

FROM "SWEAT EQUITY" TO THE SWEET SPOT: UNDERSTANDING CAREER COMMITMENT
INFLUENCES FOR TITLE IX ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

Maureen E. Wilson, Committee Chair

Title IX regulations have been in place for five decades, and various studies have examined the impact of these regulations on athletics, adjudication, and the experiences of complainants and respondents involved in cases. Although Title IX has evolved, skeptics and supporters have debated whether the regulations are effective. As of late, each presidential administration has revised guidance and steepened the risks for those responsible for Title IX compliance. The Department of Education, through the Office for Civil Rights, requires that institutions of higher education have Title IX coordinators. Results of surveys conducted on the state of the profession have signaled there may be high attrition in Title IX roles, yet limited research has focused on Title IX administrators.

The purpose of this study was to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. Career entrenchment (Carson et al., 1995; Wilson et al., 2016) and career commitment (Wilson et al., 2016) form the conceptual framework of the study. Additionally, I explored how organization development and change principles may intersect with Title IX work. Career and organizational commitment, as well as resources, are all central to how organizations develop and change.

The research questions were: (1) What influences career commitment for Title IX administrators navigating case management and compliance? (2) What role do institutional resources play in Title IX administrators' ongoing career and organizational commitment?

I used generalized inductive qualitative research and conducted semi-structured interviews with ten participants with a minimum of three years of experience in Title IX investigation, adjudication, or compliance at Ohio college or university campuses. Seven themes emerged to explain what influenced the participants' career commitment: "Sweat Equity": Professional Contributions; Institutional Experiences; Threat of Burnout; Making a Difference in Students' Lives; Allocation of Resources; Criticality of Support; and Belief in the Institution.

The findings of this study showcase what higher education leaders and lawmakers should consider in retaining these highly-specialized employees. Additionally, the findings may apply to career commitment influences for others in compliance positions and other helping roles. This study highlights ways that collaborative change strategies can be useful tools for institutional, government, and organizational leaders based on my interpretations of participants' experiences. I also recommend practical strategies to advance theory.

I dedicate this to my uncle Eric (Rick) Robertson. OD&C Cohort Two is known as the pandemic cohort, which at most took away from our experience, but COVID-19 took you away from our families' lives. I felt you cheering me on even in your absence.

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Michelle Obama (2011) once said,

You may not always have a comfortable life. And you will not always be able to solve all the world's problems all at once. But don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own.

Although eradicating gender-based discrimination may seem like a world problem we cannot conquer, I hope this study encourages others to keep trying. Therefore, I end here in acknowledging future researchers, practitioners, and officials who center humanity, justice, fairness, and equity for all.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

When Patsy Takemoto Mink co-authored Title IX as a part of the Education Amendment Act of 1972, it was intended to shatter barriers to educational opportunity and allow equal access to programs and activities for women and girls (LeBlanc & Swanson, 2016; Stringer, 2018). The preamble states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (Title IX, 1972). It was created as a non-discrimination law, and its passage opened the doors for millions of women to attend college, play sports, and gain access to opportunities that may not have previously been available to them. However, following several challenges with implementation, compliance, and enforcement, lawmakers and organizations pushed for answers around who would enforce Title IX and help with interpretations of what the law meant beyond athletics (Melnick, 2018; Women's Sports Foundation, 2019).

The Department of Education's (DOE) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is responsible for the management of Title IX, and over the years OCR has published letters to inform educators of new regulations. After decades of changes to Title IX, the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) brought sweeping change, which made it clear that elementary and secondary schools (K-12) and institutions of higher education (IHE) needed to extend their attention beyond athletics to consider what the full range of access to educational programs and activities meant, including addressing *gender-based discrimination*, that includes any type of unfavorable treatment based on actual or perceived sex, gender, or gender identity (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 introduced Title VI and Title VII, which both prohibited discrimination based on race, color, and national origin. Title VI focused on discrimination in federally assisted programs, and Title VII also prohibited discrimination based on sex in employment (Civil Rights Act, 1964). Although these laws were progress for some people, many women still considering the goals of the Women's Rights Movement wanted laws prohibiting discrimination based on sex to protect women in more spaces, such as academia (Sandler, 2007). Women in Congress took action to support the idea of gender equality by pushing for the passage of the Equal Employment Act of 1972 (that amended Title VII) and the Education Amendment Act of 1972 (that created Title IX), broadening opportunities for women and girls (Galles, 2004; Sandler, 2007).

To revise Title IX law, employees of various government agencies gathered to review complaints and lawsuits that had been filed and looked for the gaps in administration of the law (Sandler, 2007). OCR released guidance regarding what schools must do to remain in compliance with the law and therefore to not threaten their federal funding (Melnick, 2018). However, OCR had “relied exclusively on unilaterally announced ‘interpretations,’ ‘clarifications,’ and Dear Colleagues Letters instead of formal rules” to revise law (Melnick, 2018, para. 8). Many have criticized that the government, throughout the decades, has not been able to navigate change efforts related to gender-based discrimination to the levels necessary to shift K-12 and IHE approaches to this work (Durrant, 1992; Galles, 2004; Nilges, 1998). Most organizational change efforts fail when leaders cannot devote the time necessary to help organizations function effectively (Burke, 2018). The frequency of government shifts in Title IX law makes implementing such regulations challenging and would require organizational-level

changes. This would far exceed the available resources some Title IX administrators (Title IX coordinators, deputy coordinators, and investigators) have at their disposal (Pappas, 2021).

On the 50th anniversary of Title IX (June 23, 2022), the DOE released proposed regulations that were subject to comment for sixty days and will likely go into effect in 2023.

Until that time, the 2020 regulations remain in effect and have placed a great deal of responsibility and liability on the Title IX coordinator and institutional hearing boards.

Implementing Title IX regulations on IHE campuses can come with much scrutiny. Advocates on the sides of both complainants and respondents have concerns about the climate when policies are too rigid or too loose. Furthermore, some have found the 2020 regulations had a chilling effect on reporting and allowed what is known as rape culture to persist. Rape culture is a “phenomenon derived from the plight of sexual violence injustices” (Mkhize et al., 2020, p. 1) that have been normalized as common actions on campuses. As a result, Title IX administrators who have been in the field over the course of multiple regulation changes may experience burnout if they lack the appropriate resources and support (Kunk-Czaplicki, 2021).

In 2018, the Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) released data from the state of the profession survey. Two-thirds of Title IX coordinators reported being in their jobs less than three years, and one-fifth held their positions for less than a year. The Obama-era regulations established the Title IX administrator’s role as crucial on college campuses, and it was a rapidly growing field (Woulfe et al., 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Although the implementation of Title IX has been viewed as progress toward reducing gender barriers in the United States, there has been little to no demonstrable change in the surges of sexual harassment and athletic violation filings on college and university campuses (Mertz,

2006 Reynolds, 2018; Staurowsky, 2003). The 2019 survey administered by the Association of American Universities (AAU) found across 33 participating schools, with 181,752 students having completed the survey, that a considerable number (41.8 %) had experienced some form of sexual harassment while enrolled in college, and 18.9 % said some of their experience with behaviors within the scope of Title IX regulations affected their performance (Cantor et al., 2020). Title IX coordinators are responsible for addressing gender-based discrimination, including sexual harassment, among other things. More than 500 IHE participated in the ATIXA state of the field survey; 58% of Title IX administrators were the coordinator, and only 13% had been in their role for five or more years (10% five to ten years, 3% more than ten years) (ATIXA, 2018). There are many antecedents (e.g., power and control, cycle of abuse, victim blaming) to Title IX cases leading to harmful organizational climates and cultures that are outside of the scope of what Title IX administrators should be tasked to address. Yet, with the Title IX coordinator being the person responsible for compliance, IHE and DOE leaders must seek to understand what influences Title IX administrators' ongoing career commitment. Knowing this may prevent this bounded phenomenon of Title IX administrators who have left their Title IX job in a relatively short period of time (ATIXA, 2018).

With Title IX administrators having some responsibility for the environment and campus climate (Galanos, 2022), these data should call to question the relationship between the experiences connected to case management, compliance, the overall culture of the campus community, and how that influences career and organizational commitment. Yet, there has been little research exploring the experiences of Title IX administrators navigating important aspects of their roles such as case management, compliance, or the impact of Title IX on organizational culture, climate, and using organization development and change (OD&C) to address a growing

concern about the impact of Title IX cases on IHE. To date, the literature has largely focused on Title IX regulations and connected laws and on complainants and respondents, but the experiences of Title IX administrators may also be a central part of what needs to change if organizations want to see lasting and sustainable shifts to their campus climate and culture.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Given the high turnover of Title IX administrators, the purpose of this study was to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. Engaging in a case management approach, Title IX administrators frequently work with complainants, respondents, and witnesses who provide statements that often contain intimate details reported forms of gender-based discrimination. This was relevant to this study because “research suggests that there is vicarious trauma within the lived Title IX agent experience” that influences their “professional quality of life” (Bassett, 2019, pp. 60 – 70). Understanding the challenges and supports for those doing this work was central to this study.

In exploring what resources (e.g., additional staff, additional time-off, additional support from leadership) are needed to help Title IX coordinators navigating Title IX compliance, a goal of the study was to provide college and university leaders with examples of the types of improvement initiatives necessary to retain Title IX administrators and a roadmap for initiating or revamping resources/supports for Title IX administrators. Rather than focus on administrators who left the functional area, I sought to determine why those who remain in the field have stayed, whether they have considered leaving, and if so, why? Research has shown that trauma, even vicarious trauma, requires support (Bassett, 2019). “Burnout occurs when job demands are high, but job resources are low” (Kunk-Czaplicki, 2021, p. 8). Although burnout has been

studied in numerous occupations including first-responders (Kaplan et al., 2017; Vinnikov et al., 2022), military servicemen and women (Leiter et al., 1994; Merlini et al., 2019), and teachers (Maslach & Leiter, 1999; Pressley, 2021), there have been no research investigations into what specific challenges Title IX administrators face or the influences to their decision to remain in a Title IX role. This qualitative interview study was guided by the following questions:

1. What influences career commitment for Title IX administrators navigating case management and compliance?
2. What role do institutional resources play in Title IX administrators' ongoing career and organizational commitment?

Framing the Study

Organization development (OD) refers to work done collaboratively across disciplines by practitioners who work with organizations and communities to help with system-wide change management that is strong and effective (Organization Development Network, 2020). OD is grounded in organization sciences (i.e., processes, structures, and identities) and social sciences (i.e., behavior and culture) (Organization Development Network, 2020). Lewin, who has been referred to as a theorist and researcher whose work linked theory and practice and later shaped the field (Burke, 2018; Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2021; Cummings & Worley, 2009), believed that OD should target changing systems rather than individuals (Burke, 2018). Lewin asserted that any planned social change must consider various factors and characteristics prior to implementing change and that it must be specific to a case (Burke et al., 2009). Lewin is often credited as one of the founders of OD, and many researchers who came after Lewin reached some of the same conclusions about how organizations change (Burke, 2018).

The Academy of Management changed the name of the field in 1991, from Organization Development to Organization Development and Change (OD&C) (D. Warrick, personal communication, April 7, 2022). According to Burke (2011), while the labels of OD and OD&C may occasionally be cast together, “they should not be considered as exactly the same” (p. 145). OD&C is not just an updated version of OD, meaning they do not only differ in chronology; rather, the two have distinct differences in the techniques used (Burke, 2011). OD applies a broad range of theories, practices, and behavioral science to “help organizations build their capacity to change and to achieve greater effectiveness, including increased financial performance, customer satisfaction, and organization member engagement” (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 1). OD&C is a field that takes a holistic look at the organizational culture by considering individual, group, and total systems, to influence organizational change (Burke, 2018). OD is about planned change, while OD&C holds that organization change happens whether planned or not (Burke, 2011).

This study sought to explore how OD&C principles may intersect with Title IX work. The research questions focused on career and organizational commitment, as well as resources, which are all central to development and change. OD&C frameworks guided this research, including the interview protocol as the OD&C lens will help center people and change systems. Using these frameworks may help inform future discussions to advance Title IX as a functional area.

Conceptual Framework

Career entrenchment (Carson et al., 1995; Wilson et al., 2016) and career commitment (Wilson et al., 2016) form the conceptual framework that I used to guide the study, limit its scope, and frame the interpretation and analysis of the data I collected (Luft et al., 2022). The

career entrenchment measure model (Carson et al., 1995) considers career investments, emotional costs, and limitations in career alternatives when determining one's intentions or investments in remaining in their role (Wilson et al., 2016). Required training and certifications are examples of career investments that influence career commitment and career entrenchment (Wilson et al., 2016). Career commitment is the attitude a person has about their career (Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018) leading to a mindset that contributes to career success (Lee & Eissenstat, 2018). Career commitment is strongly influenced by supervisory support and there is lower turnover intention when there is stronger career commitment (Khan et al., 2020). Understanding these concepts in terms of Title IX administrators may further understanding if their decision is to remain in the field.

Significance of the Study

Sexual violence is one form of gender-based discrimination that Title IX attempts to prevent there is a comprehensive body of literature on Title IX regulations and compliance (Carroll et al., 2013; Miller, 2018; Poole, 2014; Zilmer, 2022), the impact of working through cases (Bassett, 2019; Kunk-Czaplicki, 2021) and the adjudication side of student conduct and Title IX work (Glassman, 2021). Yet, as Carroll et al. (2013) stated, "although administrators are taking measures to create secure environments, sexual violence, including sexual assault, continues to be an issue on most college and university campuses" (p. 45). This study addresses a gap in the literature on the career commitment of Title IX administrators and why they remain in their roles. Still, to date, there is limited research on the experiences of Title IX administrators and how those experiences influence their career decisions. As the search to find qualified employees becomes more difficult, one option for organizations is to support and retain current employees and show them possibilities to grow within their current organization (Herachwati &

Rachma, 2018). Career investments are things that could lead to career entrenchment because leaving a specific role or field could make certain skills or attributes less valuable (Wilson et al., 2016). Understanding the types of career investments Title IX administrators made that had influenced their ongoing career commitment, was a central part of this study. Additionally, the findings may be specific to this occupation while being potentially transferable to administrative positions with similar role characteristics that work at the intersection of support services and compliance, such as student conduct, equal opportunity services, or counseling services.

Key Terms

The following definitions of key terms are pertinent to the present study. Some of the terminology is informed by the United States Department of Education and Office for Civil Rights, while other key terms are from the Ohio Guidebook on Prevention and Response to Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence & Stalking for Ohio Campuses (Osmer, 2016).

Gender-Based Discrimination

With no widely accepted definition that fully explains gender-based discrimination, I am defining it as encompassing all forms of unfavorable treatment committed against an individual because of and/or based on their sex, gender, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation, or pregnancy (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). This discrimination is inclusive of sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, all forms of intimate partner abuse, and stalking (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023; Stanford University, n.d.).

Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)

IHE encompasses the terms college, university, institution, and campus when referencing public and private two-year and four-year colleges and universities (Osmer, 2016).

Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act)

This law “requires colleges to complete and publish annual security reports, crime logs, timely warnings and crime statistics” (Osmer, 2016, p. 6). The Clery Act aims to provide transparency around campus crimes, policies, fire safety reporting, and statistics.

Rape Culture

This is a “phenomenon derived from the plight of sexual violence injustices” (Mkhize et al., 2020, p. 1) that have been normalized as common actions on campuses.

Respondent

A respondent is “an individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment” including sexual assault (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a, p. 629). The term *responding party* is sometimes used in place of respondent.

Sexual Harassment

These are acts involving “unwelcome conduct on the basis of sex 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; any individual may experience this form of harassment, as well” (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a, p. 495).

Sexual Violence

These are actions of a sexual nature “taken against a person without the person’s consent, against the person’s will, or under force, threat of force or coercion. Legally, consent cannot be given if the person is substantially impaired” (Osmer, 2016, p. 3).

Survivor/Complainant

Generally, a term used on college and university campuses rather than *victim* to refer to a person harmed by alleged behaviors (Osmer, 2016).

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972

This law “prohibits sex discrimination (including sexual harassment and sexual violence) in educational institutions that receive federal funding” (Osmer, 2016, p. 6).

Victim

This legal term or legislative language refers to a person against whom a crime has been committed. (Osmer, 2016).

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

This act was codified through Title IV, sec 40001-40703 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, H.R. 3355, the 2013 reauthorization of VAWA, “amended the Clery Act to afford additional rights to campus victims of sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking” (Osmer, 2016, p. 6).

Summary

The DOC and OCR have continuously amended the law and left K-12 and IHE administrators to interpret how to remain in compliance (Melnick, 2018). Student conduct officers and Title IX administrators have expressed that the lack of clear direction from OCR, confusion created by Title IX guidance and OCR resolutions, hysteria caused by the high number of IHE under investigation for violating Title IX, and the increased enforcement due to misinterpretations by conduct and Title IX professionals, have all added stress to roles that inherently carry heavy burdens (Miller, 2018). Institutional leaders have also felt the pressure of complying with Title IX, as many IHEs had to increase budgets in some cases by millions to

support this work (Mathewson, 2016). Brett Sokolow, a founder of ATIXA, estimated that IHE could spend between \$25,000 to \$500,000 a year, depending on the institution size, on Title IX compliance (Hartocollis, 2016).

The Title IX administrators responsible for case management and compliance were of particular interest in this study to better understand what influences their career commitment. As organizations look for ways to retain employees, an investment in them seeing a continued path within their organizations, and having adequate support and resources are key (Herachwati & Rachma, 2018). Resources may be available over a span of time and can be both tangible or intangible (Amit & Shoemaker, 1993), may provide a competitive advantage (Greene et al., 1997), and may help with coping through high-demand jobs (Bakker et al., 2007).

Informed by the career entrenchment (Carson et al., 1995; Wilson et al., 2016) and career commitment (Wilson et al., 2016), I posit that determining what Title IX administrators need in terms of resources and supports as they navigate case management and compliance with Title IX laws may help IHE to retain their Title IX administrators. Understanding what influences a Title IX administrator's career commitment, and how concepts of organization development and change could be applied to Title IX work, may assist the DOE and IHE seeking to improve campus climates.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will review the evolution of Title IX legislation, due process in Title IX cases, and the effect on institutions of higher education, and the role of the Title IX coordinator and their experience of associated role-related stress and related attrition. Additionally, I will provide an overview for organization development and change, including how OD&C can be applied to Title IX work. Finally, I will summarize the themes and gaps within the literature.

The Education Amendment Act of 1972 included the creation of Title IX to prevent discrimination based on sex. Despite the breadth of access Title IX afforded, the initial consideration seemed to center primarily on athletics. By 1974, a record 9,700 comments had been submitted about the Title IX regulations, and “it had become glaringly apparent that gender equity in athletics had emerged as the most controversial issue” (Edwards, 2010, p. 310). The Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights is responsible for the management of Title IX, and over the years OCR has published documentation to inform educators of expectations of policy changes necessary to comply with regulations. Understanding the evolution of Title IX is a key component of understanding the responsibilities of Title IX administrators currently working in the field of higher education.

Evolution of Title IX Legislation

In 1972 when the DOE initially insisted discrimination should not occur based on sex, many organizations scrambled to determine what that meant. Sports were an obvious starting point. In 1874, just as more women gained access to institutions of higher education, a publication by Dr. Edward Clarke sparked a debate, as he asserted it was time for women to have access to physical activity, such as sports (Bell, 2008). During the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, women participated in athletic clubs (Bell, 2008), until the 1920s when both the National

Association for Physical Education of College Women (NAPECW) and the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Association (NAAF) were formed (Park & Hult, 1993).

Outside of athletics, other critical arguments were made that would eventually shape Title IX into the law we know today. It was 1977 when women undergraduate students sued Yale University over allegations that the university's administration was mishandling claims of sexual harassment (Simon, 2003). In *Alexander v. Yale* (1980), the complainants argued that sexual harassment was a form of sex-based discrimination, leading this to become a landmark Title IX case (MacKinnon et al., 2012) outside of sports. Although these students lost their case, they won the ruling that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Other institutions needed notice of this precedent and a Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) was issued. According to the U.S. House of Representatives' History, Arts, and Archives, "the practice of Members and committees sending House-wide correspondence has been labelled a 'Dear Colleague' since at least 1913" (n.d., para. 2). After this 1980 notice, Title IX regulations have been widely issued through DCLs.

Landmark Changes

As Title IX continued to evolve, two concepts that became sticking points were the importance of freedom of speech, and the need for due process rights in student conduct hearings (Stimpson, 2022). Prior to 2011, many IHEs relied on their student conduct process to resolve all behavioral matters. The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides in part: "No State shall . . . deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law" (U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1). This provision controls governmental action, including institutions receiving federal financial assistance. However, this provision does not apply to private parties, such as private colleges and universities (Stoner & Lowery, 2004).

