on vacation, my work was following me. By the time I'd sat down with my cold brew, the long-awaited Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) from President Biden's Department of Education (ED) had landed in my inbox. As an investigator for Title IX and a researcher of its effects, the inevitable release of the new rules evoked both a sigh of relief and a subsequent deep breath. Despite months of hypothesizing and interpreting signals from the administration, my colleagues and I had been waiting over a year to find out if these several hundred pages would make a difference for our processes, our campuses, and our students. The anxieties of reviewing the Trump Administration's proposed rules in fall of 2018 and the stresses of implementing the Final Rule released in 2020 were renewed; like many of my colleagues across the country, I opened the document and began to read.

Positionality

Despite my current role in Title IX, I was raised as a residence life professional in higher education. I took a somewhat non-traditional path to the profession through a graduate assistantship which focused on hiring and training Resident Assistants (RAs), and then supervised a residential community before finding my passion in student conduct. I found an amazing mentor in residential conduct who matched my values in providing the level of care that students deserved from our office. While these experiences helped me find work that I enjoyed and felt confident in doing well, they also kept me in proximity to large housing departments with hundreds of student staff experiencing life at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. I

am entering this research experience with the intention to be aware of how my experiences might influence my work with participants and my interpretation of the data. My theoretical and epistemological frameworks were selected to assist with this reflexivity and to ensure that the outcome remains focused on a practical solution for my colleagues and these students.

Problem Statement and Purpose

Over more than a decade in residence life, I've seen the challenges that student staff face in their unique role. As undergraduates charged with community development, crisis response, and peer mentorship tasks for anywhere from 20-70 fellow students (Blimling, 2010), it's clear that the work that RAs do is important, and also impactful for the students taking the role. But, amidst an evolving policy climate, RAs have been increasingly charged with heavy university compliance obligations; RAs are among the few roles on campus specifically named in federal policy as Responsible Employees identifying, responding to, and reporting Title IX incidents to their institutions (Mangan, 2021). It's also well-documented that RAs experience secondary or vicarious trauma (defined as the stress related to helping or wanting to help a traumatized person; Lynch, 2017a) similar to that experienced by other first responders (Crivello, 2020; Gill, 2020; Laverty, 2020; Lynch, 2017b; Maten, 2020).

As a supervisor, I've seen RAs struggle with traumatic work experiences and in response, I developed a protocol for professional staff to support students on-call. I've watched student staff withdrawing from supervisors and friends after experiencing Title IX prohibited conduct, and avoiding formal channels of reporting and help-seeking for fear of losing their jobs. I've been part of conversations about disciplinary action for RAs trying to connect their peers to Title IX with the privacy they deserved, because the department's concern that an RA did not fulfill their mandated reporting role outweighed any concern for the survivor's anxieties about seeking

help. These experiences have strengthened my professional resolve to provide students with fundamental respect amidst a complicated policy climate and messy institutional power dynamics. As a scholar, these students and their experiences also motivate my interest in this topic and have contributed to the design of this study.

This dissertation is designed to answer my questions about the experiences I've had supervising and supporting RAs through traumatic incident response and personal crises, and hopefully guide supervisors and administrators toward a more humanistic approach to our work. I sought these answers because they appeared to be missing from the literature; in conversations with residence life colleagues about this topic, it is clear that many of those who supervise RAs are not often thinking about their team as a group of students in need of targeted outreach and support. In an attempt to find empirical data to explore these ideas, I was surprised at how little research has examined RAs as a unique population for study, despite their federally-defined role as mandated reporters for their Title IX office.

Moreover, the literature examining the RA role in Title IX compliance and how they might feel about those responsibilities was even more limited (these gaps will be explored in Chapter 2). The literature was missing a clear understanding of how Title IX work affects those supporting its implementation on the ground floor, and if this work affects their perceived access to resources. One statistic from a survey of RAs grabbed my attention and justified my goals for this research: among a sample of 305 RAs in one department, over 45% identified as survivors of sexual assault (Holland, 2019). This is wildly disproportionate to current estimates of sexual assault prevalence in the general college student population (15-20%; Mancini et al., 2016). I wondered if this statistic is an anomaly, or if the students most likely to seek out this type of work to help others are also more likely to have experienced trauma. I also wondered, although it

was not included in the prior study, how those 137 RAs felt about seeking help from their campus resources, and how many were also afraid of losing their jobs in the process of getting support.

Given these gaps in the literature and my personal experiences working with student staff, I designed this study to broadly examine RAs' perceptions of Title IX and specifically learn about their help-seeking experiences after surviving Title IX prohibited conduct. I wanted to know how RAs perceive the Title IX office as a resource on their campus and if there are barriers impeding their access to Title IX support that have yet to be addressed by best practices. Moreover, I wondered if their unique perspective as both students and trained Title IX first responders had any effect on how they might choose to engage with Title IX if they ever needed help. My epistemological (critical pragmatism; Given, 2008) and theoretical (*Where to Turn Model*; DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017) frameworks centered my practitioner perspective throughout the study and ensured that actionable outcomes remained in focus. The answers to these questions may help us understand how institutions can meet the Title IX mandate for all students, including those who are also responding to incidents of sexual harassment and violence on their campuses.

Study Design

This study sought to answer the research questions below, utilizing a mixed methodology design in two phases (a survey and interviews):

1. How do RAs perceive Title IX as both Responsible Employees and students?
2. How do RAs who have experienced Title IX prohibited conduct perceive their reporting options?
3. How do RA survivor perceptions of Title IX influence their help-seeking behaviors?

4. Are there differences in RA perceptions, beliefs, or experiences by race or gender identity?

Participants were recruited to complete a brief survey if they have held an RA position within the past five years; survey data collected included some demographic information about the participants' experiences as students and RAs, as well as measures of trust in Title IX services and help-seeking intentions (more information about the instrumentation is available in Chapter 3). 44 participants completed all scored portions of the survey. After completing the survey, participants answered a screening question to determine if they experienced any of the five categories of Title IX prohibited conduct while enrolled in college; 15 of the 44 (34%) survey respondents answered this screening question affirmatively. Participants who answered this question affirmatively were invited to schedule an interview and participate in the second phase; seven participants registered and six completed an interview (summaries of these interviews are included in Chapter 4).

The volunteer population in phase 2 is central to many of these research questions. While very little is known about RA perceptions of Title IX generally, I could not find a single study that examined the experiences of survivors of sexual violence who were also working as RAs. Yet in this sample population, one-third of responding participants described experiencing Title IX prohibited conduct, and half of the interview participants experienced the conduct while working as an RA (with identified respondents including peers, professional staff, and residents on their floor). This research begins to capture their unique voices in the literature and open the door to further inquiry about access to Title IX for specialized populations with related compliance responsibilities for their campuses. In addition to the survey data gathered in phase 1, the interview process allowed me to describe the help-seeking decisions of a unique population

for the first time in the literature. Underlying all of my research questions is a fundamental question: does the staff experience as a Responsible Employee impact the RA's experience as a survivor of Title IX prohibited conduct? RAs are primed to help answer this question for all scholars and practitioners dedicated to improving institutional response to sexual violence and supporting students through trauma.

Study Delimitations

The literature gap in this subject area is quite broad, however, the experiences of RA survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct is the most apparent content gap. I've intentionally narrowed the focus of my study to gather a broad dataset and then elaborate further with qualitative data from the sub-population of interest. Within the two phases of the proposed study, I first assessed the perceptions of a sampled population of RAs (or recent graduates) while also identifying RA survivors from that group for voluntary in-depth interviews in phase 2 (see Chapter 3 for a detailed methodological plan). These two datasets, and the overlap between them, provided rich data using a mixed methods design to answer the research questions I've identified.

This study measured the prevalence of sexual violence among the sampled population of interest for the first time beyond a single-site survey; however, I am not seeking to understand why participating survivors chose their RA role, or if their victimization experiences influenced their decision-making in the context of their work. In fact, my interviews for phase 2 participants evaluated the inverse of that relationship: how the job (their training, incident response, supervision experiences, etc.) affected their reaction to their own experiences of sexual assault, harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking. There was existing research evaluating the work-related impacts of Title IX response on RAs, as well as how the role may

affect their overall well-being (Contrini, 2021; Crivello, 2020; Flynn, 2021; Gill, 2020; Holland, 2017; Shetterly, 2018). But unlike these studies examining how RA wellbeing affects their performance on the job, this study prioritized the RA's wellbeing above their efficiency in their mandated reporting role. Whereas prior research focused on how RA perceptions affect their response to resident student survivors, this study recognized that RAs are also student participants in their campus community who are also experiencing Title IX prohibited conduct. Two of the participants I interviewed almost explicitly described this phenomenon as not only misunderstood by supervisors and Title IX, but also underestimated in terms of risk within the RA role. The RA role in Title IX compliance may be influencing these student employees' own help-seeking processes and resource utilization, which is worthy of examination regardless of how RA survivorship impacts the residents they serve at work.

Additionally, while some participating survivors chose to share specific details of their prohibited conduct experiences, I avoided soliciting information about their victimization experiences. Other than reviewing a screening question from the survey to identify which categories of prohibited conduct are included in Title IX, I did not ask participants to disclose details of their experiences of sexual violence or harassment; more information about this decision and its effect on the data is available in Chapter 3. My interview protocol also notified participants that the details of their victimization experiences need not be disclosed. As a Title IX investigator, I am trained in trauma-informed interviewing techniques and integrated that knowledge into my study so that the questions I asked within the semi-structured protocol reflected best practice. This included modifying questions for clarity, attuning to participant well-being throughout the interview by allowing for breaks, asking clear and open-ended questions, and encouraging participants to engage within their comfort level. All participants

received access to national resources for sexual violence and mental health support, as well as an offer for support as to how they might navigate campus-based resources (if still enrolled and interested in this assistance).

Study Significance

This research centered the voices of a unique population in a complex policy climate for the first time in a context that is wholly independent of the work they do on their campuses. There is some research (e.g., Holland, 2017) examining the effects of RA perceptions of Title IX on their work with residents who seek help through housing staff, but I could not find any study that overtly acknowledged that student staff are experiencing the same prohibited conduct as their peers. If we have evidence that RA perceptions influence their work with student survivors, then the effects of these perceptions on their own help-seeking must also be explored. RAs are experiencing their campus as both students and staff, just as graduate students experience dual identities and front-line professionals often feel torn between student needs and institutional obligations (Gerdsen & Walker, 2019; Rosenthal, 2017). The significance of this study is not only relevant to the administration of Title IX in a continuously dynamic policy climate, but it starts the conversation about how the heavy lifting of Title IX compliance extends far beyond the Title IX Coordinator's reach. Those doing the work with and for us deserve our attention and support, and this study amplified their voices so that we may learn more about how their needs are being met, and perhaps also being ignored.

Within the final section of this chapter, I will briefly outline the history of Title IX policy related to sexual violence response in college settings. This overview is intended to provide a common language for the remainder of this study and to situate the current policy climate before evaluating student experiences; however, this research does not examine the policy language or

the policy processes that created this climate. The reality of this work means that students are less informed about political changes in the guidance from ED than administrators, therefore, the detailed history of the law is less likely to be salient to understanding their needs. Evaluating what RAs know from their own experiences and how they feel is more meaningful for pragmatic professionals interested in improving access than trying to unilaterally instruct all students about the nuances of this work. To use a common student affairs colloquialism, before we can address the climate of Title IX compliance, we have to meet students where they are to understand their experiences with these processes. By focusing on the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of survivors in this unique student leadership role, Title IX and residence life professionals might better understand how their compliance efforts translate to student knowledge and action. While we will inevitably continue navigating this dynamic policy climate for years to come, we cannot focus exclusively on the guidance from Washington D.C. without assessing what it means for students seeking our help on campus.

Before delving into the policy context and history of Title IX, a common language is needed to facilitate a baseline of understanding about why these issues are important and why this topic is likely to remain relevant for the foreseeable future. A brief selection of relevant definitions is provided below. Where applicable, I will use the U.S. Department of Education's definition for a term from the regulation or other guidance such that practitioners engaged in this work might recognize these terms as utilized in campus policy.

Definitions

Complainant: "an individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment;" used in this proposal to refer to impacted parties that have reported alleged

prohibited conduct to their institution (Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance [Final Rule], 2020, p. 30574)

Final Rule: “The final regulations specify how recipients of Federal financial assistance covered by Title IX, including elementary and secondary schools as well as postsecondary institutions must respond to allegations of sexual harassment consistent with Title IX’s prohibition against sex discrimination” (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30026)

Formal complaint: “a document filed by a complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and requesting that the recipient investigate the allegation of sexual harassment.” (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30574)

Grievance process: an institution’s “procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints that a recipient is discriminating based on sex” (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30028).

Office for Civil Rights (OCR): the regulatory agency within the Department of Education responsible for administering the Title IX Final Rule (Final Rule, 2020)

Resident Assistant: these are typically undergraduate students responsible for crisis management, counseling, referral, administrative tasks, teaching, leadership, community building, individual student assistance and role modeling (Blimling, 2010)

Respondent: “any individual who is reported to be the perpetrator of sexual harassment” (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30030)

Responsible Employee: “an employee who ‘has the authority to take action to redress the harassment,’ or ‘who has the duty to report to appropriate school officials sexual harassment or any other misconduct by students or employees,’ or an individual ‘who a student could reasonably believe has this authority or responsibility.’” (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30038)

Sexual assault: “rape, fondling, incest, or statutory rape, as those crimes are defined in the FBI’s Unified Crime Reporting program” (Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1990 [Clery Act], 2014, p. 62759)

Sexual harassment: “conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following: (1) An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct; (2) Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient’s education program or activity; or (3) Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking” (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30574).

Sexual violence or Title IX prohibited conduct: used in this study as umbrella terms to encapsulate conduct that might trigger an institution’s obligations to respond under Title IX.

Survivor: used in this study as an umbrella term to include individuals who experienced sexual violence or alleged Title IX prohibited conduct, regardless of whether or not their incident was reported to the university or law enforcement.

A Title IX Policy Primer

Title IX was introduced in 1972 to address discrimination “on the basis of sex” for all educational institutions receiving federal money (Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance [NPRM], 2022). The letter of the law was intentionally broad; it not only prohibits discriminatory conduct on the part of the recipients of federal funds, but it also requires institutions to remedy any conduct on the basis of sex that effectively denies someone equal access to their programs or activities. Early case law highlighted the institution’s obligations to avoid using federal resources in a discriminatory manner and to also provide individuals with protection against the discrimination

of others (*Cannon v. University of Chicago*, 1979). Institutions under the 2020 Final Rule are required to respond to complaints of discrimination on the basis of sex in a manner that is not “deliberately indifferent” and to work to ensure that the prohibited conduct can be stopped, remedied, and prevented from reoccurring (Final Rule, 2020). These expectations have evolved far from the early policy context of Title IX and its original intent.

Senator Birch Bayh sponsored the original legislation for Title IX and cited concerns that American stereotypes had created schools that did not want to “waste a ‘man’s place’ on a woman;” in the 50 years since its passing, Title IX’s broad mandate has extended far beyond school admissions (NPRM, 2022, p. 41393). Subsequent guidance has added requirements for a designated employee to respond to Title IX concerns (a Title IX Coordinator), a nondiscrimination policy, specific procedures for responding to sex discrimination complaints, and protections for students and employees who are pregnant or parenting (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). Title IX’s 37 words have taken on new meaning, as several federal administrations have distributed informal guidance and now, implemented official administrative rules, to enforce the spirit of the mandate.

One can clearly draw the line from these early goals of Title IX and the “deliberate indifference” standard used in post-2020 policy to assess an institution’s failure to respond appropriately to reported conduct (Final Rule, 2020). Because of Title IX’s nationwide reach and the explicit language about federal funding, the Department of Education wields the purse strings to ensure compliance; a failing institution stands to lose access to all federal financial aid, grants, and emergency relief funds (Final Rule, 2020). These structures reflect a belief that institutions using federal money to provide a public good must intervene to ensure that access to that service is not inhibited by discrimination. The institutional obligation to respond to all discriminatory

conduct, even beyond those circumstances perpetuated by agents of the institution, is a recognition of the power dynamics involved in these situations. Institutions have much more to lose (such as \$50,000 fines per Clery Act violation; Clery Act, 2014) and much more capability to hold their community members accountable than individuals impacted by prohibited conduct (including access to a range of disciplinary outcomes for student and employee respondents; Final Rule, 2020).

Title IX did not initially address sex-based harassment (including the sexual violence that has become synonymous with Title IX in recent years) or discrimination related to gender identity or sexual orientation. *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools*, (1992), *Gebser v. Lago Vista Indep. School District* (1998), and *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* (1999) all evaluated Title IX protections for sex-based harassment and redress after institutional failures to respond. These cases, among others in recent years, demonstrate that the enforcement of Title IX extends well beyond the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in ED. Judicial influence has also recently weighed in on Title IX protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. *Bostock v. Clayton County* (2020) was filed as a violation of Title VII by an employee terminated for being gay, and still the court determined that employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is prohibited. Yet the Supreme Court declined to address a similar case regarding the Title IX protections available to transgender students (*Grimm v. Gloucester County*, 2020). However, after the Supreme Court referred the case back to a lower court, the 4th Circuit ruled in favor of the plaintiff and found that the school's policy requiring students to utilize a bathroom based on their assigned sex was discriminatory (*Grimm v. Gloucester County*, 2020). Subsequent OCR guidance has cemented the Biden administration's interpretation of Title IX as it relates to gender and sexual minorities, which represents a

significant shift in policy within the proposed rules (Final Rule, 2020; NPRM, 2022; U.S. Department of Education, 2022¹).

Courts have also responded to criticism and complaints related to the procedural requirements of the Final Rule. *Victims Rights Law Center v. Cardona* (2021) included several grievances about the administrative changes to Title IX enforcement. While many of the claims failed scrutiny, the court did determine that one of the sections of the Final Rule was arbitrary and capricious (the evidence exclusion related to cross-examination; *Victims Rights Law Center v. Cardona*, 2021). This ruling in a civil action immediately changed the work of Title IX administrators nationwide, as the court ordered that institutions must immediately stop excluding evidence from parties or witnesses not participating in the live hearing (Association of Title IX Administrators [ATIXA], 2022). It's clear that judicial interpretation of federal policy as it relates to administrative requirements will likely continue to transform the way that Title IX is implemented and perceived for decades.

Title IX has frequently depended upon federal policy for the workplace to direct and interpret civil rights protections for educational environments. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Civil Rights Act, 1964). However, guidance related to Title IX in the educational context has shifted more significantly in the last five years, and deviations from Title VII are becoming more common. For example, the definition of sexual harassment differs between the two policies. Under the Title IX Final Rule, sexual harassment must be “severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive such that it effectively denies a person equal

¹ Some guidance documents issued prior to the 2020 Final Rule have since been rescinded and are only available on the OCR website as a historical record.

access,” (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30574). Title VII does not dictate such a stringent standard for evaluating harassment.

Citing the *Davis* (1999) standard by which an institution could be held liable for damages resulting from deliberate indifference to sexual harassment, the Final Rule departed from previous guidance and the traditional use of “severe, pervasive, or objectively offensive,” (Final Rule, 2020). A higher threshold limits the types of reports that may be addressed under Title IX policy and deviates from Title VII’s requirements for harassment on the basis of sex. Thus, an individual protected by both policies (such as an employee) experiencing prohibited conduct may encounter different standards by which the conduct could be addressed by the institution; institutions may also inconsistently interpret policy jurisdiction in order to apply appropriate grievance procedures. These conflicts between policy and practice, specifically in the residential college environment, will be explored in Chapter 2.

The experiences of students (and employees) navigating institutional policies, practices, and procedures to seek support after surviving prohibited conduct are central to this proposed research. Thus, despite a long history of shifting federal guidance, the existing procedures for postsecondary institutions will be especially relevant to understanding student perceptions. The Final Rule procedures have been in effect since August 14, 2020, and are still in effect as of this publication (Final Rule, 2020). Because the sampled population includes currently enrolled students (as well as recent graduates who were also subject to Final Rule procedures), these guidelines are the most salient to our common understanding of policy. The next section will outline the Final Rule requirements for an institutional grievance process, which describes how a complainant may pursue a resolution via Title IX.

The Final Rule Grievance Procedures

Title IX guidance dictates how institutions must respond to incidents of discrimination on the basis of sex, but the Final Rule in 2020 contained the most prescriptive procedures for administration of Title IX thus far (Holland et. al, 2020a). Under the current Final Rule, there are five categories of prohibited conduct that must be addressed by institutions under Title IX: sexual harassment (including two categories formerly referred to as quid pro quo and hostile environment), sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30574). Retaliation is also prohibited by Title IX, and can be addressed as a separate alleged policy violation if it arises in the context of an ongoing matter (Final Rule, 2020). The Final Rule provides a number of definitions for roles and stages of the resolution process; in general, an individual who experienced prohibited conduct is referred to as the complainant, while the person accused of a policy violation is referred to as the respondent.

In order to be eligible to file a complaint under Title IX, a complainant must be “participating in or attempting to participate in the education program or activity,” and the institution must have “substantial control over both the respondent and the context” in which the alleged conduct occurred (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30574). This jurisdictional change represented a significant shift from Title IX policy of the past, wherein schools were directed to address any conduct that “creates a hostile environment” for another student, even if that conduct occurred off-campus (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). The conduct alleged must also meet a higher standard under the Final Rule than in prior guidance; conduct that is “severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive” may be prohibited by Title IX only if it “effectively denies a person equal access” to the educational program or activity (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30033). In contrast, 2011 guidance from OCR recommended that institutions respond to conduct that “interferes with or

limits an individual's ability to participate," (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). These conduct and jurisdictional constraints significantly limit the types of incidents that institutions can address under Title IX; which differed from the types of incidents that institutions were habitually addressing under pre-2020 policy. In response, many institutions created supplementary policies and procedures with broader jurisdiction to accommodate complaints of sex-based misconduct falling outside of the Title IX rules (ATIXA, 2022).

Once an institution receives notice of alleged prohibited conduct, they must respond meaningfully to the complainant. Supportive measures such as resource referrals or no-contact directives must be offered equitably to both parties, must be designed to preserve or restore access to the education program, and may not create an undue burden for the other person(s) involved (Final Rule, 2020). In many cases, supportive measures are sufficient to restore the complainant's equal access to their educational program; however a complainant may also choose to pursue an informal or formal resolution (Final Rule, 2020). Complainant choice and autonomy in the beginning of the resolution process is mostly preserved within the Final Rule, with an important exception. The Title IX Coordinator can begin an investigation without a participating complainant if a risk to the health or safety of an individual or the campus community is identified; scholars have expressed concerns about the institution's role in this process given how often reports are filed without survivor consent by Responsible Employees (Holland et. al, 2018; Holland et. al, 2021). This conflict is also frequently discussed in the literature, and Chapter 2 will review the tensions between survivor autonomy and institutional response to Title IX.

Complainants who have requested a resolution from their Title IX office can select an informal resolution, if deemed appropriate for the facts of the case, in which all parties meet with

a neutral facilitator to determine an agreeable outcome without a full investigation (Final Rule, 2020). Informal resolution options are typically available in less egregious incidents of sexual harassment, but cannot be offered for incidents in which an employee has allegedly sexually harassed a student; for all other complainants seeking a resolution, the complainant must request an investigation in their Formal Complaint (Final Rule, 2020).

The Final Rule prescribes how investigations must be conducted, the types of evidence permitted and prohibited in the investigation, as well as what information must be shared with parties and how (Final Rule, 2020). The NPRM released in 2022 has significantly increased institutional discretion in this area, although there will likely be some adjustments before the rule is finalized (NPRM, 2022). Students are less likely to understand or seek out details of the investigative process in their institution's policy, especially before they need the relevant information. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the institution to clearly outline the complainant's rights and responsibilities in the formal resolution process, and the amendments to the Clery Act (included in VAWA) also dictate how institutions must communicate with complainants and respondents about the grievance process (Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act [Campus SaVE Act], 2011; Clery Act, 2014).

Communication with parties during the investigation is much more prescriptive in the Final Rule than it has been in prior iterations of Title IX guidance; parties (as well as any designated advisers) are entitled to review a preliminary report and evidence, and must also receive a copy of the investigator's final report summarizing all evidence and facts gathered (Final Rule, 2020; NPRM, 2022). Changes in the Trump era policy espoused a belief in equitable procedures for both complainant and respondent; however, the procedural requirements were almost singularly focused on increasing the rights of the accused in the process, such as live

hearings, cross examination, and a required written Formal Complaint (Final Rule, 2020; Moody, 2022). In response, Biden's NPRM appears to have swung the pendulum back toward the center while allowing institutions some discretion to continue existing procedures, especially considering changes to state law that have passed since the Final Rule (Moody, 2022; NPRM, 2022). Time will tell if and how these changes will be finalized in the administrative rule, but it's clear that Biden's priority is addressing what many experts perceive to be an overcorrection in the Title IX process (Holland et. al, 2020a; Moody, 2022; NPRM, 2022). The impact to campus operations and student perceptions of Title IX policy are also yet unknown for Biden's proposal, but I am concerned that constantly shifting policy guidance is not likely to be beneficial to students trying to understand their rights. Their perceptions are central to this study; what we've already known about student perceptions will be discussed in chapter 2 and this study's new findings will be reviewed in Chapter 4.

Summary and Chapter Roadmap

In summary, this research sought to contextualize and understand how student RAs perceive the Title IX policy landscape created by the policy and law discussed above, and how this group may be caught in the crosshairs of employment and potential exploitation. Student employees operating in the area of Title IX compliance for their peers without sufficient understanding and access to their own civil rights protections are at risk for prohibited conduct without recourse or remedy. The limited research available specific to this population called into question how institutions perceive these students and what beliefs they may hold that have gone yet unexamined, especially in a context as crucial as Title IX. Additionally, their role as Responsible Employees in this arena of compliance is not proposed to change under the Biden

administration's rules, so their continued work in this area is likely to benefit from a more critical perspective and examination (NPRM, 2022).

Chapter 2 provides a broad overview of existing literature relevant to the RA's role in Title IX compliance, the practice of Title IX policy in residential settings, and the ways in which students may seek help for Title IX related incidents. I specifically included research that examined Title IX compliance in residential settings, as well as those studies that evaluated the effects of the RA role on the students serving their campus community. Additionally, the role of help-seeking as a construct is central to the research questions, therefore existing research about models of help-seeking and how survivors navigate supportive services (especially on college campuses) will lay a foundation for the analysis of the data collected. The literature review clarifies both a methodological and a content-related gap in our existing knowledge about Title IX compliance and student employees, such as RAs. Broad, national-level data about perceptions of these Responsible Employees was previously missing and has been gathered within this study; this research has also measured the prevalence of sexual violence among a nationally representative sample of RAs for the first time. The experiences of RA survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct is missing altogether from the literature, and has been documented within data collected from the second phase of this study. The research design, methodological, and epistemological decisions for approaching the study, and steps taken for data analysis will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 describes how this study answers these questions about the RA population, as well as the foundational theories and epistemological underpinnings of the research. The specific steps taken to analyze data collected within each phase of research are also included in this chapter. These pieces of the puzzle helped clarify how RAs may fit into existing theoretical

models and also identified gaps that do not address the unique perspective of student employees with Title IX responsibilities. As institutions struggle to keep up with administrative shifts at the federal level, it's important to remember that student and staff populations on their campuses must not be left behind or overlooked in the process. If all students do not have equal access to Title IX services, then the fundamental goals of Title IX cannot be met.

Chapter Two

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the present regulatory climate for university Title IX compliance. Title IX expectations from the federal government remain in flux, while policy change has been the only constant for the past decade. This chapter seeks to situate the current study in the existing literature with a clear caveat. What has already been studied, what has been published, and even student experiences of Title IX on their campus, are likely to be outdated by the time this study is complete. As this dissertation was completed, administrators have been anxiously awaiting a final copy of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) process initiated in June 2022; however, the impact on campus will likely not be felt for months as administrators adapt policies to the new rules. Despite the shifting nuances of implementation and campus climate, the focus of Title IX in the university context has been fairly consistent since 2011. These common threads are what I will attend to in the review of literature. Despite my focus on residential life implementation in the post-2020 Final Rule era, research that evaluated prior policy implications for residential students and staff were likely to still be salient to this study. Some policy analysis in the broader campus context may be briefly addressed, but the residential population of interest remains the focus.

The goal of this review is to systematically examine the intersection of Title IX policy and practice in residence life, as well as the help-seeking behaviors of students impacted by Title IX prohibited conduct. In order to accomplish this goal, a brief review of policy concerns and implementation barriers regarding Title IX federal guidance will be discussed first. Next, an examination of the specific obligations of residence life staff related to Title IX will help to situate RAs in the context of their policy mandate. Third, I will examine how Title IX policy and practice combine in residential college settings, and how implementation of Title IX compliance

has been perceived by relevant stakeholders. Finally, I will review the scholarship about help-seeking after sexual assault and barriers to Title IX access to explore how these challenges may affect the RA population.

Title IX: Policy and Protocol

While Chapter 1 provided a broad overview of the Final Rule's requirements for institutional response to sexual violence, scholars have engaged in nearly four years of critical research examining these rules since the draft regulation was released in November 2018. Some concerns have already been addressed in the review period prior to publication in May 2020, while others have been central to subsequent case law (Final Rule, 2020; *Victims Rights Law Center v. Cardona*, 2021). However, the Final Rule cemented a federal administration's priorities for sexual violence response in official rulemaking procedures for the first time in Title IX's 50-year history; therefore, a review of these guiding principles and their criticisms is required to begin to grasp the policy trends of the last decade.

This section will begin by reviewing research that examines recent policy documents at the federal level, institutional interpretations of the Final Rule, and campus or community stakeholder perspectives about the policy. While the official publication includes a wealth of content to dissect (over two thousand pages), I will focus on how the Final Rule dictates access to Title IX services, as this process is most likely to impact the help-seeking behavior of survivors. Additionally, stakeholder perspectives of policy and the required procedures for resolution may provide fruitful insight into how the campus community feels and how those perceptions may affect help-seeking.

Reporting Options

Since the OCR's 2011 "Dear Colleague" Letter, institutions of higher education are required to create and distribute several means of reporting potentially prohibited conduct to the institution. The first line of contact was identified in policy guidance released in 2014, requiring each institution to name and advertise their Title IX Coordinator, the campus expert for responding to reports of prohibited sexual harassment (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). This role created a consistent process by which complainants could formally report their experiences to the institution; in 2011, an amendment to the Clery Act also required institutions to provide survivors with access to resources, including confidential reporting options (Campus SaVE Act, 2011). As a result of these policies, any student impacted by prohibited sexual harassment or assault should have access to both formal and informal reporting options, which ideally increases their chances of seeking help. Experts agree that this reflects an empowering stance for survivors, "clearly outlining rights, responsibilities, definitions, options, and processes for students under Title IX" (Driessen, 2020, p. 403).

Sexual violence remains one of the most underreported crimes, including on campus (Amar et al., 2014; Nunn, 2018). Studies estimate that only one in five survivors of sexual assault in college will notify the police of their assault, and an even smaller percentage (2-10%) of survivors have disclosed to their institution's formal reporting process (Holland & Cipriano, 2020; Mancini et al., 2016). Informal, confidential channels of support may be more appealing to students who do not want an investigation or hearing, but institutional discretion as to who is confidential, and who is not, can be confusing for survivors seeking help (Fleming et al., 2021; Holland, 2020; Shetterly, 2018; Spencer et al., 2017). The role of confidential employees in Title

IX response has been dictated by rules about who cannot be confidential; therefore, a review of the OCR's guidance relating to mandated reporters is necessary to clarify these boundaries.

Institutions concerned with underreporting can turn to guidance from OCR, which defined the role of Responsible Employee in a 2001 Dear Colleague Letter (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). In 2020, President Trump's administration rescinded this guidance for all institutions and required each school to define which employees must report to the Title IX Coordinator (Final Rule, 2020). Under the 2020 Final Rule, institutions are also required to notify all constituents (including applicants and visitors) of their options for reporting sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator (Final Rule, 2020). Citing existing research about the efficacy of mandated reporting (MR) policy, the administrators behind the Final Rule sought to decentralize the decision-making about who is required to report, yet the majority of institutions continued designating all employees as Responsible Employees (Holland et al., 2018; Sokolow, 2013). A 2015 study estimated that only 50-60% of institutional reports of sexual violence were submitted by MR on campus, indicating there is a significant proportion filed by other sources (Rosenthal et al., 2017). Thus, while scholars debate the efficacy of MR, it seems that 40-50% of student survivors are still finding their way to formal services without the help of Responsible Employees.

Most Responsible Employees are also bound to report some incident information to their campus police as Clery Act-designated Campus Security Authorities (CSA); these aggregated crime statistics are compiled into an annual report by each institution (Clery Act, 2014). Given the documented concerns about underreporting of sexual violence, this means that institutions utilizing these crime statistics for resource allocation may be basing their budget on inaccurate data, which puts services at risk of underfunding and limiting access (Nunn, 2018). Other

legislation has recently begun to further complicate the issue, with states such as Virginia and California passing laws to require institutional disclosures to local law enforcement (Holland et al., 2021). This may further obscure already messy boundaries between university and criminal investigation procedures, with student survivors often struggling to understand their reporting options administratively and within the legal system (Holland & Cipriano, 2021).