The 1961 decision in *Dixon v. Alabama*, a landmark case for student discipline, established the need for student due process, including a notice of hearing containing the time, date, and place of allegations; alleged policy violations; and the date, time, and location of the hearing. While due process applies to public institutions within the framework of the law, most private institutions afford the same or a similar process in their definitions and procedures through what was known as a fundamentally fair process (Stoner & Lowery, 2004). Due process and hearing procedures would become a critical component of the 2020 Title IX regulations.

Numerous lawsuits, executive orders, and regulation changes continued to shape the evolution of Title IX. The 2000s brought specific guidance worth exploring in greater detail. By 2001, the Title IX guidance set the stage for ‘prompt and equitable’ grievance procedures, as well as guidance on filing a formal complaint, conducting effective and impartial investigations, and providing notice of an outcome (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). One decade later, the 2011 DCL became the most significant and comprehensive set of changes to the law; requiring a Title IX coordinator was one of those significant changes. These regulations introduced preponderance of evidence as the sole evidentiary standard for adjudication of conduct hearings and introduced the ‘advisor of choice,’ allowing students to choose anyone to serve as their advisor rather than choosing within the university’s narrow parameters. This meant that students could hire an attorney who would be allowed to participate in meetings and the hearing, albeit they could not speak. The 2011 DCL also removed mediation and other informal measures to resolve reported incidents, claiming that “mediation is not appropriate even on a voluntary basis” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 8). Furthermore, this letter expanded on the 2001 guidance of ‘prompt and equitable’ by adding that institutions would have sixty calendar days to resolve a case from the date of notice. This would later become an important factor in training

mandatory reporters, so that the university would become aware of incidents as soon as someone, viewed by students as having the authority to do something (i.e., faculty and staff), was made aware of an incident.

Haphazard Shifts

There were several other changes that came from this 2011 guidance, making it difficult to understand how to achieve Title IX compliance (Pappas, 2021). A 2014 Q&A was released by OCR to explain the 2011 DCL.

Moreover, in January of 2017, then Vice President Joe Biden released a whitepaper authored by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, providing guidance to IHE presidents, chancellors, and senior administrators on their responsibility to protect students by responding to claims of sexual violence (The White House, Office of Digital Strategy, 2017). This Task Force was the Obama administration's final attempt to activate change and transformation in higher education as it related to sexual assault. Biden said, "when college presidents and chancellors truly commit to ending the scourge of sexual violence in institutions of higher education, they set the highest example of what we expect from students, faculty, and administration" (The White House, Office of Digital Strategy, 2017, p. 1).

Eight months after the release of the document, in September 2017, former U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos rescinded the 2011 DCL and 2014 Q&A, now known as the Obama-era Title IX rules (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This rescission meant that former regulations should be abandoned until new regulations replaced them, leaving many responsible for the administration of Title IX uncertain about what it would take to follow the law while still best serving their given communities.

A handful of other letters came out between the 2011 DCL and the 2020 regulations, including one on protections for transgender students that was also later repealed in 2017. Protections for transgender students were expected to be at the center of the forthcoming 2022 regulation changes, which released for comment on June 23, 2022 (the 50th anniversary of Title IX), leaving the 2020 regulations in place until new regulations are finalized. The proposed regulations – which will become final rule after a process – state that “Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of an individual’s gender identity” which may mean that this topic could fall under the scope of Title IX (U.S. Department of Education, 2022. p. 525).

Arguably, the decision to repeal past letters and the May 2020 final rules released by OCR are now the most significant changes to the law anyone has ever seen. Although the Biden administration issued new guidance on handling Title IX as the Department of Education works to change the Trump administration’s regulations (U.S. Department of Education, 2021a, 2021b), the 2020 regulations required institutions to reevaluate what actual knowledge, versus third party knowledge of alleged violations of Title IX means. In the K-12 setting, any employee who has notice of sexual harassment, including knowledge of allegations of sexual harassment, is considered a mandatory reporter. An IHE could choose an official with authority to institute corrective measures, thereby, triggering the school’s response obligations (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a).

Additionally, under the 2020 regulations, the Department of Education issued mandatory definitions within the final rules, including a definition of sexual harassment, complainants (known as plaintiffs in the criminal process), respondents (known as defendants), and more, that each institution must use. Jurisdiction comprised another significant change, as it was specifically noted that “the Title IX statute applies to persons in the United States with respect to

education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance” (U.S. Department of Education, 2020b, p. 2). Prior to the 2020 rules, if, for example, two university students were abroad, and one accused the other of sexual assault, the university could adjudicate it under Title IX. Furthermore, with the final rules changing jurisdiction to buildings owned or controlled by the University or at a program or activity sponsored by the University, this eliminated the ability to adjudicate, for example, a sexual assault that took place at an off-campus party, even if those students live on campus together and take classes together. If a school addresses sexual harassment affecting a student or employee that falls outside of Title IX’s jurisdiction, it cannot be on record under the name of Title IX, rather under some other form of resolution “in any manner that the school chooses, including providing supportive measures or pursuing discipline” (U.S. Department of Education, 2020b, p. 2).

These final rules emphasized an equitable process that does not impose disciplinary sanctions without following the proper grievance protocol prescribed by the regulations. Over the years, there has been a debate about protections for complainants, and the previous 2011 regulations heavily swayed toward the survivors. Additional considerations in the drastic shift of regulations came because of the criticism of the 2011 regulations being survivor-centered; therefore, the 2020 regulations offered descriptive guidance on how to conduct a live hearing that includes cross-examination. Rape shield protections were added for complainants, meaning cross-examination that is not relevant to the case must be dismissed by adjudicators unless the questions and evidence about a complainant’s prior sexual behavior is “offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the alleged misconduct or offered to prove consent” (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a, p. 811).

As of 2020, it was no longer the case that colleges and universities must use the preponderance of evidence standard. Institutions could choose between the preponderance of evidence standard or the clear and convincing evidence standard as long as the evidentiary standards apply consistently for all formal complaints of sexual harassment for students and employees. Moreover, the 2020 regulations also “[allow] a school, in its discretion, to choose to offer and facilitate informal resolution options, such as mediation or restorative justice, so long as both parties give voluntary, informed, written consent to attempt informal resolution” (U.S. Department of Education, 2020b, p. 8). These regulations placed a great deal of responsibility and liability on Title IX coordinators and hearing boards. Institutions only had ninety days to implement these regulations in the middle of navigating a global pandemic, so despite the Biden administration’s review, the 2020 regulations remained what campuses across the nation were following during this research study.

The purpose of this in-depth look at the shifts from 2011 to present is to help readers understand the nuances involved in the interpretations of these directives while also being responsible for a good faith effort in administering them. As the public becomes more aware of the effects of Title IX regulations changes, more have become invested in the process, with the 2022 proposed rules drawing in more than 349,000 public comments (Quilantan, 2022).

Institutional Liability

As previously referenced, Title IX has become a growing liability for institutions. “Senior leaders have an opportunity to go all in making Title IX an institutional priority” (Zilmer, 2022, p. 111), because Title IX work closely aligns with costly liability when not done well. *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* created the standard that sexual harassment must be “so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively bars the victim’s access to an

educational opportunity or benefit” (*Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education*, 1999, p. 633). The Supreme Court wanted to limit institutional liability, stating “explicitly that the standard is not negligence but actual knowledge, and that *Davis* is not meant to impose sweeping liability” (Goodman, 2022, pp. 1287-1288). As with the 2020 Title IX regulations, “actual knowledge” raises the bar from previous standards that if an institution generally knew or should have known that sexual harassment was occurring, that they were liable (Ewing, 2020).

Still, once a Title IX coordinator does have actual knowledge, they must act and not be deliberately indifferent (Ewing, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2020a). According to Conrad et al., (2022), in 2022 the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit noted that:

Title IX provides that higher education institutions who receive federal funding may be held liable for intentional violations of the statute, and that an intentional violation of Title IX would include when an institution acts with deliberate indifference to known sexual harassment where the institution exercises substantial control over the context in which the harassment occurs and the harasser. The court also found support from the Office for Civil Rights guidance materials which provided that sexual harassment by third parties could result in liability. (para. 3)

With Title IX, a telling gauge is whether an institution is doing what its policy says will be done. Having a strong team of Title IX administrators who understand the regulations and remain current on findings and training could help minimize risks of institutional liability (Zilmer, 2022). Things such as an organization’s commitment to equity, fairness, well-being, and other elements that may influence the experiences Title IX administrators, and help minimize liability, may affect Title IX administrators’ career commitment and organizational commitment.

Due Process in Title IX Cases and the Effect on Institutions

Sexual violence is notoriously difficult to measure, and there is no single source of data that provides a complete picture of the crime (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, 2020). When incidents of sexual violence and sexually harassing behaviors occur at a school or on a college campus, or when sexual harassment occurs in the workplace, there are several parties affected (e.g., the reporting party/survivor, responding party/accused, witnesses, administrators). When people hear about incidents of sexual violence, the general reaction is to sympathize with the survivor in the time immediately following the incident. Attorneys and lawmakers mobilized to shift attention to respondents' due process rights after courts were determining that institutions were going too far in their protection of survivors due to Title IX. In *Doe v. Baum* (2018), a case in which a student felt the University of Michigan violated his due process rights, the lawsuit contended that "the University faced pressure from the United States Department of Education, the general public, and student groups to adequately address sexual assault complaints made against male students on campus" (p. 21). Therefore, institutions were reminded that there needed to be balance and neutrality within the Title IX process, even if that balance meant leaning away from the 2011 regulations. The lawsuit became a significant Title IX case that reminded institutions of their obligation to uphold due process rights for accused students (*Doe v. Baum*, 2018).

Despite the attention on *Doe v. Baum*, it was not the first case indicating that respondents felt dissatisfied with their university's Title IX process. There have been several instances of cases like *Doe v. Baum*, such as Daniel Kopin's OCR case against Brown University for what he felt was a wrongful suspension, Peter Yu's lawsuit against Vassar College for a violation of due process and discrimination, a similar lawsuit against St. Joseph's University in 2013, and a

federal lawsuit against Xavier University that same year; all of which share similar concerns of a fundamentally unfair university hearing process (Pappas, 2016). According to Pappas (2016) “these three lawsuits all share several common allegations: campus officials withheld key evidence in hearings, they were hasty to rush to judgment, and a general presumption of guilt prevailed” (p. 130). There have been arguments that because the criminal justice system does not seriously seek prosecuting sexual assault claims, some students may use their campus reporting and grievance procedures to hold perpetrators accountable (Muehlenhard et al., 2017).

According to Cantor et al.’s (2020) report for the Association of American Universities, “A high proportion of victims of nonconsensual sexual contact by force or inability to consent experienced either a behavioral, emotional, academic, or physical consequence. Almost all victims reported either a behavioral or emotional consequence” (p. 25). There are multiple studies supporting that one-in-five women are at risk of sexual assault while in college – who may or may not report the incident – but many describe it as a distressing experience (Muehlenhard et al., 2017).

Whether victimized or accused, what this literature suggests is that the emotional strain can last long after a reported incident. The impact of Title IX related incidents can be traumatic and life changing in some cases for the respondent and/or the complainant. Between literature on the responsibility of Title IX administrators (Lake, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2015), and on the lack of awareness of what is required to comply and provide due process (Pappas, 2016; Staurowsky & Weight, 2013), there are opposing views on whether the role of Title IX administrators is helpful or harmful. The well-being of those responsible for caring for physical

and psychological safety by way of creating a campus culture free from discrimination should be equally prioritized.

In recent years, the Title IX coordinator has become a position with increasingly more responsibility for creating a safe campus environment (Wiersma-Mosley & DiLoreto, 2018). As campus communities address concerns around civility, equity, and safety, IHE leaders seek ways to prevent turbulent conflicts (VanHecke, 2019). Despite shifting regulations, the role of Title IX administrators endures as campuses work toward compliance and safety (Brown, 2017).

Campus Title IX Coordinator

It is well-evidenced that gender-based discrimination continues despite Title IX changes (DeSantis, 2017; Reynolds, 2018; Stimpson, 2022). Ongoing instances of gender-based discrimination may be in part why the regulations continue to reinforce that institutions need to name a Title IX coordinator and mandatory or responsible employees to help with the reporting and resolution of incidents when they arise (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, 2022; White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). As noted by Woulfe et al., (2018) Title IX today is not what it was years ago; it has evolved since its inception, and the shifts have placed an emphasis on Title IX administrator's "campus responsibility for enforcement, cultural shifts, and how we view sexual violence as a culture" (p. 5). Therefore, the work of the Title IX coordinator has "expanded from a limited view of Title IX, to a broader view of civil rights issues" (Woulfe et al. 2018, p. 5).

Title IX administrators are all working to address Title IX compliance, but their roles differ. The Title IX coordinator is responsible for overall compliance with the laws and should be spending their time on addressing gender equity issues, improving the campus climate, strengthening the Title IX process and policy, working with campus and community partners,

and ensuring everyone has the appropriate Title IX knowledge through campus-wide training (Hambleton, 2023). The deputy Title IX coordinator is the person who assists with specific aspects of the Title IX area such as programming, serving as an investigator, supervising other Title IX staff, or acting as decision-makers (Hambleton, 2023). In contrast to the coordinator and deputy, a Title IX investigator responsibilities are to gather relevant information to the case, compile the investigation report, and at times present the facts of the case in a hearing (Bricker & Graydon, 2023).

Since the 2011 Title IX regulations put a spotlight on the handling of Title IX cases, particularly on campuses, several universities have faced public controversy for the ways they have handled Title IX investigations. One set of cases that changed the Title IX landscape involved Jerry Sandusky at Pennsylvania State University, which paid out more than \$123 million to settle claims made by at least 35 individuals who accused their long-time assistant football coach of sexual abuse (Culhane, 2013; Gluckman, 2021). Moreover, cases involving Dr. Larry Nassar at Michigan State University, which paid out \$500 million in settlements to more than 300 individuals for sexual abuse (Eggert & White, 2018; Frederick et al., 2019; Robinson, 2021), have reframed the way that Title IX policies and procedures have been written to address sexual misconduct and relationship violence, with additional emphasis on cases involving minors. Tilli (2018) drew attention to the alignment of the Sandusky and Nassar cases: “An admired figure associated with a public university is revealed to be a serial predator and his downfall spells disaster for the entire institution” (para. 1). Tilli further asserted the blur between personal desires and professional ethics would bring down board members, presidents, and athletic directors and had the power to destroy the lives of some survivors.

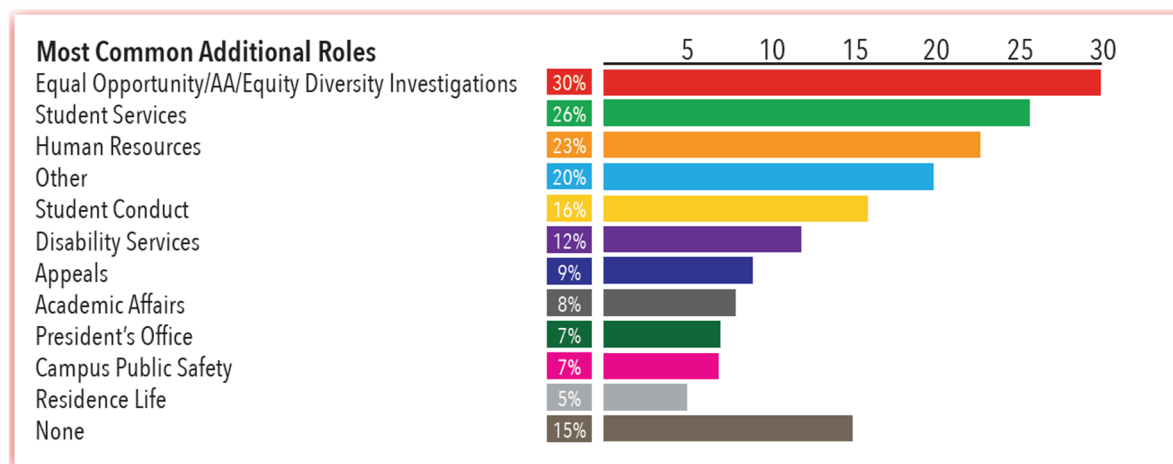
As high-profile cases on college campuses continued to gain attention, the OCR issued a Dear Colleague Letter in 2015 reminding IHE that they must have a Title IX coordinator (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), and in 2021 additional guidance was issued clarifying the role of this key administrator (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). These positions began to be established in organizational structures to reduce institutional liability. Universities invest a fair amount of time and resources into minimizing institutional risks and liability (Kaplin & Lee, 2007; Lowery, n.d.).

Title IX Administrators and Role-Related Stress

Many Title IX coordinators hold other institutional positions in addition to their Title IX duties (ATIXA, 2018), forcing them to divide their time and prioritize institutional initiatives and responsibilities. According to ATIXA's (2018) survey on the state of the profession, 65% of the responding institutions shared that the Title IX coordinator is assigned additional roles (p. 2). Figure 1 from the ATIXA Member Survey shows that many of these roles included handling equal opportunity, affirmative action, and equity/diversity investigations.

Figure 1

Title IX Coordinator's Most Common Additional Roles



Note. Permission to use provided in Appendix A. ATIXA, 2018, p. 2

The remaining majority were working in student services or human resources. These are jobs with large responsibilities in and of themselves. The resulting role ambiguity or potential role conflict could increase role-related stress (Zickar et al., 2008), and Title IX administrators continuously identify that struggles with the emotional strain (Bassett, 2019; Newell et al., 2015) and lack of resources make it difficult to remain in their roles without reprieve (ATIXA, 2021; Pappas, 2021).

In addition to emotional strain and lack of resources, the complexity of Title IX administrators' jobs has shifted. As Title IX has evolved, it has become increasingly complex to navigate with related connecting laws such as The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery) of 1990 and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994. Title IX coordinators are often in multiple roles (ATIXA, 2018; Pappas, 2021), and are asked to be knowledgeable of each of these laws. Additionally, the reauthorization of VAWA requires campus climate surveys, which are often also administered by Title IX coordinators, making campus climate something that Title IX coordinators may be partially considered responsible for (Galanos, 2022).

The role of conflict and ambiguity are among the antecedents of work stress (Bhatti et al., 2010), and without the proper resources to alleviate stress, work-related stressors may lead to role overload or burnout (Kim et al., 2016; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Still, many hours are involved in becoming a novice Title IX coordinator, let alone a subject-matter expert. The regulations require a certain type and frequency of training sessions (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, 2020), and for Title IX coordinators, there is no one training that covers all that is needed to understand how to shift cultures and remain in compliance. The National Association of Clery Compliance Officers and Professionals (NACCOP) has a similar training

model to other organizations to help Clery and Title IX professionals understand the regulations by taking various classes to build their knowledge.

Organizations known for training Title IX administrators (e.g., ATIXA, NACCOP, the Association for Student Conduct Administration [ASCA], Bricker Graydon) offer training that cover things such as how to create policies, having an unbiased grievance procedure, how to conduct investigations, how to run a hearing, and how to be an appeals officer or decisional authority. These training sessions come at a cost for institutions or employees who do not have professional development funding.

For example, virtual training sessions offered in June 2023 included ‘2023 Title IX Regulations: Policy Implications and Practical Application’ for \$290 for NACCOP members and \$340 for non-members, ‘Constructing Resolution Process’ for \$525 for NACCOP members and \$575 for non-members, and ‘Title IX coordinator Training’ for \$760 per person (D. Stafford & Associates, 2023). These training sessions are nationally recognized and relatively affordable when compared to similar organizations. Still, having the professional development funding to participate in the various sessions needed to have a full grasp of the law is not a resource all Title IX administrators have available, leaving a gap in the understanding and management of the law (Stimpson, 2022). Additionally, research has shown that some Title IX administrators lack in Title IX literacy (Staurowsky & Weight, 2013), making them a liability to the institution.

Trauma Literature

There is a growing body of research indicating that professionals in helping fields experience burnout, secondary trauma, and compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002; Leiter & Maslach, 2009; van der Merwe & Hunt, 2019). Trauma in some ways is a catchall term that encompasses a variety of events an individual may experience and the various effects those events may have

(Isobel et al., 2018). Secondary traumatic stress (STS) develops in similar ways to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in that the constant direct or indirect exposure to trauma begins to cause cognitive shifts and emotional disruptions for the person being exposed (van der Merwe & Hunt, 2019). Each time someone in a helping field responds to a traumatic event, it could flood their psyche, diminish their capacity to cope, and make them less empathetic with those they are helping (van der Merwe & Hunt, 2019).

The investigation of Title IX cases is expected to be done in a prompt manner, and therefore, the interviews may involve traumatic experiences that are difficult (Brown et al., 2016). Title IX is a profession prone to stress, secondary trauma, and PTSD (Klein, 2016), and despite the body of knowledge on trauma, Title IX administrators may lack coping experience (Klein, 2016). This literature is connected to career commitment as experiences like burnout and trauma have been linked to “job dissatisfaction, low organizational commitment, absenteeism, intention to leave the job, and turnover” (Leiter & Maslach, 2009, p. 332; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 2020).