The disconnect between university and legal reporting avenues is where confidential staff make a difference in the student experience. Surveys indicate that survivors who are connected with confidential victim advocacy services are more likely to access supportive measures and formal reporting options than survivors without advocates (Dunlap, 2016; Holland, 2017; Webermann, 2021). Timing also appears to be critical in this process. For survivors who chose to connect with advocates in Dunlap's (2016) sample, almost half of them (45%) did so within the first six months of their assault, while the remainder waited at least six months before reaching out. Learning about how survivors make decisions about help-seeking will contribute to this research; therefore, literature about help-seeking after sexual assault will be specifically addressed later.

A survivor's understanding of their options for reporting and help-seeking is critical to maintaining their autonomy after an assault (Fleming et al., 2021; Holland & Cipriano, 2021; Spencer et al., 2017; Wood & Stichman, 2018). Holland's (2020) study found that better knowledge of the university's policies about sexual violence increased a student's interest in reporting to confidential services, but not Title IX. Understanding the risks but not knowing what happens after a report is a likely cause of this barrier, whereas advocates are an appealing option with a clear goal: this person's job is to help me. The data show that confidential advocacy does help. Weberman (2021) evaluated student survivor perceptions of their reporting experiences to

several public universities, and used the data to suggest several recommendations for institutional policy. Students, especially those holding minoritized identities, often disclosed experiences of institutional betrayal and inconsistent reporting experiences, despite identical mandated procedures. Student survivors who were connected to a confidential victim advocate during their investigation reported higher engagement with their university's formal reporting office and better outcomes as a result of their report (Webermann, 2021).

However, even explicit training and experience does not always equate to a better understanding of the process. Faculty and staff survivors in Rosenthal and colleagues' (2017) study exposed a weakness in translating policy to practice. Even university professionals who experienced prohibited conduct were confused about their options, with one participant sharing, "I wasn't as keenly aware that I was awarded the same rights as an employee of the university" (Rosenthal et al., 2017, p. 115). It is reasonable to assume that student employees are even more likely to struggle with the same help-seeking decisions in accessing the resources they are trained to provide to other students, but special attention to this population's experiences in help-seeking is missing from the literature.

In summary, perceptions of reporting options can directly affect how students are able to access confidential and federally-required support services. While these incidents are still underreported, students who seek the support of a victim advocate describe their engagement with university adjudication procedures more positively; the work of staff in these confidential roles can increase survivor access to supportive measures as well as the rate of formal reporting to the university. If students perceive that they must make a choice between pursuing institutional support or managing on their own, they may miss an opportunity to receive help more imminently and explore their options fully. With a complex relationship between student

knowledge and student intentions to report emerging from the literature, survivor perceptions of federal and institutional policy may be instructive for administrators seeking to increase utilization of services. The next section will dive into existing data about student, staff, and community perceptions of policy in the Title IX arena.

Perceptions of Policy

Studies examining student and faculty or staff perceptions of high-profile Title IX incidents can shed light on overall access and community beliefs about effective response (Jacoby, 2020; Harris, 2013; Mancini et al., 2016; McGhee, 2019; Rosenthal et al., 2017; Stone, 2020). There have been several high-profile sexual assault investigations in university settings which have created interesting climates for research about community reactions. Results from studies with faculty and staff elucidate a range of opinions, from concerns about the “performative action” of Title IX response to generally positive attitudes about providing care to survivors after a disclosure (Gerdsen & Walker, 2019, p. 163; Jacoby, 2020).

Student perceptions can also be informative, but only to a point when examined via hypothetical disclosures or abstract reporting behaviors (Amin, 2019; Contrini, 2021; Mancini et al., 2016). Survivors faced with the actual decision as to whether or not to report have shared hesitation about the reporting and investigation process, which indicates that obstacles remain for the students in need of support (Holland & Cipriano, 2021). Institutional culture and stigma have frequently prevented survivors from accessing support services on campus, but Holland and Cipriano (2021) examined what happens after a survivor has considered their reporting options. A survey of survivors across the gender and sexual identity spectrum examined their help-seeking and reporting behaviors in the context of a large midwestern university; despite findings that a majority of their participants were aware of the Title IX office, most did not file a

report (just under 25% of their sample reported to Title IX; Holland & Cipriano, 2021). Those survivors who connected with a formal process were ultimately frustrated with rare accountability for the respondents and investigators who communicated that they “were not there to be supportive” (Holland & Cipriano, 2021, p. 16).

Assessing student perceptions before the services are needed may also provide good information about campus climate and culture. A sample of random students responding to a survey asserted that MR policy would increase their likelihood to report; even a new state policy requiring disclosure to law enforcement only deterred 15% of Mancini et al.’s (2016) sample from reporting a hypothetical assault. What students believe about the process, and what they decide to do when the realities of the policy hit close to home are disconnected within the evidence thus far. The inherent contradictions in policy and practice are abundant, resulting in conflicting perspectives, which require a nuanced understanding of what these institutional choices mean for survivors.

Campus-based victim advocates are a meaningful population to consider in regards to their perception of policy and how they influence student access to services. While many professionals in this field identify with feminist value systems and are concerned about compelled disclosure, the idea of increased accountability and swifter campus safety are also appealing (Driessen, 2020; Mancini et al., 2016). The OCR requires campuses to provide students with access to a confidential support service and most, but not all, campus-based victim advocates are protected by legal privilege and treated as confidential (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017). With evidence that students are more likely to seek support from campus-based advocates than the police or their RA, confidential advocacy services may be the most influential resource on campus for survivors of sexual violence (Dunlap, 2016; Holland, 2017; Webermann, 2021).

At a time when several states were implementing MR policies compelling disclosures to law enforcement, Brubaker and Mancini (2017) gathered the perceptions, concerns, and practices of campus-based advocacy personnel. In the context of Virginia's 2015 law requiring disclosure of campus sexual violence to the Commonwealth's Attorney (county prosecutor), authors found that campus advocates were under-trained and unsure of how this new process would affect their work (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017). While the legal privilege and confidentiality of victim advocates may have remained intact, these policies make it difficult for advocates to connect survivors with campus-based reporting, especially when many survivors (particularly those from marginalized communities) would prefer to avoid all contact with law enforcement. In states requiring disclosures to law enforcement or criminal justice processes, the benefits may not justify the barriers to access.

The perceived institutional and community benefits of compelled disclosure to law enforcement are outweighed by meaningful concerns about chilled reporting and a loss of survivor autonomy in the help-seeking process (Holland, 2020; Holland et al., 2021; Mancini et al., 2016). When survivors are aware of their reporting options, which is not very often (Fleming et al., 2021; Holland, 2020; Holland & Cipriano, 2021; Spencer et al., 2021), they were still more comfortable reporting a hypothetical victimization than an actual one. Compelled disclosure policies requiring reports from all employees also appear to ignore the primary barriers to reporting cited by survivors who experience sexual assault in college. A fear of reprisal from the perpetrator (who is also usually affiliated with the institution), concerns about disciplinary action for drug or alcohol use, and unclear standards for privacy and confidentiality were barriers reported by survivors who did not engage in formal reporting (Mancini et al., 2016; Shetterly,

2018; Wood & Stichman, 2018). Awareness of the formal reporting process can shape perceptions and influence engagement among students, as well as faculty and staff.

Some researchers utilized real-world examples of institutional response to sexual violence to examine the effects of policy requirements and limitations. For example, Rosenthal and colleagues (2017) examined faculty and staff perceptions of Title IX administrative response after a highly publicized sexual assault case involving athletes at the University of Oregon (UO). UO employees were less likely to report they were willing to forgive institutional mistakes if they also demonstrated a high level of betrayal related to the institution's response to this incident in particular (Rosenthal et al., 2017). Participants described an overall sense that UO's response demonstrated "a failure to maintain their psychological contract with the community by upholding standards of safety" (Rosenthal et al., 2017, p. 294). These results are supported by other research suggesting that faculty and staff are conflicted in their implementation of MR by their perceptions of policy and institutional response (Driessen, 2020; Gronert, 2019; Stone, 2020). New scholarship and terminology has emerged in response to evidence of this feeling of betrayal by the institution itself after a traumatizing event.

Smith and Freyd (2014) coined the phrase "institutional betrayal" by presenting several examples of systemic abuse to highlight the role of context in the recovery of survivors impacted by interpersonal violence. Systemic action (or inaction) exacerbates harm or serves as a facilitator to support and has the potential to explain a number of seemingly disconnected reactions to trauma, including delayed help-seeking (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Authors suggest that a historically narrow focus on the individuals (perpetrators and survivors) may overlook one of the most important contributors to positive and negative outcomes: the institutional contexts in which victimizations occur and/or are reported (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Additional research

grounded in institutional betrayal theory shows that survivors who participate in some kind of reporting process describe experiencing a loss of trust in support providers and the institution as a whole (Holland & Cortina, 2017; Sall, 2020). Overall, the experiences of survivors with formal reporting, as well as the perceptions of those supporting survivors in the process, contribute to the overall climate of Title IX compliance; negative perceptions have the potential to limit access or diminish the institution's capacity to meaningfully respond to prohibited conduct. These concerns, combined with existing legal and ethical quandaries intrinsic to the policy, pose a risk to successful implementation of the Title IX mandate for residential institutions.

Legal and Ethical Challenges in Policy Implementation

There are legal and ethical implications specific to the implementation of Title IX policy in higher education, especially given the frequency of litigation and the significant risks associated with a failed response. Fundamentally, the contradictions and power dynamics involved in translating policy to practice trickle downstream to greater confusion and a legal landmine. Challenges in administrative capacity, power differentials between federal and institutional policymakers, and lack of transparency in the adjudication process all contribute to murky interpretation affecting student access and perceptions (Contrini, 2021; Driessen, 2020; Jones, 2021; Stone, 2020). A brief review of the more broadly applicable legal and ethical inconsistencies in policy will follow here, while concerns specific to the residential environment will be discussed in depth later.

Differences in faculty policy knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about their institution's Title IX process directly affect how they accomplish their job as mandated reporters (Contrini, 2021; Holland et al., 2018; Stone, 2020). Stone (2020) interviewed 16 full-time faculty appointed at institutions in the state of Maryland about their experiences responding to student disclosures

of sexual assault. The results of this study demonstrated that faculty held conflicting beliefs and perceptions of their institution's efficacy in responding to sexual misconduct, as well as their own role in responding to and reporting student disclosures (Stone, 2020). Faculty were disconnected from the institution in their interpretations of Title IX response, “distanc[ing] themselves from the administration and the institution and overtly critiqu[ing] the management of sexual misconduct” (Stone, 2020, p. 139). Despite prioritizing student care in their response to disclosures, faculty reported feeling torn between the student and the institution; Stone (2020) suggested that greater confidence in the process post-report would improve faculty engagement with students in Title IX disclosures. Studies of RA perceptions also revealed similar themes; lesser knowledge of Title IX policy correlated with poorer perceptions of institutional policy and a decreased likelihood to refer their residents for support (Holland & Bedera, 2020; Holland & Cortina, 2017). Institutions relying on the work of their faculty and staff to ensure Title IX compliance might benefit from examining how this work is happening in an effort to improve outcomes for students.

A contradiction exists within research about perceptions of MR policies related to knowledge of policy and trust. Holland’s (2017) examination of trust as a mediating variable concluded that better knowledge of Title IX policy among RAs did correlate with increased reporting behaviors, but Amin’s (2019) evaluation of the general student body revealed conflicting results. Students in Amin’s (2019) sample were less likely to report personal victimizations as their knowledge of campus Title IX policies increased. Amin (2019) hypothesized that individuals with the most knowledge of Title IX in their sample may also have the most personal experience with the process, therefore coloring their perceptions if the Title IX process did not go well. This assumption was not tested in Holland’s (2017) dataset, but it may

explain some of the variance in the results regarding RA trust in the reporting process because 45.8% of that study's sample also identified as a survivor of college sexual assault. Individual differences in experience and beliefs about Title IX appear to be affecting institutional response to sexual violence; a better understanding of policy mandates may not be an effective cure.

The role of power in Title IX compliance as it distributes between federal and institutional levels is a recurring theme. Driessen (2020) reviewed relevant Title IX regulations (before the 2020 Final Rule) and supplemental guidance documents using McPhail's (2003) Feminist Policy Analysis framework. The author identified several strengths in the Obama-era policy related to feminist policy ideologies, and several tensions in the balance of power between survivors and institutions (Driessen, 2020). Scholars also call attention to internal conflicts among Title IX staff in fulfilling the requirements of their work as investigators or Title IX Coordinators and responding to power at the federal and institutional levels (Holland et al., 2018). Despite national attention to the issues involved, many institutions choose to appoint an existing employee to the Title IX Coordinator role only on a part-time basis, limiting their dedicated time for compliance and outreach (Contrini, 2021). Given the need for increased education and awareness on campus, additional resources are required to accomplish this goal at most institutions (Stone, 2020). A lack of resources within the office can also adversely affect the experiences of survivors if resources for supportive measures are deprioritized to meet investigation deadlines or other demands (Jones, 2021). These varied contradictions create additional burdens for institutions in their efforts to meet their policy mandate, which is a dangerous situation for a critical civil rights compliance unit.

Summary of Policy and Protocol

Title IX policy is complex and dynamic, imposing a variety of demands on institutional resources, staff time, and student engagement which is evidently impacting campus climate as well as community perceptions of campus safety. While there will be more discussion about the challenges for residence life staff later in this review, the policy itself is rife with contradictions. Debated policy obligations with limited time between policy changes do not allow administrators to evaluate efficacy, use research-based best practices, or communicate with stakeholders to assess their needs, which are all considered best practices for policy implementation (Clay et al., 2019). These conflicts force Title IX professionals to accomplish their work with a moving target that may keep impacted parties in the dark about their rights and options. As we look toward a new set of proposed regulations from President Biden's ED, these conflicts will likely remain prominent in the public discourse, and we all may need to hone our policy evaluation skill sets to keep up with the times. This section of the review situated the effects of the policy process in the literature, with attention dedicated to impacts on the broader scope of the university community. I will continue to build upon this foundation of policy knowledge and evidence to examine the experiences of the population of interest in future sections.

The Role of Residence Life in Title IX

Several themes emerged in the literature about how residence life staff and settings factor into the institution's Title IX compliance efforts. Residence life staff are subject to Title IX policy mandates usually by title and name, unlike other groups of Responsible Employees on campus (Final Rule, 2020). Title IX incidents and student needs also emerge differently in the residential setting than elsewhere on campus, requiring unique attention to incident response and staff protocol. Usually, residence life employs more trained student staff than any other

department on campus, and staff in this unique job typically spend more meaningful time interacting with the average student than any other employee (Blimling, 2010). Research in the residential context also highlights several barriers to Title IX access that are specific to this population. This section will begin with a broad overview of how Title IX directs residential staff in their response to residential student needs. Then, a brief review of relevant portions of the Title IX policy for the residential population will guide a discussion about RAs; additionally, studies of RA perceptions may shed light on how they may feel about Title IX as a resource. Next, the realities of Title IX in residence life will be parsed out, including the help-seeking behaviors of student survivors and incident response by RAs. Because many of these studies used different sample populations, from different campuses, the goal is not to find a unified solution that could apply to every department or institution. However, when common themes emerge in these studies' findings, it is critical to attend to these trends as clues to systemic issues in the higher education context. Despite minor differences in setting, structure, and culture, the commonalities among institutions, departments, and student experiences are likely to be instructive for our purposes.

Housing and residence life departments are among the largest employers of student labor on campus and offer a unique work opportunity for undergraduates: the RA position. RAs are tasked with a variety of duties ranging from social to serious, including resolving conflicts, providing campus resources, and building community among their peers (Blimling, 2010). Recent scholarship has examined how the RA position affects the students who take the job; many scholar-practitioners have explored the toll of secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and MR policy (Crivello, 2020; Holland, 2019; Laverty, 2020; Maten, 2020). While the role of the student employee in textbooks used for training (Blimling, 2010) is limited to basic social and

safety tasks, clearly some professionals and scholars are concerned about the well-being of students choosing to serve as RAs. While administrators worried about compliance tend to focus on individual students, especially those paying for an on campus experience, there are other students involved: the RAs living next door. Complex policy expectations can be difficult to manage for professional administrators, yet the RA as an agent of the institution is often at greatest personal and professional risk in their response to student crises (Letarte, 2013). A clearer understanding of the RA's role in Title IX is required before considering how they perceive this responsibility. This section will discuss the specific policy mandates for residential staff and later, how those obligations impact RAs in particular.

As students, families, and town-and-gown university neighbors demand more attention to safety and security in the campus environment, institutional policy shifts some responsibility to part-time student employees. These decisions are not made in isolation. Federal guidance, including Title IX and the Clery Act, holds institutions accountable for gathering and reporting information about crimes occurring within the university's locus of control (Clery Act, 2014; Final Rule, 2020). The Final Rule dictates that anyone who might be perceived as an "official with authority" to respond to an incident of prohibited sexual harassment must report such incidents to the university's Title IX Coordinator (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30039). RAs appear to be ideal mandatory reporters because of their proximity to residential students, the opportunities for disclosure within shared living quarters, and the number of RAs available per student. Despite the potential conflict of interest and liabilities involved in engaging undergraduate students in this type of work, RAs are still first responders to sexual violence, which some institutions have reconsidered in recent years (Mangan, 2021). The effect of this work has also been criticized, with scholars naming the vicarious trauma and role conflict inherent in student staff response to

sexual assault and other traumatic incidents (Crivello, 2020; Holland, 2019; Lynch, 2019). However, despite the explicit demands on RAs and their involvement in the institution's compliance efforts, their experiences with Title IX are under-examined.

Some researchers have evaluated how responding to incidents of sexual violence has impacted RAs; however, these studies have all been situated in the context of their efficacy “on the job” (Gill, 2020; Holland, 2017; Holland & Bedera, 2020). There is also a growing body of literature examining MR policy and its implications for the staff required to file reports (including RAs), as well as for survivors and the institution (Amin, 2019; Holland & Bedera 2020; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Holland et al, 2018; Mancini et al., 2016). Existing research about student perceptions, the effects of MR, and survivor experiences may clarify the nature of RA interactions with Title IX. First, understanding how federal and institutional policy directs the residence life organization is crucial to understanding RA interactions with Title IX response and policy. Without a clear connection between the policy mandate, the institution's or department's interpretation, and the protocol disseminated to staff, data about RA perceptions and experiences will be untethered and vague. Ideally, this review will help to contextualize other studies examining the impact of these tasks on RA wellbeing, and may ultimately reveal the ethical implications of peer response to sexual violence. Title IX's obligations for residence life can be summarized in three broad categories: responding to disclosures, mandatory reporting, and supportive measures. Each of these obligations and the RA's typical role in implementation will be discussed in the residential context.

Responding to Disclosures

Before an institution can respond to an incident of Title IX prohibited conduct, they must be aware that something has happened (referred to as “notice”). Notice in the policy language

has a complex interpretation, but generally someone must tell someone at the university that they were impacted by prohibited conduct before any of Title IX's obligations take hold (Final Rule, 2020). In your average classroom, advising office, or student affairs event, the likelihood of a student discussing a sexual assault is slim. But, RAs are living next door, available by phone, and are designated as crisis responders ready to help their peers manage conflict and emergencies (Blimling, 2010). They receive training to learn these response skills, including a wide range of tasks from filing a work order for a maintenance issue, to their mandatory reporting obligations under Title IX (Contrini, 2021; Gill, 2020). Federal policy identifies RAs by title in their list of Responsible Employees, and dictates when and how staff must respond to a disclosure of Title IX prohibited conduct. Literature about the disclosure process, the experiences of survivors and recipients of disclosures, as well as the typical RA response to such incidents may illuminate how residence life staff are fulfilling this obligation.

Disclosures in the residential setting are constrained by the policies and procedures dictating student and staff behavior, usually determined by the institution and housing department. Most agree that residence halls require strong guidelines for student behavior in a communal setting, but Hextrum et al. (2021) argued that housing policy is designed to “induc[e students] to give up their rights in exchange for greater state protections” (p. 463). The authors suggest that housing segregation, visitation policies, and demarcation processes are unintentionally exacerbating gender discrimination rather than remedying it (Hextrum et al., 2021). Given the disproportionate prevalence of sexual violence among college students (as opposed to non-collegiate adults of the same age), it is understandable that institutions feel pressured to respond to this issue in order to mitigate risk (Hextrum et al., 2020). But the

institution's unique obligations to its residential population also places demands on staff, and their role in the process of disclosure is worthy of examination.

Staff must navigate a minefield of challenges to respond effectively to a student's sexual assault disclosure on campus. Discussions of sexual assault in any setting are also influenced by broader cultural and social norms, and colleges are certainly no exception (Abavi, 2020; Holland & Bedera, 2020). Research included in this review has been limited to studies conducted within the jurisdiction of Title IX policy, which includes educational institutions receiving federal funding. Additionally, some studies of non-collegiate survivor disclosures in online settings have reported similar findings to the residential and collegiate literature available (Abavi et al., 2020; Branch & Richards, 2017; Harris, 2013; Rios, 2017; Stone, 2020; Webermann, 2021). A discussion of what we already know about the disclosure process, from both the reporting and receiving parties' perspectives, will follow to situate the discussion of the RA's response to sexual violence.

Barriers to support services exist on- and off-campus. Abavi et al. (2020) evaluated survivor narratives posted on an online discussion board to identify barriers that prevented survivors from formally reporting their assaults or seeking help from service providers. Several internal and external barriers to seeking help were identified among the disclosures reviewed from Reddit, and stigma was perceived as both an internal and external barrier; researchers recommended that mental health professionals and other service providers seek to address the stigma of seeking help in order to improve access (Abavi et al., 2020). In the higher education context, one study found that survivors were less likely to disclose to authority figures (including RAs) than their friends or other peers (17% of participants disclosed to an authority figure while 86% disclosed to a peer; Rios, 2017). Rios (2017) also included a caveat regarding the

measurement of disclosures; since so many authorities in university settings must report, it is not always possible to discern the motivations behind a survivor's disclosure. These ambiguities, when combined with a distinctly non-ambiguous policy directive for Responsible Employees creates conflict for those receiving disclosures of sexual assault as well.

By evaluating the experiences of disclosure recipients, researchers hoped to clarify the far-reaching effects of sexual violence, including the secondary victimization of friends supporting survivors. For example, Branch and Richards (2017) studied the process of help-seeking on campus by surveying a population of college students who reported receiving a rape disclosure from a friend. In addition, peer recipients of disclosures expressed consistent feelings of anger, shock, feelings of concern for the survivor, and a change in worldview, which affected the recipient's own sense of safety (Branch & Richards, 2017). These results suggest that the effects of sexual violence reach far beyond individual survivors, and that institutions may need more comprehensive services for secondary victims and support providers.

Similar studies with faculty members, who often express feeling underprepared for their Responsible Employee role, also illuminate the complexities of these interactions with students from the receiving end (Harris, 2013; Stone, 2020). Via extensive interviews and policy discourse analysis, Harris (2013) evaluated how the communication of the university's sexual harassment policy affected faculty perceptions of MR. Faculty and staff recipients of sexual assault disclosures highlighted several obstacles between procedural and relational norms in the university community (Harris, 2013). One participant explained that in the course of reporting a student disclosure, she felt torn between "navigating institutional reporting requirements and interpersonal ethics" (Harris, 2013, p. 72). Other participants expressed discomfort in upholding the policy mandate while balancing their obligation to care for their students and colleagues,

which has been a consistent finding across multiple other surveys of mandated reporters (e.g., Gronert, 2019; Jacoby, 2020; Harris, 2013; Rosenthal, 2017). Responsible Employees who are also students may struggle with their peer relationships with survivors; this special population's positionality also calls for scrutiny of findings within the existing literature that distinguishes between disclosures to "peers" and "authority figures." How the RA fits into these categories might depend on the survivor's relationship to the RA, their motivations for seeking help, or a litany of other unknown factors. With all of these complexities in mind, RA responses to disclosures of sexual assault have recently become a topic of concern among scholars.

Because studying an RA's real-time response to a disclosure of sexual assault would be impossible, a dataset of RAs' responses to hypothetical disclosure scenarios were included in a set of studies by Holland and colleagues. Holland (2017; 2019) surveyed over 300 RAs to evaluate how perceptions of the Title IX process impacted their response to disclosures. By examining the relationship between RAs' trust in the Title IX system and their subsequent reporting intentions, Holland (2017) found that RAs' beliefs about Title IX can impact how they respond to disclosures. Trust in the Title IX process affects how RAs perceive their role and how effectively they refer student survivors to appropriate support services (Holland, 2019). Holland and Bedera (2020) continued their examination of this dataset and found that responses to a disclosure of sexual assault varied along two continua: certainty and control. If an RA was unsure that the disclosure represented a policy violation, their confidence in identifying the disclosure as reportable and deserving of resources varied (Holland & Bedera, 2020). The degree to which an RA sought to preserve the survivor's autonomy also changed the nature of their response, with some responses "controlling" or "gatekeeping" access to services (Holland & Bedera, 2020, p. 1389). With these varying reactions to disclosures, survivors can interpret the

RA's response as a facilitator to resources and support, or a barrier to access. Unfortunately, a minority of responses (18%) reflected the "empowering" discourse, which appropriately recognized the policy violation and enabled the survivor to control their own access to resources (Holland & Bedera, 2020, p. 1392). These results show that despite clear policy definitions and widely accessible support services on campus, the policy does not always translate to practice.

Another study examined how the RA's response can support or obscure a survivor's access to on-campus support. Holland & Cipriano (2020) found that a response validating the survivor's right to consent also affects the survivor's experience in help-seeking. Individual RAs responding to sexual assaults are perceived as a representative of the institution; researchers noted that effective responses in these interactions "may also communicate that others will not disregard the assault," Holland & Cipriano, 2020, p. 626). Therefore, survivors may be more willing to use the appropriate services after referral. A grounded theory examination of survivors' help-seeking behaviors also highlighted the importance of the response of disclosure recipients. Because campus-based resources are significantly underutilized by survivors of sexual assault, DeLoveh and Cattaneo (2017) interviewed over a dozen survivors to examine their help-seeking decisions. The resulting framework highlights three separate considerations including an identification of the problem, a review of options, and "weighing the consequences" of those options (p. 70). Their model describes the sequence of decision-making in the help-seeking process for survivors and will be further discussed in the help-seeking section below.

After evaluating their data about the process of help-seeking, DeLoveh and Cattaneo (2017) suggest that service providers should practice reflexive communications that match the tone and urgency of the survivor. Overreacting, or escalating the perceived severity is sometimes

intended to show survivors that they are being taken seriously, but can have an unintended effect on their perceptions of such responses (DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017). Other ineffective responses to disclosures can also come in the form of “bad advice” or “controlling the decisions of victims” (Sabina & Ho, 2014, p. 218). The disclosure process itself is a meaningful decision for a survivor and university representatives most likely to receive them deserve effective training and support (Holland, 2017; Shetterly, 2018; Webermann, 2021).

Some researchers specifically addressed the role of RA training and how information received about the disclosure process can translate to their reactions to disclosures. Such studies suggest that an individual’s beliefs about rape myths or espoused feminist ideology can affect their response to disclosures of sexual assault (Abavi et al., 2020; Flynn, 2021; Holland, 2020; Holland & Cipriano, 2020). RAs may struggle to navigate existing social norms and myths about rape and sexual assault, despite policy-based training, which can influence their efficacy in response. Existing perceptions of what constitutes “real rape,” and how those rape myths infiltrate an RA’s decision-making process is a significant barrier to student support (Flynn, 2021; Holland et al., 2020b, p. 208). Flynn (2021) identified three categories of rape myths that were found to be relevant to today’s college student population, including: myths about the perpetrator, myths about the event, and myths about the victim.

Among RAs, the acceptance of rape myths revealed whether or not an RA is likely to appropriately report the incident, provide emotional support to the student, or refer the survivor to resources on-campus (Flynn, 2021; Holland et al., 2020b). RAs with higher acceptance of rape myths were also less likely to ascribe to egalitarian feminist beliefs, which also affected whether or not the RA provided emotional support and referrals to appropriate resources (Holland et al, 2020b). Failing to address these false beliefs about sexual assault proactively leaves the efficacy

of an RA's response up to chance: if they already agree with feminist beliefs, they might be better prepared to respond to a disclosure; but, if they agree with rape myths, they are less likely to emotionally and materially support that survivor, regardless of their training (Holland et al., 2020b). If an RA receiving a disclosure is less likely to perceive that disclosure as legitimate, or worthy of resources and reporting based on that RA's beliefs or gender ideology, then the chances of underreporting and noncompliance are greater.

In summary, an RA's efficacy in their response to a disclosure of sexual violence is influenced by their beliefs about sexual assault, their perceptions of their role, and their willingness to empower survivors to control what happens next (Abavi et al., 2020; Flynn, 2021; Holland, 2020; Holland & Cipriano, 2020; Holland et al., 2020b). These confounding variables at the individual level have significant effects on the survivor's experience, not just with their RA but also with how they perceive the institution's response. If RAs are unable to appropriately identify and refer survivors of prohibited sexual violence, they are likely to underreport incidents of sexual violence which puts the institution at risk for failing to comply with their Title IX obligations. More importantly, ineffective RA responses to disclosures are likely to retraumatize, isolate, and perpetuate harm against the students who are seeking their help. In the best case scenario, an RA recognizes the disclosure as a Title IX incident, and provides the student with appropriate support. But their obligation does not end with a brochure and a goodbye, RAs must also file a report with the Title IX Coordinator, regardless of the survivor's intent to engage with a formal process. MR and compelled disclosure policies are a popular subject of scrutiny, and I will discuss many of the contradictions in such policies within the university Title IX process in this review. First, I will discuss how MR affects the residential environment to set the stage for a

later evaluation of its efficacy and how such policies have been perceived by individuals in the university community.

Mandatory Reporting

Mandated reporting (MR) is a policy concept originating from professions such as social work and elder care, but it has been integrated in higher education for the purposes of student protection. With college sexual assault gaining national attention, it makes sense that administrators and lawmakers would be concerned about institutional liability and underreporting. Despite its generally positive perceptions among students and the university community (Amin, 2019; Mancini et al., 2016), many scholars have criticized this particular brand of MR in college settings (Gill, 2020; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Holland et al., 2018; Holland et al., 2020a; Marques et al., 2020; Shetterly, 2018). The theoretical disconnects between MR policies and best practices for responding to survivors of sexual trauma are central to these critiques, since experts recommend empowering the survivor above all else. Even with a supportive Title IX resource on-campus, MR policy still requires staff to act, regardless of the expressed wishes of a student survivor, by filing the report (Holland et al, 2018; Mancini et al, 2016). In the residential context, the institution's control over the residential student in many situations is already more complicated than the average commuter because of the contractual obligations in place between renter and landlord (Letarte, 2013). However, the exchange of service for control in university housing may not always be in the student's best interest (Hextrum et al., 2021). MR, among other practices dictated by policy and the institution at large, presents ethical considerations specific to the residential context that deserve further inquiry. Specifically, the hierarchical differences in staff among student and professional roles, the frequency and process of mandated reports originating from residential contexts, and insufficient

legal protections for staff engaging in the work of first responders are significant ethical concerns for this work.

While there is more literature focused on the effects of MR policies on survivors and perceptions among the general population, the residential staff involved are also important to consider. In a phenomenological study of their Title IX role, student staff articulated concerns regarding their conflicting priorities of care and compliance, indicating that even undergraduate staff are aware of the compelled disclosure dilemma (Gill, 2020). Even when RAs were well-trained about the types of incidents requiring a report, their decision about whether or not to actually follow through was impacted by their trust in what happens after their report, and their concerns about betraying their fellow student (Holland & Cortina, 2017b; McGhee, 2019).

MR policies require the first responder to a disclosure of sexual violence to make an immediate decision about what happens next for the survivor, which may inadvertently “also encourage first responders to control other help-seeking decisions” (Holland & Bedera, 2020, p. 1934). But, there is an unpredictable variety of situations that require RAs to submit a report to the institution, and significant evidence that RAs inconsistently follow response protocols when managing other incidents such as alcohol intoxication (Holland, 2017; Horvath, 2011; McGhee, 2019). If the mandate is difficult to monitor, and student staff are concerned about the relational harm, we need evidence that these risks are outweighed by the benefits of connecting survivors with their Title IX Coordinator. While there will be more discussion specific to the perceptions of MR among RAs later in this review, the theoretical and ethical conflicts of compelled disclosure will first be discussed here.

Several scholars, especially in public policy administration, have discussed the contradictions inherent in MR policies that allegedly intend to empower survivors of sexual

violence with agency to pursue criminal justice options (Amin, 2019; Holland et al., 2020a; Mancini et al., 2016). However, despite positive perceptions of these laws in the general public, survivors and those who understand the disclosure process more intimately (such as victim advocates) argue that such policies actually cause more harm (Mancini et al., 2016). Autonomy and control of their circumstances is critical for survivors of sexual assault; disclosing to what they perceived as a trusted resource (like their RA) and receiving an unwanted formal report can erode trust and agency quickly. MR also contradicts existing legal theory surrounding vulnerability and autonomy in seeking legal assistance (Mancini et al., 2016). Children and adults susceptible to abuse due to age or disability were among the first populations included in MR policies; however, college students are perhaps the only other population of legal age subject to the same level of state protection (Mancini, et al., 2016). Many argue (e.g., Sokolow, 2013) that the data show college-age adults are at greatest risk for victimization and, therefore, need more support via these policies; in contrast, others (e.g. Holland et al., 2020a) use a feminist theoretical framework to argue that agency and choice should be prioritized among capable adult populations. As no such policy applies to similarly aged adults outside the college environment, it stands to reason that the liabilities of the institution may have dominated the discourse in the implementation of policy.