Emotional Effects of Working on Title IX Cases

Researchers have suggested that stress results from strain on an individual’s emotions, based on a situation that may threaten one’s ability to cope (Bheemaiah & Venkataiah, 2022). When it comes to the experiences of Title IX administrators, there may be additional effects felt from navigating case management. The term vicarious trauma is related to patterns of negative emotional outcomes for people who repeatedly hear traumatic accounts (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996). Vicarious trauma generally occurs because of exposure to the statements of survivors or direct exposure to those survivors of trauma (Newell & MacNeil, 2015). For Title IX administrators who hear people relive their trauma on a daily and weekly basis, vicarious trauma

has become a growing concern. When complainants, respondents, and witnesses are providing their statements, they are often sharing extremely intimate details of instances of reported non-consensual sexual violence, or other forms of gender-based discrimination. These narratives are often graphic and painful when told by survivors and are often difficult for respondents to recount as they are now being asked to explain how they knew, for example, that a moan was out of pleasure and not pain.

Vicarious trauma is not a medical term, but the impact could manifest as physical symptoms among those experiencing it. Initial research on this topic came from people in helping fields, such as counseling. According to McCann and Pearlman (1990), therapists who have worked closely with survivors shared they have experienced recurrent “nightmares, fearful thoughts, intrusive images, and suspicion of other people’s motives” (p. 132). Like therapists, Title IX administrators have shared that their exposure to such traumatic narratives and images have resulted in outcomes similar to what McCann and Pearlman described. With ATIXA finding that two-thirds of the Title IX coordinators who participated in their survey were in their roles for less than three years, and one-fifth less than a year many Title IX administrators have said that this is because of the legal pressures and vicarious trauma (ATIXA, 2018). Bassett (2019) found that higher education professionals involved in Title IX cases experience vicarious trauma, as participants shared these statements:

- “I cannot watch Law and Order SVU...” (p. 112)
- “I avoid going to certain bars in the city I work in because they were mentioned as locations of trauma for respondents or complainants I have spoken to.” (p. 112)
- “Disruptive images coming into my mind repeatedly after hearing a student's experience of being assaulted.” (p. 112)

Additional themes across Bassett's research centered around experiencing fear, helplessness, angry, or concerned (Bassett, 2019). Bassett's research, in addition to previously referenced considerations connected to Title IX compliance, highlights that the volume and gravity of Title IX administrators' responsibilities, may not provide these professionals adequate resources, time, or ways to regroup to unpack the various issues (e.g., multiple job responsibilities, risks and liability, vicarious trauma) associated with the role.

Career Entrenchment and the Attrition of Title IX Coordinators

According to Carson et al., (1995), "professionally trained employees are especially vulnerable to career entrenchment" as the investment of time that it takes to do this job well could result in some feeling "it would be emotionally difficult to change [their] career field" (Wilson et al., 2016, p. 563). Depending on the stressors, how one copes with stress, available resources, clarity of the role, and entrenchment may all be factors in the attrition of Title IX coordinators. Career entrenchment can be a positive or a negative thing depending on the circumstances. Additional factors associated with entrenchment could be things like career satisfaction or being unable or unwilling to move (Wilson et al., 2016). Employees who are negatively entrenched are more mobile (Carson et al., 1996), and therefore, may be at greater risk of leaving their role.

Based on a recent survey of Title IX administrators, it was determined that while there has always been a high level of turnover and stress in Title IX administrators' positions, burnout has only intensified during the "Great Resignation" due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Calel et al., 2022). Not having appropriate resources (e.g., administrative and support staff, budgets, institutional leadership support), is prompting Title IX administrators to look for different career opportunities. The Great Resignation is not only making Title IX administrators who were

already looking to exit the field consider leaving, but also those not getting the internal support needed to be effective in their various roles (Calel et al., 2022). If IHE leaders are to understand the impact of the administration of Title IX on the attrition of Title IX administrators, there needs to be a concentrated focus on an institution experiencing high turnover to gain insight into the phenomenon.

IHEs have had to face the reality that Title IX cases continue to increase with each academic year. The role of the Title IX coordinator is vital to the tracking and handling of these cases. With the president of the United States, via the DOE, affecting turnover in administration every four to eight years, K-12 and IHE must consider ways for their constituents (i.e., students, faculty, and staff) in higher education to be high-performing and satisfied in their organizational environment that is free from discrimination. Taking a holistic look at culture and change management techniques, and bringing people into change efforts, is one way to change organizational culture while also increasing overall satisfaction for those within the organization (Burke, 2018).

Organizational Commitment and Development

In the previous chapter, I explained that career commitment is the attitude a person has about their career (Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2018) leading to a mindset that contributes to career success (Lee & Eissenstat, 2018). In Title IX work, OCR considers success strong enforcement of the law (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Career success is subjective and is generally related to the accomplishments of one's own career goals (Herachwati & Rachma, 2018). Understanding the career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education will go deeper than the specific career entrenchment and investments; but understanding ways

organizational commitment may inform what makes Title IX administrators remain in their roles or in the field of higher education.

Organizational Commitment (OC) is the level of attachment and identification with an organization resulting in loyalty of an employee based on the belief that their organization values them and their work (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Gordon, 2022). This level of commitment often leads employees to be more invested in the overall interest of their organization and its success (Fornes & Rocco, 2004). Researchers have found that there are antecedents to commitment, such as group relations, job entrenchment, communication, recognition, support, and leadership (Fornes & Rocco, 2004; Meyer & Allen, 2001; Saks, 2019). According to Fornes and Rocco (2014), the result of organizational commitment is elements of “congruency, interesting work, clarity of purpose, feedback, equity/fairness, empowerment, and autonomy” (p. 393). A mixed-methods study found that Title IX administrators are generally interested in the work of Title IX but take on duties outside of their job because they understand the importance of that work to the university (Klein, 2016). This is a form of organizational commitment and the type of organizational engagement that drives performance.

Many organizations are goal driven. Goals of organization engagement and organization commitment are desirable in part because employees who are more engaged at work perform better and have more organizational commitment (Sahni, 2019). When considering changes that have taken place in Title IX work over the past five decades, it may be necessary for the government to reconsider the ongoing threat of liability has not been enough to incentivize institutions to address the known threat that sexual harassment poses (Buzuvis, 2020). There are organizational engagement theories that may help both the Title IX and ODC&C systems learn from one another. Burke (2011) posited that OD/ODC has considerable unfinished business,

especially in the areas of “loosely coupled systems, culture change, resistance, and leadership development” (p. 144-145), which Burke believed must be addressed through innovation, less rigid and control-oriented leaders, and clarification of what we need to know.

Loosely coupled systems are organizations with a lack of strong connections, cohesion, and integration amongst units, negatively impacting organizational performance (Ingersoll, 1993). Title IX law is a strong system because it is rigid and resistant. Everyone doing or adjacent to Title IX work understands that there are regulations, even if they do not have the necessary training to comply with the law (Pappas, 2016; Staurowsky & Weight, 2013). The Supreme Court and Department of Education gives educational institutions the opportunity to voluntarily correct their actions to avoid penalty (Buzuvis, 2020). For that same reason, regulatory enforcement has not always worked to eliminate gender-based discrimination (Buzuvis, 2020).

As previously mentioned, OD&C is structured change that is collaborative in nature. While the Department of Education is required to have public notice and comments when changes are occurring to Title IX regulations, those changes do not include all the key stakeholders. It may be possible that OD&C theoretical frameworks could be applied to Title IX rulemaking to create an opportunity for Title IX administrators to be involved and potential experiences additional work engagement and career commitment.

OD&C work is guided by various tools, methods, cycles, and instructive visuals. One such cycle is Hodges’ (2020) Organization Development Engagement Cycle (Figure 2). Since OD&C is a collaborative process between the practitioner and clients, it generally begins with an initial discussion, plan, and design for intervention, implementation, evaluation, and transition.

Figure 2

Organization Development Engagement Cycle



(Hodges, 2020, para. 1)

Note. Permission to use provided in Appendix B.

Organization development is most often initiated when a client has an issue that needs to be addressed relating to how things are functioning within the organization. Hodges' cycle is an example of the process an OD&C professional would use to determine the best methods to address the issues to bring about desired change. In terms of this study, colleges and universities are the clients, with the DOE and OCR being the ones who should be initiating this cycle. Generally, there is never just one issue causing all problems or challenges within an organization. Similarly, there is rarely just one solution. The Organization Development Engagement Cycle is one way to help IHE consider whole-system changes necessary to reach the desired outcomes.

Title IX and Organization Development and Change

At the heart of all of this is the need to end gender-based discrimination and keep campuses safe. Organization development and change – which is the field that encourages organizational leadership and members to look holistically at the organizational culture by considering individual, group, and total systems to influence organizational change (Burke, 2018) – could have helpful interventions to provide adequate support and prevent or address the effects of sexual harassment on victims and communities. Organizational culture is comprised, in part, of community, so everyone must work collectively so that beliefs, values, and assumptions (Gregory et al., 2009) shared by members of an organization all reject sexual and relationship violence and gender-based discrimination as a norm.

If the objectives of Title IX are truly to “avoid the use of federal resources to support discriminatory practices” and to “provide individual citizens effective protection against those practices” (U.S. Department of Education, 2022, p. 15), this is where OD&C professionals may be helpful to leaders, teams, and individuals who are attempting to improve the campus climate, shift the organizational culture, and approach systematic change.

The purpose of OD&C is transformative, holistic, total-systems organizational change (Burke, 2018; Burke, et al., 2009; Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2021; Cummings & Worley, 2009). In more than five decades, the standard approach to Title IX work has been to focus on resolving specific problems; it has ignored tackling systematic, holistic change. Despite a commitment by the government to “getting students and schools more resources to help bring an end to this violence,” nothing has been sustainable (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014, p. 4). The lives and careers of many hang in the balance when it comes to the impact of Title IX cases (Brown, 2019; Krakauer, 2015), and it should be

incumbent of leaders to help understand (and if necessary, change) the experiences of Title IX administrators, to ensure they have the support and resources to equip them with the transformation of campus climate.

Campus Climate and Organizational Culture

The earliest definition of organizational climate, then called social climate, dates to 1939, and it dealt with perceptions of the work environment (Shintri & Bharamanaikar, 2017). There are many ways that climate could be defined related to Title IX and IHE. Campus climate as defined by Rankin (2014), is “the current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential” (p. 234).

Given that Title IX was created as a non-discrimination law, diversity climate is relevant as it “is thought of as preventing the negative outcomes of diversity, such as stereotyping and discrimination, and facilitating positive effects by encouraging the exchange and integration of diverse information” (Dwertmann et al., 2016, p. 1137). Moreover, one could consider the notion of climate as a form of justice, which explores the intersection between social inequalities and change interventions (Porter et al., 2020), which are connected to the data on the disproportionate rate in which marginalized and minoritized individuals experience sexual and relationship violence or have their identities factor into receiving support (Coston, 2019; O’Neal, 2019; Rao et al., 2019). Instances of sexual and relationship violence are one factor that continually impacts how students, faculty, staff, and stakeholders perceive campus climate.

Consideration of the assessment of organizational culture is important when it comes to understanding the challenges Title IX administrators face. Like climate, organizational culture is defined in many ways. A healthy culture is desirable for many organizations, and the good health

of a culture implies that there is a shared sense of purpose and belonging. A definition of organizational culture that is generally accepted still today, is paraphrased from Schein's (1985) definition which says that organizational culture is "a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that are shared by members of an organization" (Gregory et al., 2009, p. 673) and helps to keep norms in place (Kotter, 2012).

For many IHEs, one aspect of organizational culture and case management that has faced scrutiny is the concept of rape culture. Research into the topic has suggested that rape culture results in society normalizing sexual violence (Herman, 1989) to the point that it is accepted and even excused (Nicoletti et al., 2010), and viewed as an unavoidable part of life (Buchwald et al., 1993). According to Mkhize et al., (2020), rape culture is a "phenomenon derived from the plight of sexual violence injustices" which have been normalized as common actions on campuses (p. 1). Lake (2016) stated, the

Title IX team members can get lost in the weeds of compliance without a sense of their roles in the overall compliance system. Federal guidance provides mandates in four overlapping areas of operation: (1) organization and management, (2) investigation and grievance systems, (3) support for reporting and responding parties and (4) campus culture and climate. A well-ordered Title IX system operates in these four corners in a coordinated way. (para. 19)

Both political and IHE leaders have made it seem as though an unsafe or hostile campus climate, or an inequitable culture, is in some part the result of Title IX administrators not doing their jobs well (Brown, 2019). As previously noted, there are several training courses for Title IX administrators, but there are not training sessions specifically designed to address campus culture and climate.

Beyond the problems of role ambiguity, role conflict, work stress, or lack of resources, perhaps Title IX administrators are also in roles that are just too large for any one person or small team. Should it be the job of a small few to shift a campus culture, or the responsibility of everyone contributing a small part?

When campuses become identified for Title IX incidents, such as one campus known as being located in “Rape Capital,” (Baker, 2012), and the “disquieting articles from such national publications as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*” (Krakauer, 2015, p. 9) are included in the literature review of a best-selling author detailing the stories of a campus culture, one should question the ideologies that organization subscribes to, to better understand the slogans and stories shared about it (Škerlavaj et al., 2007). Title IX administrators are consistently hearing these stories as they help the community navigate the impact, yet few understand or “fully explore the breadth and depth of judicialization’s impacts on the personal lives and professional work” of administrators doing this work in a comprehensive way (Glassman, 2021, p. 60).

Using Organization Development and Change Methods in Title IX Work

The Department of Education hosted numerous listening sessions (DeVos, 2018), yet concerns over the evolution and enforcement of Title IX continue. When considering methods to change “whole systems,” the government and IHE leaders should explore utilizing various change methods. One reason for this as noted by Holman et al., (2007), is the need for “a concerted effort to engage groups of people in productively working together toward identifying common ground and expanding it together” (p. 2). Togetherness implies a closeness, if not in relationships, then in values, that the government and IHEs currently may not share when it comes to the understanding and enforcement of Title IX legislation.

One method that crosses sectors is World Café, which brings individuals together to help answer critical or core questions. World Café has been described as a large conversation where the meanings that come from answering questions enable groups to think collaboratively and coordinate actions (Shaw et al., 1995). “People who use human methods such as World Café and Dialogue [sic] who are seeking a ‘harder,’ results-oriented edge” will often find this method is what contributes to success (Holman et al., 2007, p. xi). Change does not have to be elusive, but it needs to be collaborative to be effective.

For decades, Title IX laws have attempted to promote gender equity and end discrimination. While the regulation changes have been written as though they are making systemic changes, they are only designed to change individual responsibilities (e.g., involved parties’ rights and responsibilities, mandatory reporters, hearing board members, advisors, Title IX coordinators). The regulations have not thus far strived for total system change such as shifts in the criminal justice system, healthcare disparities, and economic disadvantages, that are all contributing factors to sexual and relationship violence and other forms of gender-based discrimination.

There are several collaborative change methods that could reach various government sectors to consider ways that laws and parties need to work together to collectively address these issues. However, “policymakers should bear in mind that the effective use of a collaborative infrastructure also depends on a trustworthy environment and on other agreements referring to political, legal, and economic issues, and that these should be addressed” (Apostolou et al., 2011, p. 115). For years, the government has attempted to legislate morality, with little to no acknowledgment that the current system is upholding a broken moral code. This is not a

judgement of our political system, but rather a reflection on why the principles of OD&C could perhaps be a valuable resource to improve the effectiveness of Title IX compliance.

Conclusion

Given the number of legal cases contending that IHE fail to provide due process (Pappas, 2016), and some tasked with Title IX compliance lack in Title IX literacy (Staurowsky & Weight, 2013), there is speculation that not all Title IX administrators understand the role fully. Additionally, as the result of the commitment it takes to be a Title IX administrator, career entrenchment may result, which can make it difficult to shift careers because of the psychological investments in the work (Wilson et al., 2016).

While Title IX administrators are expected to provide accommodations and resources (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, 2021), one must question whether Title IX administrators perceive there are adequate resources available to them to help cope with the stress inherently associated with the role; including a pattern that there is a burdensome sense of liability for enforcing Title IX compliance (Woulfe, 2018), minimizing risks (Kaplin & Lee, 2007), and creating a safe environment (Wiersma-Mosley & DiLoreto, 2018) while shifting campus climate and culture (Lake, 2016), and preventing gender-based discrimination, despite the fact that after five decades of Title IX changes, discrimination and harassment have persisted (DeSantis, 2017; Reynolds, 2018; Stimpson, 2022).

Furthermore, despite a commitment from the government to provide resources to bring an end to campus violence (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014), the literature implies that a field that was one of the fastest growing professions between 2011 to 2017 (Woulfe, 2018), is shifting due to stress associated with the work (ATIXA, 2018; Brown, 2019), inadequate resources (Kunk-Czaplicki, 2021; Pappas, 2021; Wiersma-Mosley &

DiLoreto, 2018), and coping through the management of cases (Bassett, 2019). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and changing regulations is an additional stressor contributing to the problem of high attrition amongst Title IX administrators (Calel et al., 2022).

The literature found inconsistencies in the handling of cases, with some being so significant, that they were a disaster for the entire institution (Tilli 2018). This makes the responsibility of Title IX administrators to focus on organizational climate and culture more important than it had previously been.

Additional literature concluded there is a gap in the knowledge of Title IX administrators and their application of the law (Stimpson, 2022), while others believe the role of the Title IX coordinator has become unrealistic in scope and exceptionally stressful (Lake, 2016). The way that one responds to stress varies and they may cope differently depending on several factors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Understanding what resources are needed for Title IX administrators could help organizations shift campus culture, creating safer climates, and achieving total system change.

Research is needed to bridge the gap between the literature on Title IX administrators' roles, responsibilities, the perceptions of Title IX administrators regarding resources provided by institutional leaders, organizational commitment, and to what extent managing cases and remaining in compliance contributes to their continuing career commitment. Perhaps high attrition is a way to balance well-being, after consistently navigating regulation changes, responding to threats of litigation, and trying to enforce morality.

In a field so specialized, institutions may not be able to afford to continue to lose Title IX professionals in fewer than five years, and to shift this phenomenon, disruptive change may be necessary. Kurt Lewin believed that organizations must consider various factors and

characteristics prior to implementing change and that it must be specific to a case where planned social change is desired (Burke et al., 2009). Therefore, in this study, generalized inductive qualitative methodology will be employed to research the experiences of Title IX administrators. Utilizing interviews and data analysis to explore the research questions, “*What influences career commitment for Title IX administrators navigating case management and compliance?*”, and “*What role do institutional resources play in a Title IX administrator’s ongoing career and organizational commitment?*” This study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge to advance Title IX work and help organization development and change efforts be more successful related to gender-based discrimination.

CHAPTER III. METHODS

In this chapter, I will provide details about the methodology selected to answer the guiding research questions. I will also address my methodological decision making by sharing the research study design and rationale. I then share my positionality, delimitations, and assumptions. Additionally, I review how I established trustworthiness, taking many ethical considerations into account.

To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. The research questions were:

RQ1. What influences career commitment for Title IX administrators navigating case management and compliance?

RQ2. What role do institutional resources play in Title IX administrators' ongoing career and organizational commitment?

Research Methodology and Rationale

I used a qualitative research study design. Qualitative researchers study topics or conditions using a systematic approach to “know more about one’s practice” and improve one’s practice by gaining the perspective of those being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 1). I used generalized inductive qualitative methodology in this study to research the experiences of Title IX administrators that allowed me to analyze the data utilizing a set of procedures to produce a dependable and useful set of findings (Thomas, 2006). A qualitative research design was selected because it allows for a purposeful and comprehensive look into the details of interviewees’ experiences and environments through their lenses (Creswell, 2013).

Usually, when considering generalization, it is believed that what was so in one place and time will be the same or similar elsewhere (Payne & Williams, 2005). Inductive qualitative research is an approach that allows the researcher to code data to make sense of it and help concepts emerge (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). In generalized qualitative research, although the researcher may be guided by conceptual frameworks, there is also an attempt to “try to facilitate the emergence of different detailed understandings (Elliott & Timulak, 2021, p. 35). In this study on the experiences of Title IX administrators and what influences their career commitment, the goal of the interviews was to unearth a thorough reflection on a small number of events and circumstances that could help explain what supports Title IX administrators to remain in their role? A generic approach to qualitative research is not less rigorous, instead, it offers a broad, flexible, and creative way of collecting data (Elliott & Timulak, 2021).

By inquiring through interviews, qualitative researchers can “describe people’s knowledge, opinions, perceptions, and feelings as well as detailed descriptions of people’s actions, behaviors, activities, and interpersonal interactions” (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019, p. 143). Given the sensitive nature of Title IX work, semi-structured interviews facilitated participants’ empowerment in the study (Creswell, 2013) while also allowing for observations, inductive analysis, and meaning making to take place (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019).