Given these concerns about survivor autonomy, certainly there should be some evidence that MR has helped someone in the collegiate environment since its implementation.

Unfortunately, a systematic review by Holland and colleagues (2018) suggests the evidence supporting these claims is missing. Via extensive evaluation of university-compelled disclosure policies and extant research about policy effects, researchers found that there was no evidence to support the frequently cited assumptions underlying MR policy (Holland et al., 2018). Each of

the claims purported by advocates of MR policy was met by equally compelling evidence to the contrary; a hope for greater visibility of sexual violence was contradicted by the increased likelihood of a chilling effect on reporting where MR policies were in place (Holland et al., 2018). A general sense that reporting ensures that survivors receive support is also incompletely supported by the evidence; while some studies show that policies requiring survivor assent were perceived as helpful, others reiterate that legal, competent adults deserve the right to report their own abuse (Holland et al., 2018). Some claim that requiring all institutional staff to report can simplify the process for the university community; however, when they are required to report, RAs are not consistently identifying and reporting abusive situations per their mandate, even when appropriately trained (Holland, 2017; Holland et al., 2018). Holland et al. (2017) also found conflicting evidence that MR policy benefits the institution itself; while it may appear to insulate against liability, consistently inconsistent responses to disclosures and lack of discretion also create new liabilities. Without clearer evidence supporting the basic assumptions of MR policy, in that its design is helpful to survivors, the community, or the institution itself, it is difficult to support such mandates when the potential for harm is so apparent.

Overall, research indicates that MR policies are more likely to perpetuate harm, re-victimize traumatized students, and create barriers between students and their possible sources of support. Not all survivors are in control of what happens next after a report is made, and “deny[ing] independent, competent adults the decision to report or not report abuse can stigmatize and humiliate victims and perpetuate harmful stereotypes” (Holland et al, 2018, p. 261). Current federal guidance provides the Title IX Coordinator with discretion to initiate an investigation in the presence of an ongoing threat, even without a participating complainant (Final Rule, 2020). While Title IX Coordinators are also required by the Final Rule to reach out

to impacted students before filing a complaint without them, the discretion and broad authority of this policy allows institutions to act without survivor consent.

It appears that the new guidance released by ED in June 2022 has begun to recognize that these broad mandates are not effective; institutions may soon be able to require some employees to remain in the traditional Responsible Employee role, while others may be required to simply provide reporting information to the student (NPRM, 2022). Regardless, the institution's obligation to stop prohibited conduct, remedy its effects, and prevent its recurrence will remain central to the work of Title IX. A primary and fundamental pathway to achieving these goals, regardless of one's role at the institution, is the provision of supportive measures intended to preserve a complainant's access to their education. The role of supportive measures in achieving Title IX compliance is especially relevant to the residential environment, where a complainant's access is controlled by both the institution and the housing department.

Supportive Measures

With the heightened concern and attention focused on the MR process at institutions of higher education, other Title IX obligations for response (including the provision of supportive measures to restore access) can be minimized or forgotten. In a compelling review of federal housing policy, Cleary (2015) reminds institutions bound by Title IX that they have an obligation to respond in a manner other than through a formal adjudicatory process. In the residential context, survivors disclosing a sexual assault may be facing the reality that their assailants could have institutionally-granted access to their residence hall or live around the corner from their bedroom door (Cleary, 2015). Immediate, non-punitive supportive measures such as a housing assignment change or no-contact directives are required by the Final Rule, and must be equitably

offered to both parties, as long as the measure does not impose an “unreasonable burden” on either party (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30521).

Students must also be informed about the available support services on campus, and while that can happen after the report has been received by Title IX staff, housing also has a prime opportunity to connect survivors with those resources immediately (Amin, 2019; Manata et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the evidence shows that even RAs who were knowledgeable about support services and confident in the confidentiality of such services were not consistently referring survivors to these offices after a disclosure (Holland, 2017). RAs who had concerns about their Responsible Employee role were less likely to refer survivors to any services, suggesting that some student staff “are not convinced that the university should be getting involved with sexual assault survivors’ decision-making” (Holland, 2017, p. 38). This all-or-nothing approach to support services from the first responder role is a considerable barrier to access, especially for confidential support services that can offer mental health care and other interim supportive measures. Access to confidential counseling services can be limited, with higher demand for on-campus support than the services can meet; but, research shows that a “warm hand-off” from one service provider (such as an RA or Title IX Coordinator) to a university counselor can improve access, especially for marginalized students who mistrust mental health care providers (Webermann, 2021, p. 76).

Supportive measures must also be designed and implemented to “restore or preserve a complainant’s equal educational access,” without presuming a policy violation has occurred, but there are no other restrictions on the type of support offered (Final Rule, 2020, p. 30034). The timing of such services can have a significant effect on student survivor retention and success at the institution, even long after a report has been filed or an investigation into the conduct has

begun. Petersen and Ortiz (2016) offered targeted criticism of the expediency and goals of the OCR's investigation process for institutional Title IX complaints (which evaluates the institution's response to a complaint after-the-fact). While Title IX requires that the institution's response include stopping and preventing continued discrimination as well as individual remedies, Petersen and Ortiz (2016) argue that OCR's attention to the former comes at the expense of the latter. After a complaint is reported to the federal government, OCR investigations can last years, and individual measures are not usually available to complainants until the investigation is resolved. These large-scale challenges reaffirm the need for rapid and tailored individual supportive measures at the start of a student's report to the institution. The response of an RA, or the timely notification of a supervisor to assist in relocating a student, can be the factor that ensures a student survivor can remain safe until their options for resolution are fully explored.

Summary

Title IX policy dictates a variety of responsibilities for staff on campus, including those in residence life. While most employees receive training on how to implement their role as Responsible Employees, there remains conflicting evidence about the efficacy of these policies in a collegiate setting. Additionally, intra- and interpersonal factors affecting the implementation of MR policies in residential settings demand further scholarly attention. As a result, the implementation of these mandates in residential settings, where the majority of trained staff are part-time undergraduate students, can be convoluted and inconsistent. The implications of this distilled obligation are the focus of the following section, where I will review how Title IX policy shows up in residential settings. I specifically focus on research that measures the efficacy of policy mandates among residential students or perceptions and beliefs about Title IX among

the population of interest. My goal within the next section is to review how the literature illuminates the previously discussed theoretical concerns and evaluates the challenges that have come to fruition since the implementation of the Final Rule.

Title IX: Residential Practice

As discussed in earlier sections, institutional leadership primarily interprets Title IX policy, but the responsibility for responding to sexual violence disclosures typically falls to residence life staff for students living on campus. The 2020 Final Rule created new challenges for this process, as evidenced by public comments submitted concerning the potential chilling effects on reporting as a result of the changes implemented by President Trump's administration (Final Rule, 2020). Additionally, residence life involvement in Title IX via mandated reporting and incident response, has only increased in intensity with heightened attention to sexual assault in the college environment (Mangan, 2021). As a result, there are many implications of Title IX policy within the residential setting and several key areas are examined below, including: perceptions of mandated reporting policy among RAs and other residence life staff, the challenges associated with role conflict and vicarious trauma for these student leaders, and help-seeking via the incident response process.

Perceptions of Mandatory Reporting in Residence Life

A significant ethical consideration regarding the RA's role in Title IX response persists in the literature surrounding MR policies. Before delving into the literature regarding RAs' own perceptions of this work, this section will discuss the theoretical and ethical conflicts of compelled disclosure policies. Several scholars (e.g., Amin, 2019; Holland et al., 2020a; Mancini et al., 2016), especially in public policy administration, have discussed the contradictions inherent in compelled disclosure policies and laws that intend to empower survivors of sexual

violence to pursue criminal justice options (these arguments were discussed earlier in the *Mandatory Reporting* section). However, little research exists to examine the perceptions of RAs specific to Title IX policy and their perspectives are often muddled among other staff or they are likely hidden within samples for other general student perception surveys.

RAs as Responsible Employees are rarely studied, and their insights about policy and practice are just as unique as they are. RAs were the subject of a series of studies evaluating how their beliefs about Title IX affected their work with residents. Holland (2017; 2019) surveyed hundreds of RAs at a single institution to gather their perceptions of MR policies and evaluate their policy knowledge of Title IX. Testing a hypothesis regarding the mediating role of trust in the Title IX process, Holland (2017) found that RAs with positive perceptions of their MR role were likely to fulfill their obligations, and higher trust in their institution's Title IX Office enabled those with negative perceptions to also report appropriately. To corroborate these results, residential student survivors within Holland's (2019) site were also surveyed to examine their help-seeking decisions and why certain on-campus resources may have been perceived as inaccessible. Students indicated that they were most concerned about the potential consequences of a Title IX report, while lacking knowledge of confidential advocacy services, and just didn't think their RA was an appropriate source of support (Holland, 2019). This concern surrounding the appropriateness of housing staff in responding to sexual violence has been consistent in other studies (Amar et al., 2014; DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017; Holland & Cortina, 2017a) and is evidence that perceptions are translating into explicitly understood barriers. How these barriers impact service utilization by student survivors will be addressed in the subsequent section regarding Title IX access.

Role Conflict and Vicarious Trauma

Overall, a theme emerged from existing research about RAs as an agent of Title IX compliance: their positionality as a student first, and employee second, is often overlooked, minimized, or ignored (Gill, 2020). The challenges associated with balancing student and staff perspectives have previously been examined in higher education using a construct from management theory. Role conflict refers to the experience of balancing multiple expectations within the context of a job, such as RAs negotiating work and academic demands, or managing discrepancies between interpersonal and professional values (Horvath, 2011). The concept of role conflict in the literature may be beneficial in examining the RA's competing identities as student and staff in the campus ecosystem. Additionally, the positionality of the RA within the residence life organization may also be a factor in how student employees are expected to contribute to Title IX compliance and which support systems have been put in place for them. I will begin with a review of how the RA fits into the overall team and the downstream effects of the RA position on the students holding the title.

The RA's role in the residence life organization clearly affects their interactions with Title IX. While some scholars (Gerdsen & Walker, 2019; Letarte, 2013) have evaluated the institutional and administrative burden placed on student responders to sexual violence, as opposed to full time professionals, the humanistic impacts are less frequently examined in the literature. Decision-making in the residence life organization is generally unclear or omitted in literature examining student and staff experiences with Title IX; however, studies in this organizational environment sometimes indirectly reference or examine RAs' perceptions of Title IX training and protocol (Contrini, 2021; Crivello, 2020; Flynn, 2021; Gill, 2020; Holland & Bedera, 2020; Lynch, 2017a; Shetterly, 2018). The effects of these responsibilities (among

others) on RA wellbeing was also a common thread, which may signal recent attention to secondary trauma in the higher education context (Crivello, 2020; Laverty, 2020; Lynch, 2017; Maten, 2020). Still others (Amin, 2019; Gill, 2020; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Holland, 2017) measured RAs' policy knowledge, response protocols, and the perceived conflicts of MR implementation. Additional research examining RA policy knowledge and MR policies will be discussed in brief later, as they are much more focused on the employee role. In the case of RA experiences while responding to sexual violence, role conflict and vicarious trauma represent two key challenges to effective implementation of the Title IX mandate in residential settings. I will contextualize the RA role in Title IX compliance by reviewing what is known about how these responsibilities affect RA mental health and the balance of their responsibilities to their peers.

The balance of personal and professional for human-centered fields of work is difficult in the best of circumstances, yet in the residential environment, no one has the luxury of going home at the end of the workday and leaving it behind. Harris (2013) describes the effects of these missing boundaries as a tension between “relational and procedural norms” (p. 73). When student staff respond to peers in the context of a sexual violence disclosure, they must navigate the relational norms that typically dictate their community-building efforts and simultaneously implement the procedures from their MR training. As a result, the incident responder can feel like it is impossible to do their job as trained while caring for the individual in front of them. Gerdson and Walker (2019) reflect upon a similarly shifting boundary in their review of the tenuous nature of MR among graduate theater students. Importantly, these scholars (Gerdson & Walker, 2019) make a clear argument that a graduate student's relationship to power is too inconsistent to protect themselves from the very abuse they are expected to report to the

institution. Dichotomous expectations of graduate students also mirror the nature of the RA role as “student/teacher, novice/colleague, assistant/friend, responsible department employee/vulnerable graduate student” (Gerdson & Walker, 2019, p. 162). Meanwhile, institutionalization of these responsibilities across organizational hierarchies ignores the reality of the student staff experience. The very tangible impacts of incident response for undergraduate students deserve full scholarly and practitioner attention. Existing literature (Crivello, 2020; Gill, 2020; Lynch, 2017a; Lynch, 2017b) clearly delineates the path of vicarious trauma through the residence life organization and demands solutions to address its reach before it continues to affect generations of student and professional staff.

Responding to this systemic issue may require a non-traditional approach. Gill’s (2020) phenomenological study asked questions about how RA response to student Title IX crises should inform departmental decision making about selection, training, and supervision. The data collected, however, extends beyond the reach of better training. One participant’s interview demonstrated how the effect of Title IX response on the RAs involved is often overlooked: “[T]he mental toll that [mandatory reporting] takes on you is completely different..I don’t know if there’s enough resources out there for an RA who has to go through that and especially if they’re friends with [the student of concern],” (Gill, 2020, p. 130). RAs are aware of the tensions between the personal and professional, yet their supervisors do not seem prepared to attend to these challenges on their behalf. As Lynch (2017a) found, their supervisors are often drowning in the same pool of secondary trauma as they attempt to keep their student staff afloat. Within the confines of a live-in professional context, personal characteristics and environmental factors combine to influence first responders’ experiences of secondary or vicarious trauma (Lynch, 2017a).

Research into the effects of vicarious trauma in higher education is still emerging and has not yet addressed the dilemma inherent in asking peers to serve as counselors (Lynch, 2017a; Lynch, 2017b). Students who also identify as survivors of sexual assault, but are now required to respond to similarly traumatic incidents, may experience compounded effects. One study by Crivello (2020) interviewed RAs who also disclosed personal experiences with sexual assault; those who had the experience as staff and survivor shared that while they could empathize with their residents' needs, they also noticed a greater secondary traumatic effect. Despite evidence of increased need as a direct result of their job duties, RA access to resources has only recently become a recurring topic in other studies of general RA wellbeing (Contrini, 2020; Laverty, 2020; Maten, 2020). Still, the scope of most studies remains limited to mental health and stress or work-related adjustments rather than the holistic care of RAs as students.

Despite a severe lack of attention to the experiences of RAs as mandated reporters (excepting Holland's several lines of inquiry into the subject; 2017; 2019; Holland & Bedera, 2020; Holland & Cipriano, 2020), it is well-known that the effects of secondary trauma experiences over time can compound the harm (Lynch, 2017a; Lynch, 2017b; van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009). Repeated exposure to the trauma of others has generated critical discussion in helping professions resulting in a new construct to describe this experience and the tools to manage it: trauma stewardship (van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009). While student affairs professionals have latched onto these new tools, their application to RA populations in the scholarly literature has been limited to just one example (Crivello, 2020).

Studies of professional staff experiences with vicarious trauma make an effort to identify the student population's needs, and Lynch (2017a; 2017b) extended his evaluation of professional staff vicarious trauma to the RAs supervised by his subjects. A study examining RA

exposure to vicarious trauma resulted in a diagnostic tool utilizing the psychological criteria for secondary traumatic stress (Lynch, 2017b). Such attention to the impact of the role on individual student mental health has increased in the last decade; however, solutions are still very limited to individual RA characteristics or departmental recommendations for adjustments to training and supervision (Crivello, 2020; Gill, 2020; Holland, 2019; Lynch, 2017b). Limiting the implications of these results to the current parameters of the role without considering functional changes to the design of the position may exacerbate the issue or delay the solution.

The literature included multiple tangential references to the student-staff dichotomy and how it impacts the RA's experience on the job (Gill, 2020; Rios, 2017), but explicit research about this dual identity in regards to student staff wellbeing or in the context of crisis response is missing. One study examining role conflict among RAs responding to alcohol incidents with their peers is frequently utilized as the reference point for this construct, as it's cited in dozens of subsequent publications (Horvath, 2011). However, the transferability of this concept from alcohol intoxication experiences to sexual violence response may be cumbersome. Faculty and staff participants in studies of perceptions of mandatory reporting expressed similar concerns; in scenarios like a sexual assault disclosure, trained reporters are often unsure whether to "be a friend or...be an employee" and question whether their mandate is for the student's support or the institution's protection (Harris, 2013; Gill, 2020, p. 98; Stone, 2020).

Role conflict can also affect residents' perceptions of their RA and who residents turn to in a crisis. For example, a survey of 157 residents' perceptions of MR in residence life revealed that 69% of students who had experienced a Title IX incident would not disclose to their RA (Contrini, 2020). Participants in Contrini's (2020) survey cited a number of reasons for their hesitation to disclose, including confusion about reporting and a lack of trust in their RA. These

results suggest that the institution's reliance on peer labor for sexual violence disclosures is not only potentially harmful to the staff, but also may create barriers for student survivors who see their RA as an inappropriate source of support. Other studies (e.g., Holland & Cortina, 2017; Sall, 2020) cite similar findings about student perceptions of their reporting options; Holland and Cortina (2017) expanded on an existing model of barriers to help-seeking and contributed to research regarding the concept of institutional betrayal (Flynn, 2021; Sall, 2020; Rosenthal et al., 2017; Smith & Freyd, 2014). Institutional betrayal may be the key in connecting knowledge about survivor perceptions and the institution's response, which is often implemented by RAs and other student staff. Student employees who witness the actions and inactions of the institution from their dual perspectives may be experiencing this kind of betrayal more frequently. Existing literature has not yet evaluated if RA response to sexual violence and vicarious trauma results in similar experiences of institutional betrayal, but with a population like RAs involved in first-line response to such incidents, it is an important question to consider.

While the influence of role conflict and institutional betrayal among RAs is under examined in the literature, other studies of Title IX compliance suggest RAs are lacking support in their work (Crivello, 2020; Gill, 2020; Lynch, 2017a). Understanding these concepts and RA perceptions of their role may become helpful in identifying gaps and expanding the institution's support of their personal wellbeing. RAs are more comprehensively trained in what their campus has to offer students than perhaps any other role on campus, yet their access to support services for their own needs is unclear. The RA's dueling identities as both student and staff may be partially responsible for these challenges. In Crivello's (2020) study, RAs discussed a disconnect between their role in providing crisis support to others and their own mental health.

Other studies (Lavery, 2020; Maten, 2020) reference the insular nature of residence life work, which leads RAs to feel as though resources for their students aren't meant for them. These barriers can also create the impression that campus-based support professionals (such as counselors) are unprepared to help because they have not been RAs (Lavery, 2020). One participant described a concern about approaching a professional case manager hired for the department: "I do not know if I would feel comfortable going to her because I still feel like she works for the department" (Maten, 2020, p. 73). This barrier is especially concerning given the evidence of secondary traumatization within the RA role. Given the vast access to information and extensive training received, RAs struggling to access their own resources poses a troubling challenge for their wellbeing and the organization's efficacy.

Incident Response

There are legal and ethical implications specific to the role of RAs in Title IX compliance, especially given the frequency of litigation and the significant risks associated with a failed response. Letarte (2013) provides a strong legal analysis of institutional tort liability related to the incidents that RAs are asked to manage over the course of an average night. The decisions that an RA makes are not regarded as the choices of the average undergraduate student, but rather as a response by the institution and a reflection of their liability (Letarte, 2013). Unlike other first responder professions, neither the RA nor the institution have any legal immunity for actions taken in good faith to protect the students in their care. As a result, the institution and residence life organization places part-time student employees at greater risk for individual liability and litigation than the emergency medical personnel whom the RAs are expected to call for assistance (Letarte, 2013).

With massive responsibility placed squarely on the shoulders of undergraduate students who receive about two weeks of training a year, the institution appears to either be minimizing the potential risk, or overestimating the capabilities of their RAs (or both). To assume either of these positions puts both the student RAs and the residential students they serve in the crosshairs of a risky situation with limited resources for oversight and response. The obligations of the institution are not minimized or dictated explicitly to RAs, so it begs further investigation as to why residence life departments have placed all their bets on RA efficacy in sexual violence response. Case law also provides some context for the relationship between residence life and residents, especially as it relates to the safety and security of halls and students. Departments of residence life are effectively landlords and subject to personal liability expectations of any other housing provider as they are directly responsible for the safety of the facilities they provide (Letarte, 2013).

It's unclear how residence life departments perceive their student RAs: as part of their landlord organization, as student residents of their assigned community, both, or neither. Campus housing policies are rife with contradictions and struggle with a history of binary and separative requirements; these dichotomies are problematic in the context of gender equity initiatives like Title IX, especially given recent trends in federal policy to include a wider spectrum of gender identity and sexual orientation protections (Hextrum et al., 2021; NPRM, 2022). According to Hextrum et al. (2021), a masculinist state framework can evaluate how policy demonstrates the power of the state over students in college settings. Masculinist state theory addresses the ways in which maleness interjects in democratic structures and policies, such that men and women are limited to their roles as aggressor and victim, with the state designed to intervene for protection (Hextrum et al., 2021). Through this lens, Title IX asks students to “give up their rights in

exchange for greater state protections” (Hextrum et.al, 2021, p. 463). While definitely an unusual take on the nature of gender equity in higher education policy, especially in the context of residence life rules for students, this model describes the power that residents sign over to the institution when they pick up their keys. A failure to meet promised standards, or even the bare minimum of Title IX expectations, could be catastrophic for an institution. In addition, complete omission of legal protections for staff can implicate individual RAs who have been named as co-defendants with their schools (Letarte, 2013).

RAs, as extensions of the housing department and the institution, are trained to respond to student needs and initiate referrals to the specialized professionals available on their campus but, given these liabilities, it's unclear if that remains the goal. It appears that institutions have prioritized training their first responders in a way to avoid liability, rather than prepare them for effective response and self-care after receiving traumatic disclosures. A review of the literature examining how survivors of sexual assault receive resource referrals and the ways in which they engage with those supports may illuminate how RAs perceive their options and how they may also benefit from such supports.

Help-Seeking

The effects of sexual violence extend far beyond the reach of an individual victim or alleged perpetrator; the ways in which students seek (or avoid) help in a residential community can send ripple effects through friends, neighbors, and staff. In Branch and Richards’ (2017) survey, college students who received a rape disclosure from a friend shared how their experiences reflect this extended reach of sexual violence, including the secondary victimization of those supporting survivors. Participants receiving disclosures from friends reported significant effects to their own mental health, yet did not seek or receive the services of their campus for

support (Branch & Richards, 2017). These results suggest that institutions may not be meeting the needs of all students impacted by sexual violence if they do not make services available for secondary victims, including RAs.

If simply hearing about the sexual assault of a friend is enough to make a peer feel unsafe, then it is troubling to think about how repeated exposure to such experiences in a student staff role would affect one's perception of their campus community. Assuming that violence will continue to occur in this context and that the disclosure process is an inevitable part of the role of RAs, the institution's response to these circumstances must ensure that everyone impacted by sexual violence has access to resources. For the purposes of this review, I will include any literature about student access to supportive resources on-campus following a sexual assault in a broader category about help-seeking. I will also specifically address a theoretical model of help-seeking designed by DeLoveh and Catteneo (2017) to highlight the stages of decision-making a survivor may move through after a sexual assault. These studies will contribute to a greater understanding of how student survivors translate their knowledge of available resources to action when needed.

Most research evaluates survivor help-seeking across two categories: formal and informal resources, and the different outcomes of each avenue for student support can drastically affect student perceptions. Formal resources are considered those that include a reporting or adjudicative process either through the university or the criminal justice process. Informal supports are generally characterized as more survivor-centered, care-based resources such as counselors or advocates. Holland and Cortina (2017a) examined college students' use of and motivations for not disclosing to both formal and informal services. Their study included traditional campus supports available after a sexual assault (including the Title IX Office,

confidential Sexual Assault Center [SAC], and housing staff; Holland & Cortina, 2017a).

Expanding upon a prior framework, researchers found that there were two additional factors to explain why survivors avoided formal support services on their campus. Logan et al. (2004) identified four primary factors affecting help-seeking (*availability, affordability, accessibility, acceptability*) while Holland and Cortina (2017a) added campus-specific rationales to the model: appropriateness and alternative coping. The particular motivations for not disclosing to each office varied, with acceptability concerns cited as barriers for both Title IX and SACs while appropriateness concerns were cited as a barrier for disclosing to housing staff (Holland & Cortina, 2017a). Authors also found that survivors were much more likely to seek support among informal providers first, which is more likely to generate a positive reaction, and are more likely to report negative reactions from formal resources (Holland & Cortina, 2017a).

Research shows that formal support providers are often perceived as inaccessible or inappropriate for survivors due to concerns that their experience may not be considered “real” or “serious” enough, or fearing negative consequences for other circumstances, such as alcohol use (Gronert, 2019; Holland & Cipriano, 2020, p. 625; Nunn, 2018; Stone, 2020; Weiss & Lasky, 2017). In fact, an interesting contradiction arises when comparing literature regarding help-seeking intentions among the general population with help-seeking behaviors among survivors of college sexual assault. What they think they will do and what happens rarely align. Studies of the general college population show that despite positive perceptions of Title IX policy and resources as well as strong intentions among students to report hypothetical assaults, respondents identifying as survivors of sexual assault are the least likely to follow through (Holland, 2020; Newins et al., 2018; Sabina & Ho, 2014). While most broad-scale studies of student perceptions report positive associations with the idea of reporting, less than 5% of

survivors report to on-campus authorities and fewer than 20% utilize informal reporting services such as confidential advocates (Clay et al., 2019; Cleary, 2015; Holland, 2020). Much of the research regarding perceptions of reporting options with law enforcement appears to translate to survivors' perceptions of the on-campus options (Holland & Cortina, 2017a). Those who do connect with their university's formal reporting process often do so instead of criminal justice proceedings; these survivors cite a briefer investigation and adjudication process, better outcomes, and required trauma-informed training for university officials, not to mention the historical and structural barriers that marginalized people face when interacting with police (Brubaker et al., 2017; Dunlap, 2016).

Very little research has evaluated student help-seeking from housing staff as a bridge to formal or informal services; some studies in the residential or university context mention the RA in passing (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017; Jones, 2021; McGhee, 2019), but very few have directly assessed RA perceptions of help-seeking or resource utilization (Flynn, 2021; Holland, 2019; Holland & Cortina, 2017b; Lynch, 2017b; Shetterly, 2018; Webermann, 2021). Perceptions of RAs as a resource as well as the perceptions of students in those roles are under-researched topics in the literature. Lynch (2019) contextualized RAs and housing staff in an odd position related to informal and formal help-seeking. Housing staff have the familiarity and closeness of informal reporting options, but the obligations of formal resources. This leads to confusion when students seek help, because their expectations for support are not met and instead, they may receive a referral to a more formal campus resource that feels less trustworthy or accessible than their RA (Lynch, 2019).

Studies indicate that even though informal sources of support were more likely to receive a survivor's first outreach, estimates of actual use range from 0-17.8% among college student

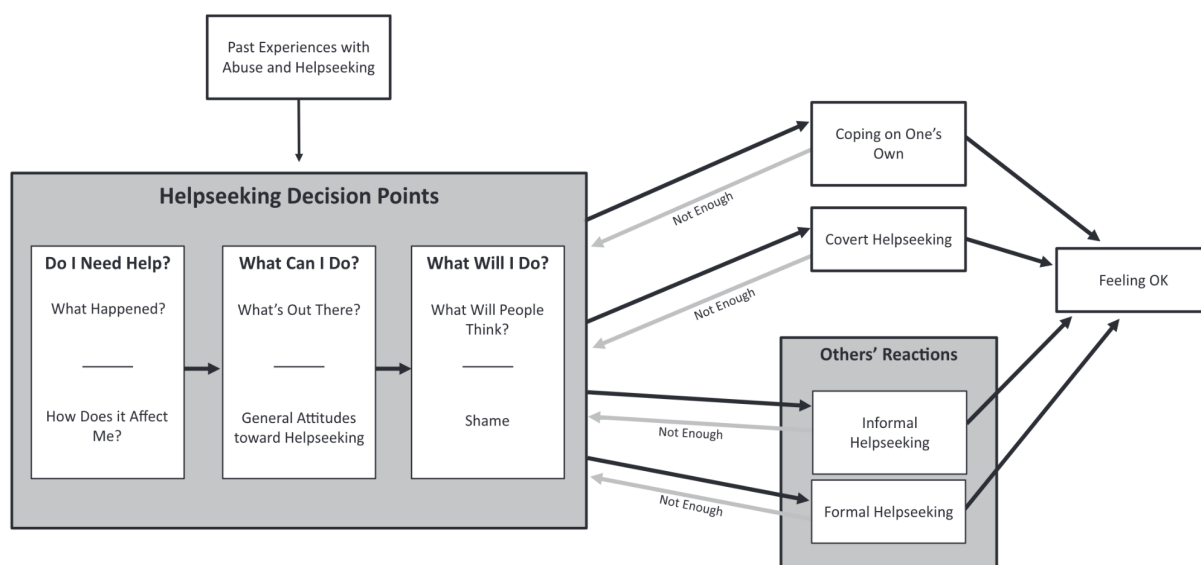
populations (Holland & Cortina, 2017a). Because RAs are likely to receive these disclosures and make some of those first referrals to support, their perception of these services and how they are communicated to impacted students is key. Some scholars are concerned that the RA's role as mandated reporter serves as a barrier to survivor access, given their closeness in age and maturity to the residents they serve (Shetterly, 2018). Additionally, the RA's role in incident response and policy enforcement can affect how students perceive their helpfulness; many survivors cite concerns about alcohol or drug use involved in their assaults and worry that their disclosure might trigger consequences for their behavior (Hellmuth, 2016; Rios, 2017; Spencer et al., 2017). Concerns that an RA may need to report their substance use for disciplinary action are reasonable given the policy enforcement responsibilities common among these staff (Blimling, 2010). These factors, among many others researched in a general college student population or among survivors more broadly will inform how access to Title IX may be inadvertently obscured for residential students. A summary of the evidence regarding these potential barriers to access will be evaluated in the following section.

DeLoveh and Cattaneo's (2017) *Deciding Where to Turn* model (see Figure 1) may provide a helpful tool for examining survivor decision-making in the aftermath of sexual violence. Their model, derived from a grounded theory qualitative evaluation of survivor experiences "reflects the complicated nature of deciding whether and where to seek help" (DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017, p. 70). This model identifies three sequential points at which a survivor must make decisions about how to respond to a victimization: *do I need help, what can I do, and what will I do* (DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017, p. 71). Decision making at each stage is mediated by past help-seeking and victimization experiences, and each choice to self-support or seek the assistance of others can result in a reevaluation of their prior choices to potentially make

different decisions (DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017). Each phase of decision-making also includes separate evaluations of the incident, the available resources, and potential reactions to the survivor's decision (depicted in the figure below; DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017). This model provides a helpful framework for the current study in structuring the evaluation of general perceptions of help-seeking options as well as survivors' specific choices related to the help-seeking they engaged in after experiencing Title IX prohibited conduct.

Figure 1

DeLoveh & Cattaneo's (2017) Where to Turn model²



Summary

In summary, the practice of Title IX is heavily influenced by the perceptions and beliefs of residence life staff implementing their mandates. RAs are peer enforcers of policy, and when it comes to sexual violence, this role is challenged by the limitations and liabilities of their peer status as well as the by the potentially traumatizing effects of their work. Without a clear understanding of how RAs perceive the campus resources for their own use, the risks of

² Reprinted with permission from the *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

vicarious trauma and role conflict within their response to sexual assaults are too serious to ignore. In the absence of a strong base of empirical study, the existing literature examining help-seeking on-campus or more generally among survivors can be a point of reference for considering how students may respond to experiences of victimization. All of these factors (policy, procedure, perceptions, and implementation) combine to either facilitate or impede access to supportive services. In the next section, I will review common barriers to Title IX access that may be applicable to the population of interest in this study.

Barriers to Title IX Access

Students who experience sexual violence on their campus are challenged by their circumstances and their trauma in navigating university resources. Research cites a number of reasons why survivors justify their avoidance of campus support services, and these factors speak to campus culture as much as or more than individual decision-making (Amar et al., 2014; Amin, 2019; Cleary, 2015; Dunlap, 2016; Hellmuth, 2016; Holland & Cipriano, 2020). If a student's rationale for avoiding services can be addressed in the design of campus resources, their procedure or protocol for response, or the institutional policy itself, then students who are doubly challenged by their trauma and the campus climate may feel more supported. Several themes emerged within the literature surrounding college sexual assault survivor help-seeking, and they are summarized in this section as barriers relating to policy knowledge, the perceptions of survivors identifying with minoritized racial or gender communities, and employment, stigma, or other harms.

Policy Knowledge & Perceptions

Before a survivor can put an institution on notice of prohibited conduct, they must be able to identify their experience as something likely to be policy-prohibited, or serious enough to

report. This requires an understanding of the policy itself and which campus resources are best prepared to respond to their disclosure. However, an “alarming percentage” of first-semester college students espoused attitudes that are dismissive or even condoning of sexual assault, even after completing university-mandated training (Hellmuth, 2016, p. 57). These results suggest that attitudes are more fully formed than previously expected, with additional outreach and education required before students enroll in their college courses.

A common discourse surrounding hesitancy to disclose was the idea that a survivor perceived their own experience to be less serious, or less deserving of resources and resolution than others’ experiences (Amar et al., 2014; Amin, 2019; Holland & Cipriano, 2021; Spencer et al., 2017). Holland & Cipriano (2021) define this as minimization, wherein survivors downplay the severity of their victimization because of perceptions about rape myths, or they employ minimization as a coping strategy to manage trauma. Concerns about a lack of evidence or other perceived procedural barriers were also cited by participants, suggesting that survivors are unaware of the investigation and resolution options available, some of which require no evidence at all (Holland & Cipriano, 2021). Policy discourse may also be a barrier since policy definitions rarely align with students’ own language to describe their experiences (Weiss & Lasky, 2016). As previously discussed, how a friend or first responder reacts to a disclosure of Title IX prohibited conduct can result in the survivor feeling supported (if the incident is identified appropriately and the survivor receives resources), or create a feeling of institutional betrayal (Holland & Bedera, 2020; Holland & Cipriano, 2020; Smith & Freyd, 2014; Webermann, 2021). Students may be unsure about who is a resource and who is a reporter, which can lead to an unintentional disclosure to a Responsible Employee; these circumstances are especially challenging for all parties involved (staff and student), if the RA must file an official report when

the student was only seeking access to confidential resources. RAs, given their relational closeness to students, are a likely group to receive accidental disclosure (Gronert, 2019).

Among RAs, their increased policy knowledge positively correlates with appropriate reporting behavior (Holland, 2017). However, consistency is an issue with no federal or state standardized training for Responsible Employees, leaving institutions on their own from a year-to-year and department-by-department basis (Holland, 2017; Final Rule, 2020). Without consistent and empirically validated training for Responsible Employees, those on the front lines of sexual violence response are left to their own devices and biases in responding to disclosures, and among fellow students, these are potentially problematic. Hellmuth (2016) conducted an analysis of the primary prevention training required by the Campus SaVE Act amendments. In a survey of over 500 first-semester freshmen students, researchers found that students who endorsed rape myths were also more likely to misidentify sexual assault scenarios and also not report those they perceived to constitute assaults (Hellmuth, 2016). The author argues that pre-college prevention strategies may be required to address rape myths and misconceptions before they become ingrained; this knowledge gap may explain why without additional intervention or education, students hired to be RAs in their second semester or year are just as likely to endorse rape myths and fail to report (Flynn, 2021; Hellmuth, 2016; Holland et al., 2020b).

Beyond policy knowledge, an RA's perceptions of their role in the university's response to Title IX affects how they and their residents perceive access to Title IX support. Six student participants in Contrini's (2020) survey reported concerns with seeking help from RAs after a sexual assault, and explicitly stated it was because of the RA's MR role within the institution. RAs who identified as survivors in Holland's (2017; 2019) study were more likely to hold

negative perceptions of their MR role, and their trust in Title IX's response also declined compared to those RAs who did not identify as a survivor. Since greater trust in the Title IX office mediated the relationship between negative perceptions of MR and effective reporting intentions, the experience of this portion of her sample (45% of respondents) represents a huge barrier to Title IX access for RAs and their students (Holland, 2019). It's not clear from the literature available why these negative perceptions among survivors have persisted, especially among RAs with increased access to resources and training. It's possible that they may have already interacted with the Title IX office and perceived a negative outcome, or have seen students they referred to the office struggle with the complexities of reporting and adjudication processes (Amin, 2019; Rosenthal, 2017). Additional research is needed to expand upon our understanding of RA survivor perceptions of Title IX to clarify which barriers are impeding their access and trickling to their interactions with residential students.

Experiences of Racial and Gender Minorities

In regard to reporting and disclosure in the criminal justice context, there is clear evidence that students identifying within minoritized racial and gender communities struggle to access support from law enforcement due to historically entrenched violence from the police (Amin, 2019; Brubaker et al., 2017; Rosenthal, 2017). Many of these concerns translate directly to the higher education context, especially with compelled disclosure laws between institutions and law enforcement becoming more commonplace (Holland et al., 2021). With this growing relationship between campus and police, student survivors may struggle to access any supportive resources if they are afraid their outreach will result in unwanted contact with the police. Several studies have examined how survivor perceptions of reporting options impacted their

decision-making, and the trends among racial and gender minorities are consistent, if not surprising.

The literature highlights a strong connection between institutional policy and whiteness, in that the procedures designed for responding to incidents like those falling under Title IX policy are not written in such a way to meet the needs of a pluralistic student body (Gronert, 2019; Hextum et al., 2021; Holland et al., 2020; Holland & Cipriano, 2021; Liebrich, 2020). Even more troubling, the surveys designed to assess sexual assault prevalence and Title IX services are often so flawed that minoritized populations are grouped, mislabeled, or omitted from data collection (Brubaker et al., 2017). Poorly worded questions about perpetration or victimization implied only one gender involved on either side of the incident and a limited number of demographic options all plagued the national surveys reviewed by Brubaker and colleagues (2017). These flawed sources of large-scale data are partial clues to the larger problem. One study found that only cisgender, heterosexual women in their sample correctly identified all of the services available in their Title IX office, while participants with minoritized racial or ethnic identities only discussed the office's investigative authority, making no reference to help-seeking or adjudicatory outcomes of the process (Holland & Cipriano, 2021). All survivors in their study, regardless of gender or sexuality, reported similar concerns regarding their access to Title IX services, indicating that some barriers may be felt universally across groups (Holland & Cipriano, 2021). Despite evidence of a system built for their needs, the straight, cisgender White women in this study still rarely accessed Title IX, suggesting that even survivors who "more closely fit social conceptualizations of an 'ideal' or 'real' sexual assault victim" may experience unaddressed barriers to access (Holland & Cipriano, 2021, p. 20).

Studies examining the perceptions of Title IX among individuals holding minoritized racial identities highlight the challenges and contradictions in our understanding of these populations. While one study showed that the prevalence of sexual violence was highest among Black and biracial student survivors, others showed that the majority of survivors of sexual violence are White (McGhee, 2019). Additionally, many of these studies disregard or aggregate data about intersectional sexual identities, potentially confounding the results (McGhee, 2019). International students are plagued by their typically fragile relationships to their new campus communities, which adds a layer of potential harm and isolation after reporting, as well as the likely influence of stereotypes about sexual violence among their families in home cultures (Brubaker et al., 2017). Research also suggests that there are differences among minoritized racial groups in their perceived access to confidential support services, based on prior experiences with health care providers, stigma surrounding mental health, or decreased availability on their campuses (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017; DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017; Harris, 2013; Holland, 2020; Rios, 2017). The institutional context of these resources and procedures adds layers of power and historical oppression that are felt by survivors holding marginalized identities and undoubtedly impact their help-seeking choices (Holland & Cipriano, 2021).

While some administrators may convey an understanding of intersectional issues in their work (Liebriech, 2020), the policy and history of Title IX are clearly designed to protect White, middle class women in the collegiate environment (Brubaker et al., 2017; Hextrum et al., 2021). Brubaker and colleagues (2017) evaluated the procedures and data from six national surveys of college student victimization experiences, and identified several structural and theoretical biases affecting the results. If studies gathered racial or gender minority data, it was rarely used as an independent variable in the analysis to make categorical findings (Brubaker et al., 2017).

Additionally, gender and sexual minority status were rarely measured or were omitted from consideration in the wording of questions included, such as demographic questions conflating sex and gender (Brubaker et al., 2017). Racial differences were minimized or ignored in the analysis; some cited equivalent prevalence rates among all racial groups despite limited analysis or complexity in the racial and ethnic data collected, or cited low sample sizes to excuse a lack of discussion (Brubaker et al., 2017). Authors also highlighted the power differential in students seeking support from institutional or community resources, which include concerns about help-seeking from oppressive agencies, anxieties about community reactions, and fear of perpetuating stereotypes about perpetrators with minoritized identities (Brubaker et al., 2017). Some research has begun to examine the role of gender in help-seeking and response to sexual violence among the RA population (Holland et al., 2020b) but we need further examination of how these barriers in the general population are compounded by potential barriers experienced by RAs.

Employment, Stigma, and Other Harms

Studies referenced several different concerns and harms cited by survivors regarding their help-seeking and reporting behaviors, representing an ecology of barriers and risks for students experiencing sexual violence (Demers et al., 2017; Fleming et al., 2021). Several of these mesosystem factors are perceived at the institutional level, which likely includes those originating in the housing department's role and response. Cleary (2015) reviewed a student complaint to OCR in which the complainant's request for alternative housing arrangements went unanswered while the investigation proceeded, representing the institution's "deliberate indifference" to the student's concerns (p. 370). Others reference the power dynamics of such disclosures and reports, citing concerns about holding a peer or entry-level employee responsible

for implementing the institution's intervention (Rosenthal, 2017). OCR appears to have taken notice of this issue, as their recently proposed rule delineates responsibility for MR based on the roles of the respondent and complainant; for instance, an employee receiving a disclosure from a fellow employee may soon be required to provide that person with the contact information for Title IX, rather than reporting the incident on the complainant's behalf (Rosenthal et al., 2017; NPRM, 2022). Prior research minimized the perceived effects of campus-level barriers and reflected existing beliefs that individual help-seeking behaviors are solely affected by individual factors (Holland & Cipriano, 2021); however, institutional culture and climate, as well as widespread beliefs about Title IX efficacy, have influenced individual survivor behavior.

The institutional context can also serve as a barrier to Title IX access, especially as it relates to how a survivor perceives their power relative to the institution's. One survivor provided a clear example of this power differential in that her internship was managed by the department's adviser, and this additional layer of control influenced her choice to avoid campus-based reporting procedures (Dunlap, 2016). The power held by institutions over RAs, including the provision of housing (and control of where that housing is located), food security through meal plans, and supplemental pay may be comparable to these circumstances, and are certainly worthy of examination. There are also valid concerns about the procedures following a report of sexual assault, such as survivors who call it "the second rape," which highlights the traumatizing nature of investigations and a serious barrier to access for non-investigative resources (DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017, p. 67). Experiencing that process first-hand from a prior incident, or hearing about it from friends or peers may contribute to negative perceptions about the Title IX process and decreased trust; RAs are likely to have more opportunity to perceive the

Title IX office in this indirect way. More research is needed to explore why RAs may report negative perceptions of Title IX, and which barriers may be influencing their personal beliefs.

Summary

While a growing base of literature has begun to examine specialized populations and their perceptions of Title IX services, the body of knowledge about perceived barriers to Title IX access is still quite broad in scope and rarely addresses specific groups vulnerable to prohibited conduct. Several consistent themes highlight the challenges that obscure this supportive resource for those who have already experienced a formal reporting process, those who identify within a historically marginalized community, or survivors whose ties to the institution hold more power than they do. RAs are just as likely, if not more so, to be experiencing these barriers to access, while simultaneously performing institutional Title IX compliance in their roles. Fears about retaliation from their peers, or their employers, are valid concerns that deserve scholarly attention and practitioner focus. If these barriers are not addressed, or there are others that have yet to be identified, then RAs are at significant risk for underutilization of Title IX support services when research already suggests they are experiencing sexual violence at a disproportionate rate (Holland, 2017; 2019).

Significance

The goal of this review was to situate the current research in the existing literature focused on RAs as agents of Title IX compliance, the effects of federal and institutional Title IX policy in a residential context, and how the complexity of Title IX policy and practice influence help-seeking behaviors. In this chapter, I have contextualized the federal guidance in the residential setting and discussed the variety of research that has examined components of the policy that are most meaningful to a residential student or RA. With an understanding of how

residence life has been integrated into institutional response, literature examining the effects of this mandate in practice provided a basis for understanding the impact of federal policy on students, student staff, and institutions as a whole. Specifically, I examined the existing research about the individual role of the RA and reviewed all references to Title IX responsibilities, perceptions, or challenges to summarize what we already know about these students and their interactions with Title IX policy. In addition, research about help-seeking behavior after sexual assault, although limited in the college setting, provides a baseline for understanding why students (including RAs) may choose to disengage with formal reporting resources on their campuses.

Overall, the literature discussed here has paved the road for this study to fill a content and methodological gap in what we know about Resident Assistants and Title IX. RAs struggle with their MR responsibilities and, when their personal beliefs about the policy affect their work, it stands to reason these conflicts may affect their personal experiences as well. Residence life departments are stuck between between policy-driven mandates for sexual violence response and their obligation to care for the students in their halls; much like the existing studies of faculty and staff experiences, it is important to understand how navigating this role conflict affects RA perceptions of their own institution and their sense of safety on campus. Most importantly, we have compelling evidence (Holland, 2017; 2019) that a sample of students who chose the RA role were personally affected by sexual violence at a rate more than double the average college population. If institutions are to fulfill their mandate and student affairs professionals are to provide adequate support to their staff, we need to know more about this discrepancy and ensure that access to a job does not supersede access to a safe, equitable educational experience.

Chapter Three

Chapter 1 situated this research in the dynamic policy context and climate surrounding Title IX compliance at universities nationwide. Chapter 2 provided an overview of the relevant literature and existing research examining the role of RAs in Title IX compliance and the effects of sexual violence and help-seeking on college campuses. This chapter will clarify the epistemological assumptions underpinning the study and describe my methodological approach to this research. As described in Chapter 1, my personal and professional experiences in higher education are critical to my interest in this topic, and are significant contributors to the decisions I made about epistemology and research methodology. The choices I made about research design were also influenced by the literature review and the methodological and content gaps identified (specifically a national survey of RA perceptions of Title IX and a qualitative examination of the experiences of RA survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct). This chapter will explain these choices and describe the foundation for this research study.

Epistemology

This study depends on the perceptions and help-seeking experiences of RAs to inform the findings, which are intended to create opportunities for tangible changes in campus policy, procedure, and protocol; therefore, critical pragmatism best describes my philosophical framework for designing this research. Given (2008) described how critical pragmatism has recently emerged as an addition to existing notions of philosophical pragmatism, which focuses on the relative nature of knowledge and the constant “flux” of social reality; critical pragmatism emphasizes “construction of reality as a struggle between conflicting discourses and competing definitions of the situation” (p. 161). The flexibility of pragmatic ideas about knowledge and reality combine with a critical lens to allow for ample possibilities for social reform and change,

especially in the realm of policy and political action (Given, 2008). In the context of a fraught policy climate with well-documented challenges related to federal, institutional, and local power dynamics, a critical methodology is also central to evaluating the structural and institutional effects of Title IX compliance on the population of interest.

The reality of Title IX policy and practice for myself as a researcher, for RAs as they interact with the responsibilities within their role, and for campus administrators responding to federal guidance is constantly shifting and evolving, which can result in a variety of complex views and perceptions. What one does with those perspectives also matters; pragmatists firmly believe that choosing the next action is more crucial than what has already been done, the future-oriented nature of this framework is effectively designed for community organization and social change (Given, 2008). In an area with differentiated power between government, institutions, and students like Title IX, critical pragmatism as a methodological tool facilitates a “moral call for everyone to intervene in public life and interrupt the uncontested flow of inequality” (Given, 2008). Critical pragmatism also begins to add structural elements to an understanding of social action and pluralistic constructions of reality; individuals are bound to interact in a social setting, but they are not constrained to the existing social structures within those settings (Given, 2008). They are empowered to act and change them.

These diverse, complex perceptions are precisely what I sought to measure within both phases of this study; a nationally-representative sample of RAs was completely missing from the literature on this topic, and very little Title IX research had amplified voices from diverse racial and gender identity populations. In a policy context, it’s easy to claim that there is a right answer, especially in an area like Title IX where the documentation of the policy process is so extensive; but as a researcher (and as a practitioner), I firmly believe that what our students understand

about Title IX is more important than what is written down on a policy document the majority of students will never see. As evident from the literature, increasing policy knowledge has contradictory effects on student disclosures of actual or hypothetical victimization (Amin, 2019; Mancini et.al, 2015); therefore, shifting attention to other individual factors on a large scale might clarify what is missing from our current knowledge about barriers to access. My experience in this work aligns well with the critical pragmatism paradigm, as the diverse perceptions of participants will create a unique understanding of the reality of Title IX practice, which may subsequently inform practitioners about hidden structural barriers to access. While I have professional training in both residence life and Title IX administration, my knowledge is distinct from the experiences of my participants, whose own interactions contribute to their perceptions of this policy. RAs' experiences with training, responding to crises, referring students, and reporting their own incidents are likely to be as diverse as the participants.

My positionality is important for the structure of this study, and was integral to the ways in which I collected and analyzed the data. As a practitioner in Title IX and a former residence life professional, my experiences with the policy and practice of Title IX compliance in residential settings have undoubtedly influenced the design of my research, and it's impossible to separate my background from the implementation of the research design. The steps I have taken to attend to reflexivity throughout the process of designing and implementing the study serve to address the problematic dimensions of my position and allow for successful qualitative research (Creswell, 2018). Attending to the influence of my beliefs, experiences, and values was critical in preparing for data collection and analysis to establish the validity of my results. My experiences and training as a Title IX investigator provided both background knowledge and interviewing skills to minimize partiality, which was likely beneficial to the research. It's

important to acknowledge that my personal experiences as a residence life supervisor have piqued my interest in this subject, as outlined in Chapter 1. My prior research experiences have also contributed to my decision-making regarding the study topic and research design; I conducted a similar exploratory qualitative study for a research methods course, but sampled a population of residence life professionals supervising student conduct work instead of RAs. The qualitative data provided by my colleagues confirmed my assumptions regarding RA access to university support resources, and suggested that measuring student perceptions may explain what barriers exist and why.

While the validation from my peers in the pilot was fruitful, for this study I chose to focus on the experiences and behaviors of the RAs impacted by the work and Title IX prohibited conduct. I selected a broad theoretical model of help-seeking to analyze the data so that the qualitative design and this flexible framework still centers the voices of my participants, rather than speaking from my own experiences or soliciting data from other seasoned professionals. DeLoveh and Cattaneo's (2017) *Where to Turn* model (outlined in Chapter 2) does not dictate if or how survivors should respond to Title IX prohibited conduct but uses grounded theory to describe the types of self-reflection that a survivor may engage in while responding to a victimization experience. This model was helpful in centering the voices and choices of the participants without judgment or seeking to fit the data into arbitrary boxes.

Additionally, the prevalence of prohibited conduct experiences among this target population was yet unmeasured; hence, this participant-centered approach has assisted with understanding the unique experiences of this student population and how RA survivors engage in help-seeking (and how their responses may differ from the general population of survivors reflected in the model). Critical pragmatism also prioritizes evaluation of "social processes of

inequality reproduction within institutions such as stigmatization, ‘othering,’ [and] marginalization,” which is crucial to understanding RA perceptions of these policies and practices within the higher education organization (Given, 2008). A critical pragmatist approach to this study requires scrutinizing the positionality of the researcher and participants, their experiences, and situating the study in existing political and historical contexts (including the complicated policy climate of Title IX in the U.S.). Thus, intentional memoing and reflexivity on my part as the researcher has been critical to evaluating the perspectives shared and identifying the theoretical connections between participant experiences. These foundational choices enhanced the methodological design selected and supported the development of both scholarly knowledge and solutions for practitioners.

Methodology

This study examined the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of Resident Assistants regarding Title IX policy and practice. The design of this study assisted in accomplishing this goal in a number of ways. First, existing studies (e.g., Contrini, 2021; Gill, 2020; Holland, 2017; Shetterly, 2018) are usually limited to single-institution research, while this study’s national sample may inform practitioners at all levels of the profession about this topic. Additionally, the experiences of RAs who identify as survivors of sexual violence was missing from the discussion; the sample of participants for the interview phase of this study addressed this gap in the literature. National prevalence data about RA survivorship was not available, but one of the few single-institution surveys of this population indicated that survivors of sexual assault may be overrepresented in the RA population (Holland, 2017; 2019). Survivors in this student-employee role may also have unique lived experiences to share about their role in Title IX compliance as

RAs, and those also holding minoritized racial and gender identities may already be facing additional barriers to support service access.

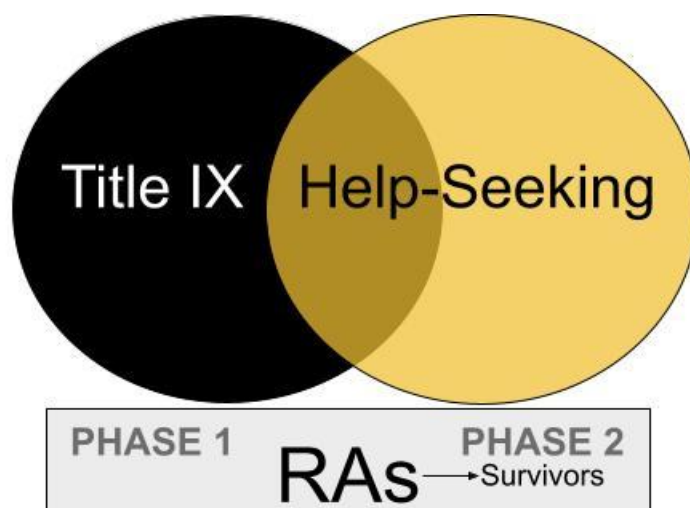
This study sought to answer the research questions below:

1. How do RAs perceive Title IX as both Responsible Employees and students?
2. How do RAs who have experienced Title IX prohibited conduct perceive their reporting options?
3. How do RA survivor perceptions of Title IX influence their help-seeking behaviors?
4. Are there differences in RA perceptions, attitudes, or experiences by race or gender identity?

The design of this study is outlined in the diagram below, with data regarding two central concepts (Title IX and help-seeking) examined in both phases, with the true focus of the research (participants) at the foundation of the study. The sub-population of interest in phase 2 is highlighted in the design below, as this group is a unique study population in the literature about Title IX policy.

Figure 2

Diagram of the study design



Several methodologies were implemented to respond to these research inquiries via a two-phase mixed methods design. In phase 1, an exploratory quantitative and qualitative survey was distributed broadly to gather RA perceptions and experiences with Title IX response, as well as some general demographic information about the participants and their institutions. Because this data had not yet been collected from such a broad sample of participants within the population of interest, an exploratory design was critical for evaluating and analyzing the results. Measures of policy knowledge as well as trust in Title IX services were adapted from Holland's (2017)³ study of RA perceptions. Qualitative components were minimized within this phase, but the examination of help-seeking decisions among the group of RAs identifying as survivors (compared to RAs not identifying as survivors) provided context for the in-depth analysis in phase 2. Personally identifiable information was not required for the survey, therefore participant confidentiality was ensured. Four sections of the instrument gathered data about the participants and their experiences with Title IX: demographics, Title IX policy knowledge and experiences, perceptions of policy and reporting options, and the categories of personal survivorship experiences (to screen for eligibility in phase 2). The survey instrument is available in Appendix A.

Demographic information was collected for use as independent variables in the analysis. Participants' racial and gender identity, their affiliation with varying institution types (public/private, location by region), their years of experience as an RA, and the types of training experiences they received in their role were coded as variables to explore the results of later sections of the survey. A brief analysis of their self-rated Title IX policy knowledge and their actual scored knowledge (gathered in their true/false responses to broadly applicable policy requirements) also contextualized their perceptions of the policy. Most importantly, survey

³ These items were adapted from existing research with the permission of the author (K. Holland).

respondents were asked to rate their agreement with several questions evaluating their level of trust in the Title IX office, and their hypothetical interest in seeking help from a variety of sources (including their supervisor in residence life, law enforcement, or their Title IX office). These sections provided the most opportunity for detailed responses; each question about help-seeking asked participants to explain why they would choose to disclose or withhold a hypothetical incident to each source of support.

Qualitative responses from the survey tool were open-coded with constant comparison to evaluate the general population's beliefs about help-seeking, and also compared and contrasted between survivor and non-survivor group responses (Creswell, 2018). For participants who volunteered for the second phase, this data was expanded via qualitative interviews to clarify their help-seeking decisions within the stages of DeLoveh and Cattaneo's (2017) *Where to Turn* model after experiencing an actual incident of Title IX prohibited conduct. The interview protocol included questions tailored to assess decisions at each stage identified in DeLoveh and Cattaneo's (2017) model (see Appendix A); participants were invited to discuss how they recognized their experience was prohibited conduct, their decisions while exploring options for help-seeking, and how they identified the choice that fits their needs to take action (or how they chose to avoid formal help-seeking options).

After completing the help-seeking section of the survey, participants answered a screening question to determine eligibility for the second phase. RAs were presented with a list of the categories of Title IX prohibited conduct and a linked resource providing the current definitions of each type of conduct (which I created based on current federal guidance; see Appendix B). If participants indicated they have experienced any of the listed types of prohibited conduct while enrolled in college, they were invited to participate in the second phase of the

study (approximately 40% of eligible participants from phase 1 volunteered for phase 2). To maintain the anonymity of the survey data, interview interest was collected via a separate instrument (collecting participants' racial and gender demographics and preferred email address only).

Participants who opted into the explanatory qualitative phase of the study provided their email address and were invited to schedule an interview on a rolling basis to facilitate representation across the survey participants.⁴ Brief analysis of the trust in Title IX and help-seeking decision sections of the survey data, particularly among survey respondents identifying as survivors, was conducted to inform the drafted interview protocol (the final version of this protocol is in Appendix A); an emphasis on help-seeking per the theoretical model was prioritized. Those participants who provided information for phase 2 participation received a separate email to schedule a brief semi-structured interview with me to elaborate on their experiences as both RA and survivor. Survey data for phase 2 participants was disconnected from their interview to preserve privacy and data integrity; only a few demographic and screening questions were repeated in the interview registration process to better describe the interview participants and allow for analysis related to RQ3 and RQ4. Interviews expanded upon the survey data gathered from the broader sample to improve the richness of the data available and increase the validity of the results via data triangulation.

The population of participants eligible for phase 2 was still identifiable via the screening question in the survey; therefore, some analysis of the research questions was conducted with both datasets. With the smaller, purposeful sample of interview participants, the assumptions and results from the broader sample and all responding RA survivors will be described in Chapter 4 and explored in-depth within Chapter 5. Variance in experiences based on institutional context,

⁴ Due to limited response rates, all participants who volunteered for phase 2 were invited to schedule an interview.

policy differences, training received, and years of experience in the RA role were also explored within the qualitative interview, but the depth of analysis was contingent on the overall sample I was able to recruit. The qualitative data added depth to the responses shared by the larger sample in phase 1 and explored the experiences of a unique population of interest for the first time in the literature (RA survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct). Participants have assisted in contributing to existing knowledge about survivor experiences and also in identifying structural inequalities that can be addressed to improve sexual violence response in higher education organizations, which aligns with my critical pragmatist approach. I believe participants have shared invaluable perspectives about campus climate, student employment, and Title IX policy in practice.

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected in two phases. Quantitative and qualitative data was solicited via survey from a large population of eligible participants, shared broadly to solicit a nationally representative sample.⁵ Participants who have worked as an RA (or in similarly positioned roles) within the last five years at a federally funded post secondary institution in the United States were eligible to participate. These criteria ensured that participants had likely received some type of exposure to Title IX policy as trained Responsible Employees within the recent policy climate. Specific location data was not collected in the interest of privacy, but regional affiliation within the areas designated by the Association of College and University Housing Officers - International (ACUHO-I) was included on the survey to demonstrate a representative sample. The size of the survey population was dependent upon participation rates,

⁵ Recruitment for participants was conducted via e-mail list-servs and social media pages, primarily those affiliated with nationally-representative professional organizations or specifically marketed toward residence life professionals. The resulting population included at least one participant from each geographic region of ACUHO-I. A full list of recruitment efforts is documented in Appendix C.

and recruitment in this phase was supported by large professional organizations (who have already funded this research).⁶ The survey instrument, designed in REDCap⁷, was distributed widely with the support of the ACUHO-I, and their regional organizations. ACUHO-I is the leading organization for professionals working in university and college housing departments, and has access to more than 17,000 professionals in the field (ACUHO-I, 2022). Additionally, the Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) provided research funding for this study and distributed the study to its membership, which typically includes Title IX administrators at the K-12 and postsecondary level. While Title IX administrators may not directly supervise residence life staff, they are likely to have strong relationships with the teams on their campus and provided another avenue of recruitment for this study. Recruitment materials were also distributed via professional social media networking sites, including any that had an espoused affiliation with higher education, housing, or student affairs professionals.

At the end of the survey, phase 1 participants were invited to participate in a random drawing for monetary compensation (supported by the research grants). To maintain anonymity of the data, participants interested in the incentive raffle were redirected to a separate data collection tool to participate in the raffle. Phase 1 participants were also asked if they have experienced any of the five categories of Title IX prohibited conduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence). This screening question was designed to create independent variable groups for the analysis of the survey data (survivors and

⁶ ACUHO-I research funding reviewers provided feedback about the design of the study but relied on the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to distribute the grant. Disbursement was not dependent upon incorporation of the reviewers' feedback.

⁷ Study data were collected and managed using REDCap electronic data capture tools hosted at Virginia Commonwealth University. REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) is a secure, web-based software platform designed to support data capture for research studies, providing 1) an intuitive interface for validated data capture; 2) audit trails for tracking data manipulation and export procedures; 3) automated export procedures for seamless data downloads to common statistical packages; and 4) procedures for data integration and interoperability with external sources.

non-survivors), and to determine eligibility for phase 2. Those participants eligible and interested in participating in phase 2 were invited to provide their contact and demographic information via a separate sign up tool; the invitation was clear that phase 2 participation was voluntary. A phase 2 sample that matched the demographic diversity of phase 1 participants would have been ideal; however, I am cognizant that survivorship rates among minoritized populations are typically higher (Brubaker et al., 2017), which may skew the eligible population for interview (and the resulting phase 2 population was relatively representative of phase 1 participants; see Chapter 4 for more details). All participants in phase 2 received compensation for their time.

Participants in phase 2 were scheduled for a 60 minute interview block, conducted via Zoom teleconferencing software, which was recorded and transcribed verbatim.⁸ Participants selected their own pseudonym to protect the anonymity of their data and any disclosed personally identifiable information about themselves or their institution was redacted from the transcript or anonymized. While the population of available participants depended on successful sampling of the intended target audience in phase 1, and the percentage of those participants who have experienced prohibited conduct, my goal was to interact with at least five and no more than 15 participants for phase 2 (six participants engaged in an interview). This sample population allowed for an opportunity to potentially interact with RAs from a broad range of experiences and locations,⁹ while maintaining a reasonable amount of qualitative data, given the time constraints of a dissertation study.

Analysis and Interpretation

The experiences of my participants were central to the research design and practical recommendations for organizational change was the goal; therefore, these considerations have

⁸ Audio recordings of each interview were sent to Scribie.com for professional transcription; this service was included in the funding provided by ACUHO-I.

⁹ Regional location was not collected in the interview registration process.

guided the development of my instrumentation and the analysis of the data. Open coding via constant comparison of qualitative data collected (in phase 1) influenced the final version of the interview protocol, as well as the data analysis with the theoretical framework. Each research question delved into the personal experiences and beliefs of the participating RAs, therefore, if and how their decisions fit into DeLoveh and Cattaneo's (2017) model guided my analysis. As explained in the prior chapter, this theoretical model of help-seeking behavior is the only one I found in the literature, and it does not reflect the specialized knowledge or experiences of college participants, or survivors with training and experience as Responsible Employees, such as RAs. The means and methods of how I analyzed phase 1's quantitative data are outlined below, and additional details about the qualitative components of the study will follow.

Statistical Analysis

Phase 1 provided a variety of opportunities for analysis with quantitative data; and many more potential avenues of inquiry still remain within the dataset collected. Measures of policy knowledge, incident response experiences, trust in Title IX, and willingness to seek hypothetical support from three common sources are all eligible for examination as dependent variables. Independent variables included recency in the RA position, years of experience in the RA role, perceptions of Title IX policy knowledge, incident response or training experiences, and racial and gender identity demographics. A brief description of the plan for statistical analysis of the data to respond to each research question is below:

RQ1: How do RAs perceive Title IX as both Responsible Employees and students?

- Descriptive analysis of Trust in Title IX measure (8 likert scale items with scores from 1-5, with some items reverse-scored; higher scores indicate higher trust in Title IX)
- Inferential analysis of policy knowledge (self-reported by scored measure)

- Bivariate correlation (two-tailed): How does RA self-reported policy knowledge correlate with their scored measure of Title IX policy requirements?
- Inferential analysis of Trust in Title IX measure by policy knowledge and incident response experiences
 - Bivariate correlation (two-tailed): How does RA policy knowledge (measured as a score of correct answers about policy requirements) correlate with measures of trust in Title IX services (measured as a composite score of several Likert scales)?
 - Independent samples t-test: How do an RA's experiences with Title IX incident response (measured as a dichotomous yes/no variable) predict measures of trust in Title IX services (measured as a composite score of several Likert scale questions)?
 - Independent samples t-test: How do an RA's experiences with Title IX incident reporting (measured as a dichotomous yes/no variable) predict measures of trust in Title IX services (measured as a composite score of several Likert scale questions)?

RQ2: How do RAs who have experienced Title IX prohibited conduct perceive their reporting options?

- Descriptive analysis of Trust in Title IX for the phase 1 participants answering the screening question affirmatively
- Inferential analysis of Trust in Title IX between survivor and non-survivor groups
 - Independent samples t-test: how do measures of Trust in Title IX differ between survivor and non-survivor groups?

RQ3: How do RA survivor perceptions of Title IX influence their help-seeking behaviors?