The goal was to reflect the realities of the study participants’ experiences as they were shared and then to analyze their meaning. While career entrenchment and career commitment were the specific theories that guided this study, it was informed by the organization development and change literature broadly. I did not attempt to fit emerging themes into those frameworks where it did not make sense based on what surfaced from the study. For example, some participants shared examples of process challenges where Hodges’ (2020) Organization

Development Engagement Cycle could have been a helpful framework for interview questions. However, the focus of this study was on career commitment, not organization development. Therefore, where career commitment and career entrenchment were in fact suitable preexisting frames, the responses and themes were informed by them.

Pilot Interviews

Prior to gaining IRB approval for this dissertation study, I scheduled several pilot interviews with Title IX administrators who were ineligible to participate in the study either due to a conflict of interest or geographical location, to refine my interview protocol and to practice my interviewing and memoing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) techniques. I conducted thirteen pilot interviews focused on Title IX resources with Title IX administrators and individuals who work closely with Title IX, at a West Coast, mid-sized, private university. These interviews helped me specifically narrow in on hearing themes as I took notes. Each pilot interviewee was treated with the same confidentiality, ethics, and care participants in the study later received. Nothing from the pilot interviews is included in or used for the research study in any way.

Separate from these memoing sessions, for the purposes of the interview protocol pilot, I interviewed a Title IX investigator, Title IX deputy coordinator, and a Title IX coordinator from a Midwest, large public university. The participants in the pilot interviews provided oral consent to participate in the study, and a Zoom interview was scheduled. The pilot participants years of experience in Title IX work ranged from four years to eleven years of experience, though two had done Title IX or adjacent work for ten to twenty years longer than they had formally been in Title IX roles.

The pilot interviews were treated the same as the research interviews in the way they were conducted. Participants were reminded several times that this was just a pilot and were

offered the options to withdraw consent at any time, were offered the option to skip questions, request resources in the form of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and were provided information on how to contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Maureen Wilson, or the Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board. Each pilot interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes, which proved to be useful information when I received my modification letter from the IRB asking me to scale back the time commitment for participants. I had initially estimated that interviews would take between 60 to 90 minutes.

Additionally, at the conclusion of the pilot interviews, I asked each pilot participant for feedback on the interview protocol and questions. The pilot participants communicated that my questions were clear and that the interview was a good experience for them. One change resulting from the pilot interviews was the rephrasing of one question to ensure that participants were asked not only about career commitment, but also organizational commitment. This change helped to better align the interview questions with my research questions. The only additional change made was to the pace of interviews. I read through the script quickly and was told to slow down to give participants the chance to process the information. These were the only changes made based on the feedback received from pilot participants.

My interview questions were designed to gain a broad perspective from participants' examples and experiences with Title IX, that also provided me with a glimpse of their knowledge on the topics I was exploring (Jorgensen, 1989). Based on their knowledge, one question that I asked two out of three of the pilot participants produced particularly insightful responses. I did not realize that I did not ask the middle pilot participant this question until my third interview. This resulted in me ensuring that I did not skip a question with any of the participants in the research study.

The pilot interviews were a good investment of time. After the pilot interviews were complete, I maintained the recordings and transcripts through March 2023 to practice with various coding and analysis software. Once my practice sessions were completed, all data from the pilots were deleted and destroyed from my personal device and the cloud. The sixteen participants in the pilots were not counted as participants in the study and their data were not used in the findings.

Sampling

Criterion based sampling, which is an example of purposive sampling, is a technique that allows the researcher to select a specific criteria and sample of participants. More widely used in qualitative research, according to Palinkas et al. (2013), purposeful sampling helps the researcher make “the identification and selection of information-rich” sites and participants (p. 534).

Through purposeful sampling I identified ten Title IX administrators who are experienced in the field as participants, and I sought to collect in-depth and rich data based on their knowledge as the best way to inform this study (Creswell, 2009).

Given the topic, I used IHE websites to specifically identify Title IX administrators. After reviewing Title IX websites in the state of Ohio, it was determined that there were more than 50 Title IX administrators. After reviewing their roles and finding details on when the Title IX administrators were hired (where available), current and previous roles, and any other information I could find on public websites, I determined that around 37 Title IX administrators at public colleges or universities may have been eligible for this study. Direct emails were sent to those potential participants who had information available either on the Title IX website, campus directory, or a combination of both. The recruitment invitation to participate (Appendix C) in the study was emailed directly to those identified using the sampling technique outlined. When a

participant replied to the researcher that they were willing to participate, they were sent a screening tool (Appendix D) to complete, and the informed consent form (Appendix E).

Ohio public colleges and universities generally have between one to three Title IX administrators. There were some outliers with more than three. For sampling purposes, having several from one university was helpful to understand the experiences across the roles within a single institution.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

I invited a total of 37 Title IX administrators at Ohio 4-year public institutions to participate in the study by sending a recruitment invitation. I sought participants who have been in their roles for three or more years, as I believed they would be able to speak to why they have remained committed to their jobs given that ATIXAs 2018 survey found two-thirds of Title IX coordinators had been in their roles for under three years. Criterion sampling was used to select the target population for this qualitative study. I tracked responses and for those who wished to participate, I sent a screening tool and consent forms to everyone who responded in the affirmative, and for those with three or more years in the field, a 60-minute interview was scheduled. Phone calls were held, or emails were exchanged with participants who had specific questions about the study. Recruitment began in early February with invitations sent to 23 of the 37 Title IX administrators invited. After a lull in participant interest, the remaining 14 invitations were sent in mid-February. Twelve individuals expressed interest in participating, 2 never responded to attempts to schedule, and 10 were the final participants.

According to Suri (2011), “most research synthesists employ criterion sampling by stating explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria which includes specifications for methodological rigour [sic]” (p. 69). Criteria in this study included being over the age of 18, having three or

more years in Title IX work experience, and employment at an Ohio public institution during the time of the interview. There was also a goal of having diversity in age, gender identity, and race or ethnicity. These criteria were selected to help understand the career commitments of those who have remained in the field for three or more years already and who were working under the same federal and state laws at public institutions. Using data from the Qualtrics survey as a screening tool, I determined that the participants were a diverse group in age, race/ethnicity, gender, and years of experience.

Research Population and Participants

Title IX administrators from Ohio public colleges and universities (n= 10) formed the population for this investigation. To avoid a conflict of interest, Bowling Green State University (BGSU) was excluded from the population as I served as the Title IX coordinator for BGSU from 2018-2019, and then supervised the Office of Title IX and served as an appeals officer until I left the university in January 2023. BGSU's Title IX administrators were helpful in serving in the pilot interviews outlined above.

The study's 10 participants were employed at six public IHE throughout Ohio. Their institutions were diverse in many aspects, including associate degree granting institutions to bachelor's or higher degree granting institutions; with or without branch campuses; from urban and rural settings; and from primarily commuter to largely residential; and enrollment that ranged from small to large. All institutions were predominantly and historically white institutions. Because all were Ohio IHEs, all participants' work was under the same circuit court, state and federal laws, and guidance from the Ohio Department of Higher Education that ensured participants had the same concerns for policies and legal precedents as a commonality.

Participant Demographics

I conducted 10 recorded interviews with a sample that was representative of various positions, departments, and divisions across different Ohio institutions. All participants worked in Ohio, full-time, at a public college or university either remotely or on-site. All research participants had between three and 10+ years of experience in Title IX investigation, adjudication, and/or compliance. While I know the years of experience, given how few Title IX administrators have been in their roles for more than 10 years, I felt it could be too identifying to be more specific.

Table 1 provides demographics for participants and their institutions. Due to the small number of Title IX administrators in Ohio who met the criterion, I have provided a snapshot of the demographics to protect the confidentiality of the group. Not included in the table is education. Participants' highest degrees earned ranged from bachelor's to doctorate, with several of the participants stating that they were currently working on a Ph.D. or a master's degree part-time.

Data Collection

I collected data via semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview protocol included a specific, predetermined topic, and the interviewee was encouraged to talk more freely than in structured interviews (Scanlan, 2020). I chose this style of interview to flexibly explore challenges and supports in the role of the Title IX administrator, what factored into their decision to remain their role, and what types of resources existed. Upon receiving IRB approval (Appendix F), I identified research participants for the research study using purposeful sampling as outlined above. The interview protocol was developed based on the research questions and theoretical framework (see Appendix G). The interviews were conducted during the Spring 2023

Table 1*Demographics*

Personal Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Women	7	70
Men	2	20
Non-binary	1	10
Age		
25 – 34	1	10
35 – 44	5	50
45 – 54	4	40
Years in the role		
10+ years	2	20
6 to 9 years	3	30
3 to 5 years	4	40
-3 years*	1	10
Race		
White	8	80
Black	2	20
Institutional Characteristics	n	%
Size		
Small	1	10
Midsized	2	20
Large	7	70
Residential status		
Commuter	3	30
Residential	7	70

Note: -3 years based on formal switch into Title IX role. Met criterion based on experience.

semester over Zoom to allow for maximum flexibility, time efficiency, and reduction of cost barriers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prior to the interview, participants were asked to complete a

screening tool. This tool helped to ensure that the participant pool was diverse in identities and experiences.

Once interviews began, I documented participant responses through qualitative memoing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and audio recordings to capture how each participant described their lived reality working in Title IX. Transcriptions were used to ensure accurate depiction of what each participant shared. Within ten days of being interviewed, participants were sent a copy of their interview transcript to review for accuracy and were asked to submit any corrections or clarifications to the transcript within seven days. Participants were told that after seven days, the transcript that was shared with them would be used for data analysis unless they chose to withdraw from the study at any point. Four participants made edits to their transcripts, and I accepted all edits or modifications.

Interviews

I collected data through semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions to allow Title IX administrators to share their experiences and elicit their views (Creswell, 2013). I consulted Title IX and organization development and change literature to structure the research questions and interview protocol. After finding a sample of participants and scheduling individual Zoom interviews, I opened the interviews thanking each person for their willingness to participate in my study. Moreover, I shared the purpose of the qualitative research study and my positionality as a former Title IX administrator. I communicated that the interview would last approximately 60 minutes and told them they would have the option to select their pseudonym and share it with me in the wrap up. Participants were reminded of their right as a volunteer in this research study and asked to confirm that they gave consent to participate and for the interview to be recorded.

Once I began recording, I informed participants that we were now recording and let them know that we would begin the interview protocol. During the interviews, I made every effort to collect stories and examples that would help inform this research study while understanding the experiences and the context (Creswell, 2013) relevant to the participants and their institution. My initial question was a descriptive grand tour question (i.e., tell me more about yourself and your organization) (Spradley, 1979), which in several instances, the responses were broad enough that two to three of my follow-up questions were answered in this opening.

My interview protocol was divided into five phases, and I went through each phase, periodically moving forward or going back if they said something that made me want to know more about something that I may not have asked in a certain phase. For example, while I asked each participant about stress related to their roles, I did not ask each participant how they coped with stress. If it came up later that they had a specific coping strategy, I would ask them to elaborate on all the ways they coped with stress brought on by Title IX work. The subtle shifts in the questions helped to bring out emergent patterns (Spradley, 1979), and potential points for future discussion.

Document Review and Analysis

According to Yanow (2007), “documents can provide background information prior to designing the research project, for example prior to conducting interviews” (Yanow, 2007, p. 411). Additionally, utilizing document analysis as a method “may corroborate observational and interview data, or they may refute them” (Yanow, 2007, p. 411); in either case, the researcher can glean more from what is being told.

Because I employed criterion-based purposeful sampling, I additionally visited the Title IX website of each Title IX administrator to whom I sent an invitation. Therefore, my second

data collection approach to this study was electronic document analysis. This analysis involved reviewing the contact information for Title IX staff; the reporting form or options to report incidents; the policy or policies; the programing, events, or training sessions offered/advertised; emergency resources (e.g., 911, counseling, local hospital); confidential and other resources; and any publicly available reports (e.g., annual reports, resolution reports). Additionally, I analyzed the ease of finding the aforementioned topics in comparison to the ease of finding them on other Ohio public institutions' websites.

Data Analysis

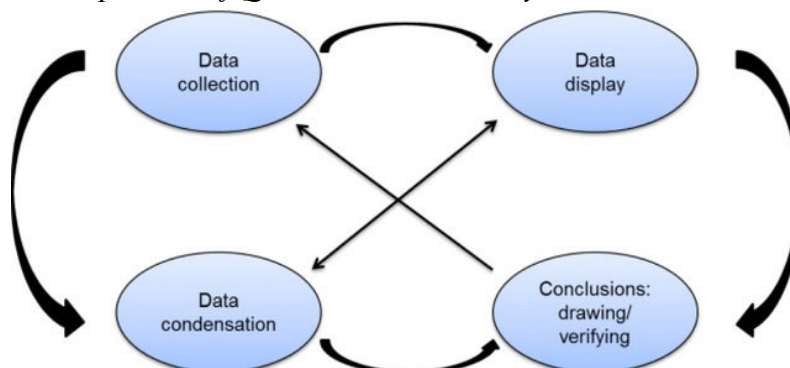
For this study, data collection and data analysis were done simultaneously so that the study was shaped as I consistently reflected on the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 2006). Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) components of qualitative data analysis interactive model (see Figure 3). Data were collected using the interview and transcription methods previously described. "Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials" (Miles et al., 2020, p. 8).

Following these procedures, data were displayed in an organized and condensed format, which allows people to understand the findings (Miles et al., 2020), yet contain a robust amount of information to demonstrate that saturation was reached.

Title IX can be a complex and triggering topic, therefore, I remained cognizant to illustrate information in a tasteful way and to avoid over exaggeration of the findings (Miles et al., 2020). The data were segmented, and transcripts were coded and themed to reduce

Figure 3

Miles & Huberman Components of Qualitative Data Analysis: Interactive Model



(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10)

Note. Permission to use provided in Appendix H.

redundancy (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Finally, conclusions helped verify that findings were reached from an objective perspective (Miles et al., 2020).

To begin data analysis, there were several steps I followed. Interviews were conducted on Zoom, and when the recordings were available, the audio files were used to upload to Rev.com. Rev.com is a paid service that allows audio and video files to be converted into transcripts with >90% accuracy. I then reviewed each transcript to further clean it before sending it to participants. To assist me in my data analysis, I used NVivo to code and analyze data. I independently coded each transcript instead of using the auto-code feature of the software for the initial coding. The coding process took 2 to 3 hours for each transcript. I then used the auto-code feature to identify additional coding options. The NVivo software helped me categorize the core ideas and threads that were both common and unique to the participants. In total (between my initial coding and the auto-coding) there were 360 codes assigned. After reviewing the codes, I grouped them based on emergent themes and collapsed codes based on similarities. I then moved 338 codes grouped by theme under research question one or two. The 22 codes that did not fit

under a theme or help to answer a research question were grouped separately. Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of how many codes and categories were distributed by themes within research questions prior to determining the final codes.

Table 2

Number of Codes and Categories

RQ1. What influences career commitment for Title IX administrators navigating case management and compliance?		
Theme Number	Number of Codes	Number of Categories
1	77	8
2	78	7
3	48	7
4	36	2
RQ2. What role do institutional resources play in Title IX administrators' ongoing career and organizational commitment?		
Theme Number	Number of Codes	Number of Categories
5	36	4
6	32	5
7	31	3

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is based on *credibility* and truth, *transferability* for the readers to determine if the findings are transferable, *dependability* to show that the research is repeatable, and *confirmability* to demonstrate the level of confidence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research is based on a reality constructed by the researcher, and yet, the research findings should be rich in detail in a way that enables readers to trust in the researcher's process (Stahl & King, 2020). This study sought to establish clarity, organization, completeness, accuracy, and conciseness in presenting results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To achieve trustworthiness, this researcher analyzed and interpreted the data, coding to identify common themes, and using various forms of triangulation (Stahl & King, 2020).

Although research on Title IX is increasing, there is still limited information on the experiences of Title IX administrators. This study aimed to find outcomes which will lead to

resolutions for the various problems that have led to interest in this topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While Title IX has helped the advancement of women, it has not evolved enough to end gender-based discrimination. This research was conducted in a way that gets as close to an objective reality as possible (Stahl & King, 2020). Despite my background as a Title IX administrator, I remained as neutral as I could and utilized my cohort, faculty, and committee to help me reduce my bias and the influence of my own beliefs on this process.

Memo Writing

As mentioned previously, while conducting interviews, I generated notes by postulating themes and looked for emergent categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This form of analytic memo writing is referred to as *memoing*, which is a technique often used in grounded theory research but is helpful in qualitative methodologies generally (Birks et al., 2008). Writing memos is a flexible process that is good for novice researchers (Birks et al., 2008; Charmaz, 2006), as it allows for exploration and discovery while also demonstrating that the researcher can use a logical process of knowledge development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). “Through the use of memos, the researcher is able to immerse themselves in the data, explore the meanings that this data holds, maintain continuity and sustain momentum in the conduct of research” (Birks et al., 2008, p. 69). This technique allowed me to get my thoughts down as they occurred, which helped me link the data and contribute to my analytic files (Glesne & Peshkin, 2006) and build trustworthiness.

Peer Debriefing and Review

To build credibility and trustworthiness, several techniques were used to involve peers in the data analysis and findings process (Solomon & Amankwaa, 2016). The Doctorate in Organizational Development and Change (D.ODC) program is a cohort-based program where

residencies consisted of presenting research updates, including the purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, other relevant information. Peer feedback resulted in changing my method, refining my research questions, and ensuring that the research process was not unduly influenced by my own experiences, rather strictly those of the participants.

Given the nature of this work, I have taken great care to protect the identities of my participants and their institutions. I crafted questions in a way that did not make participants feel pressured to share sensitive information about their cases or institutions. With respect to my participants, I have also worked to ensure that I am not adding to or reducing their words and collective experiences. To ensure trustworthiness, I exchanged two deidentified transcripts and my codebook with a doctoral candidate in another program at Bowling Green State University for a peer review. Our documents allowed us to independently confirm the presence of the themes in our transcripts. An additional peer debriefing was done by an individual with a Ph.D. in organizational behavior, and revisions were made to the models based on these debriefings. As a final step, an optional group discussion (Appendix I) was offered to participants to review preliminary findings to ensure that I captured the essence of their voices. This session took place two months after the initial interviews and three participants took place in the Zoom presentation. One participant participated in a solo update. The participants were asked if my interpretations of the data resonate with their experiences, and did the findings capture why they remain in their roles. All who participated in this additional session responded in the affirmative.

Ethical Considerations

Creating an ethical study is an essential part of research design to ensure that participants are safe from harm and undue stress (Cacciattolo, 2015). With stakes this high, every effort was made to protect the confidentiality of the participants and their institutions to avoid causing harm

(e.g., legal, psychological, emotional). Informed consent was obtained prior to participation, and the positionality of the researcher was disclosed. Additionally, to protect participants' identities, each was given the option between selecting a pseudonym or having one assigned.

Although confidentiality can never truly be guaranteed, risk was minimized by taking every precaution to prevent emotionally painful, embarrassing, or distressful circumstances for participants (Elliott & Timulak, 2021). As participants reflected on their experiences with the administration of Title IX, they were not pressured to communicate more than they were comfortable sharing. The researcher did not take on reporting responsibility on behalf of any Title IX administrator or their institution. Researchers need to build trust with their participants and protect each one (Creswell, 2009). The interview questions were ethical, following the standards set out by IRB, and information was shared with participants on how data will be used throughout the duration of the study.

Informed Consent

Once volunteers indicated their interest in participating in the study via email, they received an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E) to review prior to the initial interview. The informed consent form included an explanation of the purpose of the study, intended number of participants, expectations of participants, anticipated time commitment, potential risks and benefits of participation in the study, confidentiality and protections, consent, and an opportunity to ask questions they may have had about the study. Additionally, participants were informed that no compensation would be provided in exchange for their participation. Title IX administrators may often be subject to email monitoring if they are actively in litigation. An option was provided to use a personal email address if there were concerns about their institution monitoring their communications.

Confidentiality

Information was held confidentially. Identifying information, such as each participant's name and their institution's name and any case or legal information was not used in the findings. I removed or obscured identifying details from any direct quotes I used to avoid inadvertently identifying participants or institutions. Data and records from this study will be held in confidence. Consent to participate in this study included consent for the researcher and supervising faculty to see the participant's data. For the purposes of the peer review, two transcripts were used which contained the participant number and pseudonym. Organization names were excluded from transcripts.

Protections and Storage

All materials were and will continue to be stored on a password protected device owned by the researcher and on the researcher's BGSU OneDrive, which is behind a dual protected login. Any hardcopy materials were kept in a locked file cabinet. The digital recordings have been reviewed only by the researcher and supervising faculty may have access to those materials. Rev.com was the transcription service utilized and recordings were provided to the non-human options for that service. Records that could identify participants will be destroyed approximately five years after the study is completed. The results of this research will be published in future related publications and presentations on the findings.