- Descriptive analysis of hypothetical help-seeking measures for the Phase 1 participants answering the screening question affirmatively
- Inferential analysis of the hypothetical help-seeking measures between survivor and non-survivor groups
 - Chi-square analysis: do RA survivor disclosures (yes/no dichotomous categorical variable measured by three help-seeking questions) differ from non-survivor disclosures?

RQ4: Are there differences in RA perceptions, experiences, or help-seeking related to race or gender identity?

- Inferential analysis of policy knowledge by demographic group
 - Independent samples t-test: do participant scores of Title IX knowledge differ by race?
 - Analysis of Variance (ANOVA): do participant scores of Title IX knowledge differ by gender identity?
- Inferential analysis of Trust in Title IX measure by demographic group
 - Independent samples t-test: do measures of Trust in Title IX differ by race?
 - Analysis of Variance (ANOVA): do measures of Trust in Title IX differ by gender identity?
- Inferential analysis of hypothetical help-seeking measures by demographic group
 - Chi square analysis: do help-seeking disclosures differ by race and gender identity?

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative elaboration was collected for the hypothetical help-seeking questions; responses to each hypothetical disclosure scenario were open-coded in Atlas.ti (qualitative research software) to identify trends and themes. A set of open codes was developed from the qualitative dataset to contribute to findings about the perceptions of all RA participants regarding help-seeking. Some anticipatory codes were developed in advance for a preliminary codebook, such as codes related to the theoretical framework, constructs evaluated on the survey, and each of the resources available in the college environment that were included in the help-seeking questions. In the process of coding, each participant's response to the screening question (regarding survivorship experiences) was added as a separate code, "survivor" or "non-survivor." These tags, in addition to the iterative codes from responses to the hypothetical help-seeking questions (such as "Police Climate," and "Familiarity"), contributed to findings for RQ3. Additional qualitative data from the interview phase provided richer information for analysis, specifically focused on the experiences of RAs who identify as survivors of prohibited conduct, and supported the findings for RQs 2, 3, and 4. The interview transcripts were also open-coded using constant comparison and integrated with the etic codes from phase 1 data (substantive codes) and categories derived from the DeLoveh and Cattaneo (2017) *Where to Turn* model (theoretical codes). Significant overlap between the data collected allowed for many of the codes from phase 1 to be used with interview data and vice versa; these shared codes connected the survey and interview data for overall analysis.

Because the focus of phase 2 interviews was survivor experiences with help-seeking and their RA role, new codes were likely to emerge as distinct from the overall survey data; these codes included "Employment Risk," "Resident Support," and "Trauma." Interview data and

resulting themes primarily contributed to the findings for RQs 1, 2, and 3 with information about the experiences of survivors holding minoritized racial and gender identities adding to the analysis for RQ 4. Findings and commonalities contributed to the existing theoretical framework about help-seeking and specifically addressed the relationships between RA survivor perceptions of Title IX, their work and training experiences related to their Title IX responsibilities, and their personal help-seeking decisions while navigating campus-based resources after an experience of prohibited conduct.

I reviewed the validity of the codebook after each transcript was coded, by analyzing individual code densities and co-occurrences between similar themes. Highly populated codes were reviewed and individual quotations were double-checked to ensure that the selected codes were appropriate and none were omitted or redundant. Additionally, as I coded each interview transcript, I identified codes or themes that did not appear to be used frequently, and tested their relevance through a review of low-density codes in Atlas.ti. A code co-occurrence table was created to ensure that quotations with other similar themes tagged would include these low-density codes if appropriate (such as the co-occurrence of “Barriers to Report” and “Employment Risk”). The co-occurrence table was also crucial for identifying key quotes to include as evidence of the themes discussed in the findings.

Network mapping was implemented as another tool to analyze the data as code densities shifted for each completed transcript. With such a significant list of codes, and many complex interrelationships possible from the data, I focused on analyzing the most dense and the most directly relevant to the research questions in the network mapping phase (see Chapter 5 for the resulting map). Selecting codes with data particularly relevant to the research questions was significant, as some themes emerged with very little discussion across multiple interviews. For

example, Ash identified his concerns with residence life culture as a primary barrier to his access to resources, but Hermione found that the lack of information from Title IX eroded trust with RAs. Both of these constructs are related yet different issues impeding RA access to Title IX services. Some of these less frequent, but more explicitly related themes were included in the findings and network mapping in lieu of more densely populated themes, which were less meaningful to answer the research questions.

Throughout the interviewing and coding processes, I reflected on the data analysis in memos to note any emerging trends and themes that might warrant further investigation. My memos assisted with evaluation of the data in regards to the research questions, and also guided the both code development and assessment of high- or low-density codes in the data. Findings were selected for further analysis as they emerged, and were prioritized as themes repeated across multiple interviews or sources (including the help-seeking survey data). The sample size for interviews was relatively small; therefore it seemed important to carefully avoid possibly false or misleading conclusions based on only one participant's perspective. Ideally, the overarching findings will include representative data from multiple participants. All 5 of the practical and scholarly implications were derived from evidence garnered from all participants; other trends or interesting considerations were noted for potential future research in Chapter 5.

Validity

The validity of the survey tool was crucial to accomplishing the goal of the study: measuring perceptions of Title IX policy and practice among a national sample of RAs. The construct of choice was selected from the literature and focused on the role of trust in utilizing campus-based support services; policy knowledge and trust measures on the survey have been adapted from existing research to increase construct validity via convergence (Heale &

Twycross, 2015; Holland, 2017). While policy knowledge scores were not integral to answering the study's research questions, they provide context as to how RAs perceive their own awareness of Title IX and may be an important tool for considering the validity of other responses. If a participant with many years of RA experience never responded to a Title IX incident and had a low policy knowledge score indicating limited understanding of what the policy requires, their perceptions of Title IX services may be skewed.¹⁰ Questions measuring trust in Title IX services were directly adapted from Holland's (2017) survey and were used in conjunction with hypothetical help-seeking questions to evaluate how RAs felt about Title IX and using their services for their own needs. Adapting existing survey questions increases the criterion validity of the survey tool and allowed for some direct comparison between this national sample and Holland's (2017) site-specific survey (Heale & Twycross, 2015).

The subject matter presented a validity concern, especially as it relates to the interview participants. While I was especially careful in the interview protocol instructions to remind participants that they need not discuss the details of their victimization experiences, some chose to disclose specific experiences when discussing the impact of the incident. Other potential participants may have been hesitant to discuss the subject matter at all, which is why participation in phase 2 was voluntary and participants were permitted to stop the interview at any time. The compensation available for participation in phase 2 was minimized (\$50) so as not to create undue influence in the decision-making process for respondents choosing to opt-in.

Participants' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences regarding Title IX and their own help-seeking after experiencing prohibited conduct were central to this research, therefore, participants were able to fully participate without disclosing any personal information they did

¹⁰ In fact, participant self-rated and scored measures of policy knowledge were not significantly correlated, indicating that participant knowledge of Title IX policy was likely skewed positively in their self-assessment.

not wish to disclose. The research environment and lack of personal information connected to the interview data were intentionally designed to facilitate open and honest communication to support validity, including active listening and member-checking in the conversation.

Participants in the interview were asked to select a pseudonym (with the researcher's assistance to ensure unique pseudonyms were selected) to protect their privacy on the transcript of the recorded interview. Participants were informed that the audio recording (with pseudonym only) was to be transcribed and that all other recording data would be deleted after transcription.¹¹ Each participant was invited to participate in an additional member checking exercise, by receiving a copy of the resulting transcript of their interview and submitting written corrections or addenda.

The timing of the study may affect the validity of the results, in a number of ways. First, the study was approved to proceed in early Spring 2023, which can be a difficult time for current students to engage in research. While recent graduates (within five years) may be eligible to participate, a representative population including current students and current RAs was ideal. 33% of the phase 2 population indicated that they were still enrolled at their undergraduate institution, meaning that current students were the minority of the study population. Additionally, the Title IX policy climate has shifted significantly over the past two years, and is still in the process of shifting with proposed rules still pending until May 2023. These inconsistencies in policy standards were likely to translate to inconsistencies in policy knowledge and experiences with Title IX across the study population. When relevant to help-seeking decisions, the shifting policy context might be examined in-depth via the qualitative interviews with RA survivors.

¹¹ Recordings from Zoom interviews were saved to the researcher's university-issued computer, rather than the cloud, and deleted permanently after transcripts were reviewed by participants.

The sampling of participants for phase 2, while purposeful via the screening tool in the survey, was also a potential validity concern (Maxwell, 2013). Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, there may have been eligible participants who were hesitant to volunteer for an in-depth interview. Participants still employed by their institution, students involved in a grievance process with their institution or the Office of Civil Rights, or folks with individual challenges such as lingering trauma responses related to their experiences of prohibited conduct may have been less likely to volunteer. Conversely, some participants may have been eager to discuss this topic with an unknown researcher. The sample population for phase 2 was relatively demographically representative of the overall survey population, but is still not likely representative of the real population of student survivors who served as RAs. While efforts were made in the sampling process to increase representation across the length of the survey collection timeline, the privacy of the interview sign up process was prioritized.

The size of the sample population was also a potential threat to validity. While efforts were made to distribute the information widely to all potentially eligible participants, there was no way to ensure a particular sample size for phase 1 or phase 2. The acquired population of phase 2 participants may not have reached representativeness or saturation of the data. Acknowledging this limitation throughout data analysis was critical for contextualizing the findings and for potential replication efforts in future research. Support from ACUHO-I and other organizations in distributing information and recruiting participants may have also been a double-edged sword for the validity of the results. While lending credibility, it might have also presented a challenge if some participants did not wish to participate in a study with such ties to the housing profession. Other participants may have chosen not to participate in a study that was distributed by their housing or Title IX staff; I believe that recruitment among recent graduates

also trickled down toward current students and that such informal sources of recruitment increased participation. Additional bias may appear in the sampling process with an increased likelihood of participants holding extreme beliefs about Title IX or their RA experiences (positive or negative) choosing to respond.

My bias and reflexivity in this process was also a risk to the validity of the study. I sought to enter this research experience with minimal assumptions about the potential results, and the expectation to learn more from my participants. Several strategies (memoing, member checking, triangulation) were employed throughout the research process to engage in reflexivity and support the validity of my findings, while the discourse process in my qualitative components was intended to facilitate stronger social constructions of knowledge in this area. I designed this study and research questions based on personal experiences as a professional in residence life and Title IX. While I chose to center the voices of my participants, it was also an intentional decision to de-center myself and create space for ongoing reflexivity and researcher mindfulness. Some of my assumptions about this topic held true in the data, while other findings were a surprise. By choosing a research design that minimized the role of my assumptions or hypotheses about the findings, I believe the validity of the results has improved through the research process. I selected a methodological and content gap in the literature to ensure that our profession can learn and improve access to services regardless of the results.

Research Ethics

The sensitive nature of the topic of sexual violence and the personal impacts of these experiences presented significant challenges related to the ethics of my research. Considering the risks to my participants was critical to an effective study. High standards for confidentiality and participant privacy were necessary to create a research environment where honest experiences

could be shared, and this priority in the research process safeguarded the integrity and validity of the results. These concerns were addressed in the design of the study, the process of informed consent, and my communications with participants throughout their engagement in research activities. This section will review some of the adjustments and accommodations made throughout the study to protect privacy and confidentiality, and ensure minimal risk to participants.

All participants received and affirmed their informed consent via a study information sheet detailing the purpose of the study, their role, and the risks or benefits of participation prior to beginning the survey. The informed consent included details about phase 2, even if not all survey respondents were eligible to participate. While none of the research participants were required to disclose personally identifiable information such as their name or institutional affiliation, it is reasonable to assume that some may have been concerned about my positionality as a Title IX Investigator and full-time professional in higher education. Despite this risk, there were no personal or professional conflicts of interest apparent in the study design that would jeopardize the validity of the results. Because the study was limited to participants who have held an RA role within the last five years, the eligible population excludes any student employees that I directly supervised in my prior residence life roles.

Participation in either phase of the research study was voluntary and participants were able to exit the survey tool or conclude the interview at any time; incomplete phase 1 surveys were entirely or partially omitted from the final dataset.¹² Participants who were eligible to participate in phase 2 were required to choose to participate by submitting their response via a

¹² Some participants provided incomplete responses to the survey which still included a majority of scored items; where a participant's survey included all required components for a particular analysis, their response was included. This resulted in variance between sample sizes across the analyses for research questions, but preserved as much of the dataset as possible.

disconnected survey instrument. These design choices demonstrated respect for participant autonomy and the importance of informed consent in a study about a sensitive topic (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [Belmont Report], 1979). Survey instructions and the interview protocol clearly delineated participant rights and options for completing or opting out of the research study. The survey instrument was designed to collect a minimal amount of information about student institutional experiences and affiliations so that individual data cannot be traced to a specific college or department. Personally identifiable information about the student was not collected at any stage of the study, which reflects optimal conditions for participant privacy. Because the subject matter is deeply personal and may have caused discomfort in disclosing information about sexual violence experiences, research funding was solicited to offer compensation via random drawing for phase 1 participants and additional compensation for all interview participants. Financial incentives were minimized to ensure they did not create undue influence in the participants' decisions to participate.

The principle of beneficence in ethical research was also important to consider when discussing sexual violence and student experiences. Participants in phase 1 were not asked to discuss any personal experiences with sexual violence and instead were asked to answer hypothetical questions to assess their perceptions. Participants in Phase 2 were asked about their personal experiences in responding to a victimization experience, but were not asked to provide detail about any traumatic incidents. First of all, while a person's specific experiences may impact their own response to a traumatic event, the details of the experience were unnecessary to gain an understanding of the effects and their response to traumatic incidents in an effort to seek help on campus. Secondly, in a semi-structured interview utilizing trauma-informed strategies

(open-ended, non-judgmental questions, allowing ample time for breaks), the general flow of the conversation had been prepared in advance, but participants were leading the discussion. Any question the participant was uncomfortable answering was skipped and participants were informed that the interview could end at any time. The potential benefits to our knowledge about RAs as a distinct population of students served by Title IX and the likely contributions to best practice for residence life and Title IX administrators were important goals. Participants may have perceived the opportunity to be involved in this research as worthwhile despite the possible distress involved in discussing their experiences. With my best efforts to preserve autonomy and minimize harm, I hope that participants felt motivated to share their knowledge and beliefs about this subject.

This study is explicitly designed to address issues related to inequity in access to civil rights protections in a university setting, which is inherently tied to ideas of justice in research ethics. The existing literature about who is most impacted by sexual violence on college campuses, who is able to and afraid to access supportive resources, and whose voices are missing from this conversation contributed to the design of this study. I hoped that potential participants who learned of this research would feel seen and validated for the knowledge they had to offer and would choose to share those experiences with me in an effort to improve the services available to their peers and future students alike. What we know about sexual violence on campus has already identified structural inequities for students from marginalized communities, and within this population of trained student leaders, we may learn more about these barriers and their potential solutions. Administrators engaged in this work are generally passionate and dedicated to the ideals of equal access and ensuring a nondiscriminatory learning environment; thus, this new data, and the analysis with a critical pragmatist lens, ideally provides such

practitioners with tangible, realistic steps to take toward improving equity and access on their own campuses. It is my hope that even in the absence of statistically significant findings, participants who shared their time with me via the survey or interview have felt heard and that their feelings about these victimization experiences have been validated (perhaps for the first time). The consequences of continuing to engage in this important work on campuses across the country without seeking to understand the needs of RAs are too serious to ignore.

Chapter Four

This chapter will describe the data collected, the analytical steps taken to answer the research questions, and the results of those analyses. I will provide a higher level overview of results from the survey instrument, how I transformed the survey data into variables for analysis, and the specific data analyses conducted (both quantitative and qualitative) in an effort to answer the proposed research questions. The interpretation of these results and potential implications for the profession, as well as future research, will be discussed within Chapter 5.

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 70 participants opened the survey instrument to respond; 44 participants completed all questions through the screening item at the end. An additional four participants provided responses to a majority of scored items; these participants stopped the survey before responding to the hypothetical help-seeking questions and screening question for the second phase. Partial responses including all scored items were included in the analysis for some research questions.

Demographics

Participants represented a range of racial and gender identities, reflected in Table 1.

Table 1***Racial and Gender Demographics of Survey Respondents***

Racial demographics of survey respondents								
American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	White	International	Other/ Not Listed	Hispanic/ Latine	Not Hispanic/ Latine
2	3	7	1	50	2	1	8	2
Gender demographics of survey respondents								
Agender	Genderqueer/ Genderfluid	Man	Non-binary	Questioning or unsure	Transgender	Two-spirit	Woman	Other/ Not Listed
1	3	19	8	2	3	0	35	0

Note: The racial and gender demographic questions on the survey allowed participants to select as many identifiers as they would like; therefore, individuals with multiple identifiers selected will be counted for each selection. All collected demographics are included, even if the participant did not complete the full survey.

With a critical pragmatist framework in mind, the racial and gender demographic data were transformed for analysis to reflect comparative groups. Title IX exists solely in a United States context, which is heavily influenced by cultural norms relating to race, gender, and sexuality (Brubaker et al., 2017). Demographic groups for this study were selected to reflect how power and privilege is distributed in this context, with non-White identifying participants compared to White counterparts for analyses involving race. Gender was consolidated into three categories: women, men, and transgender or gender non-conforming (TGNC) participants. These categories were similarly selected to account for the distribution of power between gender groups and specifically in the history of Title IX policy (Hextrum et al., 2021).

Participants also provided some data about their undergraduate institution and RA experiences. Their graduation year was a required component of eligibility to ensure they had recent experience with Title IX within a similar policy climate. The breakdown of this demographic is outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Graduation Year of Survey Respondents

Grad Year	Not eligible	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 or Still Enrolled
No. of Respondents	2	5	7	7	7	8	12	14

A majority (69%) of respondents indicated that they attended a public institution of higher education while 31% indicated they attended a private institution. Participants also identified the region in which their undergraduate institution is located, as reflected in Table 3 below.

Table 3***Regional Affiliation of Survey Respondents***

ACUHO-I Region	Locations Included	Number of Respondents
AIMHO	Arizona Nevada Colorado New Mexico Idaho Utah Montana Wyoming	3
GLACUHO	Illinois Michigan Indiana Ohio	7
MACUHO	Delaware New Jersey D.C. Pennsylvania Maryland West Virginia	8
NEACUHO	Connecticut New York Maine Rhode Island Massachusetts Vermont New Hampshire	12
NWACUHO	Alaska Washington Oregon	1
SEAHO	Alabama Mississippi Florida North Carolina Georgia South Carolina Kentucky Tennessee Louisiana Virginia	17
SWACUHO	Arkansas Texas Oklahoma	5
UMR-ACUHO	Iowa Nebraska Kansas North Dakota Minnesota South Dakota Missouri Wisconsin	5
WACUHO	California Hawaii	2

Note: Some regions include locations in Canada, which are not subject to Title IX requirements, so these areas were excluded from the survey.

RA Experiences

Participants also described their relative experience in the RA role, by indicating how long they have held the position at their undergraduate institution. Six participants reported that they served as an RA for less than an academic year, while the remainder indicated that they held the position for at least one year. Twenty-eight (28) participants indicated that they have served for less than three years, but more than one, and the remaining 24 participants indicated they have held the RA position for more than three years. Nearly all participants indicated that their RA experiences included training focused on Title IX responsibilities (two respondents selected that they were not sure). Eighteen (18) RAs indicated that they did not respond to an incident of Title IX prohibited conduct while serving in their role, while 38 indicated that they have responded to Title IX incidents (three were unsure). Forty (40) participants indicated that they filed a report with Title IX as a result of an incident response experience; some of these participants may have also filed a report with Title IX as a result of their own experiences with Title IX prohibited conduct, even if they did not respond to incidents while on the job.

Title IX Policy Knowledge

Respondents rated their own knowledge of their institution's Title IX policy on a four-point scale (very limited understanding, somewhat understand, mostly understand, completely understand). Only nineteen participants rated themselves on the lower half of the scale, while 10 of the remaining forty indicated that they "completely understand" their institution's policy. This self-assessment was immediately tested, with a 10-item true/false measure of Title IX policy constructs, adapted from recent federal policy guidelines (and Holland's 2017 instrument; see Appendix A). These items asked participants to determine whether the statements about policy were true or false such as, "a student who reports an

experience of sexual misconduct can decline to participate in the investigation process,” and “the Title IX office cannot respond to anonymous reports of sexual misconduct.” Participants received a point for each correct answer, and scores ranged from 5 to 10, with an average score of 7.6; it seems that the RAs represented in this population held a fairly comprehensive understanding of the basic tenets of Title IX policy.

Trust in Title IX

Participants rated their trust in Title IX services by responding to 8 Likert-scale questions. These items were adapted from Holland’s study (2017) and were designed to assess their perceptions of Title IX efficacy and outcomes. Participants were invited to respond on a 5-point scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” with a neutral option available. Items such as “the survivor would be taken seriously” were positively scored; items such as “nothing would happen to the perpetrator” were reverse-scored, with higher levels of agreement resulting in negative points. Disagreement with positively-associated statements (and agreement with negatively-associated statements) were scored as negative points, so participants could receive a scored measure from -16 to +16 points.

The actual range of participant scores on this item was -9 to 16, with an average of 4.5 points. Nine (9) individuals scored a negative value, indicating an overall distrust in the Title IX services; four (4) of the participants with a negative trust score (44%) also identified as survivors of prohibited conduct. Thirty-four (34) participants scored a positive value on this measure, but only 10 of these participants (29%) identified as a survivor of prohibited conduct. The statistical analysis of group differences in mean scores will be reviewed and discussed in the next section, under RQ2. The analysis of RQ1 will also use these scores to evaluate the overall relationship

between respondents' self-reported policy knowledge, their policy knowledge measured on the scored items, and their measure of trust in Title IX services.

Help-Seeking

Participants were presented with a hypothetical personal experience of Title IX prohibited conduct and indicated if they would consider seeking help from sources such as their supervisor in residence life, the Title IX office, campus-based police, or local law enforcement. A total of 33 of 53 respondents indicated that they would disclose a hypothetical incident to their supervisor, while 12 of the remaining 20 indicated they were unsure if they would disclose to their supervisor. Thirty-one (31) of forty-five (45) respondents¹³ indicated that they would report to Title IX; although the qualitative data provided suggests that there may be some confusion about the RAs' mandatory reporting requirements and their hypothetical role as the complainant in these questions. Ten (10) of the remaining fourteen (14) respondents indicated they did not know if they would disclose to Title IX.

Hypothetical disclosures to law enforcement were particularly interesting; only fifteen (15) of forty-five (45) respondents indicated that they would report to campus police, while nineteen (19) indicated they would not. This pattern continued into the data regarding hypothetical disclosures to local law enforcement, with only nine (9) participants indicating that they would disclose to local police, and twenty-three (23) indicating that they would not. The group differences in these ratings by survivorship status, race, and gender will be analyzed in-depth during the statistical analysis below. The qualitative data collected may illuminate the differences in perception between these sources of support.

¹³ Some participants did not continue the survey after submitting their responses to the first help-seeking question.

Qualitative data: Reporting to Title IX.

Participants were also invited to expand upon their answers to each hypothetical help-seeking scenario with a request for qualitative elaboration as to why they made each selection. Several themes were apparent from this data. Overall, participants who identified as survivors of prohibited conduct expressed more hesitation about reporting incidents to Title IX in the hypothetical help-seeking measures. While some repeated earlier concerns about mandated reporting and a sense of obligation to report (or fear of losing employment if they did not), survivors in this section also cited examples of Title IX Climate¹⁴ that served as a barrier to reporting and a breakdown in trust. Some described incidents reported for residents that were not addressed properly, and others expressed general anxieties about being taken seriously or being believed. Minimization, which is a well-documented barrier to help-seeking in the literature (Abavi et al., 2020; DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017; Holland & Cortina, 2017a), was also common for this question; many participants hedged their decision to consult Title IX on an assessment of the hypothetical incident's severity or their perceived sense of safety after the incident.

Qualitative data: Reporting to residence life.

In considering whether or not to report a hypothetical incident to one's supervisor in residence life, more survivors cited a positive association of trust in their supervisor's ability to help them manage their own experience. Some non-survivors also cited trust as a compelling reason to report, but on the whole, non-survivors were more unsure about whether or not a report to their supervisor would be beneficial. Multiple participants also expressed confusion about how the supervisor's role as a mandated reporter would affect their perceived autonomy in making this decision; some cited their knowledge of the policy and their awareness that they still had

¹⁴ "Climate" codes were created for each potential resource listed within the hypothetical help-seeking questions; this code was applied to quotes in which participants referenced general rumors, a resource's reputation on campus, or concerns about the potential resource's competency to manage these incidents.

some control over the process, while others chose to avoid disclosing to a supervisor because they would have to report to Title IX (or others).

Qualitative data: Reporting to campus police.

Participants expressed a familiarity and a subsequent series of concerns about potential disclosures to on-campus police or security. Reputational issues served as a consistent barrier and were cited by RAs as evident from both general perceptions on-campus and their specific experiences responding to incidents for resident needs. On the whole, responses to this question were more often an outright “no” or “unsure” than other resources on-campus, with only fifteen (15) of forty-four (44) respondents indicating they would report. RAs citing a sense of personal familiarity with campus police officers used this theme as both a positive and negative factor; some felt more comfortable based on prior interactions, and some had seen officers treating Title IX incidents with less confidentiality than they would have liked. Reports to police also involved a hypothetical assessment of severity or safety, with results depending on whether or not RAs felt the Title IX process would be sufficiently protective, or if a police presence was necessary for safety.

Qualitative data: Reporting to off-campus law enforcement.

Participants broadly expressed much less interest and certainty in their hypothetical disclosures to off-campus law enforcement. Many RAs expressed that their campus resources, which often include on-campus police or security staff, were perceived as more relevant or more prepared to address their needs. However, some cited better resources and potentially better outcomes (such as an arrest) for off-campus law enforcement as a potential facilitator for reporting their experiences to this resource. A lack of familiarity or exposure with off-campus law enforcement likely resulted in some of the decisions not to report, with some participants

citing decreased trust in off-campus law enforcement and greater access to on-campus resources for campus-based police. Many repeated earlier concerns about whether or not the “city police department would take me seriously,” and concerns about the off-campus law enforcement response to other incidents resurfaced as well.

Survivorship

Participants completed a screening question, which provided some brief information about the phase 2 interviews and asked RAs to indicate if they personally experienced any of the five categories of Title IX prohibited conduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking). Participants also had the option to indicate that they had experienced “none of the above” (25 participants) or if they would “Prefer not to answer” (5 participants). A total of fifteen (15) of forty-four (44) respondents¹⁵ indicated that they had experienced one or more categories of prohibited conduct, as described below in Table 4.

Table 4

Survivorship by Category of Prohibited Conduct

Category of Prohibited Conduct	Number of Participants
Sexual harassment	13
Sexual assault	6
Dating violence	5
Domestic violence	2
Stalking	6

¹⁵ This calculation included only survey respondents who had completed the screening question at the end (44 total).

Note: Participants self-reported their experiences and were provided with a resource document (see Appendix B) describing the definitions of prohibited conduct from federal policy.

Participants could also select as many categories as applicable, therefore, the counts above may reflect these multiple selections.

The survivorship rate of this sample population, calculated as the percentage of survey respondents who answered the screening question at the end affirmatively, represents 34% of this sample. This is markedly different from both the literature's estimation of survivorship amongst a general college population (15-20%; Mancini et al., 2016) and Holland's (2017) sample of RAs from her single-institution survey (45%). Without the complete datasets and sample sizes for all comparable groups studied, the statistical significance of these differences is impossible to calculate with any certainty. However, the difference does seem notable and may also be worth further examination via future research.

Survivor Reporting

Individuals answering the survivorship screening question affirmatively were also asked to identify when they experienced prohibited conduct, relative to their tenure as an RA.¹⁶ Eight (8) participants indicated that they experienced prohibited conduct before and during their RA service, while five (5) participants stated their experience occurred before their time as an RA, and two (2) others stated their experience of prohibited conduct occurred while they were RAs. Participants were also asked about their reporting decisions; seven (7) participants disclosed their incidents to multiple sources (many participants reported to both a supervisor and Title IX), while one (1) reported to their supervisor only, and an additional five (5) disclosed to Title IX only. Two (2) participants indicated that they did not disclose the incident to any of the listed

¹⁶ Participants were able to select multiple options for this question as well, if repeated or multiple experiences of prohibited conduct occurred over time.

sources of support on college campuses (their Title IX office, their supervisor in Residence Life, advocates, or law enforcement).

Phase 2 Interview Summaries

The following section provides an overview of each phase 2 participant's narrative as shared during the qualitative interview. This section includes some interpretation of interview data shared, as well as brief identification of potential themes for analysis later in the chapter. Specific analysis of how these interviews respond to the research questions will follow in the following section of results by research question. The significance and implications of these participant stories will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Ash

Ash identifies as a White man, and served his campus as an RA for three years. Ash experienced dating violence in the context of a romantic relationship, which coincided with a pattern of stalking conduct by one of his female residents at the time. Ash stated that while he enjoyed his experiences as an RA overall, the "stress and pressures of responding to incidents" contributed to burnout he experienced. Ash stated that he ended the abusive relationship he was in and did not recognize that incident as dating violence until much later; as a result, he did not seek help for this experience while in college. Ash also struggled with his supervisor's response to his resident's stalking conduct, and also struggled to access resources after identifying this pattern as Title IX prohibited conduct. Ash felt that the residence life department's reputation for their response to other RAs experiencing Title IX incidents served as a significant barrier for him in seeking access to supportive resources.

Ash explained that while he was almost immediately able to identify the pattern of his resident's behavior as potential stalking conduct, he was also very quickly concerned about the

consequences of seeking help as an RA. Ash explained that Title IX resources were included in RA training, but residence life “never made it clear if we could fully utilize the Title IX office without some fear of retaliation.” Ash also said that early in his RA career, “it was kind of just like the vibe on campus, was that as an RA, if you ever reported something like that, you would get fired.” Ash recalled a rumor that had circulated amongst RAs from a previous year: after an RA was “drugged and raped” off-campus, she was fired from the position “for getting transported to the hospital.” Ash indicated that he believed this student was able to seek their own support from Title IX, but that there remained a fear “that [RAs] would face repercussion” for seeking help. This fear of retaliation from both the respondent and institutional sources was a central theme for Ash’s decision-making, and highlights both individual and structural barriers for help-seeking.

Ash described how he sought help from his supervisor after reaching his “breaking point” with his resident:

[the supervisor] had known that I had been setting boundaries with her, and it was her suggestion as well, over time, to set those boundaries, too, 'cause I was like, "It's just a little concerning behavior," before it turned into stalking. I was like, "This is concerning, right? What are ways that I can make her leave me alone?" She was like, "Oh, yes. Set boundaries." I [had] already been doing that.

Ash was ultimately disappointed with his supervisor’s response, expecting that she might have offered the Title IX office or even connected him with the Title IX Coordinator on the phone.

Ash felt like his supervisor was dismissive of “female on male stalking, ‘cause it’s pretty rare,” but noted that shortly after this disclosure, the conduct did stop. Ash suspected that his supervisor spoke privately to the resident and “threatened” to report the conduct.

Ash considered seeking support from the Title IX office for this incident independently, citing a positive perception of the Title IX Coordinator's efficacy and a desire for resources he felt might be helpful, like a no-contact directive. But there was always a "constant fear" of retaliation, from both the resident and residence life; Ash worried that residence life might choose to terminate his employment rather than "move [his] building" to separate the involved parties. Ash named significant financial implications for a potential termination, citing the need for additional loans to compensate for a loss of RA benefits. Ash also considered talking to counseling on campus, but "didn't like any of the counselors," and stated that his most effective strategies for helping himself move forward from this incident were stress management and going to "spaces where [he] knew that person couldn't reach [him]."

Ash frequently discussed the reputational concerns he had heard about residence life's response to prior incidents of prohibited conduct among RAs, as well as their lack of acknowledgement that these incidents happen to RAs too. Ash advised residence life supervisors to "do your job" and "have a high level of care" for RAs when they seek help for Title IX incidents. Ash also believed that the Title IX office could improve in their communications with RAs, especially during training: "I think that was a big failure, is that the training really focused on helping other people, there wasn't really anything really focused on what if you are at higher risk because of your position and something happens to you?"

Carl

Carl identifies as a Black nonbinary survivor of domestic and dating violence.¹⁷ Carl initially focused on their concerns in responding to Title IX incidents affecting their residents, but these experiences also clearly affected their perceptions of how the Title IX office could (or

¹⁷ Carl began the interview by discussing incidents they responded to with residents in the RA role. Later in the interview, I clarified that the study was focused on incidents of Title IX conduct that "happened to you," and Carl was able to affirm that they had experienced and reported prohibited conduct to Title IX.

could not) support them. Carl also described their role in responding to incidents for residents in a way that was much more investigative in nature than policy requires for RAs. Carl explained that they were required to determine “if the report was from a direct source, if it was true or not.” Carl stated that they felt responsible to “make sure that I've heard everything the student might have said and I've gotten the necessary information from a student and also lay down my own report before taking them to the supervisor or any place I'm going to take the report to.”