Voluntary Participation and Consent

Participation was completely voluntary. During the study, participants had the option to decline answering questions and could revoke consent for interviews before, during, or after the interview took place. Participants had the option to decline to participate in or to withdraw from this study at any time, whether during or after their participation, without negative consequences.

While no participants withdrew, they were told that should a participant withdraw, their data would have been eliminated from the study and destroyed upon written notice of withdrawal.

Delimitations and Assumptions

I sought to explore the career commitment of Title IX administrators at public institutions in Ohio. While I set a specific goal of 8-12 Title IX administrators, *saturation* – the point at which new categories or information stop emerging and relationships among career commitment and resources are identified – is the more useful goal in qualitative research (Elliott & Timulak, 2021). I reached saturation and had thick and rich descriptions (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The parameters of the study I set was one delimitation, as it was a geographically narrow focus to ensure participants had the same concerns for policies and legal precedents. Additionally, the reporting lines of Title IX administrators vary, and the understanding of institutional barriers or knowledge of resources may vary as well, yet I choose to include investigators and deputies who may not have had as much knowledge of resources and support provided more broadly across the organization.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many institutions to send students away from campus for varied periods of time, and under the 2020 regulations, off-campus offenses fell outside of the jurisdiction of IHEs. One assumption I made in this study is that participants would have enough experience with case management and compliance to inform the findings of the study. According to Kunk-Czaplicki (2021), “the result of not creating an equitable educational environment through Title IX procedures and processes could result in a loss of federal funding” (p. 18). An assumption that Title IX administrators are concerned with the high stakes of navigating the law was something of which I had to be conscious. An awareness of assumptions and bias comes from my own positionality as a former Title IX administrator. My second

assumption was that many Title IX administrators had considered leaving their job during challenging times. I did not anticipate that this would be the case for everyone, but I had to be sure that I did not attempt to evoke feelings that were not there. My third assumption was that it would be easier for participants to reflect on challenging cases verses ones where they felt supported. This was in part because I also assume that Title IX administrators do not often have the time to ask for support or process when they felt unsupported. The lack of opportunity to think about being supported would also make it difficult to reflect on what support feels like. I had additional assumptions, but to minimize my bias and assumptions, in January 2023, I had someone interview me using my research study interview protocol. Experiencing my own interview protocol allowed me to deliberately work to exercise reflexivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), ensuring that I remained open to the data instead of inserting my personal assumptions.

Researcher Positionality

Prior to beginning this research, I first acknowledged that I served as a Title IX administrator for over a decade and remain connected to the work. I am a Black heterosexual woman, and although I hold several marginalized identities, I am also educationally privileged. I am a student affairs, student conduct, Title IX, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), human resources, and organization development and change practitioner. Within Title IX work, 72 % of Title IX coordinators surveyed identified as women; 68% of Title IX coordinators identified as white; and 15% as Black/African American (ATIXA, 2021). Being a Black Title IX coordinator located me in a racial minority within the field, and that was most relevant to me considering that “more than 20% of Black women are raped during their lifetimes which is a higher percentage than among women overall” (Tyne, 2022, para. 36).

My positionality drove my initial interest in this research, although it has shifted beyond what I originally intended to study. On the topic of positionality in qualitative research, Bourke (2014) stated, “the lessons to be gleaned about positionality that arise out of this research do not lie in the disconnect between preconceived notions and lived experience” (p. 4). Rather, my awareness of my positionality as someone who has been in each of the Title IX administrator roles and has supervised these staff, is what allowed me to attempt to engage with Title IX administrators about their experiences based on current conditions of the field and to hear what they need to navigate case management, compliance with regulations, and to maintain a desire to remain in their roles.

To undertake qualitative research, it takes a strong commitment on the part of the researcher to use themselves as an instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The stories within this section may be difficult to read and therefore, I am providing a content warning. While this section is pertinent to why this research is important to me, it could trigger those with personal or secondary experiences connected to Title IX.

I have spent over a decade working through Title IX cases. My first significant case when I was a Title IX deputy coordinator involved a situation in which a first-year student went out with friends she had just met in the early days of the fall semester. There was an athletic recruit on campus, and they all ended up at the same party. The first-year student was stumbling as she left the party, so when they got back to the residence hall, students took her to her room and got her in bed. The group then went down the hall to another room, but for some reason the recruit stayed behind. A while later, the roommate decided to go back down to check on her friend. When she went to open the door, the recruit blocked her and said that things were okay and asked if she had a condom. Panicked, the roommate went back down the hall and told the group

that she was concerned. They pondered over what to do and eventually settled on getting the resident advisor (RA) to check. The RA went down to the room and stood outside of the door for a while, but unsure about what was happening on the other side of the door, the RA decided not to knock and went back to the group to discuss what they should collectively do. The next morning, the roommate went back to the room and found her roommate covered in blood. She had been raped and beaten. Her injuries were so bad that she spent the next six weeks on campus in a wheelchair.

Working through this case, my heart was broken for this student. Her opening weekend in college took away so much from her that no process could restore. Because the recruit was not a student at the institution, there was little formal action the college could take, and the family decided not to pursue legal action. As I talked to more than a dozen witnesses in that case, all that I could think about was why no one intervened. This led to me actively focusing on violence prevention and teaching bystander intervention. Although it was not my trauma to own, I never forgot this case as a Title IX administrator, as a student affairs practitioner, as a former athlete, and as a mother of two girls. I wanted to help people better understand consent and comfortable ways to intervene. I also sought to create policies and structures for better accountability for not only those found responsible through a fair and equitable process, but also to create the structures to guide Title IX administrators so that we all understood the nuances of the laws.

Moving ahead to the middle of my career, it is important to share a situation that is more directly connected to this research study. Dr. Matthew Rygg was a 2014 Bowling Green State University (BGSU) alumnus of the higher education administration program. His dissertation advisor was Dr. Maureen Wilson, who is also my dissertation advisor. On December 13, 2019, a former colleague of his at the University of Portland went to his home, chased him as he ran, and

beat him with a baseball bat resulting in a badly damaged shoulder and 18 staples in his scalp (Gaitán, 2021). Rygg believed his assailant wanted to kill him (Gaitán, 2021). The campus safety director shared with the media that the assailant followed Rygg after a campus holiday party and beat Rygg because he was upset with the outcome of an internal 2016 Title IX case reported by his daughter (De Dios & Seekamp, 2021). Rygg did not quit his job following the assault; he remained in his role until June 1, 2021, when he left to work for a consulting group. On December 13, 2021, two years from the date of the beating, the assailant pled guilty and served the remainder of an 18-month sentence in prison for the assault.

The 2011 Obama era Title IX regulations conditioned individuals on college campuses and many families who pay attention to the Title IX guidance to think about the experiences of survivors. The 2020 Trump era Title IX regulations conditioned that same group to think about the experiences of the respondent and their due process rights. But who is helping us consider the experiences of Title IX administrators navigating these cases and compliance with the law? While what Rygg experienced is egregious, it is a real-life story of an alumnus of my own alma mater regarding just how challenging and frightening Title IX work can be. Title IX roles are often high-stakes and potentially dangerous positions to be in. Examples like the one I shared about a Title IX administrator who remained in his role, and the traumatic case of what a first-year student experienced, coupled with the survey data shared from the literature, are reasons I sought to do this research study. I wanted to better understand the experiences of Title IX administrators as they navigate their caseloads and compliance, get a better sense of the role, if any, of institutional resources as supports or barriers, and learn what influences their career commitment. While conducting this research, if it came up, I also explored why Title IX

administrators considered leaving their roles, as I aim to help institutional leaders better understand what is necessary to improve the experiences of Title IX administrators.

CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. In this chapter, I present findings related to both research questions that guided this study. Data for the study were collected via ten semi-structured interviews with Title IX administrators from various educational, gender, racial, and generational backgrounds. All participants had three or more years of experience doing Title IX work and are employed full-time at an Ohio public institution of higher education.

Seven themes explain what influenced these participants' career commitment. Regarding the first research question, four themes emerged: "Sweat Equity": Professional Contributions; Institutional Experiences; Threat of Burnout; and Making a Difference in Students' Lives. Regarding the second research question, three themes emerged: Allocation of Resources; Criticality of Support; and Belief in the Institution. These themes capture highlights of the experiences participants have had navigating Title IX case management and compliance. The themes also capture factors that influence career commitment and ongoing career and organizational commitment.

"Sweat Equity": Professional Contributions

Sweat equity refers to the way that a person adds professional value without additional pay by investing their time and other intangible assets (Bhandari & McGrattan, 2020). The way that participants operationalized their "sweat equity" or professional contributions considerably influenced career commitment. Two categories shaped this theme: the amount of time invested and education. Time investment captured the ways participants have made efforts to advance their careers and contribute to the field. Time investment included creating student training and

professional development for faculty and staff, case management, and attaining required certifications. These were some of the primary commonalities connecting participant experiences that surfaced among reasons the participants have remained committed to their roles. The amount of time invested in various aspects of the job was the number one cited factor influencing these Title IX administrators' continued career commitment.

When asked whether participants had made career investments that influence their commitment to remain in the role, Mellie shared:

I mean, I think just in general, the amount of time I have spent in my jobs, whether it's from training, whether it's from helping to rewrite policy, whether it's from processing through cases with people any of that kind of stuff, I think that it, it's a time investment more than anything.

Fitzgerald stated:

Boy, time ... I fought really hard for us to be able to create a position that was for our institution, the first time we hadn't tagged a Title IX coordinator on to someone [else's job]. And so, I worked real hard at this institution, I guess that's my sweat equity, in translating that into an opportunity for a Title IX coordinator.

Similarly, Elizabeth felt that the amount of time she invested had influenced her career commitment. She also connected the time she spent to fulfilment in the role:

I would say the first is just time spent. I got into the office and immediately felt like I wanted to be here. The work was just really fulfilling.... I was looking at a lot of historical injustices and I found myself getting really, really mad about things that had already happened. But working in this office makes me feel more like I can do things

about them now or at least learn more about them now. So, that's really fulfilling to me. So, I would say, yeah, time spent in the office, time spent in the role.

Another significant consideration under this theme was the category of education. While education was an investment of time, it was the continuing influence it had on participants that made it a separate category. Participants all had a college degree or multiple degrees ranging from bachelor's to doctoral degrees, and several participants referenced that they are currently working toward another degree. Additionally, Title IX administrators are required to be certified which means continuing education credits to remain current on issues related to Title IX. None of the participants in this study began their careers in the functional area of Title IX, which required additional investment in both time and education. With regard to professional development in the form of certification or continuing education, Genevieve remarked:

Oh yeah. I mean, when I switched to only doing Title IX and just focusing all my energy on Title IX was really when I committed to this as a career for what it is. I am as trained up as I think I possibly can be through the organizations like ATIXA, Bricker and Eckler; from the Clery level one to informal resolution, decision maker, appeals officers. I'm trained over and over in regard to that. Always keep staying educated with ATIXA. I think I'm scheduled to do level five coming up here, which involves diversity and the diversity aspect of it. And so again, always staying extremely invested in the world of Title IX.

Similarly, in reflecting on the need for continuous learning, Elizabeth shared, "Another thing is my education. I have really kind of gone all in on Title IX and gender, gender equity issues with my studies. And the more I learn, the more I want to keep learning."

Educational preparation related to degree was also relevant for participants, Fitzgerald strongly believed that his background in higher education prepared him for the various roles he has been able to successfully navigate. He said, “My friends in law school say I should go to law school. I tell them they should get a higher ed degree.” Jake desired to pursue an additional degree but raised that the time commitment necessary for a terminal degree has not been possible for him just yet. He stated:

I've wanted to get my PhD and my goal has always been to get a PhD, but life factors come in and various things. So, it's been a while since I've applied for a PhD program.

I'm going to apply I think this semester.

Upon reflection, the participants took inventory of their time, and their assessment led to the finding that overall, the way that these Title IX administrators have invested their sweat equity with regard to time and education has led to greater career commitment.

Institutional Experiences

Both positive and negative aspects of climates, cultures, and systems that emerged made up the institutional experiences of participants. There was some overlap between this and the next finding. Positive and collaborative climates, cultures, and systems contributed to good institutional experiences, organizational commitment, as well as a commitment to higher education in general. Conversely, this theme also captures the dangers to career commitment among climates or cultures that are not positive or collaborative, or times where the system is not working as it should. Aspects of climates, cultures, and systems that were viewed as positive included connectedness, entrenchment, and victories. These contributed to participants' organizational and/or career commitment.

Several participants shared that their career commitment is in part tied to their loyalty to their organization or because this work provides them with an opportunity to impact at least one person's life. An example of organizational commitment related to a participant's connectedness came from Abby who shared:

What I think would make it difficult to walk away from the role is not so much aspects of the role itself, but just with where I am in life. I don't necessarily want to move. I like the university. And so, from that perspective, leaving the university would be challenging.... I am pretty firmly personally invested in the institution. And plus, I really do think it is a great institution and there's so many people and such good work that is done here that I really personally care about the success of the university. So, I do think I'm pretty personally invested.

Likewise, Fitzgerald stated:

I am very committed to making sure this community uses its tools and its resources as best as it's able. I feel like I put all my chips in and I'm just liked here. It's hard to imagine thinking outside of the context of my current institution.

In wanting to understand what influences career commitment, each participant was asked to describe a time when the system worked. From this, several expressed that when everyone is doing their part, the system works and that is a good feeling. In a challenging role like the ones these participants described, there were several references to victories. Victories were moments participants described as things that help to make their job more manageable and give them the motivation needed to continue doing this work.

Elizabeth provided an example of working with students involved in a sexual harassment case with “thinly veiled homophobic language against another student.” The victory in this case was in the outcome based on the students’ responses:

They organized SafeZone 101 training. The respondent brought several of his friends to attend, listen and learn, and the complainant on his own agreed to go as well. It made my little hope of restorative justice heart beat so fast. It was just a great, great moment all around. So, that felt like an absolute win all around and I was really glad that we had the opportunity to do something like that, to facilitate something like that, because I think frequently people just assume that our office does investigations. But people don’t always get the closure that they want or get what they want from an investigation. And this is a perfect example of a situation where I think that that's true. I don't think there would've been as much healing for either party or for their community if it was through an investigation. And that's not to say there's definitely a time and a place for an investigation, not discounting that, but it was wonderful to take part in something like that.

Participants described things like being invited to graduation, having families thank them, and just the overall satisfaction with knowing they did what they could. When reflecting on helping a pregnant student who came back to say thank you, Quinn shared:

It's kind of exciting when you get some of [a thank you], a reprieve. You have a nervous mom, a nervous parent, and you kind of help them out and then they're telling you, ‘Thanks so much, here's a picture of my baby. Everything worked out. I'm still back at school. Everything's great.’ So that's kind of fun.

There were many victories and points of pride that the participants have come to expect periodically in the work. When reflecting on a time the system worked, Genevieve shared about a case saying, “it was investigated, it was adjudicated, and both parties – this is so rare – were actually okay with what the outcome was.” The reason that this is such a victory that Genevieve and the other participants described was captured well when Priscilla said:

Even though the work can be a lot, I will say that the reward that it provides is that it gives a person in this role an opportunity to really have a positive impact and be a positive step through someone's journey through trauma.... I've heard a colleague say, ‘this is hard work, but it's also heart work.’ You walk away with a different idea about how people go through life and that can be eye-opening.

Not all participants experienced that same degree of positive climate, culture, or systems that contributed to their organizational commitment. According to Carson et al. (1995), career investments are a dimension of career entrenchment, which is conceptualized as a “multidimensional construct” (p. 303). The negative aspects participants identified were “feeling stuck” and or misalignments between climate, culture, and/or system and their misalignment with the participant’s personal or professional values. For two participants, there were concerns at some point in their careers with feeling stuck in Title IX work if they didn’t explore other opportunities as they perceived no upward mobility in Title IX either within their current institutional structure or more broadly in their perceptions of how Title IX administrator advance within higher education. While both participants noted how supportive of an environment they were in, inclusive of positive relationships with their supervisor, elements of career entrenchment were clear. Elizabeth shared:

The only time I would say that I was considering leaving, it wasn't necessarily because of any of the casework, because even though it's hard work, it's really fulfilling. Yeah, it was more so because of career progression, but I don't think that even then I would be trying to leave the field. It would've likely been if I could find something at another institution.

Priscilla said, "My challenge with this type of work is, I'm not sure where it leads to. I'm not sure."

During a time when the regulations were pushing for campuses to be more trauma centered, Noelia shared how challenges arose around the concept of mandatory reporting. She stated "I remember that was kind of the culture of the institution that this is not my position, this is not my job, I don't have to do this. There are other people that should be doing this. Noelia shared that sometimes the way that campus partners responded highlighted how a misalignment with an organization can influence career commitment. Noelia stated:

There have been a few times where I have felt we were not student-centered or human-centered really. I mean, that has really made me second guess if I'm congruent with the institution or if it's me, if maybe the field isn't for me and maybe something else is.

Olivia also shared an experience that made her feel disconnected from her organization:

When push came to shove, it was about throwing each other under the bus instead of taking it as a learning opportunity and figuring out how we move forward in the best way for the institution. It was about, well, 'who can we blame and/or throw under the bus, and/or fire so that we don't have to take responsibility for what we did or didn't do as an institution?' And it's interesting because when you get like that, when you're at an institution like that, then you start to not try things. You start to not be creative in your approaches to how you figure out and solve and work through things. And so, then you

become status quo. That was a large departure from where I was at [my previous institution].

One can see how these participants may have questioned their career commitment when they did not share the same beliefs and values as those within their organization. “Sweat equity” and climates, cultures, and systems emerged as two primary influences on career commitment.

Threat of Burnout

Participants shared numerous examples of work-related stress and things that could lead to exhaustion in a Title IX role. My interpretation led to the finding that the threat of burnout challenges career commitment. When asked whether Quinn had considered leaving the role during a challenging period in Title IX work, Quinn replied:

I would say once or twice. Just wondering about burnout. Wondering if the support is not there or just worrying about can I keep up with this? Is it stress? Is it going to be this stressful? What other options are out there? So, starting to explore that. Obviously, I've stayed, and I plan to stay a little longer. But thinking future, I start to think how long do I want to stay in this? Is it going to be another 10 years? Do I want to transition into something else? And I'd say I'm probably currently exploring what I'd like to do.

Expectations and stress were identified as hugely significant for participants related to burnout. Several examples were identified within expectations and stress, including case management, and navigating compliance, with particular attention given to regulation changes, and also the mental toll of challenging cases.

Across interviews, participants shared similar reflections that understanding expectations of their professional role as Title IX administrators influenced their career commitment. Expectations included aspects such as the need (whether perceived or actual) to always be

available, for Title IX administrators to be knowledgeable, continue to be trained and offer training, and be flexible and open to change.

Additionally, there was an understanding that in a Title IX role, you should expect to be stressed, knowing that liability is high, and litigation is always looming. Additional stress comes from a lack of resources but the expectation to still navigate case management, train and educate the community, keep the institution in compliance, and help others navigate trauma. As such, Title IX administrators noted their own challenges or successes with coping. Several stressed the importance of having people you trust (who were often people who do the same or similar work), being with family, taking walks or exercising, getting outside, and having hobbies. The work of Title IX administrators is a stressful job according to the participants.

Change was something that the participants had come to expect, but also something they encouraged aspiring Title IX administrators to consider because it can lead to burnout. Here are some of the ways participants described what to expect in the role. Priscilla shared:

It's a lot of work. A lot of work. This is not a job where you're going to just show up and peruse through your day, and at any moment, your day can change. So, you have to be open to whatever the day brings. And also, you have to be able to gain the trust of a lot of different types of people very quickly. Also, I would say you have to be able to be able to listen to a lot of different stories and scenarios and not pass judgment because people come here with a lot of different issues.

According to Olivia, "it's just an isolating job and an isolating role no matter how you're involved in it. If you're a deputy, if you're the Title IX coordinator, like gosh, you take the brunt of it." Elizabeth shared that "you need to want to do this work. If you are here accidentally or it's not something you want to be doing, it's going to be hard."

Even for those who intentionally got into this work, they described that they anticipated challenges. Mellie, who has been doing this work for some time said that people should expect:

A regular level of frustration, constant frustration. I think whether it's frustration with the amount of cases that come in, frustration with the lack of response from the parties, frustration with having to adhere to the compliance pieces of it, any of that. I think it's just a field where you are going to be banging your head against the wall a lot and I think you expect to hear really difficult things and to have no idea what to say.

Fitzgerald spoke about the pressures, but also the commitment when he said:

You have to have empathetic personal skills to be able to do the work. You have to not have that reserved for complainants or respondents, have to be able to provide it to everyone included in the work. You have to have administrative skills. You have to be able to work in a bureaucratic environment, even the smallest schools are bureaucratic environments. And you have to have patience in you. You need to have all of the knowledge and the skills that are required to do the compliance related law work that's a part of it too. The journey pulls you and presses you and pushes you in ways that you didn't expect it. And that's why it's cool. And if it's not why it's cool, then it's not right.

Title IX has evolved since its inception, and the expectation is for Title IX administrators to enforce regulations and help shift the culture (Woulfe et al., 2018). While no participant spoke directly to a responsibility surrounding the campus culture, they all spoke about the importance of complying with the regulations, and helping their campus be a safe community. The pressures associated with this work could threaten career commitment.

Case management and navigating compliance is a large part of the day-to-day work of Title IX administrators and all ten participants reflected on how difficult these cases and Title IX

work can be. Participants raised various challenges, including the abrupt change, difficulty working in and through stressful situations, lacking resources necessary for the work, lacking awareness of what Title IX does, and overall challenges with Title IX regulations and other compliance related matters. At some point, 9 out of 10 participants considered leaving their role. This consideration helped me explore those who are remaining because of career commitment or organizational commitment, or those who may be at risk of leaving the role. For those who are seriously considering leaving or have an intent to quit, there were several factors from constant changes in regulations which at times conflict with personal values and views, an overall lack of institutional support, and workload.

When it came to regulation changes, there were split feelings between participants as some believe the changes have become a part of the work, while others feel the frequency has made it more challenging because as they get into the full swing of their policy, it is time to change them again. I asked if participants have worked through regulation changes, and if so, has the compliance aspect of the job affected their intentions at any point to remain in the Title IX role. Fitzgerald said, “No. You know what, I come at the work with what I think is a healthy approach of ‘those are the rules, you've got to find a way to do right within them.’” Conversely, Mellie shared:

Yes. Probably because I would say when I first started doing this prior to the 2020 reg changes, it felt more based in justice for victim/survivors, education for respondents, creating safer campuses, stuff like that. Now there's just so many small compliance pieces that you constantly have to look out for and almost every time we're having conversation about what direction is this case going in, me or the Title IX coordinator is like, let's pull out the policy. Let's pull out the procedures...But I think in a compliance sense this

doesn't align with what people would hope the regulations would be about. There's got to be some other way to be compliant that isn't so, I don't know, difficult.

On the topic of regulation changes, Quinn said, “laws and regulations change all the time. So, I think it's just trying to be as prepared for it as you can as things change. So, I'm used to changing quickly.” For other Title IX administrators, some of the changes have been difficult to navigate personally and professionally. For example, Noelia shared:

Trump's Dear Colleague Letter came out in 2020, that was a rough one for us. I have seen some challenges. I struggled with having folks, being in-person, seeing the person who has triggered them. That has been a struggle for me. I struggle with my own personal angers about issues, and that has certainly set me back a few times and not being able to respond as quickly as I would like. In a way, yes, having to play by the roles I don't necessarily always believe in has been difficult for me. But I don't know that it would make me waver because I think if I'm not doing this, then who's going to step in and do it? And I don't think that's fair either. I can get past myself for that.

For some participants who have been in the work for several sets of regulation changes, they reflected on how different things are from how they were fifteen years ago. Jake told a story about how he navigated the initial 2011 regulation changes. He shared:

I worked through regulation changes from when the Dear Colleague Letter first came out in 2011, approximately. It's funny, when I was at my previous institution, Title IX was not even a word that was constantly used in student affairs, I would say. When we were dealing with situations with sexual misconduct, it was often more of in a mid-level entry to mid-level area that was handling those cases and working with student conduct. We didn't have the offices that we have today. I felt it was interesting because after that Dear

Colleague came out, I was at a training, and they actually took a break in the training, and they brought all of us together from all the different training cohorts that we were doing at the time. We spent a good two hours actually talking about how has this letter impacted your institution? And so, one of the things I remember is what was in the Dear Colleague Letter and what came out of the Dear Colleague letter meant changes to processes. We would do this process for a year, then we would change to a different process. At one point we were told you had to call the police right away and then a year later said, nope, you don't call the police right away, but you do let them know about it and then they reach out to the person if they want to make a police report. We had a specific officer to contact to talk to about it. The reports that we wrote were changed a lot.

And then we had these major changes under Trump. The Obama administration, they really enhanced it more, I would say with VAWA and everything. But then Trump came in and they kind of made changes that I think some of them were good, especially for the respondent because...at one point I was thinking there wasn't much support for the respondent going through the process. So, I was kind of glad I saw some of that in here, which I think is important. But then I saw some other things and I was going 'that doesn't make sense and it's going to impact us negatively.' And then of course the sudden change that we had to make a quick switch around this year and looks like we're going to have to do it again and in the summer.

When asked if the regulation changes or compliance aspect of the work has affected their intentions to remain in the role, Abby shared:

It hasn't affected my intentions to remain in the role at this time. Now, I will say...we've seen a lot of pendulum shifts, and as I mentioned, just as we feel like we've fully implemented and we're really getting up to speed, and we have a good process related to the 2020 regulations, now we're going to get new regulations. I mean, if those pendulum shifts continue to happen, it could impact my desire to stay in the role. We have so much work to do supporting our community. To have to be continually changing course and figuring out how to do things to comply with new legal requirements is really challenging.

One example of regulations intersecting with career commitment was explicit when Genevieve shared:

If I'm considering leaving, it's going to be after this next rollout of what they're doing. So again, I'm already prepping for it to the best I can. The regulations in 2020, we didn't know what we didn't know in regards to how we were going to have to overhaul...And so again it's just finding enough hours in the day. And the piece is, in the past, everything in regulatory spaces for civil rights, human rights has always been very dictated, right, funding wise, based on who's in power at the time. But it feels even more in rapid succession of the changing of political powers to what that looks like. And so again, as soon as something is set in stone, it's going to be undone and then redone again, which is what the trajectory could be. And that's going to be a burnout for everybody.

This burnout that Genevieve mentioned was echoed by others.

When considering challenging cases that stood out to participants and what made them stand out, it was the ones that took a mental toll on them. Participants expressed that navigating cases is something that is an expectation of the role and there are inherent challenges that come

along with that. Participants wanted to make a difference in the lives of students, and there were times where their involvement with cases blurred boundaries in ways that were sometimes unexpected. Sometimes, the weight of not being able to do anything to help is what made a certain case linger in the minds of participants, other times, it was a more personal connection. For readers, I would like to give a content warning that these examples can be challenging to read, just as they were challenging to live through for these participants. When considering the complexities of navigating laws, Mellie reflected on a challenging case that made her consider leaving the role.

So, I think one of the really challenging ones that I dealt with was a case where we came up against not only Title IX regulations, but regulations specific to where we are in the Sixth Circuit when it comes to cross examination and a complainant who provided all of the necessary information during the investigation when it came to text messages, photographs, all of that, but really did not want to participate in the cross-examination piece, was present at the hearing, but refused to answer anything. And that then kind of dictated the outcome of the case. And that was just really, really hard because in my role that had to be kind of neutral, it was so hard to not want to say to her, if this is the outcome that you want based on everything I'm seeing here, you have to put yourself through this, you have to, but I couldn't do that. And then working with the board to write the decision afterwards and figure out how to write that in a way where they really still wanted to indicate that they thought this person was responsible even though we couldn't say he was responsible. That was super challenging, really, really challenging and just stuck with me for a long time. I have pretty good boundaries having done this for a while

now, but it was one where I just went home and was like, excuse my language, but fuck this. Really, really.

Another case that highlighted difficulties experienced by Title IX administrators when there is nothing they can do to help was illustrated when Priscilla shared:

We had one [case] where there was a sexual assault, it was pretty violent. However, we weren't able to identify the person who was responsible for the sexual assault. This was a rape case, actually, it was a rape. I wasn't able to identify the person because the student did not follow the proper procedures in the residence halls to sign the person in properly. And so, we had no information, we didn't have anything to do. I mean, we couldn't do anything about it because we didn't have enough information. And so, to have that conversation with a young adult, first time away from home, new life experiences, and to not really be able to help except for provide the support and resources...it's those kinds of times that makes this type of work more difficult.

Though each described similar experiences with stress or anxiety, one participant in particular spoke about how much the job has affected her, and the concern that has raised for her family.

Olivia shared:

I picked up a lot of weight physically. I was always sick, always sick..., and I was so stressed out. I was stressed out about everything and everybody that I had become a shell of myself. I remember going home for the holidays one year and my parents saying to me, we don't know who this Olivia is. This person that is showing up for us during holidays and breaks and is rarely coming home, we don't know who she is. This is not the Olivia we raised. This is not the Olivia that we poured into. We have no idea who this person is. And this person is insecure about everything, is scared about everything,

doesn't want to try anything new, isn't taking care of herself, isn't doing what's best for her health, her wellness, or her job because she's always so worried about, well, I'm going to get in trouble and get fired. So, I mean, mentally, physically, it looked like stress and anxiety.

There were instances where working through cases was more challenging to navigate when considering that this incident could have involved your child. Priscilla stated: "I have children of my own, so I don't know if it's because I'm getting older, I'm thinking about that now like, 'gosh, this could be my kid.' And so that's hard pill to swallow sometimes." Likewise, while reflecting on interviewing a complainant going through an abortion as a result of an unplanned pregnancy from a case he was investigating, Jake shared:

It's hard sometimes to not take it with you back to your home. It's hard for me to not want to explain everything to my wife about what happened today but say it in a way like hey had this one interaction with the student...told me what they were going through, and I was very upset from it or challenged by it because of how I would feel if that was my child.

While these were all instances of work-related stress, the various examples demonstrate the career commitment of these participants and how it can be threatened by the nature of the work. How Title IX administrators put into use their "sweat equity" or professional contributions, the way they experience their environment (i.e., culture and climate) and the strength of collaborative systems, and how the threat of burnout is managed all influence career commitment.

Making a Difference in Students' Lives

Present in each interview was the idea that helping students is what this work is about. This sentiment was clear when Priscilla shared how rewarding it is to make a positive impact and be a part of a students' journey, or when Mellie shared about a student who was suspended:

There were a lot of educational pieces added into that [suspension] and restorative pieces, and a plan for reentry, and all of that seemed to have worked. He returned to the institution, I met with him when he returned, he went on to some very impressive opportunities after that.

I heard a similar connection to the outcome of a case when Elizabeth shared the story about the students organizing a SafeZone workshop. Fitzgerald described an example that touches on many of the findings, but best shows a commitment to students. He shared:

We were able to reach a finding through a very long process. We were able to provide support for the same individual in a follow-up situation.... I think we were meeting a student's needs at a very different level at very different times and providing very different levels of support. So, I feel good about that. And students don't always come in and say thank you. So, getting invited to graduation is probably as best as it could get.

Jake, who investigates claims, shared:

I think I've enjoyed talking to students or individuals involved trying to answer questions to make sure that they feel that they're being heard and that they are not being judged, especially in my investigation role. It's definitely a positive thing that I try to get to know the student a little before we go into that investigation.

Jake also described how it bothers him “when some of the tactics I think I see being played in the process, especially when we're dealing with lawyers as advisors” ends up hurting students. Quinn described that when she was first introduced to Title IX:

I liked the neutrality of it, kind of the structure of it. Even though it's a little bit more structured now than what it was. But it just seems like a good place to help students on both sides.

Noelia shared that “real work is being done and it's making a difference. Talking about it, saying, I believe you, I hear you, things like that are transformational for people, and not just students, but just humans. So, it's worth it.” All of the participants had a desire to make a difference in the lives of the students they encountered.

Allocation of Resources

Allocation of resources is the first of the three themes addressing the second research question about the role of institutional resources in Title IX administrators' ongoing career and organizational commitment. Within allocation of resources, there were two distinctions, tangible resources and intangible resources. Some participants said that the level of support and resources they received helped them to be happier in their role. Others expressed that the lack of resources also felt like a lack of support, making it difficult for them to maintain a strong organizational commitment. There seemed to be greater organizational commitment on the part of those participants with more resources or support.

Tangible Resources

When considering resources, many of the participants wanted additional staff and a larger budget. Specifically, there was a need for more Title IX investigators. Staff sizes varied, but of all institutions represented, only one had fewer than three staff members, and most of the

participants referenced a model involving staff from other offices involved at some point in their process. When asked about what resources their institution provides to support participants in their roles, Jake shared:

Well, I think my institution provides some good resources. They provide us the ability to go through training without asking every time for the funds. We have a contract with a training firm that definitely allows us to, when it's time for us to re-certify or what we need to do, we can easily sign up.

However, Jake felt that when it came to adequate staffing, resources were a concern. He shared:

We don't have enough resources to get every case done in a very sufficient time and manner. And I think that we need to look at how we're addressing this. I mean, I have a case that took almost two years to get through all the way.... So, I think when you have a limited number of people who can do the investigations...I think we need to hire more Title IX investigators or deputy coordinators. I think some offices – not just here where I'm at, but I think around the country – are too small.

Noelia shared that the lack of resources provided by the institution has been the biggest source of work-related stress.

I don't feel that we have adequate funding for everything that we want to do, including the trainings for all of those involved, investigators, coordinators, everything. Funding is a primary stress. I'm also not entirely sure that we have tangible resources available.

She said that their “campus advocate is a big resource.”

Mellie shared that with her institution:

They have invested in a contract with a law firm that provides training and that has been unbelievably helpful because they offer training very regularly. They offer various levels

of training because of the contract that we have. I can attend as many as I want at no additional cost to the institution.

In response to the same question, Abby stated:

I think we can always use more resources. First of all, there's always more we could be doing Over time the university has gotten to know us a little bit better, they know our resources, we've kind of marketed ourselves a little bit. And the more our name gets out there, the more that people report to us. And so, our reports continue to increase and increase. And so every time we think that we've gotten the staffing we need, then we get a bunch of new reports and we could use more. So, I would say I consider myself lucky compared to other institutions that I talk to with our staffing levels. But I think there's always more that we could be doing and with more staff, we could create additional services and efficiencies.

Regardless of the various campus cultures and other institutional differences, everyone saw staffing as an institutional resource that helped them determine the extent to which Title IX work was prioritized by their institution. One example of an ongoing commitment to providing resources during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Genevieve shared:

People were being cut, finances, money, like salaries were being cut. And when they had to make those hard choices there were some things done in my area, but I didn't lose people. And for me, I was willing to lose travel and everything else like that. And in the institution I'm currently at, there are some funding challenges in regards to retention and matriculation of students. And so again, there's a lot of conversations, but I keep being, even under my new leader, reassured that this is an area that they're not going to be cutting. Now, they'll cut when we are allowed to travel, we can't do certain things, but

they're not taking away so far from that. And that's been pretty consistent with this institution. When I need things, they usually say yes.

The emphasis of this study was on resources. Therefore, after asking participants to share what resources were provided to support them, they were asked if they felt those resources were sufficient, Priscilla shared:

So, resources are a challenge. When I'm thinking about, for example the human resources personnel, this office is, in my opinion is understaffed. And we have had a review from an outside company that specializes in Title IX to give a report to say, "yes, you do need more people" like "you're doing a good job, but you do need more people in these roles." So, we don't have the resources that we need. We do well with what we have, but I think we could probably do so much more but I'm sure that's the story of everybody's, every institution. In terms of time as a resource, we don't have any time. We are short on time, but I think it goes back to the short staffing part.

Priscilla went on to say that:

This is probably just because I don't have a lot of experience with this, but I think coming into this field, what I've found is that people get here from all different backgrounds, which is cool. But for me, it would've been helpful to have some blueprint. I don't know. I mean, I know institutions are different, but to have some sort of guidance...I know we have the Title IX regulations and all that stuff, but a practical thing that I could turn to and say, 'all right, well this is the industry standard, and so this is what I should be doing.' Or if I'm benchmarking, if I just had something so that I kind of know that I'm on the right track. A lot of this has been that I've either talked to other colleagues on my own and just kind of haphazardly find out information, and that's not really a good way to find

out things if we want to be consistent and have this be a solid profession in that we are all doing the same things. So that's a resource that I think would be helpful.

The point has been made earlier by Abby, but Mellie also expressed the need for additional staff. This additional resource would help with the Title IX compliance aspect of preventing the reoccurrence of harmful behaviors. Mellie shared:

I think that we need more people who are able to investigate ... I think there should be some structural changes at the university but more folks who can be doing that prevention and education work. And I think that we've really struggled from the advocacy side of it.

Additional resources connected to budget is the ability for Title IX administrators to have access to institutional memberships for professional associations. The institution often pays for membership fees, travel, and any other related cost associated with benefiting from these affiliations. I asked participants about the ways they engaged with affinity groups or professional organizations. Participants found affinity groups and professional organizations to be a useful resource, albeit their participation levels varied.

While these are helpful resources, they were not always within reach for each participant. For example, Elizabeth shared “we didn't get travel expenses this year in our office to travel to conferences and stuff, so I wasn't able to go to ATIXA.” Likewise, Priscilla shared:

I haven't engaged with ATIXA very much because of the cost. I was able to make the business case that this was something that we needed to do but we're not members of ATIXA or anything like that. And it really is simply a financial resources issue.

Noelia shared that at her institution, the budget model lumps all the funding into professional development for her to use as she deems appropriate. She shared:

I have to juggle how I'm going to split those resources, and I don't think that's fair to our students, first and foremost, and it feels like a setup for failure for me sometimes. Am I trading off training for one where I could be doing great things for this particular topic for another one. So, we do have funding for professional development, but it comes with a price.

There were several concerns about resources being inadequate to carry out the demands of Title IX compliance. Participants felt that additional resources would allow their offices to provide more programming, focus on prevention work, and better meet the needs of the community. Participants struggling to obtain resources noted that this makes their job, and therefore their commitment to it, more challenging. Participants who had more resources expressed gratitude and stated they knew not all their colleagues at other institutions were in the same position.

Intangible Resources

Intangible resources are things that do not necessarily have a quantifiable value and may not be physical but are helpful. This section outlines intangible resources participants have, areas where this has lacked, and what they want or need through knowledge sharing, education, and partnerships.

An example of intangible resources was shared when Priscilla stated:

The resources that I think we capitalize on is using the knowledge and expertise and taking a team approach, which is really helpful when you have a short-staffed department. So that would probably be our greatest resource, is just using access to the subject matter experts in different departments who can help.

Other participants described ways they have developed important collaborative relationships with campus partners, to help best serve those going through the Title IX or student conduct process. The 2020 regulations changed the jurisdiction of Title IX which increased the caseload for student conduct professionals adjudicating sexual misconduct cases. The partnerships between Title IX, legal counsel, student conduct, and academic affairs were the ones that surfaced most often in this study.

In some cases, if it were not for these collaborations or external resources, there were concerns that the Title IX case management would not work. For example, Mellie said “we're relying on advocacy from off-campus partners...and I mean they're great, but it's not the same as having somebody that is dedicated to our campus.” In other cases, these partnerships were strained and added to the stress of navigating the role. For example, Olivia shared about a specific case that legal counsel failed to be a helpful resource when she stated, “It would've helped if legal had provided some legal advice when I had asked for it during that situation.” She went on to share more about the scenario and said, “when the shit hit the fan, I remember legal counsel talking to us about the fact that, ‘well, we told you you shouldn't have...And I'm like, no, you didn't.”

One example of a resource because of strong support was demonstrated when Quinn shared “my current supervisor, the Title IX coordinator is fabulous...She's brought in our wellness group through the EAP, through human resources EAPs wellness department.” She went on to describe how the EAP guided them through different relaxation and wellness activities. This is the sort of resource Priscilla requested when she said her institution needs to “start giving us a mental health day.” Wellness was something top of mind for several participants. Abby shared that “the university also as a whole has been trying to support wellness

amongst employees...we're trying to incorporate [wellness as] shared values into our daily work." Investment into things that helped center mindfulness and wellness was an intangible resource the participants valued or identified as a need.

Each of these examples touched on the need to provide services for those already in the role. However, when participants were asked about advice they would give to those entering the role, several had great guidance for Title IX administrator hopefuls, while Mellie's advice was for the professional associations. Mellie shared:

I think especially if people are going directly into Title IX work...but not really having a lot of experience, I think there should be some kind of discussion. Or part of the training should be, there's no consistency, you're not going to know, no case is going to be like any other case, and you need to figure out what are the things you need to do for yourself for the things that do come up.

As a follow-up, Mellie was asked who should be responsible for the discussions with new Title IX administrators:

I think from a supervisor, an institution level, there should be conversations of what does self-care look like for you? What can I, as a supervisor, make sure is happening? How are we going to communicate if these things happen? All those kinds of things. And from the ATIXA or Bricker and Graydon type training, I could see it being more like, here's how to manage that in the moment. Here's that more like logistical side of it...So I think it's a bit of both.

Although the time that it takes to plan these sorts of training sessions or discussions is a tangible resource, what Mellie and others meant was that the result of these discussions prepares Title IX administrators for the work, and preparation is an intangible resource. Each participant in this

study has worked hard to become knowledgeable and prepare themselves for nearly anything they may face in their roles. Having or lacking the appropriate allocation of resources to assist them in their work has influenced career commitment for these ten participants.