I asked Carl a number of questions about how they perceived the resources available to support their well-being as an RA; Carl struggled to answer these questions, and focused on resources provided to all RAs to support their residents, such as campus partners who helped him respond to resident needs, or access to services they can share with students. Carl indicated that they sought help from their supervisor to support their residents, but Carl felt that the primary source of support for their own experience of prohibited conduct was family off-campus. When discussing how they came to realize that they might be in need of help, Carl stated, “I stick it upon myself and I had to do what I had to do just to make sure that everything that I knew was okay.” Carl indicated that they did reach out to Title IX and report their own experience, but “I really felt bad because me taking that kind of information and report to Title IX, and I wasn't given the right information and the right judgment.”

Carl was very focused on fairness and justice in the outcomes from Title IX, for their situation and for residents they referred. Carl stated that when they felt like Title IX was not treating them fairly, Carl sought support from their supervisor in residence life and was guided to “solve the problem” on their own. Carl’s self-determination also came through as empathy for their own needs and recognizing the resources they deserved, stating, “If I've been trying to solve others’ issues, that means I should also do it to myself.” Carl encouraged other RAs to know that

even if they might not receive all of the information about what happens with their Title IX reports, it is “part of the experience” and important to “believe in yourself.” Carl hoped that supervisors in residence life would be more willing to guide other RAs to ensure that “each report or case of misconduct is being solved.” Carl also identified an opportunity for greater collaboration between RAs and Title IX, indicating that a better working relationship might improve outcomes for residents seeking help from their RAs.

Hermione

Hermione identifies as a Black woman who survived sexual assault before and during her time as an RA. Hermione was also unique in this study sample because after leaving the RA role, she returned to the same institution to work as a Resident Director. Hermione’s story really highlighted the importance of climate and culture within Title IX and residence life, as her subsequent return to her institution impacted her perceptions of these resources. Even years later, Hermione still carried her experiences with her former supervisors, Title IX training, and residents who sought help while she navigated her campus as a new professional. Hermione described several reputational concerns with the Title IX office, and explained how the training and information provided to RAs was a significant barrier to not just reporting, but also the development of trust between departments:

I always remember that [the Title IX Coordinator] never came in person. She was always virtual. And we always left feeling very confused about the process and things and whatnot. And always had more questions, but none of us really wanted to ask those questions 'cause we were already confused from the beginning. So we kind of just wrote it off and said, I guess we'll be confused and when it comes up, really relied on the RDs to be able to assist.

Hermione also stated that her confusion about the Title IX process left her and her RA peers unsure as to how they might best support their residents, and thus, when she experienced her own incident, she did not know what would happen with a report, if she chose to file one.

Hermione also recalled an incident in which she responded to a student's sexual assault while on-call as an RA, and discussed how she felt the case was mishandled by Title IX. The student survivor reported to Title IX, but "basically left feeling like [Title IX] didn't believe her, and the student that did it to her was an athlete. They didn't believe her, things didn't make sense." Hermione noted that in her attempts to support this student, "we didn't have the tools and the knowledge to give her. She didn't have the tools and the knowledge for herself." Hermione also shared that her duty partner who assisted with this response was "really upset about" this incident; however, when this RA sought support from residence life, "our supervisor had pulled her in and basically laid into her." Hermione recalled that despite a strong personal relationship with her supervisor, learning about this reaction impacted her sense of trust in the resources available to her after her experience of sexual assault.

In determining how to respond to her own experience during college, Hermione focused on her past survivorship experiences as a source of help, stating "I just went through the motions until I knew I was gonna hit the other side." Despite being well-connected to resources including her fellow RAs, the Dean of Students Office, and the orientation staff (through concurrent employment roles), Hermione was worried about how her supervisors would perceive her after learning about her sexual assault, particularly because of her race and gender:

I think especially being a woman of color, I was the only one of color on my staff. My supervisor was a White woman, went to a PWI [predominantly White institution], so to speak. It's not really so much a PWI but I grew up around White people and so I, even in

the black community, I'm a bit of an outlier. And so I just didn't, I didn't want there to be another thing to isolate me. I didn't want to be another statistic in anybody's book or anything like that. So it wasn't at all punitive. It was just sort of perception. I didn't want to be treated any differently than I already was being treated, which was phenomenally.

Hermione added that she was concerned about mandated reporting in her circle of resources, and the likelihood of a report to Title IX also impacted her decision to stay silent. She ultimately decided that even though she trusted her supervisor for support, she “knew that [she] could never swear her to secrecy” because her supervisor was compelled to disclose the incident to Title IX.

Hermione’s boyfriend was also an RA, and her parent was a nurse, so her desire to have control over her story resulted in a lack of disclosure to any of her potential sources of support. Hermione noted that while she was not aware at the time, she had since learned that Title IX reports on her campus were automatically shared with police and counseling, which could be another potential barrier if students were aware of this process. Hermione added that the respondent was not affiliated with her institution, so she believed her campus judicial options were inaccessible; Hermione also expressed that the Title IX process offered “no predictability” and stated, “it felt, from what I had seen, from what I heard there, it was just a lawless land.”

Hermione described how her experiences have affected how she supervises the RAs on her team:

[T]he advice that I gave to my RA, which was I kind of opened up and shared my story and said, "These are your options and you're not going to feel okay immediately, but you will feel okay eventually. And it just takes time and you have to be patient with yourself and have grace and understand you're going to have bad days, there are bad days. It doesn't mean it's a bad life. You're not branded with this scarlet letter. And although it

doesn't feel like it in the moment or even a couple days after the fact, life does go on and it becomes less consuming of your life.

Hermione also urged her peers as supervisors of RAs to remember, “their sole purpose of being an RA is not to serve us or serve their residents, they are humans and they're people and they are also coming in with God knows what experience in their life.” Hermione added, “we need to treat them with just as much care as you would treat the person that is the one that has experienced this traumatic thing. 'Cause it just, it's the... This ripple effect. But no matter if you're on the first ripple, the second ripple or the fifth ripple, you could still feel it.”

Luna

Luna identifies as a White genderqueer woman who was serving her campus as an RA at the time of our interview, and had experienced sexual harassment in her role as an RA. Luna worked in a “traditional” residence hall, which includes communal bathroom facilities by floor; Luna identified this environment as particularly challenging for her wellbeing, stating “there's really no separation of work and home.” This concept, often described by residence life professionals as living in a “fishbowl” became central to Luna’s story, and a unique barrier also identified by other interviewees in their search for support. Luna added that while she appreciated getting to know her residents so closely, she has also had to respond to a significant number of incidents while not on duty:

Because it's quite literally you can't avoid going to the bathroom. It just becomes difficult because in the short walk to the bathroom, I can witness something that I now have to react to in my role. Even though I'm not actively on call or on duty, I still have to react to this situation because I saw it and I'm still technically required to.

Luna stated that she received Title IX training but felt that she “learned more about Title IX through dealing with Title IX than [she] did in the training.” Luna expressed concern and confusion about the process for reporting with University Police because she felt underprepared for their role in responding to the residence halls.

Luna described an incident in which she had been responding to an incident in her role as RA and was “put in a position of physical restriction” while “alone in that moment.” Luna described a more urgent type of help-seeking, in which she felt “trapped in the situation” and needed to “convey the seriousness of what was happening” to a source of help for intervention. Luna noted that University Police were already nearby for the initial call, and her first priority was to get their attention because she “needed someone else to intervene.” Luna’s request for intervention ended with a police report and criminal charges sought against the respondent.

Luna also stated that the procedures after making her report to University Police were unclear and expressed that she felt better training was needed for RAs in working with campus police. Luna described how she learned about the outcome of her criminal case:

I had been wanting to try and find out what happened, and this is weeks later, and I happened to have to call UPD, and it happens to be the officer that responded, recognized me and realized he was the one that responded to my prior Title IX with UPD. And so he told me that I was subpoenaed, but I never got the subpoena 'cause they didn't give it directly to me, they gave it to him while he was out of town. He went to court on my behalf and testified for me, and he told me [the respondent] got charged. That's how I found out.

Luna also experienced difficulties in working with Title IX related to a similar incident involving a contractor in her residence hall, which she reported to their office; the Title IX Coordinator

provided Luna's contact information to the respondent's third-party employer without notifying Luna, and this company called Luna unexpectedly. Luna stated that this experience in particular "made [her] want to report it to Title IX less."

Luna stated that her most effective help-seeking came in the form of counseling services on her campus and seeking support from her fellow RAs. She also noted that while her department did not initially make Title IX seem like a resource available for RAs, they did maintain a private apartment on-campus for RAs to borrow "if things are too overwhelming" in their assigned space. Luna advised her peers to be aware that "the process may be slow," but hesitated to provide further guidance from her experience because she "wouldn't particularly wanna tell them anything negative about it." Luna felt that the residence life department and Title IX could do a better job at recognizing "that when you're working as a RA, you're more likely to end up in a Title IX situation." Luna also suggested that Title IX professionals could prioritize "talking to us as RAs and checking in on us, instead of only hitting on the facts... What we need to do as RAs to support our students."

Peter

Peter identifies as a Black man, who survived sexual harassment and dating violence.¹⁸ Peter stated that he "felt quite confident" in the RA role, and that the training he received left him feeling "totally prepared" to respond to Title IX incidents. Peter stated that he did have to refer some residents to Title IX for support, and that he "did have to follow with her, to see, to follow the victim, to know how the process has been handled." Peter stated that he struggled with the information he got back from Title IX, indicating that "what he [the Title IX Officer] said

¹⁸ Peter began the interview by discussing incidents he responded to with residents in the RA role. Later in the interview, I clarified that the study was focused on incidents of Title IX conduct that "happened to you," and Peter described an assault that may or may not have qualified for Title IX support given the description Peter provided. Because the focus of this study is the RA perceptions of Title IX and their help-seeking choices, I included Peter's story because at the time, he felt that he should have had access to Title IX as a result of this incident.

wasn't fair enough.” Peter stated that he sought support from his supervisor to manage his residents’ concerns but noted that even this support was not enough and he “lost hope with Title IX.”

Peter briefly described his experience of prohibited conduct, and stated that while he was walking on campus, he was knocked unconscious and woke up to find that he was naked. Peter stated that he was disappointed when he reported this incident to Title IX, because the process “wasn’t fast enough” but that when he “did consult the Title IX officer, which said he was gonna look on the process,” Peter felt that the result was not “impartial.” Peter stated that he was able to secure help and support from friends, who “tried to keep [his] mind off that incident,” and that while he considered disclosing to a lecturer, he decided against it.

Peter’s description of his work as an RA with resident survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct is reflective of his perceptions after this personal experience. Peter described taking on a significant role in follow up, after referring students, stating:

The case was being handled to Title IX officer for like a month, but at the moment nothing happened, nothing was going on. It was just, it was, it's not just still. You know what I'm saying? But nothing was going on the process. So I came to meet him to discuss more about the process action, the Title officer, how's the case going.

Peter’s description of his role with resident reports since he became an RA seems to reflect the trust that was broken in the lack of an expedient response to his personal experience of prohibited conduct, which occurred before he was an RA. While he ultimately expressed that he was glad he reported to Title IX, he gave much of the credit for the support he received to his friends and personal support system.

Victoria

Victoria was a first-year RA at the time of our interview and identified as a White woman who had experienced sexual harassment from another RA on her team. While in the process of onboarding to her new role and supporting her residents, Victoria witnessed this respondent sexually harassing her peers on staff:

...it wasn't mostly directed at me because I reminded him of his sister. That is the only reason he did not make comments about my body and it's not... It doesn't really help. But my two friends, he made comments about and towards and also just like other women being very objectifying.

Victoria explained why she was worried about this respondent having access to her residents:

“[experiencing sexual harassment from an authority figure like an RA was] going to cause significantly more damage and my residents don't necessarily trust me enough to talk to me about that.” Victoria's attention to the perceived risk of the respondent potentially engaging in this behavior with her residents reflected a common theme of minimizing personal experiences of prohibited conduct.

Victoria and her friends also doubted the seriousness of the respondent's harassment, noting that “he was really good at just kind of toeing the line so it's really uncomfortable but like if we said something, he'd just brush it off.” Victoria even joked during her interview that after witnessing a friend receiving more targeted comments, she offered to help that friend file a Title IX report. However, Victoria stated that she did not know that her own experience was also sexual harassment until she “accidentally” reported it to her supervisor (in the context of a casual conversation with her peers in his office). Victoria stated that her supervisor gave her and her friends “a day” to decide if they wanted to file their own report with Title IX, but ultimately, the

supervisor mentioned the respondent's conduct to a colleague and notified Victoria that he would have to file the report.

Victoria said that she was not concerned about the confidentiality of the Title IX office, but was well-aware of the gender dynamics of her small RA team, and believed that "it would not have taken [the respondent] very long to figure out" who reported the incident. Victoria stated that the case was expedited when she reported additional concerns about overlapping desk duty shifts with the respondent, and while "they did not fire him," "they gave him the option of moving to an all-male dorm or quitting." Victoria added that at the time of our interview, the respondent still lived in her apartment complex, and she had already been required to respond to his apartment while on duty, "but never alone."

Victoria urged other RAs who are potentially also experiencing similar sexual harassment to know and trust that "deeply uncomfortable is bad enough." She also expressed a concern for the lack of resources at her Title IX office on campus, noting that "they need more support, they need more people."

Results: Research Question 1

How do RAs perceive Title IX as both Responsible Employees and students?

In an effort to better understand RA perceptions of Title IX from their perspective as students and staff, I collected data to measure their perceived and actual knowledge of Title IX policies, their trust in Title IX processes and outcomes, and their experiences responding to and/or reporting Title IX incidents. Each of these data points represented a variable for analysis to consider as a part of the overall sample's beliefs and perceptions about Title IX. Because this research question was not focused on RA survivorship experiences, but rather the perceptions of the entire sample, groups were not created from the screening question for these analyses.

Bivariate correlation: PolicySelf and t9PolicyScore

To evaluate the potential relationships between an RA's knowledge of Title IX policy and their perceptions of Title IX overall, I first calculated the bivariate correlation between the respondents' self-rated knowledge of policy (measured on a Likert scale which was converted to a score of 1-4) and their scored responses to a policy knowledge measure (with a maximum score of 10 possible). Respondents' self-rated Title IX policy knowledge was not significantly correlated with their actual scored knowledge of common Title IX policy concepts, $r(57) = -.002$, $p = .990$. Descriptives for this analysis are available in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Bivariate Correlation: PolicySelf by t9PolicyScore

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>I</i>
PolicySelf ¹	59	2.78	.811	-
T9PolicyScore ²	49	7.61	1.40	-.002

Bivariate correlation: t9PolicyScore and t9TrustScore

A bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength of the relationship between RA's knowledge of basic Title IX policy requirements and their perceived trust in Title IX services. The t9PolicyScore variable had a maximum score of 10, and the t9TrustScore variable could include a range of scores between -14 and 14. There was no significant relationship between the participants' scores on the Title IX policy knowledge item and the trust in Title IX measure, $r(47) = -.009$, $p = .516$. The descriptive table for these variables is included below, in Table 6.

Table 6**Descriptive Statistics for Bivariate Correlation: t9PolicyScore by t9TrustScore**

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>
T9PolicyScore ¹	49	7.61	.811	-
T9TrustScore ²	48	4.56	5.74	-.096

Independent samples *t*-test: t9TrustScore by IR_exp

In an effort to evaluate how an RA's work-related experiences affected their perceptions of Title IX services, I conducted an independent samples *t*-test to compare the mean t9TrustScores between two groups: those RAs who disclosed having responded to Title IX incidents as an RA, and those who stated they did not respond to such incidents in their role. RAs with Title IX incident response experiences ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 6.091$) did not demonstrate a significantly different measure of trust in Title IX services from those who had no Title IX incident response experience ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 5.132$), $t(44) = -.823$, $p = .415$, $d = -.264$. A descriptive table of this analysis is included below in Table 7.

Table 7**Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9TrustScore by IR_exp**

	<i>IR_exp</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
T9TrustScore	Yes	32	4.25	6.091	1.077
	No	14	5.79	5.132	1.372

Independent samples t-test: t9TrustScore by Report_exp

Additionally, I wondered if RAs may have had experiences reporting to Title IX beyond an incident response scenario, and if there may be differences in trust measures between groups with and without this reporting experience. I conducted an independent samples *t*-test to compare the mean t9TrustScores between two groups: those RAs who disclosed having reported to Title IX, and those who stated they did not report to Title IX. RAs with Title IX reporting experiences ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 5.780$) did not demonstrate a significantly different measure of trust in Title IX services from those who had no experience reporting to Title IX ($M = 6.71$, $SD = 5.312$), $t(45) = -1.607$, $p = .115$, $d = -.513$. A descriptive table of this analysis is included below in Table 8.

Table 8

Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9TrustScore by Report_exp

	<i>Report_exp</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
T9TrustScore	Yes	33	3.82	5.78	1.006
	No	14	6.71	5.312	1.420

Results: Research Question 2

How do RAs who have experienced Title IX prohibited conduct perceive their reporting options?

All participants who reached the end of the survey completed a screening question to determine eligibility for the phase 2 interviews; this question allowed me to capture the survivorship rate among the entire sample population, even if participants chose not to opt-in to the interviews. A grouping variable was created from the screening question data, SurvGp (survivor group). Because the measure of trust in Title IX services represented the most direct

assessment of RA perceptions, this scored item was used as the dependent variable for an analysis of differences in perceptions between survivors and non-survivors.

Independent samples t-test: t9TrustScore by SurvGp

I conducted an independent samples *t*-test to compare the mean t9TrustScores between two groups: those RAs who reported personal experiences with Title IX prohibited conduct (survivors) and those who did not identify as a survivor of prohibited conduct. RA survivors ($M = 3.53, SD = 7.337$) did not demonstrate a significantly different measure of trust in Title IX services from respondents who did not disclose experiencing Title IX prohibited conduct ($M = 4.55, SD = 4.874$), $t(42) = .551, p = .585, d = .175$. A descriptive table of this analysis is included below in Table 9.

Table 9

Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9TrustScore by SurvGp

	<i>SurvGp</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
T9TrustScore	Non-Survivor	29	4.55	4.874	.905
	Survivor	15	3.53	7.337	1.895

Results: Research Question 3

How do RA survivor perceptions of Title IX influence their help-seeking behaviors?

In order to determine if RA survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct evaluated their help-seeking options differently from other RAs, responses to the hypothetical help-seeking questions were compared by the survivor grouping variable. Four hypothetical help-seeking disclosures were included in the survey: reporting to Title IX, disclosing to a supervisor in residence life, reporting to campus-based police or security, and reporting to local law

enforcement off-campus. Participants indicated if they would report a hypothetical experience of Title IX prohibited conduct to each potential source of support with a “yes,” “no,” or “unsure.” Participants also elaborated on their choices with qualitative data. The results below are reported for each hypothetical source of support: HS1 refers to Title IX, HS2 refers to a supervisor in residence life, HS3 refers to campus-based police or security, and HS4 refers to off-campus law enforcement.

Chi square test of independence: SurvGp and HS1 (Title IX)

A chi square test of independence was conducted to assess the relationship between participants’ decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to Title IX and their survivorship status. The decision to disclose or not disclose was not significantly different between groups $\chi^2(2, N = 44) = 1.651, p = .438$. Three of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher’s exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .400$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 10 below.

Table 10

Crosstabulation: Survivor and Non-Survivor Help-Seeking with Title IX

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
Non-Survivor	21 (72.4%)	3 (10.3%)	5 (17.2%)
Survivor	8 (53.3%)	3 (20%)	4 (26.7%)

Chi square test of independence: SurvGp and HS2 (Residence Life)

A chi square test of independence was conducted to assess the relationship between participants’ decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to their Residence Life supervisor and their survivorship status. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups

$\chi^2(2, N = 44) = 1.497, p = .473$. Three of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .604$) Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 11 below.

Table 11

Crosstabulation: Survivor and Non-Survivor Help-Seeking with Residence Life

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
Non-Survivor	18 (62.1%)	3 (10.3%)	8 (27.6%)
Survivor	12 (80.0%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (13.3%)

Chi square test of independence: SurvGp and HS3 (Campus Police)

A chi square test of independence was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to campus-based police or security and their survivorship status. There was a significant difference between participants who identified as survivors and those who did not in their disclosures to campus-based police or security, $\chi^2(2, N = 44) = 6.156, p = .046$. Survivors were significantly less likely to report a hypothetical incident of Title IX prohibited conduct to campus-based police than non-survivors. One of the expected counts was less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a significant result ($p = .048$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 12 below.

Table 12**Crosstabulation: Survivor and Non-Survivor Help-Seeking with Campus-Based Police**

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
Non-Survivor	10 (34.5%)	9 (31.0%)	10 (34.5%)
Survivor	4 (26.7%)	10 (66.7%)	1 (6.7%)

Chi square test of independence: SurvGp and HS4 (Local Law Enforcement)

A chi square test of independence was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to local law enforcement and their survivorship status. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups $\chi^2(2, N = 44) = 1.898, p = .387$. Two of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .443$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 13 below.

Table 13**Crosstabulation: Survivor and Non-Survivor Help-Seeking with Local Law Enforcement**

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
Non-Survivor	6 (20.7%)	13 (44.8%)	10 (34.5%)
Survivor	2 (13.3%)	10 (66.7%)	3 (20.0%)

Qualitative Results: Help-Seeking by Survivor Group

Overall, survivors identified several relatively consistent themes and considerations in describing their hypothetical help-seeking decisions by source of support. When compared to

their non-survivor peers, survivors espoused more perceived barriers to reporting to their Title IX office but were less likely to cite an employment risk as one of those barriers. This was evident by respondents who were unsure if their mandatory reporting obligations also applied to their hypothetical personal experiences with prohibited conduct (who fell into both survivor and non-survivor groups). Concerns about the potential outcome of a Title IX report were equally distributed between both groups, as well as concerns about the perceived climate and efficacy of Title IX services on-campus.

Qualitative data shared regarding disclosures to residence life supervisors were relatively consistent between groups. “Familiarity” was a new code identified in this category; however, it was applied both as a barrier to reporting and also a facilitator to feeling safe in disclosing. Familiarity with residence life supervisors as a resource was also closely related to perceived trust in the recipient of such disclosures, with some describing their supervisors as “more trustworthy” and “transparent about caring for us.” Disclosures to residence life were also connected to Title IX, likely due to the recognition of supervisors’ roles as mandated reporters. Some participants specifically articulated this connection as a potential barrier for reporting (“knowing that my supervisor would be a mandated reporter, it would depend on how I answered the first question,” re: disclosing to Title IX). Others contextualized this answer within the policy requirements, recognizing that even a mandated report allows them continued autonomy and control of the process.

Reports to police varied slightly between on-campus officers and off-campus community resources. Perhaps because RAs were more likely to interact with on-campus officers in their incident response role, respondents cited their increased familiarity with officers as both a barrier and a potential facilitator of disclosure. One participant explained that their frequent access to

officers on campus led them to believe “they would have taken me more seriously than the average student – not equitable but the reality.” Several RAs identifying as survivors explained that their observations of campus police in discussing Title IX incidents with other RAs or observing the outcomes of resident reports caused concern for both confidentiality and the outcome of their potential reports.

Responses for both law enforcement questions also cited the ongoing cultural dialogue regarding policing in America, with some respondents elaborating on their decisions to not disclose by simply writing “ACAB.”¹⁹ Others cited concerns about the potential outcome of such reports, describing a range of previously observed police interventions from officers not seeming “helpful,” to responses that were perceived as “condescending.” Respondents also cited concerns about potential “retaliation” based on their race and/or gender, with a Black respondent stating that she “would be scared to go to the police and in fear that I wouldn’t be believed.” With regard to off-campus law enforcement, survivors were more likely than non-survivors to identify a specific barrier to reporting, such as not being taken seriously, perceived financial obligations for pursuing a criminal case, and perceptions of “victim blaming.” Only three (3) of the fifteen (15) survivors indicated they were “unsure” about reporting to off-campus law enforcement, while one (1) indicated they were not sure about reporting to campus police. Fewer survivors (2) indicated an interest in reporting to off-campus law enforcement than campus-based police (4).

Results: Research Question 4

Are there differences in RA perceptions, beliefs, or experiences by race or gender identity?

Participant demographic data was transformed into two grouping variables by race (dominant and marginalized) and gender (TGNC, woman, man); given the critical pragmatist

¹⁹ This slogan, meaning “all cops are bastards,” is a phrase used by “people who oppose the police for various reasons,” and has resurfaced in recent years after the murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis, MN. (dictionary.com, 2020)

epistemology for this research, groups were created with the relevant socially distributed power and privilege in mind. Differences in these groups among a variety of other data points were evaluated to answer this research question. Differences in t9PolicyScore and t9TrustScore by race were evaluated via independent samples *t*-tests. Because the grouping variable for gender ultimately created three categories, differences in the t9PolicyScore and t9TrustScore by gender were examined via one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests. Finally, help-seeking decisions in the four hypothetical scenarios presented by the survey were compared between race and gender groups using chi-square tests of independence.

Independent samples t-test: t9PolicyScore by RaceGp

I conducted an independent samples *t*-test to compare the mean t9PolicyScores between two groups: RAs identifying within the dominant racial group and RAs identifying within a marginalized racial group. RA participants in the dominant group ($M = 7.71$, $SD = 1.404$) did not demonstrate a significantly different knowledge of Title IX policy from respondents in the marginalized racial group ($M = 7.40$, $SD = 1.404$), $t(47) = -.703$, $p = .486$. A descriptive table of this analysis is included below in Table 14.

Table 14

Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9PolicyScore by RaceGp

	<i>RaceGp</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
T9PolicyScore	Marginalized	15	7.40	1.404	.363
	Dominant	34	7.71	1.404	.241

Independent samples t-test: t9TrustScore by RaceGp

I conducted an independent samples *t*-test to compare the mean t9TrustScores between two groups: RAs identifying within the dominant racial group and RAs identifying within a marginalized racial group. RA participants in the dominant group ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 5.851$) did not demonstrate a significantly different trust in Title IX services from respondents in the marginalized racial group ($M = 6.07$, $SD = 5.378$), $t(46) = -1.230$, $p = .225$. A descriptive table of this analysis is included below in Table 15.

Table 15

Descriptive statistics for independent samples *t*-test: t9TrustScore by RaceGp

	<i>RaceGp</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
T9TrustScore	Marginalized	15	6.07	5.378	1.389
	Dominant	33	3.38	5.851	1.019

Chi square test of association: RaceGp and HS1 (Title IX)

A chi square test of association was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to Title IX and their race. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups $\chi^2(2, N = 51) = 1.870$, $p = .393$. Two of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .515$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 16 below.

Table 16**Crosstabulation: Help-Seeking with Title IX by Race**

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
Marginalized	13 (76.5%)	1 (5.9%)	3 (17.6%)
Dominant	20 (58.8%)	6 (17.6%)	8 (23.5%)

Chi square test of association: RaceGp and HS2 (Residence Life)

A chi square test of association was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to their supervisor in Residence Life and their race. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups, however this association approached statistical significance, $\chi^2(2, N = 45) = 5.581, p = .061$. Four of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .069$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 17 below.

Table 17**Crosstabulation: Help-Seeking with Residence Life by Race**

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
Marginalized	13 (92.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.1%)
Dominant	28 (58.1%)	4 (12.9%)	9 (29.0%)

Chi square test of association: RaceGp and HS3 (Campus Police)

A chi square test of association was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to campus-based police or security and their race. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups $\chi^2(2, N = 45)$

= .380, $p = .827$. Two of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .846$).

Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 18 below.

Table 18

Crosstabulation: Help-Seeking with Campus-Based Police by Race

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
Marginalized	5 (35.7%)	5 (35.7%)	4 (28.6%)
Dominant	10 (32.3%)	14 (45.2%)	7 (22.6%)

Chi square test of association: RaceGp and HS4 (Local Law Enforcement)

A chi square test of association was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to local law enforcement and their race. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups $\chi^2(2, N = 45) = 1.143, p = .565$. Two of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .578$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 19 below.

Table 19

Crosstabulation: Help-Seeking with Local Law Enforcement by Race

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
Marginalized	4 (28.6%)	7 (50.0%)	3 (21.4%)
Dominant	5 (16.1%)	16 (51.6%)	10 (32.3%)

Qualitative interviews: themes about race

Only one participant (Hermione) discussed the effect of her race on her help-seeking decisions. Hermione expressed a concern that existing as a Black woman in a predominantly White institution (PWI) with a White supervisor would lead to challenges if she disclosed her sexual assault experience. While she cited an overall positive perception of her membership on the staff team as the sole person of color, she also recognized the impact of being “isolated” as it related to evaluating her sources of support. She also discussed being an “outlier” in her upbringing and stated that she grew up in predominantly White communities and was used to being the only person of color around. Hermione explained that her supervisor, who had an otherwise positive relationship with Hermione, criticized her response to a Title IX situation, and significantly exacerbated her co-RA’s struggles with the situation as a result of her supervisor’s response. While Hermione did not articulate her own experience with her supervisor’s feedback as a barrier, she felt that the lack of support provided to her colleague was a signal as to the support she might receive if she sought help.

One-way ANOVA: GenderGp and t9PolicyScore

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the differences in mean t9PolicyScore between gender groups. There was not a significant effect of gender on t9PolicyScore at the $p = .05$ level, $F(2, 48) = .869$, $p = .426$. Levene’s test for homogeneity of variance was non-significant, indicating that a non-parametric test is unnecessary. The descriptive statistics for this analysis are summarized in Table 20 below.

Table 20**One-Way Analysis of Variance: GenderGp and t9PolicyScore**

	TGNC		Woman		Man		$F(2, 48)$	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
T9PolicyScore	7.31	1.437	7.55	1.355	8	1.468	.869	.036

One-way ANOVA: GenderGp and t9TrustScore

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the differences in mean t9TrustScore between gender groups. There was not a significant effect of gender on t9TrustScore at the $p = .05$ level, $F(2, 45) = 1.672$, $p = .199$. Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was non-significant, indicating that a non-parametric test is unnecessary. The descriptive statistics for this analysis are summarized in Table 21 below.

Table 21**One-Way Analysis of Variance: GenderGp and t9TrustScore**

	TGNC		Woman		Man		$F(2, 45)$	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
T9TrustScore	3.23	1.442	3.86	1.368	6.86	1.350	1.672	.069

Chi square test of association: GenderGp and HS1 (Title IX)

A chi square test of association was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to Title IX and their gender. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups $\chi^2(4, N = 50) = 6.073$, $p = .194$. Six of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test.

Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .165$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 22 below.

Table 22

Crosstabulation: Help-Seeking with Title IX by Gender

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
TGNC	10 (76.9%)	3 (23.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Woman	12 (57.1%)	2 (9.5%)	7 (33.3%)
Man	11 (68.8%)	2 (12.5%)	3 (18.8%)

Chi square test of association: GenderGp and HS2 (Residence Life)

A chi square test of association was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to their supervisor in residence life and their gender. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups, $\chi^2(2, N = 45) = 7.133, p = .129$. Seven of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .188$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 23 below.

Table 23

Crosstabulation: Help-Seeking with Residence Life by Gender

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
TGNC	7 (58.3%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (41.7%)
Woman	15 (78.9%)	1 (5.3%)	3 (15.8%)
Man	9 (64.3%)	3 (21.4%)	2 (14.3%)

Chi square test of association: GenderGp and HS3 (Campus Police)

A chi square test of association was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to campus-based police or security and their gender. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups $\chi^2(2, N = 45) = 1.003, p = .909$. Five of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .913$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 24 below.

Table 24

Crosstabulation: Help-Seeking with Campus-Based Police by Gender

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
TGNC	4 (33.3%)	5 (41.7%)	3 (25.0%)
Woman	5 (26.3%)	9 (47.4%)	5 (26.3%)
Man	6 (42.9%)	5 (35.7%)	3 (21.4%)

Chi square test of association: GenderGp and HS4 (Local Law Enforcement)

A chi square test of association was conducted to assess the relationship between participants' decision to disclose a hypothetical incident to local law enforcement and their gender. Help-seeking decisions were not significantly different between groups $\chi^2(2, N = 45) = 1.050, p = .902$. Five of the expected counts were less than 5, which violated the assumptions of this test. Calculation of the Fisher's exact test also resulted in a non-significant result ($p = .908$). Results from the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 25 below.

Table 25**Crosstabulation: Help-Seeking with Local Law Enforcement by Gender**

	Yes (would report)	No (would not report)	Unsure
TGNC	3 (25.0%)	5 (41.7%)	4 (33.3%)
Woman	3 (15.8%)	10 (52.6%)	6 (31.6%)
Man	3 (21.4%)	8 (57.1%)	3 (21.4%)

Qualitative interviews: themes about gender

Ash and Hermione both discussed the impact of their gender identity on their help-seeking decisions. Ash in particular felt that his gender identity served as a significant barrier to his ability to seek help and believed that his supervisor dismissed the severity of his experience because his stalker was a woman and he was a man. Ash specifically stated that these dynamics also crossed his mind, stating, “for a lot of female/male sexual violence, there's a lot of uncertainty, a lot of insecurity, a more of a desire to keep it under wraps so that people don't know because you might be embarrassed.”²⁰ Hermione recognized that her supervisor shared her gender, but not her racial identity, and stated that these gender and racial dynamics both potentially served as opportunities for her staff to “isolate” her from the team. Hermione also stated that she “didn’t want to be another statistic in anybody’s book,” so she decided not to disclose her experience of sexual assault, or any of the prior experiences she had before college. Hermione stated that her supervisor would also “chase her into the elevator to make sure that she’s okay” if she expressed emotionality during a meeting, so Hermione chose to avoid this type

²⁰ This sentiment was also reflected in the qualitative elaboration for the help-seeking questions, with one participant noting, “I think generally as a man reporting that kind of thing can be more difficult or has a stigma associated with it” in response to questions for disclosing to Title IX, campus police, and local law enforcement.

of response altogether. Hermione added, “I didn’t need to be coddled. I didn't need time off. I didn't need any of that. I just needed normalcy.”