Criticality of Support

Many readers may view support as another intangible resource, but my interpretation of what support meant to these participants led to support as a critical component in retaining Title IX administrators, and therefore a separate theme. For the purposes of this study, I thought of resources as tools to get things done, and support as what connects the people, work, and tools together. Two crucial forms of support were identified: support from leadership and moral support. Spending significant amounts of time with students and others throughout the process requires Title IX administrators to provide and receive support in doing their job. Providing support to students was something mentioned by participants throughout the study, and having supportive colleagues, who also desired to help others was something participants found to be a necessary supportive measure for their own career commitment.

Support from Leadership

Most of the participants felt they were in a supportive environment, and for those who have experienced people within institutions who were not supportive, they reflected on the difference it makes to have the necessary support. Many of the participants experienced some sort of change to reporting structure, with several moving from the Division of Student Affairs to some other division. The names or even functions of divisions could make participants identifiable, but there were themes across the findings that suggested many institutional leaders believed there were two other functional areas under which Title IX should fall under. Despite changes, if their supervisor and other institutional leaders were invested, the participants felt

supported. In reflecting on what it was like to once report under student affairs, Genevieve shared:

Whether it be cabinet or senior leadership meetings, [the VPSA] was always very positive about Title IX, always thinking on the prevention side, always present for any kind of events we had, but also engaging the president, the provost, and all senior leadership very actively to participate in the events that we had. Being in student affairs, he was very student-centered minded and for the student experience, which made a big difference in some ways. Now I'm no longer reporting under student affairs, but under his leadership, there was never a point in which I felt there was any conflict. He never put me in a situation where I had to make decisions that would've been concerning in regard to if allegations were amongst the Title IX team. He just was a really incredible leader, but on top of that, supported this area better than I've seen anybody support it.

This example crosses over with the earlier finding regarding sweat equity and investment of time (in this case the time they put in and the time invested in them) as some of the participants felt that having supportive supervisory relations were directly connected to their career commitment, as they have had help defining their educational and career paths. For example, Jake shared:

If I didn't have the support from my supervisor as well as the Title IX coordinator, and the deputy coordinator over in Title IX, I don't think I could be in this role and have gone as far as I have. I think with their support and their encouragement, it's been very helpful.

Additionally, Quinn shared:

I will say, having the supervision that we do have is always really super supportive. If you go to them, and it may not be money wise, but it's kind of like, 'I need this or I just

need a day off to, if possible, to just reset myself and have a day to myself.' Knowing that that's always supported in our role is really nice.

One way that Mellie experienced support from her supervisor was simple and yet effective when she measured its impact on her ability to navigate the role. Mellie said "My supervisor has chocolate in our office and sometimes she just looks at me and she's like, I'll bring you chocolate. She just knows that."

Moral Support

Beyond supervisors, support also came to participants from other sources. For example, Abby stated:

So first, I am very fortunate to have really good coworkers. We are really supportive of each other. We have really worked in our office to foster as much as possible a culture of wellness. The university at large has been very supportive of Title IX and...has put a lot of support behind the office.

Given the level of organizational commitment that was evident during her interview, I asked Abby to describe how the level of support she receives affects her continuing commitment to remain in role. She replied:

I would say it affects it substantially. If we as an office or I as an individual lost the type of support that I have, I don't know. It would make it very difficult to continue in this role. I think this role, even with the support that we do have, which again, I know as compared to other institutions, we have maybe some stronger supports than other institutions may have. But even with that support, it's still a hard job and it is difficult from a workload perspective. It's difficult from just being emotionally taxing. So, to add

a lack of support on top of that would make it a pretty difficult job and may influence my decision to stay or go.

Priscilla finds moral support in colleagues from surrounding campuses. She shared:

We did have an informal group together, it was just people in the surrounding area...And so, got together with some of those Title IX people...it was really informal, to talk about our experiences. And hey, because in most of these places, there are usually one or two people in these offices, just to have someone, another colleague...has been very helpful. And so, I think that is something that would keep me in the profession as far as engaging with other people who are doing the same type of work.

Whether it was receiving treats or career advice from their supervisors, receiving moral support from colleagues, or explicitly benefiting from solution driven partnerships, each participant desired to work in a supportive environment.

Belief in Institution

Overall, participants had a belief in Title IX work, but also present was belief in their institutions and the good that could be done through the work of higher education faculty and staff. Elizabeth shared, “Working with the people I do seeing how thoughtful, kind, smart, compassionate they are and how dedicated they are to making changes that you see, it really helps me want to stay.” Belief in the organization was clear in things such as Abby sharing her firm personal belief in her institution and valuing the people she works with. Abby also shared ways her institution has invested in employee wellness, or having “pretty broad institutional support,” which were things that have led to ongoing career and organizational commitment. Noelia reflected on the “way that we looked at student success...rather than looking at an academic base, we were looking at obstacles that were getting in the way of students.” They

adjusted the structure and Noelia's role based on the best way to support student success. This shift crossed over with making a difference in the lives of students, but it also helped Noelia have more belief in her institution.

Additionally, this belief was present when Fitzgerald shared "I feel valued in the community. We've been able to build some relationships and do some cool things.... We fight hard for our progress even though sometimes it's slow." Fitzgerald noted that his institution is engaged in organizational change and that it is "a community that's willing to engage in meaningful, thoughtful conversations." When considering how Elizabeth shared the feeling of stepping foot in the office and knowing that was the right place to work, there was a belief in colleagues and the institution. Upon reflection, Elizabeth said "all sorts of interesting things [are] going on" at the university. Genevieve's belief in the institution was strengthened after receiving support. She shared that leadership:

Was heavily invested in changing the dynamics about Title IX. They actively recruited me to come to the university. When they got me here, they stood behind the practices, even going into covid and the shutdown and everything like that.

Having strong leadership drove career and organizational commitment, as well as belief that the institutional leadership truly cared about Title IX and students in an authentic way "instead of any other agenda."

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. In this chapter I presented the results of this generalized inductive qualitative resource study, following semi-structure interviews with ten participants from various Ohio public institutions.

The overarching themes included “sweat equity”: professional contributions; institutional experiences; threat of burnout; making a difference in students’ lives; allocation of resources; support plays a critical role; and belief in the institution. Sweat equity, institutional experiences, and making a difference in students’ lives influenced participants’ career commitment. The threat of burnout challenges career commitment. Resources and support play a critical role in retaining Title IX administrators, and belief in the institution develops organizational and career commitment. In the final chapter, I discuss my conclusions based on the findings, address the ways this study relates to and extends existing literature, identify the limitations of the study, and provide implications for future research.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

The Association for Title IX Administrators regularly surveys the field. In 2018, more than 500 IHE participated in the ATIXA state of the profession survey, and just 13% of Title IX administrators (58% of whom were the coordinator) had been in their role for five or more years (10% had been in their role between five to ten years and 3% had been in their role for more than ten years) (ATIXA, 2018). The Office for Civil Rights has continually emphasized the need for institutions of higher education to have a Title IX coordinator (U.S. Department of Education 2011, 2015, 2022). Informed by the knowledge that two-thirds of Title IX administrators had been in their role for less than three years in 2018 (ATIXA, 2018), I through this qualitative study sought to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. The research questions were:

RQ1. What influences career commitment for Title IX administrators navigating case management and compliance?

RQ2. What role do institutional resources play in Title IX administrators' ongoing career and organizational commitment?

In this chapter, I integrate the findings of the current study with the extant literature to articulate clear connections to past research and advance a model of career commitment for Title IX administrators. Next, I share the boundaries and limitations of the study and close by identifying implications and recommendations for policy, practice, and research.

Title IX, which is a part of the Education Amendment Act of 1972, was created to prevent discrimination based on sex. Since then, several presidential administrations have amended the regulations, with the most significant changes to date coming under the Obama and

Trump administrations. The White House put together a Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, which provided guidance to IHE leaders on their responsibility to protect students by responding to claims of sexual violence (The White House, Office of Digital Strategy, 2017). Despite the evolution of Title IX law, reductions in the numbers of sexual harassment and athletic filings on college and university campuses have been minimal (Mertz, 2006; Reynolds, 2018; Staurowsky, 2003). Findings from the present study extend the present research to imply that the pendulum shifts in Title IX regulations have resulted in increased workloads and stress for Title IX administrators and have resulted in a lack of clarity for campus constituents. These challenges left some participants feeling like their ongoing career commitment to Title IX work would be threatened by navigating constant regulation and policy changes.

Glassman (2021) stated that “challenge is the notion that change, rather than stability, is the norm, and that change provides opportunity for growth” (p. 55). Some of the participants embraced rapid change as a part of the work and were unbothered by regulation changes. Other participants still navigated the regulation changes, just with the acknowledgement that more stability was needed. Several participants referenced case management and the constant feeling that any case could result in a lawsuit left them feeling stressed and that pressure could cause burnout. Despite previous research that has implied that some Title IX administrators lack Title IX knowledge (Staurowsky & Weight, 2013), these participants came from various educational and professional backgrounds, and all referenced going through all required Title IX training sessions. Reflecting on what influenced their career commitment, participants articulated time committed to aspects of their jobs such as case management, policy creation, training and certifications, education, and leaving their legacy around Title IX work.

Participants went beyond the required training and all of them prided themselves on being knowledgeable of Title IX and adjacent laws so that they were subject matter experts. There was an acknowledgment by many of the participants that they do not always get it right, but not for a lack of knowledge or effort as some literature has suggested (Staurowsky & Weight, 2013). Instead, it was the result of having multiple campus responsibilities, being understaffed, and not having the appropriate resources or support. A lack of resources made it difficult to remain in Title IX roles without reprieve (ATIXA, 2021; Pappas, 2021). Having small wins and occasional victories was the much-needed break for many of the participants. Burnout occurs from high job demands, prolonged exposure to trauma, and low job resources (Kunk-Czaplicki, 2021), and is a common repercussion of secondary traumatic stress (Bassett, 2019). Participants in this study referenced trying to avoid burnout as the result of rapid change and a lack of resources, but also secondary trauma. These results support extant literature on Title IX administrators' burnout (Kunk-Czaplicki, 2021).

As discussed in Chapter I, a 2019 survey administered by the Association of American Universities found that far too many students (41.8 % out of 181,752 students across 33 institutions) had experienced some form of sexual harassment while enrolled in college (Cantor et al., 2020). When these incidents are reported, Title IX administrators repeatedly hear the stories of other people's traumas firsthand. Research has found that Title IX administrators struggle with that emotional strain (Bassett, 2019; Newell & MacNeil, 2015). While each participant understood that their job was to support anyone going through the process, there was an acknowledgement that the various situations could take an emotional toll on them, even impacting their families. The present study supports the existing research that trauma, including vicarious trauma, requires support (Bassett, 2019).

The present study supports existing literature that career commitment is significantly affected by supervisory support (Khan et al., 2020), but participants also found work-related support from colleagues, senior leaders, and professional organizations. Those participants who have lacked support described the impact on their well-being, their career, and their organizational commitment. To support students, faculty, and staff within the Title IX process, participants felt there needed to be a culture of collaboration and systems in place to be helpful and effective. When there was a misalignment with the organizational culture (i.e., “set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that are shared by members of an organization,” Gregory et al., 2009, p. 673), organizational commitment was lacking. Additionally, when participants perceived a lack “of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential” (Rankin, 2014, p. 234), the climate could feel more harmful than helpful. In circumstances in which participants felt supported, had shared beliefs and values with their organizations, and had a healthy climate of collaboration that produced victories for the staff and broader campus community, there was expressed organizational commitment.

Title IX roles have evolved over time and these administrators are uniquely positioned within higher education structures. While these Title IX administrators all agreed that there are challenges built into the work, each embraced the accompanying growth inherent in the work. Organization development and change encourages organizational leadership and members to look holistically at the organizational culture by considering individual, group, and total systems to influence organizational change (Burke, 2018). From this study, the absence of total systems change (e.g., reduced incidents of Title IX violations, change to the administration of Title IX regulations) appears to have been the greatest barrier to the ongoing career commitment of Title IX administrators.

Advancing a Model of Career Commitment for Title IX Administrators

One of the purposes of qualitative research is to extend existing theory (Creswell, 2013). Through this study, I sought to understand why Title IX administrators with three or more years of experience remained in their roles. Critical to the ongoing commitment was the way that participants were supported and how their well-being was centered. Being in environments with supportive colleagues, supervisors, and senior leadership influenced both career and organizational commitment. When leaders had a vision or there was a clear strategic plan, participants seemed to have a stronger belief in the institution.

From the ways institutions structured the organization to ways organizations centered removing barriers, participants made it clear that these actions helped them better align with and commit to the institution. The primary influence on career commitment was making a difference in students' lives. *Time* was the most frequent code in my data analysis, and this included the ways their time has been spent helping students. Each person on a college campus hopes to have a good institutional experience. This includes Title IX administrators, who are charged with trying to create safe and equitable campus climates and prompt and fair systems for others. The findings of this study urge readers to consider ways to keep these employees engaged and committed to their Title IX roles.

This study was framed within career commitment and organization development and change theories. Therefore, it is important to articulate both theoretical connections, as well as practical strategies to influence today's workplaces and employee experiences. Accordingly, I offer a Model for Career Commitment Influences for Title IX Administrators (Figure 4) that graphically represents the findings of the study, but also articulates tangible action steps for those interested in Title IX work and those supporting it for ways to operationalize the findings.

Figure 4

Career Commitment Influences for Title IX Administrators



Findings in Action

- Invest time in actions that are career builders, such as education and involvement
- Develop strong climates and cultures maximizing collaboration and system-wide capacity for effectiveness
- Conscientiously center well-being and embrace change
- Effectively leverage partnerships and prioritize resources
- Seek and provide emotional and actionable support
- Believe in the mission, vision, values, and integrity of the organizations
- Aim to play a pivotal role in the lives of those who are served by the Title IX process

Findings revealed that the way climates, cultures, and systems are experienced in the working environment influences career commitment. From the onset, transparency surrounding the campus climate and culture would benefit everyone because it allows for discussion about the gap between current culture and leadership and community aspirations for culture. Fix the culture and the people will fix themselves. In high-demand jobs, perceptions of culture and/or how the systems function could influence organizational commitment.

Examples of ineffective systems, including poor communication, misunderstanding of responsibilities, or misalignment of values affected the experiences of Title IX administrators. Participants in negative environments noted finger-pointing when things went wrong, “throwing

people under the bus,” and not centering students or the human experience. When cultures and climates become too toxic, organizational leaders often shuffle people or discontinue their employment. Organizations may address specific behaviors one-on-one or in small group settings, but this does little to change the effects of broken systems on organizational cultures. Figure 4 is for readers invested in or supporting those in Title IX roles. Regardless of the institutional profile, IHE leaders and future Title IX administrators should explore ways to put these findings into action. If there is a desire to retain Title IX administrators, their experiences may be a good starting point to intentionally create conditions that positively influence career commitment. In action, these findings mean:

- Professional contributions contribute to career commitment; therefore, those interested in Title IX work should invest time in continuing education and professional involvement.
- Campus leaders must develop and maintain strong climates and cultures, maximizing collaboration and system-wide capacity for effectiveness for Title IX administrators and others to have positive institutional experiences.
- The threat of burnout challenges career commitment; therefore, Title IX administrators and campus leaders must conscientiously center well-being and be agile.
- When there are insufficient resources, leaders and their staff members must effectively leverage partnerships and prioritize the resources they do have available to them.
- Support was extremely important to participants in this study. Several of the participants supervised staff, and therefore, seeking and providing emotional and actionable support influences ongoing career in organizational commitment.

- Belief in the institution influences career commitment, and believing in the mission, vision, values, and integrity of an organization influences ongoing organizational commitment.
- The opportunity to play a pivotal role for students during a very critical period in their lives fostered Title IX administrators' career commitment. It is important to support all parties involved in the process.

Positive and collaborative cultures are deliberately developmental, and that benefits everyone. According to Kegan and Lahey (2016),

As human beings we're set up to protect ourselves – but it is just as true that we're set up to grow psychologically, to evolve, to develop. In fact, research shows that the single biggest cause of work burnout is not work overload but working too long without experiencing your own personal development. (p. 2)

Fixing climates, cultures, and systems will help people overcome their own limitations as everyone benefits from positive environments. Being deliberate about fixing the entire system “does not present a choice between focusing on the individuals or focusing on the organization as a whole” instead, it helps to create a “comprehensively developmental culture” (Kegan and Lahey, 2016, p. 5), where people succeed because of, rather than in spite of, an organization's culture.

As mentioned in Chapter I, there are antecedents to Title IX incidents out of the control of IHE administrators. Whether it is gender-based discrimination in athletics or sexual harassment including sexual assault, these situations have led to harmful organizational climates and cultures. This study focused on career commitment influences, and as mentioned in chapter II, there are various things that influence career satisfaction and career commitment; some are

positive, and some are negative. Concepts such as role ambiguity, work stress (Bhatti et al., 2010), role conflict, and role overload (Zickar et al., 2008) have all been identified in the literature as challenges to career commitment. Career entrenchment (Wilson et al., 2016), career mindset (Lee & Eissenstat, 2018), and supervisory relationships (Khan et al., 2020) could have a positive or negative influence, depending on the circumstances. Lastly, researchers have found that some of the positive antecedents to commitment include group relations, support, and leadership (Fornes & Rocco, 2004; Meyer & Allen, 2001; Saks, 2019).

Present in this study as career commitment influences were things such as the work stress that leads to burnout, the institutional experiences impact on continuing career commitment and organizational commitment, role overload due to a lack of human resources, the presence of career entrenchment, relationships within affinity groups, and the importance of supervisory and leadership support. Title IX administrators are charged with responding to reported incidents and, to provide support to all parties while also addressing the impact of alleged behaviors. Within the context of OD&C, there is an intersection between Title IX and organizational culture that needs to be explored, based on the results of this study. Figure 5 depicts how Title IX incidents are connected to culture like a roundabout connects roads. The center of a roundabout was designed to slow people down and prevent possible harm to those who will cross paths. A Title IX administrator in many ways is serving that same purpose and preserving the upkeep of what happens at the center of culture and equity could have significant implications on the functional area of Title IX and field of higher education.

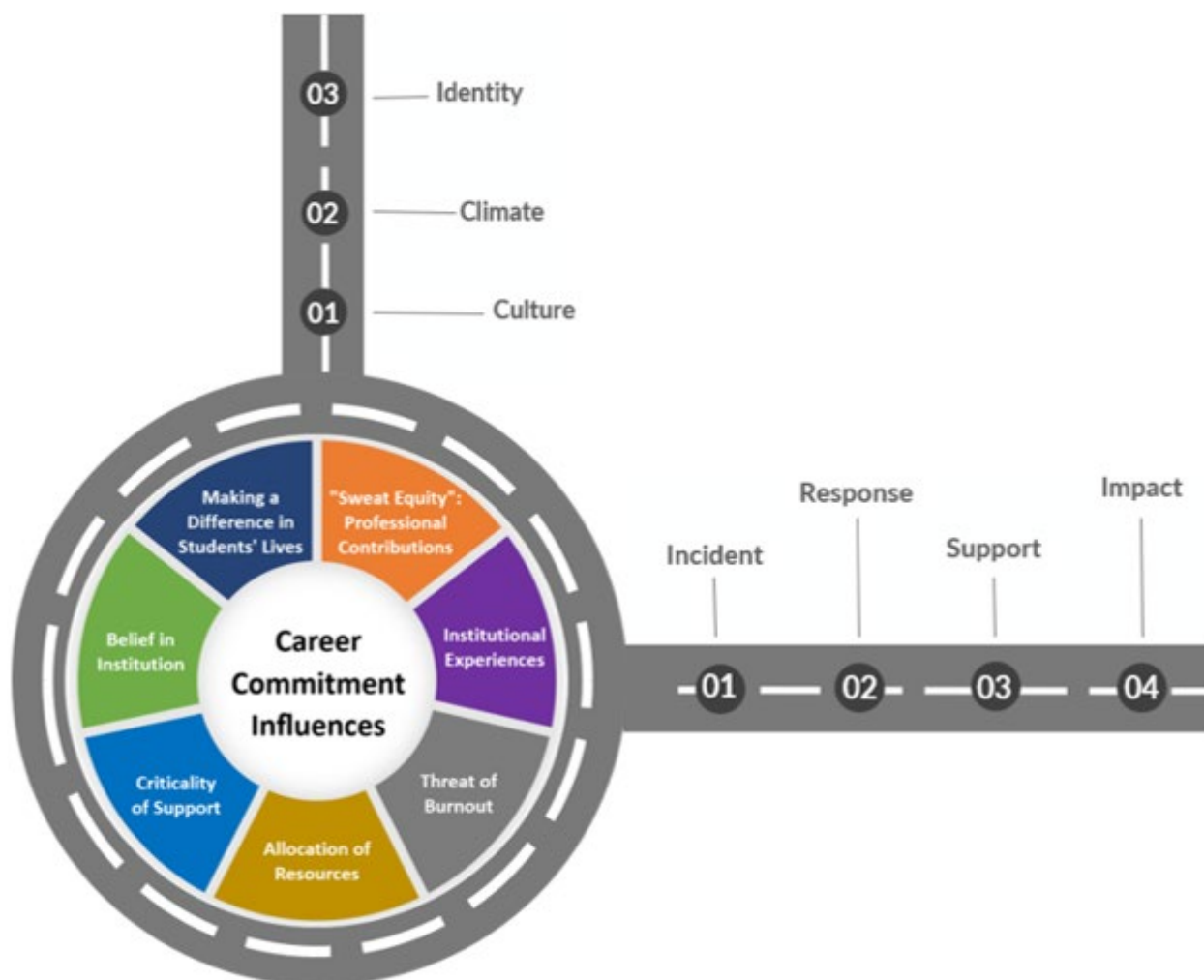
Find the Sweet Spot

Participants noted that change is inherent to Title IX work. The Department of Education has placed a great deal of responsibility on Title IX administrators. Some of those

responsibilities include resolving complaints through fair grievance procedures, addressing patterns of possible gender-based discrimination, addressing systemic problems affecting campus climate, providing training and resources to the community, and coordinating campus compliance with the law (Wiersma-Mosley & DiLoreto, 2018).