Summary of Results

Quantitative analysis revealed a mix of statistically significant and non-significant results, which are enhanced by the qualitative elaboration provided by both survey and interview participants. These results could suggest interesting opportunities for improvements to policy and procedure in an effort to better support this unique population. While this chapter focused on strict description of findings, Chapter 5 will involve a broader discussion of the research questions in an effort to highlight the underlying themes of all analyses. A summary of the limitations in the data and the study’s design will also be included in the next chapter. Practical suggestions for both practitioners and scholars interested in this line of inquiry will also be described in the final chapter. The breadth of these data and the range of opportunities for continued examination are meaningful, even in the absence of many statistically significant results.

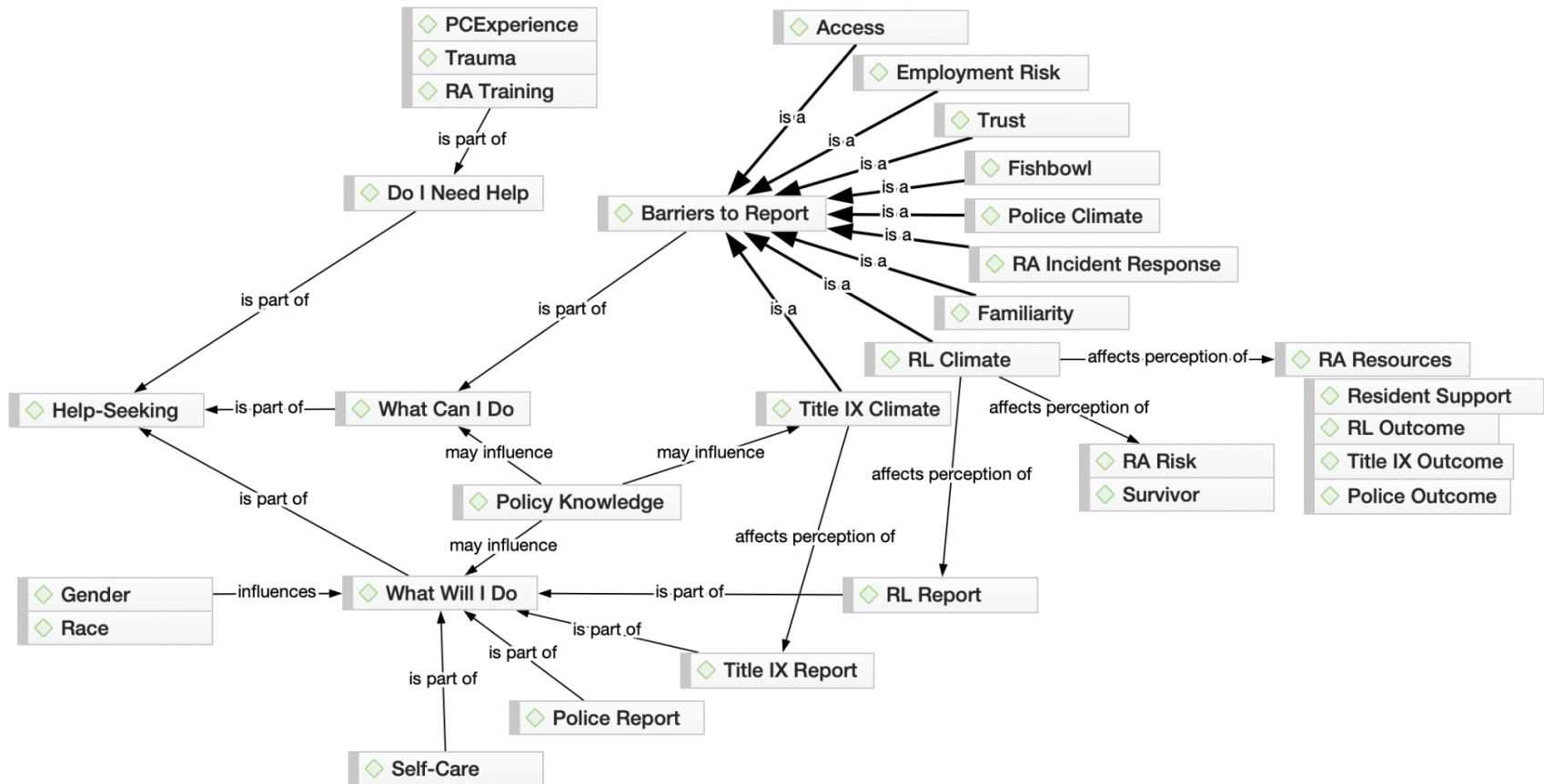
Chapter Five

This study examined the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of Resident Assistants to learn more about their help-seeking decisions after experiencing sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, or stalking. I identified a model of help-seeking from the literature (DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017) by which I could compare the choices of RAs with a general population of survivors. The *Where to Turn* model described three phases of decision-making for survivors of sexual violence: Do I Need Help, What Can I Do, and What Will I Do (DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017). While the experiences of the population of interest in my study varied from those of the sample in the DeLoveh and Cattaneo (2017) model, the barriers to help-seeking experienced by survivors of all kinds of sexual violence are often similarly described in the literature (e.g., Abavi et al., 2020; Fleming et al., 2021; Holland, 2017; Wood & Stichman, 2018). The underlying assumptions of this study involved an additional layer of consideration for this population of interest: do training and experience helping others in the aftermath of Title IX incidents affect how RAs perceive their options for support?

I used Atlas.ti software to examine the relationships between concepts identified in the qualitative data using their network mapping tool; the following map (see Figure 3) highlights the results of this analysis. Several anticipated (and unanticipated) themes emerged across the data collected. A detailed review of this visual tool will follow:

Figure 3

Network map of relevant codes



As compared to the *Where to Turn* model from the literature with a broader population of survivors, several unique codes emerged as “Barriers to Report” for this sample population. The culture of their residence life department, perceptions developed through incident response experiences, and a perceived lack of privacy as a result of the “fishbowl”²¹ mentality in on-campus life were all reflected as considerations for help-seeking among RAs. Additionally, many RA survivors cited their exposure to Title IX training and experiences in the role as helpful in the identification of their experiences as Title IX prohibited conduct (within the *Do I Need Help* phase of the model). RAs were also significantly more attuned to the functional outcomes of reporting to resources; whereas the model from the literature spoke to more social and intrapersonal effects, RAs cited specific help-seeking outcomes as either desired or avoided. For example, a concern about the confidentiality of reporting internally to residence life staff (i.e. where the information would be shared and with whom) was repeatedly discussed. This reflects a clear awareness of Title IX policy and the limitations of mandatory reporting across the residence life organization. Additionally, participants discussed a desire to control the steps after their report (such as reporting to police only if they perceived an arrest was likely, or reporting to Title IX if they were aware they could decide whether to pursue an investigation). This is a significant departure from the *Where to Turn* model in the literature, and likely specific to this RA population.

These unique characteristics and data points will be critical for the evaluation of the research questions below. The remainder of this section will discuss the research questions as proposed, and how the data collected begins to answer each question. Examples from survey

²¹ This code referred to statements wherein participants referenced feeling “no separation between work and home” or believed they could not access resources privately because of their high-visibility role on-campus.

respondents and interview participants will be included throughout; however, broader themes garnered from multiple data sources across the study were prioritized in the discussion here.

Discussion: Research Question 1

Research question 1 considered how RAs in their dual perspective as students and staff might espouse unique perspectives about Title IX services on their campuses. The data show many specialized experiences and perceptions that have affected how RAs interact with Title IX policy and practice, how those interactions affect their trust in these services, and what those perceptions might mean for survivors in this population. While there were no statistically significant findings observed for this research question, some of the results are meaningful despite statistical insignificance.

Participants were asked to rate their own knowledge of Title IX policy before completing a series of questions designed to assess their awareness of Title IX policy requirements. Participants' self-rated scores did not significantly relate to their scored Title IX policy knowledge, which is an interesting result. The vast majority of respondents (40) rated themselves on the knowledgeable half of the self-rating scale, but the average measured score was only 70%. This indicates that RAs in this sample likely overestimated their actual policy knowledge and inflated their self-assessed score. Policy knowledge and its relationship to trust or help-seeking behavior is complicated in the literature, with some studies reflecting an increase in reporting behavior with better knowledge of policy (e.g. Holland, 2017; Mancini et al., 2015) and others demonstrating the inverse of that relationship (e.g. Amin, 2019). Thus, it's not surprising that the statistically insignificant results of this analysis also suggest a murky relationship between RAs and their understanding of Title IX policy.

Because this study also sought to understand how RAs might perceive Title IX differently because of their on-the-job exposure to policy and practice, additional analyses compared measures of trust in Title IX. Groups of respondents were created based on the Title IX experiences they encountered as RAs. Nearly all participants (96.6%) indicated that they received Title IX training, so grouping RAs by exposure to training seemed less productive. However, participant experiences in responding to Title IX incidents and filing Title IX reports varied more significantly, which created useful grouping variables. Neither of these statistical analyses produced significant findings, which suggests that among this sample population, Title IX exposure on the job does not impact an RA's perceived trust in Title IX.

Participants in this study ranged from current RAs with less than a full year of academic experience on the job, to graduates and professional staff who have left their undergraduate institution in the last five years. The range of experiences presented and the gaps in time since their RA tenure may have affected the accuracy of their self-reported data, and may have also colored their perceptions of Title IX services over time. Repeating this analysis with a larger sample, perhaps delimiting the analysis by smaller groups of staff with more recent experience or more time away from the role might provide a fruitful examination of the effect of time on this finding. Additionally, I chose to avoid soliciting detailed data about the content and perceived quality of the Title IX training received, as inconsistencies in training for mandated reporters are well-documented and are already a source of confusion for administrators (Holland et al., 2018). Future research may consider examining these experiences and their effects on trust in Title IX services among a population of recently trained RAs.

Discussion: Research Question 2

Research question 2 addressed the perceptions of the study's sub-population of interest, RAs who identified as survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct. As of the moment that I type this sentence, RA survivors have yet to be explicitly identified or studied in the literature about help-seeking or Title IX access. Survivorship groups were created by respondent answers to the screening question for phase 2 interviews; this dataset created a nationally representative sample of RA survivors for this analysis.²² According to the literature, perceptions of potential help-seeking resources on and near college campuses are shown to influence help-seeking behavior (Holland, 2017; Holland & Cortina, 2017a; South, 2016). Analysis of this novel population's perceptions may support further study of help-seeking decisions.

Perceptions of Title IX services, as measured by RA responses to a series of Likert options adapted from Holland's (2017) study, did not change for students identifying as a survivor of Title IX prohibited conduct. Upon first review of the descriptive data from these items, it seemed that a greater percentage of the respondents scoring in the negative (indicating a distrust of Title IX) were identifying as survivors; however, the statistical comparison of mean scores between groups did not produce a significant result. Sample size may be impacting the results, since survivors were outnumbered in the sample 2-to-1. An additional study with a larger overall sample size, or comparison between relatively equal between-groups might provide clarity.

Discussion: Research Question 3

Research question 3 naturally followed question 2's analysis of RA survivor perceptions by evaluating how these participants' help-seeking behaviors were explained by the survey and

²² Six of the nine regional associations were represented in the survivor group, with participants representing the range of eligible graduation years and both public and private institution types.

interview data. Help-seeking differences were analyzed between survivor and non-survivor groups to determine if significant themes were evident from the data. This research question also directly ties into the theoretical framework for the study, with opportunity for a direct comparison to the DeLoveh and Cattaneo (2017) *Where to Turn* model. Surprisingly, respondents identifying as survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct indicated that they were statistically no more or less likely to disclose a hypothetical incident to their supervisor in residence life, Title IX, or local law enforcement in the community.²³ Survivors were statistically less likely to report a hypothetical incident to campus-based police, which is notable for further discussion below.

Do I Need Help?

In the *Do I Need Help* section of DeLoveh and Cattaneo's (2017) model, survivors interpret their personal experience of Title IX prohibited conduct and also evaluate the impact of the experience. RA survivors in this study described a relatively quick evaluation process in most cases, especially for those experiencing Title IX prohibited conduct after taking on the RA role and receiving training. Participants explained how they determined their experience might fall into the Title IX category; Ash described his recognition that the pattern of his resident's conduct had crossed the line from uncomfortable to stalking, while Luna stated that her realization was immediate because "all [of her] incidents involved physical touch that [she] didn't consent to." Even though Victoria expressed that she did not recognize her experience as sexual harassment until her supervisor named it, she had also already offered support to a peer in filing a report against the same respondent with Title IX. This disconnect implies that although Victoria knew that the respondent's conduct was prohibited by Title IX, she did not seem to think her experience was serious enough to warrant help. Peter indicated that he very quickly realized he

²³ The survivors' actual help-seeking behaviors after experiencing Title IX prohibited conduct were also interesting, with 13 of the 15 in the sample reporting that they disclosed to one or more of the resources listed; most often, this included their supervisor in residence life and/or Title IX.

needed support, and specifically from his institution: “I was beaten... It was, I found out to be some student here. They did that to me. Some student did that to me.” Respondents to the hypothetical help-seeking questions on the survey also described their evaluation process, with many citing assessments of severity and safety as key indicators of whether they would file reports. One participant stated, “If I felt my safety or the safety of anyone involved was at risk, I would, but if not, I likely would not” report to campus-based police.

What Can I Do?

The second stage of the *Where to Turn* model describes how survivors evaluate their options for support and apply their perceptions about those options to consider which resources are plausible sources of help. Identifying options is particularly tricky for the RA participants in this study; they were acutely aware of the offices (and even the specific people) designated to support survivors of sexual violence, but there was a recurring theme of uncertainty related to their own perceived access. Ash stated that he was unsure if RAs were able to seek support at Title IX because “our residence life administrative staff never made it clear if we could fully utilize the Title IX office without some fear of retaliation.” Luna also felt that Title IX was brushed over in RA training: “It was more so as a general idea as, you also being a student on campus, this is something you can if you need, you can reach out to.” Hermione explained how her knowledge of prior Title IX reports at the institution precluded her own help-seeking: “because it was one of those things where it was like I knew what I thought the outcome could be and so I decided that I just didn't want that to be my outcome.” Participants in the hypothetical help-seeking section of the survey also expressed concerns related to how their perceptions of these resources affected their decision. One respondent stated that their report to campus-based police “depends on the officer responding,” while another stated that their Title IX office “was

not accessible to students,” so they did not believe a report from an RA would be “taken seriously.”

RAs have more frequent access to professional staff in residence life who typically interact less often with the average resident in their hall. Participants in the interviews described their interest in utilizing their supervisors as a resource, with a wide range of success reflected in their stories. Ash knew that his supervisor was an ideal first resource for the incident involving his resident’s conduct, but was disappointed by her response to his concerns:

[the residence life supervisor] didn't report it to the Title IX office, and I didn't report it to the Title IX office, and what I think happened, it stopped, and I think that my supervisor pulled in the student and was like, "You gotta cut it out," which, to me, that's pretty inappropriate.

Other RAs described their supervisors in terms of the quality of their personal relationships, but even close connections did not consistently predict disclosures of sexual violence. Both Hermione and Victoria described feeling very well-connected to and supported by their direct supervisor, but only Victoria “accidentally” disclosed her incident to her supervisor. Hermione cited a concern about feeling “isolated” on her predominantly white staff if her supervisor or peers were aware of her sexual assault experiences. Luna stated that she immediately wrote off her supervisor as a potential source of help simply because they were “not particularly close.” Survey respondents cited both positive and negative perceptions of trust in their supervisor’s response as reasons to seek support or avoid disclosing a hypothetical incident to residence life.

What Will I Do?

All of the interview participants ultimately reported their experience to one or more support services on their campus, which allowed for meaningful analysis of their help-seeking

decisions in this stage of the model. During the *What Will I Do* phase, survivors assess the potential consequences of their likely choices. DeLoveh and Cattaneo (2017) found that their sample of survivors focused on both social perceptions of help-seeking and internalized shame related to the unwanted sexual experience. These themes were not as clearly evident from the RA participants in this study; however, the RA participants in this study were more likely to evaluate multiple potential avenues of help-seeking before making a decision.

Ash described briefly considering seeking Title IX support on his own, but his supervisor's response had led him to feel his "cry for help had been diminished." Peter explained how his decision to seek the Title IX office's support was also validated by his friends, who provided "encouragement, they tried to keep my mind off the incident." Overall, and perhaps specifically because of their exposure to the help-seeking behaviors of others, RAs in the study expressed more significant concerns about the functional outcomes of their help-seeking decisions. Carl highlighted this issue in how he described his help-seeking with Title IX and how it influenced his work with residents. "I was very nervous talking to [Title IX] because I was not given like...I was not treated the way I expected to be treated." Hermione's understanding of the formal reporting procedures at her university silenced her from disclosing her experience; she shared, "I had no desire to trust anybody with anything, if it wasn't going to be handled with care and appropriately and professionally." As a result, she was left to *Cope on One's Own* (DeLoveh & Cattaneo, 2017), and relied upon her prior victimization experiences to anticipate how she was going to react to the trauma and move through processing the event.

Help-Seeking With Campus-Based Police

A fascinating result from this research question emerged from the help-seeking disclosures to campus-based police. While most of the research questions in this study focused

on the relationship between RAs and their campus Title IX office, it's apparent from the data that RAs struggle to distinguish between certain resources because of significant overlap in protocol and likelihood of interaction. Disclosing to supervisors often implied a mandated report to Title IX, which in some institutional contexts, also involved a report to campus police.²⁴ In response to the hypothetical help-seeking question about disclosing an incident to campus police, survivors were significantly less likely to report to campus police than RAs within the sample who did not identify as a survivor. This finding may also be affected by the sample size and incongruence between groups, however, it is supported by some of the qualitative elaboration provided by survey respondents.

Multiple participants expressed specific concerns about the confidentiality of campus police based on experiences they have had with officers responding to incidents or other reputational concerns. Two participants explained a similar barrier to reporting, stating, "Campus safety often talked to other RAs about specific Title IX situations." Still others noted that they have "never seen a positive outcome [after reporting to police] for my friends who are also survivors," nor their residents in the Title IX incidents in which they have interacted with campus police. A couple survivors cited experiences with campus police that would have encouraged them to report, such as an established relationship, or a supervisor with a dual role in campus safety. But the majority of survivor respondents to the qualitative section of this help-seeking scenario were unequivocally opposed to seeking help from this resource.

Discussion: Research Question 4

In research question 4, group differences in many of the measures selected for this study were compared across racial and gender groups. Qualitative and quantitative measures of policy

²⁴ Compelled reporting laws to local police or the prosecutor's office are increasingly common at the state level (Mancini et.al, 2016).

knowledge, trust in Title IX, and help-seeking decisions were examined for group differences by race and gender identity, with a few notable findings. While none of the calculated group differences between races or genders were statistically significant, there was one result that was approaching significance and may be affected by the sample size. Group differences in reporting hypothetical incidents to residence life supervisors were not significant ($p = .061$), but with a larger sample population, this relationship may be worth further testing. These differences may have also been affected by the transformation of the race and gender demographic data to ensure adequate group sizes and efficient statistical analysis in the time available for this dissertation research. Additional testing with individual racial or gender identification groups might be fruitful in future studies or with the existing dataset.

Limitations

My positionality was a strength for this research topic, but it also created a limitation. My experiences as both a residence life and Title IX professional were an opportunity for bias in my beliefs about how these two areas interact and how the work may affect student employees. I developed this research idea from personal experiences supervising and supporting RAs managing traumatic incidents, and I know that my assumptions about those experiences were driving my interest in this topic. However, through memoing and intentional research design choices (such as the semi-structured interview protocol), I aimed to eliminate as much of my own bias as possible. This goal was also centered in my professional ideology related to trauma-informed care, and my belief that the voices and experiences of those impacted by sexual violence must be identified and amplified. While this inevitably created a more challenging study, I believe that the knowledge gained by this endeavor was worth the effort. I also know that my professional training has allowed me to conduct this research with the experience necessary

to sensitively address participant experiences with a vulnerable topic, and I provided all participants with a resource guide for national support services related to sexual violence. I also offered participants my assistance in accessing their campus-based resources, including navigating confidential support or their institution's formal grievance processes. Participants in phase 2 received a follow up email shortly after their participation in the study to offer further assistance.

Many other limitations in the research design were created by the choices made in the interest of participant privacy and psychological safety. Discussing trauma, either as a first-responder to the trauma of others or as a survivor of traumatic sexual assault, is not an easy conversation to have; depersonalization of the data was one way to offer support to the participants, but participation rate in interviews held true to this anticipated limitation. Prioritizing privacy affected the types of analysis I was able to conduct, especially with the nationally representative data collected in phase 1, but was worthwhile for the safety and well-being of my participants.

While I was hopeful for a much broader dataset, I was pleasantly surprised with the diversity of the resulting sample in many ways. I expected an overrepresentation of either demographic extreme (graduated RAs or currently employed students), but received responses from a relatively equitable distribution of students by graduation year. I was also surprised by the gender diversity of the resulting sample in both phases; while the phase 2 population adequately represented phase 1 by gender, it was more lacking in racial diversity than the phase 1 population. I expected more difficulty in achieving representativeness of interview participants by gender and race, which was not reflected in the final population; two men (one Black and one White), three women (two White and one Black), and one (Black) non-binary RA ultimately

participated in the interview. Perspectives from other non-dominant racial groups, such as Latine, Asian, or Indigenous survey participants were lacking within the interview population.

Sampling bias, especially for the phase 2 interviews, was also likely given the nature of the topic (Maxwell, 2013). Participants who had strong feelings about how their victimization experiences were affected by their institution's response or their role as an RA responding to sexual violence were more likely to elect to participate in the study overall. Institutional policies are generated from the same federal guidance but are rarely identical across campuses. Thus, there was also likely to be considerable variability in the policies that participants were subject to across multiple institution sites, with additional variability in how they were trained to understand the applicable policies across years of employment or employment at multiple institutions. The qualitative detail offered in phase 2 clarified some of these variables to allow for in-depth description of the RA's experience as it relates to their perceptions and help-seeking behaviors.

Because this study aimed to gather a nationally representative sample for the first time in the literature related to this topic, the data can explain the accomplishment of this goal. The total survey population was more representative of the nation than I anticipated; I collected participants' regional affiliation with ACUHO-I and assumed that relative participation would vary by size of region (since some regions have many more institutions of higher education than others). While larger regions did include higher numbers of respondents, there was at least one participant from every possible region. While I was hoping for a larger dataset overall, the attrition rate from question 1 through question 40 was also less than I expected (44 of 70 respondents who opened the survey completed all scored items) and allowed for a robust analysis of all research questions.

Given that there were fifteen (15) RAs eligible for phase 2 from the survey, interview interest from seven (7) of these participants represented a high response rate. Participation in an interview by six (6) RAs was even more impressive. However, my plan for the interview phase was designed to allow for a more representative sample from the survey population, and I unfortunately did not have enough interested participants to be selective. The benefit of a smaller pool allowed me to invite all participants who expressed interest in an interview. The qualitative data gathered via interview also suggests that my concern about selection bias related to the overrepresentation of skewed perspectives of Title IX might have held true. While some respondents expressed neutral to generally positive attitudes toward the Title IX services on their campus, multiple participants highlighted specific grievances with Title IX's response (or lack thereof) to their incidents.

An additional limitation was inherent in the focus of the interview and the selection of help-seeking behaviors of interest. While survey data was collected regarding reports to on- and off-campus law enforcement resources, the interviews were not designed to address this subject. As a result, most participants did not discuss thinking about disclosing to police or officially reporting to law enforcement (Luna was a notable exception). Further examination of RA survivors' decision-making specifically as it relates to police reports or criminal procedures, especially in light of the statistically significant differences within the survey data, would be interesting for future research.

Recommendations for Practice

I selected a critical pragmatist epistemology for this study because I felt strongly connected to the role of the scholar-practitioner and how my personal experiences in higher education inspired this topic. As a scholar, I have attended to the influence of theory in real

world settings and wanted to be a contributor in ways that practitioners like me would find accessible and helpful (Bourgeois, 2010; Given, 2008). I also believed that the constructions of my participants as they related to understanding Title IX policy on their campus were more likely to be meaningful to their help-seeking than some objective truths about the policy climate (which will change again by the time someone reads this dissertation). Therefore, this section will discuss the implications of this data for many practitioners in higher education and recommendations for improving access. Whenever possible, I will share the words and recommendations of my study participants to elucidate these findings.

RAs feel vulnerable without clear support

I entered this study with assumptions from my personal experiences supervising and supporting RAs through experiences of Title IX prohibited conduct. I was hopeful that my assumptions were wrong, but the data show otherwise. RAs in this sample expressed feeling particularly vulnerable to Title IX prohibited conduct as a result of their high-visibility roles and continuous engagement with residents and staff in the living environment. This construct of “RA Risk” emerged early in the interviews, with Ash sharing, “there wasn't really anything really focused on what if you are at higher risk because of your position and something happens to you.” Luna echoed this sentiment, stating, “when you're working as a RA, you're more likely to end up in a Title IX situation.” Three of the six participants in my interviews described Title IX prohibited conduct that they experienced as a consequence of their RA position via required interactions with residents or staff they may not have encountered elsewhere. Despite the discomfort involved in acknowledging vulnerability to sexual violence, the RA's workplace is still a workplace, where many are encountering these employment-related risks and challenges

for the first time. We could all do better by student staff by prioritizing their safety on campus and focusing on tangible strategies for support beyond “if you are in danger, run.”

While it is reasonable to assume that living on-campus presents a greater risk of sexual violence, it is astonishing how consistently these same RAs expressed uncertainty about accessing their own resources. All survey respondents received training, yet many espoused confused sentiments about whether or not they would be required to report their own experiences of prohibited conduct as a mandated reporter.²⁵ All interview participants described how resources were shared with them during RA training; Victoria explained how this was not always clearly about or for them as well: “They told us how to fill out all the forms and that... They never exclusively said, ‘Hey. Also fill this out for yourself if something happens.’” Ash also described how a former RA’s rumored termination after a sexual assault persisted in the reputation among his staff and left students afraid of reporting for fear of retaliation and the significant financial implications of losing their RA job.

RAs need clear messaging from both Title IX administrators in training for RAs and from residence life supervisors on a more consistent and informal basis to break down this perceived barrier. More importantly, if these perceived rumors about employment termination after help-seeking are true, hiring managers and supervisors should immediately reconsider this practice; any punitive effects for parties on either side of Title IX incidents are in conflict with both the intent of the Title IX Final Rule and its requirements for institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

It appears that the training provided to RAs is clearly preparing RA survivors to better catalog and evaluate their resources on-campus, which is an often-cited barrier for college student survivors in general (Amin, 2019; Mancini et al., 2016), but this greater awareness did

²⁵ The 2020 Final Rule carves out an exception for survivors of prohibited conduct who are also mandated reporters.

not result in easier disclosures for any of the participants. Practitioners within both functional areas (Title IX and residence life) should consider re-evaluating how the disclosure process is discussed with RAs, particularly if RA survivors do not have access to private reporting for their own use, separate from communication lines intended for resident disclosures. Hermione urged her residence life colleagues to remember: “RAs are experiencing the same things as the resident is or their colleagues are, or they themselves are, but they're just experiencing it differently. And we can't measure trauma.” Even Peter and Carl, who both expressed generally positive perceptions of Title IX services on their campus also talked about being “nervous” to report and concerned about “fairness” in the outcome.

RA survivors are instrumentalists

Fair outcomes were also a consistent theme from multiple data sources. Whereas survivors in DeLoveh and Cattaneo’s (2017) grounded theory study espoused concerns about social consequences and shame in their help-seeking behavior, RAs were outcome-driven. I suspect that their increased access to Title IX incidents and their incomplete feedback about the process (from infrequent training, second- or third-hand information from students, and the reputational concerns that circulate RA teams) may play a role. Data from interviewees provided solid guidance for both Title IX administrators and residence life supervisors seeking to improve RA knowledge about resources. For example, while many Title IX trainings referenced by interviewees focused on the report only, providing RAs with basic information about potential resolutions may dispel the mythology a bit. Additionally, mandated reporters and survivors alike are often misinformed about the potential for non-punitive support from Title IX, which could also improve RA access to Title IX services if they were aware of the full spectrum available.

Employment risk was a significant barrier to reporting for RAs when considering whether or not to disclose to a supervisor. Ash explained how he perceived his job responsibilities as the priority, stating, “the second you start failing at your job responsibilities, even if you do have to take care of yourself more, your head's on the chopping block.” A survivor who responded to the survey also indicated that they hesitated to report to residence life because they were “considering a career in higher education and would have been scared.” Despite generally positive feedback about RA relationships with their supervisors, perceptions of the Title IX or police reporting climate on their campus were inherently tied to their decisions with supervisors because of mandatory reporting policies. RA training consistently conveyed that they understood their supervisors would have been required to report to Title IX, so survivors who were hesitant or unsure about Title IX also waffled about discussing the incident with a supervisor. Policy knowledge appeared to mediate this relationship, at least with one survey respondent who stated, “while I knew [the supervisors] had reporting responsibilities, I also knew I could decide whether or not to pursue a formal case.”

Interview participants suggested that Title IX should increase their transparency for RAs during training and share more explicit information about access to services:

We don't just have to frame it as how you help your residents. We can frame it like, "This is for all students and employees who are a part of this institution and part of this culture. It doesn't matter if it happens off campus, if it happens on campus, or happened 10 years ago, you can receive a level of help." (Ash)

Luna echoed this sentiment, indicating that she wished her Title IX office would “talk to us as RAs and check in on us, instead of only hitting on the facts.” Victoria acknowledged that her Title IX office is under-resourced, and indicated that with more staff, she expected that they

could be more responsive and communicative about their process. Hermione and Ash both encouraged RA supervisors to provide support, rather than focus on the efficacy of the survivor in their RA role at the moment of disclosure.

Reputation and climate matter to RAs

RA participants in both the survey and interviews shared consistent themes as to how they developed their perceptions of Title IX support services throughout their experience. Survivors and survey respondents alike described how their observations of the Title IX process, or the management of incidents by police, or their supervisor's perceived trustworthiness affected their decisions to disclose or withhold their experiences. RA experiences with these processes and representative staff are very influential in how these offices are perceived, and these perceptions can last. Hermione is perhaps the most helpful example of why these reputational concerns are worthy of attention and intention:

But there's always that like, well, don't hold your breath because who really knows how [the Title IX process] is going to go? So I think, in the moment, and even after that, it didn't have a huge impact for me personally, but even coming back as a professional we just had to do Title IX training and I was like, [the Title IX Coordinator is] not doing it. We can't keep going through the same thing over and over and over again.

Hermione's frustrations as an RA with her Title IX Coordinator's lack of effort in connecting with RAs resurfaced when she returned to work at the same institution as a Resident Director, and found the training experience had not changed. Ash developed his concerns about reporting to residence life from a rumor about an RA he had never directly met.

There is already increasing attention to the effects of campus climate on Title IX compliance, with the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) dictating a

mandatory climate survey every two years (Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act [VAWA], 2022). Institutions are still scrambling to identify the regulatory requirements from this new bill, but in the meantime, they may consider engaging in some climate assessment within their own populations. Every training session, community event, and interaction with a potential Complainant presents an opportunity to gather data about the campus climate for Title IX. Residence life and student affairs may benefit from this kind of assessment for all campus-based resources as well, given that their capability to respond to crises is limited by the information they have about those student needs.

Rumors and reputation about fairness, empathy, and due process persist beyond the typical lifespan of an RA's tenure in the role. Higher education as a profession depends upon recruitment from within, and it's evident from multiple participants in the interview phase of this study that students may return to the college or university environment with established perceptions and beliefs about Title IX that affect their work as professionals. We may never know who brings these histories to their work, but the perception is certainly the reality until trust can be restored and relationships repaired. All providers of support services should recognize the long-lasting impact of these challenges and proactively seek feedback from these key demographics to intervene before the harm cannot be undone.

Recommendations for Scholarship

Despite a critical pragmatist focus on tangible recommendations for practitioners engaged in this work, the results of this study illuminated key considerations for future scholarly research as well. In addition to what has already been identified throughout this chapter in the discussion of results and limitations from the current study, the following implications for research and scholarly inquiry are offered in consideration of the experiences and stories shared by this unique

population of student staff which are to be documented in the literature for the first (but hopefully not the last) time.

RA experiences are unique in this policy context

I approached this research with a suspicion that existing literature examining how students perceived Title IX, or how mandated reporters perceived Title IX was missing something big. It's clear from these findings, and the data's departure from the help-seeking model identified in the literature, that this suspicion has been confirmed. RAs have offered diverging and novel perspectives about how Title IX policy translates to practice. More importantly, these student staff have provided administrators and researchers with accessible data that acknowledges multiple viewpoints of Title IX compliance on-campus. This study began with a question about the survivorship rate documented in Holland's (2017) single-site survey; while the sampled survivorship rate from this study does not appear to be as high as the prior sample (34% vs. 45%), both samples did reflect a departure from the literature about survivorship on-campus. Continued exploration of survivorship experiences among RAs may prove useful for student affairs practitioners, residence life supervisors, and Title IX professionals seeking to understand relative rates of trauma exposure in pockets of the campus community.

Information about what students need and how it can be offered to them is available in a one-stop source within the RA population; these participants shared data from their own survivorship experiences, their observations of student survivor outcomes, and cultural or reputational concerns that had been shared within the team. RAs clearly have unique experiences in the assessment of campus climate related to Title IX, but have expressed feeling limited in their communications with Title IX, or feeling as if they are solely treated as reporting parties regardless of the perspective they have to offer. Continued development of more diverse campus

climate assessment, with attention to these special populations, may result in clearer data and recommendations for improved practice on a site-specific level. Additionally, the increased exposure to trauma within the RA role deserves further scholarly attention. Ongoing research about the effects of trauma (not just vicarious or secondary exposure to the traumatic experiences of their residents) would benefit from the inclusion of these RAs' voices.

Policy research would benefit from more diversity in perspective

Title IX policy research, even despite pending guidance and the winds of change, might still teach us something new by asking RAs for some of these answers. Higher education, particularly in critical research arenas, values and prioritizes diversity in data. Power and privilege on-campus extend far beyond the confines of racial, ethnic, and gender demographics. There is power and privilege in serving as an RA and, as evident by some of these participants' narratives, there is an even greater power exerted over their experiences when they agree to serve their campus in this role. RAs are likely not alone in this catch-22; research assistants, teaching assistants, new professionals, and even the students working the desk at the campus gym are all caught between worlds, beholden to their employer's requirements and also a student member of their campus community. We should value this diversity in perspective equally, and examine how these intersections within our communities are affecting climate, culture, and perceptions of support services, especially in a civil rights context.

Additionally, many of the statistical analyses within this dataset were affected by sample size. Repetition of these surveys and interviews within broader populations of RAs, other residence life professionals, and many other pockets of campus life might provide a more detailed perspective of Title IX climate broadly. Institutions may benefit from adapting some of these tools for assessment of trust, policy knowledge, and help-seeking choices from the

literature and using the data to improve their own understanding of campus needs as well as perceived accessibility to supportive services.

Conclusion

Title IX demands a lot of institutions of higher education in its 37 words: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). Institutions may feel this is an insurmountable goal, one in which progress should be the target rather than perfection. In that case, I hope and expect that this scholarship extends the conversation as to where we are heading next as a profession. We know we will be upended by a shifting policy climate on a whim, and we also know that much of our work is beyond our control. However, RAs are telling us loud and clear that they need more from us. Because of these students and their stories, because of the courage of Ash, Carl, Hermione, Luna, Peter, and Victoria, and after all of their efforts late at night, in the lobby with upset parents, and simply on the way to the bathroom, I can unquestionably say: they deserve our all.

References

- Abavi, R., Branston, A., Mason, R., & Du Mont, J. (2020). An Exploration of Sexual Assault Survivors' Discourse Online on Help-Seeking. *Violence and Victims*, 35(1), 126–140. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-18-00148>
- Amar, A.F., Strout, T.D., Simpson, S., Cardiello, M. & Beckford, S. (2014). Administrators' perceptions of college campus protocols, response, and student prevention efforts for sexual assault. In *Violence and Victims*, 29(4), 579-593. DOI: 10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-12-00154
- Amin, D.M. (2019). *Students' awareness, knowledge, and perceptions of mandatory reporting of sexual victimization on college campuses*. [Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Commonwealth University]. VCU Scholars Compass.
- Association of College and University Housing Officers - International. (2022). ACUHO-I Home Page. www.acuho-i.org.
- Association of Title IX Administrators [ATIXA]. (2022). atixa.org.
- Blimling, G.S. (2010). *The Resident Assistant: Applications and Strategies for Working With College Students in Residence Halls*. Kendall Hunt Publishing.
- Bostock v. Clayton County, 590 US __ (2020). <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2019/17-1618>.
- Bourgeois, N. (2010). The Critical Pragmatist as Scholar-Practitioner. *Scholar Practitioner Quarterly*, 4(3), 233-244.
- Branch, K. A., & Richards, T. N. (2013). The Effects of Receiving a Rape Disclosure: College Friends' Stories. *Violence Against Women*, 19(5), 658–670. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801213490509>
- Brubaker, S. J., & Mancini, C. (2017). The Impact of Increased State Regulation of Campus

- Sexual Assault Practices: Perspectives of Campus Personnel. *Journal of School Violence*, 16(3), 286–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2017.1318577>
- Brubaker, S.J., Keegan, B., Guadalupe-Diaz, X.L., Beasley, B. (2017). Measuring and reporting campus sexual assault: Privilege and exclusion in what we know and what we do, in *Sociology Compass*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12543>.
- Cannon v. University of Chicago, 441 US 667 (1979). <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1978/77-926>.
- Civil Rights Act of 1964 § 7, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq (1964).
- Clay, J. A., Pederson, A. C., Seebeck, J., & Simmons, C. A. (2019). Administrative Response to Campus Sexual Assault: Thinking Through Implementation Tensions. *The Review of Higher Education*, 42(2), 681–706. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2019.0011>
- Cleary, S. (2015). Using Title IX and the Model of Public Housing to Prevent Housing Discrimination against Survivors of Sexual Assaults on College Campuses. *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, 30(2), 364–382.
- Contrini, S. (2021). *Resident Assistants and Title IX: the hypocrisy of compelled disclosure*. [thesis, Rowan University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (Fourth edition). SAGE.
- Crivello, K.A. (2020). *The management of secondary trauma experiences for Resident Assistants in housing and residential life*. [Doctoral dissertation, California State University, Long Beach]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education, 526 US 629 (1999). <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1998/97-843>.
- DeLoveh, H. L. M., & Cattaneo, L. B. (2017). Deciding Where to Turn: A Qualitative

- Investigation of College Students' Helpseeking Decisions After Sexual Assault. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 59(1/2), 65–79.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12125>
- Demers, J. M., Roberts, A. P., Bennett, S., & Banyard, V. L. (2017). Victim Motivations for Disclosing Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Partner Abuse. *Affilia*, 32(3), 327–343.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109917704936>
- Denzin, N.K. (2003). The Call to Performance. *Symbolic Interaction*, 26(1), 187-207.
- Dictionary.com. (2020, June 26). “ACAB.” <https://www.dictionary.com/e/acronyms/acab/>.
- Driessen, M. C. (2020). Campus Sexual Assault Policies: A Feminist Policy Analysis Framework. *Journal of Women in Social Work*, 35(3), 397–412.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109919878273>
- Dunlap, J. S. (2016). *The personal is suddenly very political: Legislative efforts to improve the experiences of campus sexual assault survivors*. [Doctoral dissertation., Northern Illinois University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Fleming, C. J. E., Lynch, K. A., Hakas, M. B., & Belanger, E. (2021). Resource Use After Unwanted Sexual Experiences in Undergraduates: A Comprehensive Evaluation of Factors Related to the Decision to Seek Help. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(7–8), NP3433–NP3452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518780408>
- Flynn, E. (2021). *Rape myth prevalence among resident assistants at Rowan University*. [thesis, Rowan University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools, 503 US 60 (1992).
<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1991/90-918>.
- Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District, 524 US 274 (1998).

<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1997/96-1866>.

Gerdsen, J., & Walker, J. (2019). Who Reports Mandatory Reporters? *Theatre Topics*, 29(2), 161–168. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2019.0022>

Gill, C.A. (2020) *A phenomenological study examining Resident Assistants' experiences as mandated reporters in cases of sexual violence*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Dayton]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Given, L.M. (2008). Critical Pragmatism. *SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publications.

Grimm v. Gloucester Cty. Sch. Bd. - 972 F.3d 586 (4th Cir. 2020).

<https://www.lexisnexis.com/community/casebrief/p/casebrief-grimm-v-gloucester-cty-sch-bd>.

Gronert, N. M. (2019). Law, campus policy, social movements, and sexual violence: Where do we stand in the “MeToo” movement? *Sociology Compass*, 13(6), e12694.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12694>

Harris, K. L. (2013). *Organizing sexual violence: Communicative, intersectional dilemmas around mandated reporting* [Doctoral dissertation., University of Colorado at Boulder]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Heale, R., & Twycross, A. (2015). Validity and reliability in quantitative studies. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 18(3), 66–67. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2015-102129>.

Hellmuth, J. L. (2016). *Attitudes, identification, decisions to report, and bystander factors among college freshman regarding sexual assault* [Doctoral dissertation, Temple University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Hextrum, K., Becker, M., & Stinnett, J. (2021). Masculinist state protection: Safety concerns

- produce gender disparities in university housing policies, in *Gender Issues*, 38, 461-482.
- Holland, K. J. (2017). *Sexual Assault Response Systems in an Evolving Legal Landscape: Implications for Reporting and Help-Seeking* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Holland, K.J. (2019). Examining responsible employees' perceptions of sexual assault reporting requirements under federal and institutional policy. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 19(1), 133-149.
- Holland, K. J. (2020). Correlates of college women's intentions to use formal campus supports for sexual assault. *Psychology of Violence*, 10(2), 245–254.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000240>
- Holland, K.J. & Cortina, L.M. (2017a). "It happens to girls all the time": Examining sexual assault survivors' reasons for not using campus supports. in *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 59, 50-64. DOI 10.1002/ajcp.12126.
- Holland, K. J., & Cortina, L. M. (2017b). The evolving landscape of Title IX: Predicting mandatory reporters' responses to sexual assault disclosures. *Law and Human Behavior*, 41(5), 429–439. <https://doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000253>
- Holland, K.J., Cortina, L.M., & Freyd, J.J. (2018). Compelled disclosure of sexual assault, in *American Psychologist*, 73(3), 256-268.
- Holland, K. J., Cortina, L. M., & Freyd, J. J. (2019). Advocating alternatives to mandatory reporting of college sexual assault: Reply to Newins (2018). *American Psychologist*, 74(2), 250–251. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000415>
- Holland, K.J. & Bedera, N. (2020). "Call for help immediately" A discourse analysis of Resident

Assistants' responses to sexual assault disclosures, in *Violence Against Women*, 26(11), 1383-1402.

Holland, K.J. & Cipriano, A.E. (2020). Campus support providers' discussion of consent in response to sexual assault disclosure situations: Understanding of consent linked to resource referrals, in *Violence and Victims*, 35(4), 615-632. DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/VV-D-19-00154>.

Holland, K. J., Bedera, N., & Webermann, A. R. (2020a). The Selective Shield of Due Process: Analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's 2020 Title IX Regulations on Live Cross-Examination. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 20(1), 584–612. <https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12216>

Holland, K.J., Gustafson, A.M., Cortina, L.M., & Cipriano, A.E. (2020b). Supporting survivors: The roles of rape myths and feminism in university resident assistants' response to sexual assault disclosures, in *Sex Roles*, 82, 206-218. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01048-6>.

Holland, K. J., & Cipriano, A. E. (2021). Does a report = support? A qualitative analysis of college sexual assault survivors' Title IX Office knowledge, perceptions, and experiences. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 21(1), 1054–1081. <https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12271>

Holland, K. J., Cipriano, A. E., Goodman-Williams, R., & Diede, A. S. (2021). Examining Support for University-to-Police Reporting Policies for Sexual Assault: The Role of Survivors' Consent. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 68(3–4), 440–454. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12533>

H.R.2016 - 112th Congress (2011-2012): Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act [Campus

- SaVE Act]. (2011, September 8). <http://www.congress.gov/>
- Jacoby, C. (2020). *Are We “RE”ady to Help?: Assessing the Campus Climate and Faculty/Staff’s Knowledge, Confidence, and Readiness to Engage in Campus Efforts Around Sexual Violence* [Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, School of Graduate Studies]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1990 [Clery Act], 79 Fed. Reg. 62751-62790, (October 20, 2014), (Codified at 34 CFR 668).
- Jones, A. E. (2020). *Sexual Assault on College Campuses: An Investigation of Psychological Well-Being and Reporting Behaviors of Female Victims* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Laverty, S.L. (2020). *“But are YOU okay?” Exploring burnout and help-seeking behaviors in Resident Assistants*. [Doctoral dissertation, Temple University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Letarte, C.M. (2013). Keepers of the Night: the dangerously important role of Resident Assistants on college and university campuses, in *Kentucky Journal of Higher Education Policy and Practice*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.13023/KJHEPP.2013.02.2.4>
- Liebriech, H. (2020). *A case study of student and employee perspectives of Title IX*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawaii at Manoa], ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Logan, T.K., Stevenson, E., Evans, L., & Leukefeld, C. (2004). Rural and urban women’s perceptions of barriers to health, mental health, and criminal justice services: Implications for victim services. *Violence and Victims*, 19, 37–62.
- Lynch, R.J. (2017a). *Breaking the silence: A phenomenological exploration of secondary*

- traumatic stress in U.S. college student affairs professionals*. [Doctoral dissertation, Old Dominion University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Lynch, R.J. (2017b). The development and validation of the Secondary Trauma in Resident Assistants scale. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 44(1), 10-29.
- Mangan, K. (February 2021). Too much for students to handle? Why one university decided to do away with RAs. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/>
- Manata, B., DeAngelis, B. N., Paik, J. E., & Miller, V. D. (2017). Measuring Critical Aspects of the Resident Assistant Role. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(4), 618–623. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0046>
- Marques, O., Couture-Carron, A., Frederick, T.J., & Scott, H. (2020). The role of trust in student perceptions of university sexual assault policies, in *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 50(2), 39-53.
- Maten, L. (2020). *Stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue among Resident Assistants at the University of Mississippi*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Mississippi]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Mancini, C., Pickett, J. T., Call, C., & Roche, S. P. (2016). Mandatory Reporting (MR) in Higher Education: College Students' Perceptions of Laws Designed to Reduce Campus Sexual Assault. *Criminal Justice Review*, 41(2), 219–235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016816634787>
- Maxwell, J.A. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods: an interactive approach*. SAGE Publications.
- McGhee, J. D. (2019). *Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Violence by Faculty and Staff at*

Hometown University: An Evaluation Study [Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

McPhail, B. (2003). A feminist policy analysis framework, in *the Social Policy Journal*, 2(2/3), 39-61.

Melnick, R.S. (2018). *The Transformation of Title IX: Regulating gender equality in education*. Routledge.

Moody, J. (2022, June 30). What Biden's Title IX Rules Mean for Due Process. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/06/30/>.

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [Belmont Report]. (1979). The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
<https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html>.

Newins, A., Bernstein, E., Peterson, R., Waldron, J., & White, S. (2018). Title IX Mandated Reporting: The Views of University Employees and Students. *Behavioral Sciences*, 8(11), 106. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs8110106>

Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance [Final Rule], 85 Fed. Reg. 30026-30579, (May 19, 2020), (codified at 34 CFR Part 106).

Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance [NPRM], 87 Fed. Reg. 41390-41579, (proposed June 23, 2022), (to be codified at 34 CFR Part 106).

- Nunn, M. M. (2018). *Journey to Compliance: Institutional Response to the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter to Address Campus Sexual Violence* [Doctoral dissertation, Mercer University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Peterson, A., & Ortiz, O. (2016, May). A better balance: Providing survivors of sexual violence with “effective protection” against sex discrimination through Title IX complaints. *Yale Law Journal*, 125(7), 2132-2155.
- Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act [VAWA], S. 3623, 117th Cong. (2022). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/3623/text>.
- Rios, G. O. (2017). *Attitudes Toward Consent and Alcohol Consumption: Impact on Reporting and Help Seeking After Sexual Assault* [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Rosenthal, J. M. (2017). *An Exploration of Responsible Employee Policies on College Campuses as Directed by Title IX: What Do Victims, Faculty, and Administrators Really Think about the policy?* [thesis, University of Colorado at Denver]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Rosenthal, M., Smith, C.P., & Freyd, J.J. (2017). Behind closed doors: University employees as stakeholders in campus sexual violence, in *Journal of Aggression, Conflict, and Peace Research*, 9(4), 290-304.
- Sabina, C., & Ho, L. Y. (2014). Campus and College Victim Responses to Sexual Assault and Dating Violence: Disclosure, Service Utilization, and Service Provision. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 15(3), 201–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838014521322>
- Sall, K. (2020). *Institutional betrayal: Students’ experiences with formally reporting a college sexual assault*. [thesis, East Carolina University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

- Shetterly, J. (2018). *Resident Advisers' Perceptions of Their Mandatory Reporting Status under Title IX: How They Can Help Survivors* [M.A., Eastern Michigan University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Smith, C. P., & Freyd, J. J. (2014). Institutional betrayal. *American Psychologist*, 69(6), 575–587. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037564>
- Sokolow, B. A. (2013). Who is a mandated reporter of what? Getting some clarity. [white paper]. Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA).
<https://cdn.atixa.org/website-media/atixa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/12194245/Mandated-Reporters.pdf>.
- South, K.A. (2016). *College student survivors' evaluations of institutional responses to reports of sexual violence*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon], ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Stone, J. (2020). *Receive, Respond, Report: Faculty Experiences with Students' Disclosures of Sexual Assault* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, Baltimore County]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Spencer, C., Mallory, A., Toews, M., Stith, S., & Wood, L. (2017). Why Sexual Assault Survivors Do Not Report to Universities: A Feminist Analysis. *Family Relations*, 66(1), 166–179. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12241>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2022). OCR Reading Room.
[https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/publications.html#:~:text=Title%20IX%20Responsibilities%3A%20%22Dear%20Colleague%22%20letter%20\(April%2026,put%20grievance%20procedures%20in%20place](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/publications.html#:~:text=Title%20IX%20Responsibilities%3A%20%22Dear%20Colleague%22%20letter%20(April%2026,put%20grievance%20procedures%20in%20place)
- Webermann, A. R. (2021). *Student Perceptions of Title IX Reporting and Response* [Doctoral

dissertation, University of Maryland, Baltimore County]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Weiss, K. G., & Lasky, N. V. (2017). Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Misconduct at College: A Critical Perspective. *Journal of School Violence, 16*(3), 259–270.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2017.1318575>

Wood, M., & Stichman, A. (2018). Not a Big Deal? Examining Help-Seeking Behaviors of Sexually Victimized Women on the College Campus. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 62*(6), 1415–1429.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X16683225>

Appendix A: Instruments

Phase 1: Survey Instrument

1. [demographic: race/ethnicity]
2. [demographic: gender identity]
3. Have you served in a part-time, undergraduate student staff position in residence life as a Resident Assistant, Resident Advisor, or similar live-in role?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. When did you graduate from your undergraduate institution?
 - a. 2017
 - b. 2018
 - c. 2019
 - d. 2020
 - e. 2021
 - f. 2022
 - g. Still enrolled
 - h. Not listed
5. Is your undergraduate institution public or private?
 - a. Public
 - b. Private
 - c. Unsure
6. Where was your undergraduate institution located?
 - a. AIMHO region (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming)
 - b. GLACUHO region (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio)
 - c. MACUHO region (Delaware, D.C., Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia)
 - d. NEACUHO region (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont)
 - e. NWACUHO region (Alaska, Oregon, Washington State)
 - f. SEAHO region (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia)
 - g. SWACUHO region (Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas)
 - h. UMR-ACUHO region (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin)
 - i. WACUHO region (California, Hawaii)
7. How long have you served as an RA on your campus?
 - a. <1 year
 - b. 1-2 years

- c. 3-4 years
 - d. >4 years
8. Did you receive training about your Title IX responsibilities while serving as an RA?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
9. How well do you understand the Title IX policy from your campus?
- a. Not at all
 - b. Slightly
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Mostly
 - e. Completely
10. Did you respond to any incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, or dating violence while serving as an RA?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
11. Did you file any mandatory reports of sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, or dating violence while serving as an RA?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
12. Please answer the following true/false questions related to the Title IX office on your campus:
- a. A student can make an anonymous report of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Office. (T)
 - b. A student who reports an experience of sexual misconduct can decline to participate in the investigation process. (T)
 - c. The student who reported and the student who is accused of sexual misconduct are both allowed to review the investigator's written report. (T)
 - d. A student who reports sexual misconduct to the Title IX Office must also file a report with the local Police Department. (F)
 - e. Students involved in a sexual misconduct investigation may have a support person present during any meeting. (T)
 - f. Title IX cannot respond to anonymous reports of sexual misconduct. (F)
 - g. The Title IX Office can offer confidential assistance to students who are considering making a report. (F)
 - h. The Title IX Office can respond to sexual misconduct that occurs off-campus. (T)
 - i. A student who witnesses sexual misconduct can report the incident to the Title IX Office. (T)

- j. For a student to be found “guilty” of sexual misconduct, the investigation must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the incident took place (F)
13. Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about the Title IX office on your campus: (Likert scale, Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
- a. The survivor would be taken seriously.
 - b. Nothing would happen to the perpetrator. (reverse scored)
 - c. There would be consequences for the perpetrator and they would be fair.
 - d. The survivor’s privacy would be protected.
 - e. The investigation would reveal the survivor’s identity to others. (reverse scored)
 - f. The survivor would be treated with dignity and respect.
 - g. Their safety would be ensured.
 - h. The survivor would not be informed about the outcome of the investigation. (reverse scored)
14. Hypothetically, if you experienced Title IX prohibited conduct while serving as an RA, would you have been willing to report to the Title IX office?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
 - i. Please explain your answer: (open response)
15. Hypothetically, if you experienced Title IX prohibited conduct while serving as an RA, would you have been willing to report to your supervisor in Residence Life?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
 - i. Please explain your answer: (open response)
16. Hypothetically, if you experienced Title IX prohibited conduct while serving as an RA, would you have been willing to report to law enforcement (on-campus police or public safety)?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
 - i. Please explain your answer: (open response)
17. Hypothetically, if you experienced Title IX prohibited conduct while serving as an RA, would you have been willing to report to law enforcement (off-campus police)?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
 - i. Please explain your answer: (open response)
18. While enrolled in college, have you experienced any of the following types of Title IX prohibited conduct? [Review this resource](#) for definitions of each. (Select all that apply)

- a. Sexual harassment
 - b. Sexual assault (includes fondling, rape, statutory rape, and incest)
 - c. Dating Violence
 - d. Domestic Violence
 - e. Stalking
 - f. None of the above
 - g. Prefer not to answer
19. (If any of the above items are selected) When did you experience prohibited conduct?
(Select all that apply)
- a. Before I became an RA
 - b. While I was an RA
 - c. After I was an RA
20. Did you report your experience of prohibited conduct? If so, to whom? (Select all that apply)
- a. My supervisor in residence life
 - b. The Title IX office
 - c. Law enforcement (on or off campus)
 - d. Confidential services (advocacy, counseling)
 - e. I did not formally report my experience of prohibited conduct
21. The second phase of this study is focused on understanding the help-seeking decisions of survivors of Title IX prohibited conduct who were also RAs. If you experienced Title IX prohibited conduct while you were in college, you are eligible to participate in the second phase. Because of the difficult subject matter, participants in the second phase will be compensated for their time and participation. Participation in the second phase is voluntary.
22. Would you be interested in participating in an interview for the second phase of this study? If so, please use this link to provide your contact information. Your contact information in this registration page is disconnected from your survey responses; your survey responses will remain anonymous.

Phase 2: Interview Protocol

Pre-Recording: Our conversation will be recorded today, and a written transcript will be provided to you for your review. Before we begin the recording, please select a pseudonym and update your name in the Zoom meeting. This will be the name on your record and in my summary of our interview for the study. If you would like to skip any question, or take a break at any time, please just let me know and I can stop the recording or proceed to the next question.

Introduction: Thank you for sharing your time and perspective with me today regarding your experiences as a Resident Assistant. You were invited to participate because you identified as a survivor of Title IX prohibited conduct during college in the first phase of this study. I recognize and honor how difficult it can be to share this information with me, and want to assure you that none of my questions today will ask you to discuss the prohibited conduct you experienced. At the beginning of the interview, I will ask you to identify which prohibited conduct you experienced just to confirm that you are eligible to participate in this phase.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about your perceptions of Title IX resources on your campus and how you sought help (or helped yourself) after experiencing prohibited conduct. All of the answers you share with me will be recorded, and any information you share that is personally identifiable for you or your institution will be redacted from the final transcript. Your privacy and safety is my priority. My hope is that you feel comfortable in the conversation to share your honest experiences with Title IX as an RA, and that we both learn more together.

Do you have any questions about the study or our conversation today before we get started?

Do you consent to participate in this study?

1. As a reminder, the last question on the survey asked if you had experienced any of the Title IX prohibited conduct listed. Because this interview is focusing on the experiences of survivors of prohibited conduct who also served as RAs, I will ask you to verify which of the following types of prohibited conduct you experienced while enrolled in college:
 - a. Sexual harassment
 - b. Sexual assault, includes rape, fondling, statutory rape, and incest

- c. Stalking
 - d. Dating Violence
 - e. Domestic Violence
2. **To start off, tell me about your experience as a Resident Assistant overall.**
- a. How did you feel about your role and responsibilities?
 - b. What were some of the successes and challenges that you recall?
 - c. How did you feel about your training related to Title IX incidents?**
 - i. Did you feel prepared to address those situations with training and supervisor support?
 - d. Did you have to respond to any incidents of sexual harassment or assault? Tell me about that.
 - i. How did you feel about this part of your role?
 - ii. Did you ever follow up with students you referred to Title IX? Tell me more about that.
 - iii. Did you ever speak to your supervisor or campus support services about these experiences?
 - iv. **How did these experiences with your residents affect how you felt about Title IX?**
 - e. How did you feel about the support services available to you on campus while you were an RA?
 - i. Tell me what you remember about the support services offered to you by supervisors or in training while you were an RA.
 - ii. What can you tell me about the conversations you had regarding your own self-care in the RA role?
 - iii. Was Title IX ever discussed as a resource for you as an RA? Tell me about that conversation.**
 - iv. Was university counseling offered as a resource while you were an RA?
 - v. Had you considered using counseling services on campus? Tell me more about that decision.
3. We're going to switch to talking about your experience as a survivor of prohibited conduct. As a reminder, I will not be asking any questions about the specific incident. If

you feel comfortable disclosing details throughout your responses to my other questions, I will honor your disclosures by ensuring that they remain anonymous per your pseudonym in my study.

- a. When you experienced prohibited conduct, were you a Resident Assistant at the time?
 - i. **If yes**, how do you think the incident you experienced affected you in the role?
 1. How do you think your training and experience as an RA affected your reaction to the incident?
 - ii. **If no**, did the incident occur before or after your time as an RA?
 - b. Do you think the RA role had any impact on your experience after the incident?
 - i. Do you think the incident had any impact on your motivations to become (or remain) an RA?
 - c. **How do you think your knowledge of campus resources as an RA affected your reaction to the incident?**
4. My research uses a model of help-seeking after sexual violence that describes the decisions survivors usually make after experiencing prohibited conduct. These decisions are broken down into three phases: **Do I Need Help, What Can I Do, and What Will I Do**. The next set of questions will ask about your decisions in each of those phases.
- a. After experiencing prohibited conduct, **tell me about how you came to realize that what happened was an incident of sexual harassment or assault**.
 - i. Talk to me about the more immediate effects of the incident on you (personally, academically, in your RA role, etc.)
 - ii. Were you concerned about your wellbeing or safety at any time? Tell me more.
 - b. After experiencing prohibited conduct, did you consider disclosing the incident to others for help (family, friends, support services on campus)?
 - i. Can you describe how you made your decision to **seek help**
avoid disclosing?
 - ii. In your decision-making process, did you consider any particular person or support service on campus first? Who or which service came to mind?

1. Was there a support service available on campus that you were **nervous to talk to**? Which one(s)? Tell me more about that.
- iii. Many of these supportive resources spend time with RAs during training. Did your RA training influence your decision? How?
- iv. Did you disclose the incident to anyone in Residence Life? Why or why not?
- v. Did you disclose the incident to the Title IX Office? Why or why not?
- c. What influenced your reporting or disclosure decisions?
 - i. Were you concerned about the **confidentiality of the Title IX office** potentially receiving your disclosure? Why or why not?
 1. How did that influence your decision to disclose, or not, to this office?
 - ii. Were you concerned about the **confidentiality of your supervisor(s)** potentially receiving your disclosure? Why or why not?
 1. How did that influence your decision to disclose, or not, to this person?
 - iii. Were you concerned about the **potential outcome** of reporting to the Title IX office? Why or why not?
 1. How did that influence your decision to disclose, or not, to this office?
 - iv. Were you concerned about the **potential outcome** of reporting to your supervisor? Why or why not?
 1. How did that influence your decision to disclose, or not, to this person?
- d. Were you looking for a supportive resource on campus after the incident?
 - i. If so, **what were you looking for in a supportive resource**?
 - ii. Did your campus offer **confidential support services to victims** of sexual assault or Title IX prohibited conduct?
 1. Did you seek support with those resources after your experience?
 2. Why or why not?

3. What influenced your decision to seek support or avoid the confidential victim services office?
 - iii. Did your campus offer **confidential counseling services** to students?
 1. Did you seek support with the counseling services after your experience?
 2. Why or why not?
 3. What influenced your decision to seek support or avoid the counseling services office?
 - iv. If you were not looking for a supportive resource on campus, **were you looking for support elsewhere?**
 1. Did you find support off-campus?
 - v. Were there any self-guided strategies or coping mechanisms you used to help yourself after experiencing prohibited conduct?
 1. Tell me about those strategies.
 2. Were they effective in helping you feel okay after the incident?
5. Is there anything else you think I should know about your experience as a college student survivor of Title IX prohibited conduct and RA?
 - a. What advice would you give to a current RA who may have recently experienced prohibited conduct?
 - b. What advice would you give to that RA's supervisor to assist in supporting that RA?
 - c. What advice would you give to the Title IX office on that RA's campus to assist in supporting that RA?

Appendix B: Title IX Prohibited Conduct Resource

Definitions of Title IX prohibited conduct

These definitions of prohibited conduct are derived from the Title IX Final Rule and must be addressed by all educational institutions receiving federal funding.

<p>01 SEXUAL HARASSMENT</p>	<p>conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:</p> <p>(1) An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct; (2) Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity; or (3) Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking</p>
<p>an offense classified as a forcible or nonforcible sex offense under the uniform crime reporting system of the Federal Bureau of Investigation</p>	<p>02 SEXUAL ASSAULT</p>
<p>03 DATING VIOLENCE</p>	<p>violence committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim</p>
<p>the use or attempted use of physical abuse or sexual abuse by a person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. is a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, or person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim; ii. is cohabitating, or has cohabitated, with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner; iii. shares a child in common with the victim; or iv. commits acts against a youth or adult victim who is protected from those acts under the family or domestic violence laws of the jurisdiction. 	<p>04 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</p>
<p>05 STALKING</p>	<p>engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. fear for his or her safety or the safety of others; or b. suffer substantial emotional distress.

Note: This item was linked to the survey screening question to allow participants to review the definitions of prohibited conduct per Title IX policy before responding, if needed.

Appendix C: Recruitment

WERE YOU AN RA?

Click here!

Participants invited to a study about RAs and Title IX

If you have served your college or university campus as a Resident Assistant (RA) since 2017, you are eligible to participate in a survey about RA perceptions of Title IX services.

Participants are eligible to participate if they have held a part-time student staff RA role within the last five (5) years at a college or university which received federal funding.

There is no direct benefit to participation in the study.

ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS:

- **COMPLETE A BRIEF SURVEY ABOUT THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF TITLE IX (~15 MIN)**
- **MAY BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW**
- Survey participants may opt in to a random drawing for compensation
- All interview participants will receive compensation for their time

This dissertation research study is conducted by Beth Paris, under the supervision of Dr. Beth Bukoski at Virginia Commonwealth University (IRB ID HM20025582). For more information, contact eparis2@vcu.edu.

Funding for this research has been provided by the Association of College and University Housing Officers - International (ACUHO-I) and the Association for Title IX Administrators (ATIXA)

Note: This flier was shared in PNG and PDF file formats via email and social media recruitment, as summarized in the table below.

Audience	Posted Via?	Date Sent	2nd Post	3rd Post	4th Post
ATIXA	ListServ	Jan 27			
ACUHO - I	ListServ/LinkedIn	Jan 31			
ASCA	ListServ	Jan 31			

Social Media Pages

Residence Life Professionals	Facebook admin	Jan 26	Feb 13	Mar 6	Mar 16
ACUHO-I Women in Housing	Facebook anon	Jan 29	Feb 13	Mar 6	Mar 16
ASCA Women in Student Conduct	Facebook anon	Jan 29	Feb 13		Mar 16
Student Conduct Professionals	Facebook anon	Jan 29	Feb 13		Mar 16
Equal Opportunity Title IX	Facebook anon	Jan 30	Feb 13		Mar 16
Student Affairs and Higher Ed Pros	Facebook anon	Jan 29	Feb 13	Mar 6	Mar 16

Emails

Direct emails to staff	Email	Fliers were sent to 33 staff supervisors in residence life departments, as identified on publicly posted websites.			
------------------------	-------	--	--	--	--

All posts to social media were shared with groups via a page administrator or using the “Post Anonymously” feature, such that the researcher’s personal profile was not attached to the study information.

Vita

Elizabeth Lee Paris was born on September 7, 1989 in Dover, New Jersey, and is an American citizen. She graduated from Atlantic Community High School in Delray Beach, Florida in 2008. She received her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in Early Childhood Development and Education from the University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida in 2011 and 2013, respectively. She has worked in various student affairs and compliance roles within public universities in Florida and Virginia since 2013, most recently in Residential Life and Housing (until 2021) and Equity and Access Services (presently employed) at Virginia Commonwealth University.