Figure 5

Intersection of Organizational Culture, Title IX, and Career Commitment Influences



Yet, according to the 2021 ATIXA State of the Field Survey, 49% of participants did not feel that senior-level administrators provided necessary funding to ensure Title IX compliance (ATIXA, 2021). Funding is a resource that allows the opportunity to appropriately staff, train,

and receive the professional development necessary to understand the nuances of the role. This surfaced as a key finding in this study as well. Furthermore, Title IX regulations are unfunded mandates, which puts senior leaders in a precarious position.

Given the number of legal cases contending that IHE fail to provide due process (Pappas, 2016) and that some tasked with Title IX compliance lack in Title IX literacy (Staurowsky & Weight, 2013), there is speculation that not all Title IX administrators understand the role fully. This study found that participants understood the responsibilities and were trained to navigate them, but that the constant nature of change impacted their ability to keep their campuses informed of expectation, and to have a sound policy that could be in place that didn't require overhaul with every presidential administration. Some participants had come to expect and embrace the changes, while others noted that the changes could lead to burnout.

All participants recognized that both good and bad result from regulation changes, but that the pendulum shifts have been drastic. Title IX administrators must invest a great deal of time in becoming proficient in their work. The commitment it takes often leads to career entrenchment, which can make it difficult to shift careers because of the psychological investments in the work (Wilson et al., 2016). While Title IX administrators are expected to provide accommodations and resources (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, 2021), one must question beyond this study whether Title IX administrators perceive there are adequate resources available to them to help cope with the stress inherently associated with the role. One stressor that could be addressed using organization development change methods is the frequency of changes in Title IX regulations. The government must consider not only the students involved in the process, but the staff. One likely implication of not identifying balanced regulations that can stand the test of time is having limited staff interested in helping campuses comply with the laws.

Determining whether there are collaborative change methods that could be used to help improve any of these systems requires first identifying their purpose. What purpose does a college campus serve? What purposes do the functions within a university serve? What purpose does statewide guidance serve? What purposes do physical and mental well-being serve? What purpose does preparing a new employee serve? What purposes do changing a climate, culture, or system serve? What purpose do Title IX regulations serve? I urge readers to re-read these questions, asking who is being served instead of the purpose (e.g., Who does a college campus serve? Who do the functions serve? Who is served when changes are made to climates, cultures, and systems? Who do Title IX regulations serve?). These are big questions, and we must involve a diverse range of people to answer them before initiating change. Cady (2007) asserted,

The question of “who” helps to define the natural boundaries of the system undergoing change. As boundaries are explored, purpose is further clarified. It is an iterative process in which the emerging web of connections informs where to draw lines. (p. 33)

What would happen if, rather than a group of politicians and lawyers, a group of Title IX administrators wrote the Title IX regulations and then sent them to lawyers to ensure justice and fairness are embedded within? The implications of regulations that center humanity could change lives.

For the participants in this study, the pendulum shifts in Title IX regulations in some ways provide job security, and in other ways create conditions for burnout. In terms of job security, participants mentioned how “trained up” they were, and this referred to the specialized nature of Title IX work. Despite the constant shifts in regulations, the DOE maintains that campuses must have a Title IX coordinator, and this has ensured that campus leaders will need Title IX administrators to navigate compliance. Title IX administrators have the knowledge and

training to develop and revise policies; most other campus professionals do not. However, participants noted that it takes time to get the campus community to be aware of the policies; and when it seems there is broader campus understanding, the regulations change again. Burnout can result from the constant upheaval and lack of clarity to effectively develop and implement compliant policies. Participants noted how frustrating Title IX work can be, and when reflecting on the compliance aspects, there were sentiments such as Genevieve's when she shared that if she would consider leaving her role "it's going to be after this next rollout of what they're [OCR] doing." For participants like Genevieve who have demonstrated ongoing commitment to Title IX work for more than a decade, the constants shift in regulations contribute to the threat of burnout. The sweet spot for these participants would be the creation of regulations that could endure the test of time.

Boundaries and Limitations of Study

According to Roberts and Hyatt (2019), "limitations are particular features of your study that you know may affect the results" (p. 154). This study included limitations. The first is that this study was conducted in the spring of 2023, just months before the anticipated Biden administration's regulations are assumed to be released. One of the interview questions centered around how compliance aspect of the job may affect their intention to remain in a Title IX role. Some participants noted that they were awaiting the next round of regulation changes. Had this study taken place after the 2023 regulations were released, there may have been a clearer understanding of the ways in which policy shifts and regulation changes influence ongoing career commitment of Title IX administrators. However, the three-year spacing between this study and the 2020 regulations mitigated recency bias. This form of bias is based on how easily a person can recall an experience (Bazerman & Moore, 2017). The amount of time that had passed

between the 2020 regulation changes and interviews reduced how vivid participants' memories were with policy revisions.

Limited institutional type diversity comprises the second limitation as although several attempts were made, no historically Black college or university (HBCU) was represented and only one participant worked in a community college. The experiences of Title IX administrators may vary depending on institution type which may have affected the findings in this study.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study and accompanying model led to three important implications for practice in the following interconnected areas: (1) organizational structures and guidance, (2) wellness and well-being, (3) total system change.

Organizational Structures and Guidance

Title IX has twofold expectations of schools and institutions. The first is compliance-centered (i.e., prompt response to stop behaviors and equitable solutions to address a behavior's effects), and the second is educational (i.e., prevent the behavior's reoccurrence). Throughout the course of this study, several of the participants referenced that Title IX was formally located within their institution's Division of Student Affairs; one participant made specific reference to the level of support received because of the placement within student affairs. It is worth examining whether the trend of restructuring or locating Title IX in areas other than student affairs continues to honor the educational aspects of Title IX work that are centered on student learning and development. However, as evidenced in this study, Title IX administrators come from various career and educational backgrounds, so it is therefore unlikely there is a single solution for the functional location for Title IX work.

The advantages of Title IX's location within student affairs are that these practitioners generally have deep knowledge of student development, and they are trained to navigate various situations students encounter and with which they need support. According to Barr (2003), "knowledge of the law is an essential element of the professional practice of any student affairs administrator, for it shapes policies, practices, and decisions on a daily basis" (p. 128). Barr described nine sources of law influencing policies and practices within higher education and stated that "it is clear that the law is a part of professional practice in student affairs," and so "student affairs officers should exercise the best judgement possible based on the facts, including the educational mission of the institution" (p. 147). Additionally, having Title IX within student affairs generally pairs well with the student conduct overlap. Student conduct professionals are often guided by the same student learning outcomes, and they also experience many of the same challenges as Title IX professionals. Both require a strong knowledge of law and policy.

As compliance comprises a large part of Title IX work, another area with the potential for great synergy would be within divisions that specifically bring all compliance areas together (e.g., Title II, Title VI, Title VII, and Title IX). At some institutions, an office of human resources (HR) has certain responsibilities within these compliance areas, while at others Title VII and Title IX may be viewed as risk management. Although most professionals who work with anti-discrimination laws would have the knowledge to navigate the compliance aspects of Title IX, Title IX is unique and distinct from employment laws as the cases primarily involve students. The positioning of Title IX within higher education should be discussed because, depending on the leadership, the variability of structures, resources, and support for Title IX will have implications for the field in that prevention efforts may not be centered and learning outcomes may be lost if the focus is too narrowly set on accountability and compliance.

Statewide Guidance

Some of the participants in this study expressed a need for specific guidance for navigating Title IX. Although the Title IX regulations offer a framework, when it comes to policy creation, there is a lot of room for interpretation. Participants referenced going through training to better understand Title IX regulations. However, within the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, there may be different nuances to consider beyond the broader regulations. One participant said that it would be great to have statewide guidance so that there were standard operating procedures to structure the work. The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) released *A Safer Campus: A Guidebook on Prevention and Response to Sexual & Intimate Partner Violence & Stalking for Ohio Campuses* in 2016 (Osmer); it has not been updated. This document offers guidance on definitions, response teams, responsibilities, and resources for Title IX and violence prevention professionals. Many of the participants referenced that the ODHE is a great resource both financially and as an affinity space.

It is worth examining whether ODHE should broaden the contents of the guidebook to offer a policy template for Ohio IHE. Beyond standardizing policies, this guidebook could offer potential benefits and barriers relevant to certain approaches in Title IX work (including the relevant organizational structure). While all of this is possible, as public institutions, there are already several restrictions in place sometimes impeding progress. If this idea is not approached with caution, statewide guidance could overproceduralize policy to account for various campus conditions. If the state could identify a way to offer individualized guidance and additional resources for campuses (e.g., a state-wide Title IX investigator who could be available to all Ohio institutions on an as needed basis based on certain criteria), that may be incredibly useful for IHE.

Educational Association Guidance

Another recommendation is that the Inter-University Council of Ohio (IUC) should become more involved in a discussion on ways to best support Title IX compliance. According to the IUC (2023):

The major goal of the IUC is to sustain a consortium that: establishes a comfortable forum that fosters idea exploration and problem solving; facilitates relationship building and trust among and between presidents and senior campus officers; enables members to achieve together—through collaboration and cooperation—what institutions cannot likely achieve alone. (para. 2)

The IUC provides a platform for discussion about organizational climates and culture, which often influence the organizational structural shifts being made at various institutions. Currently, the IUC does not regularly gather diversity officers and has not created a space for Title IX administrators. Since Title IX and diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging (DEIB) are not mutually exclusive and have significant crossover, both are areas that could benefit from a combined standing committee within the IUC. This DEIB/TIX committee could advise university presidents on ways to interpret all levels of anti-discrimination laws. There could be far-reaching implications for a statewide unified approach. If one institution is successfully sued, it could result in statewide policy changes or make every institution vulnerable to legal action.

Wellness and Well-Being

Throughout this study, participants referenced ways they desired to or were already centering their wellness (e.g., physical health) and well-being (e.g., mental and emotional state). Participants at institutions focused on wellness or well-being spoke about these efforts being a part of why they felt supported and how this enhanced organizational commitment. Although it

was a small sample size, there was a noticeable difference for participants who found little reprieve from work-related stress versus those who had space to release some of those stressors through various coping or mindfulness strategies.

Glassman (2021) shared a resource that was created for student conduct professionals centered on risk mitigation and self-care strategies.

[T]he webinar titled “The Truth About Litigation Stress: Managing ‘Creeping Legalism’ through Evidence-Based Approaches” . . . offered six specific behaviors for conduct practitioners that would help them to buffer against the impacts of judicialization and build resilience to the ever-changing legalistic landscape of their work. These include careful and objective documentation, improving communication skills, understanding the litigation process, learning problem-based coping strategies, engaging in wellness and self-care, and seeking litigation support and mentorship. (pp. 181-182)

This webinar was hosted by ASCA, a professional organization to which some Title IX (or other) administrators may not have access, depending on available resources.

Understanding the importance of supporting the physical, mental, and emotional needs of Title IX administrators is necessary and institutions should discuss ways to prioritize access to various benefits to support well-being. As one participant noted, their supervisor utilized the employee assistance program wellness services. Another participant noted that it could be as simple as providing wellness days. Although this is an additional benefit some institutions may not be able to afford, it would be worth analyzing the cost-benefit ratio. Webinars, art hours, mindfulness sessions, and other interventions could take place during the workday and would also provide a mental break from the strain of the work. The implications of not exploring wellness and well-being strategies included having staff experience burnout.

Total Systems Change: Enduring the Test of Time

Although individual responses varied, when considering what to tell someone interested in Title IX work to expect in the role, all participants noted the importance of expecting to work hard and invest a lot of time in becoming knowledgeable; being prepared for climates, cultures, and systems that are either difficult to navigate or wonderful to be a part of; existing in a highly stressful work environment that is always changing in some way and potentially burning out if unprepared for the realities of Title IX work; being required to do a lot with limited resources; and understanding the importance of finding a mentor who can provide support beyond what may be found at work. This study focused on what influences career commitment (i.e., what keeps them invested in this work) for Title IX administrators. The way participants operationalized their professional contributions and institutional experiences was based on their professional knowledge and resilience, which is something that needs to be developed for those newer to Title IX roles.

The findings should better position leadership to retain Title IX administrators, however, there is a need to acknowledge that campus leaders cannot retain staff without recruiting them first. Title IX work has lost its appeal as each administration continues to change regulations, and as the legal burden has permeated throughout the work. Chapter II highlighted the fact that between 2011 to 2017 Title IX was one of the fastest growing functional areas in higher education (Woulfe, 2018). Although this study focused on career commitment influences, the findings also highlighted the threats. Collaborative change efforts are necessary to help determine the best ways to stabilize the field – rethinking ways to recruit, finding ways to refresh existing Title IX administrators, and prioritizing retention – and plan for change in a way that will endure over time.

Role of and Involvement in Professional Organizations

As new Title IX professionals enter the field, attention should be given to how these professionals are onboarded to determine if the needs for Title IX administrators go beyond general onboarding to an institution, department, or specific role. Considering that Title IX administrators arrive in the field from different educational and professional backgrounds, creating onboarding that focuses on the role and the regulations could be beneficial. This would require system changes that institutions should not have to take on alone. For example, there was a time when professional organizations teamed up, like ATIXA attending ACPA conventions and working with the commissions to offer panels and training sessions not readily available to some. Total systems change would look like OCR sending representatives to professional organizations conventions, and professional organizations partnering to have more frequent joint conferences to ensure that Title IX administrators, and higher education professionals more broadly, are engaged and prepared.

Many participants noted that they entered Title IX work from other functional areas. Even participants who had been in the field for more years discussed learning to adjust to the expectations of always being informed, available, and neutral in the face of challenging situations. During this study, participants noted that Title IX work has forced them into conversations that make them uncomfortable. From hearing traumatic experiences, asking difficult questions, reaching unfavorable decisions, or being at odds with enforcing regulations or policies that they did not always agree with, the responsibilities and expectations could take a mental toll. Many participants indicated they have just navigated their way through managing frustrations, litigation, and change by asking peers and going to listservs. Consideration should

be given to formal ways to utilize professional organizations to recruit, prepare, and retain Title IX professionals for this work.

Utilizing Collaborative Change

The Department of Education often hosts listening sessions and allows for public comments during regulation revisions. The DOE should consider engaging professional organization leaders and representatives who have direct experience with navigating Title IX on college and university campuses and allowing OD&C professionals to facilitate collaborative change methods to determine what has worked, what has not worked, and what should become the cadence for Title IX changes. If the system is going to change to make Title IX regulations stable and more Title IX administrators committed, the partnership between professional organizations and the government may be the place to start. This study showcased the importance of resources and support, and for participants, having the ability to be around other colleagues doing Title IX work felt good. Understanding the experiences of Title IX administrators must be a priority for government officials and IHE leadership alike.

Instead of leading from the front, the Department of Education staff must consider what the impact may be to the system of Title IX work if they became the follower, letting the experiences of those most impacted by Title IX laws determine a pathway forward for reshaping regulations. There is space for professional organizations and campus leaders to design a new future for Title IX. Eradicating gender-based discrimination might be possible if change is authentic, collaborative, and comprehensive. Participants in this study did not identify collaborative change methods as a solution. Instead, I interpreted that the types of changes participants were seeking would be the outcome of utilizing these methods. One thing that was

clear from participants was that perhaps with less focus on compliance and more focus on people and cultures, change can happen in a systemic way.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings in this study revealed that research is needed on Title IX administrators at private institutions, since this study included participants only from public institutions. Conducting a similar qualitative study at private institutions, but perhaps without a set year of experience as criteria, could build the body of knowledge. This study focused heavily on resources. Developing an interview protocol with a different focus, or no focus, could also lead to rich descriptions. Additionally, although there are recent studies on Title IX administrators, there is still limited literature on the experiences of Title IX administrators, and there is an opportunity to better understand the motivation or drive to enter and remain in their roles. A broader study that is not specific to any geographical location or institution type would benefit the field. Additional research could also be conducted on the attrition rates of Title IX administrators to determine whether it aligns with other high demand jobs. A study specific to attrition could explore whether there should be a recommended maximum amount of time in which someone should work in Title IX administration to limit their ongoing exposure to trauma or high stress environments.

The Title IX administrators in this study remained in their roles because they had already invested a great deal of time into become good at their jobs, they felt good about the climate and culture they worked in, they experienced systems that worked, they had resources, were supported, believed in their institution, and above all, were able to make a difference in the lives of students. There were several challenges that threatened their career commitment, with burnout being the primary concern. Understanding these influences may help retain these highly

specialized and needed practitioners. Peer reviewers for this study recommended a future study on if each of the seven themes have a bigger influence on career commitment than another (e.g., professional contributions influence career commitment more than belief in institution). A survey could help determine which of these themes is the predominate influence on career commitment.

Finally, this study used the career entrenchment measure model (Carson et al., 1995) to consider career investments (Wilson et al., 2016) as the framing to determine what influences Title IX administrators' ongoing career intentions. The findings revealed that the way Title IX administrators are supported is connected to their ongoing career commitment. Many of the participants found support through professional and affinity organizations. Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984) explored the relation between student involvement and student development. Knowles Adult Learning Theory (1978) explores not only how adults learn, but also the fact that as long as we are alive, we never stop learning. Therefore, future research into the relation between Title IX administrators' involvement in their professional organizations (this does not have to be specific to Title IX organizations) and their professional competencies, development, and commitment could help better explain what influences satisfaction and longevity in Title IX roles.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. The use of generalized inductive qualitative research supported a study that unearthed a thorough reflection on a small number of events and circumstances that could help explain what influences career commitment of Title IX administrators. The findings determined that Title IX administrators give a lot of themselves to the work through their sweat equity and that they need more in return.

The interpretations, implications, and discussion sections of this chapter shared various ways that institutional leadership can change systems to better support Title IX administrators. The reality of the findings is that all five themes could apply to a wide variety of roles in multiple industries.

Ideally, those interested in this topic will find ways to best support the well-being of Title IX administrators (or anyone in a helping role). However, the reality is that people are often better positioned to help themselves than to wait on others. Professionals who help others, and in so doing experience secondary stress and trauma, must also work to practice self-care (Davis, 2019). This study revealed that the threat of burnout challenges career commitment. Awareness of emotional triggers and training on mindfulness techniques is one way to help minimize the risk of burnout (Davis, 2019).

The goals of Title IX are noble, yet it is well-evidenced that gender-based discrimination continues (DeSantis, 2017; Reynolds, 2018; Stimpson, 2022) despite five decades of change efforts. To master system change, “it is necessary to give up old ways of doing things that are familiar in order to step into new ways of being” (Cady, 2007, p. 29). One reason that we have seen little to no demonstrable change in gender-based discrimination across the branches of Title IX (Mertz, 2006; Reynolds, 2018; Staurowsky, 2003), is because despite all the legal interventions, the government cannot legislate morality. Organizations can do the work to change systems and people must do the self-work to become better humans who care for the dignity and worth of all, so that they no longer cause or tolerate discrimination and harassment.

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APPENDIX A. ATIXA PERMISSION TO USE 2018 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY TITLE IX COORDINATOR'S ROLES FIGURE

From: Brett Sokolow <brett.sokolow@atixa.org>
Sent: Friday, December 23, 2022 2:51 PM
To: Jennifer Q McCary <jmccary@bgsu.edu>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Permission to continue use of ATIXA figure

Yes, Jennifer, permission is granted. Best of luck with your research, and I hope you will come to an ATIXA conference to present your findings.



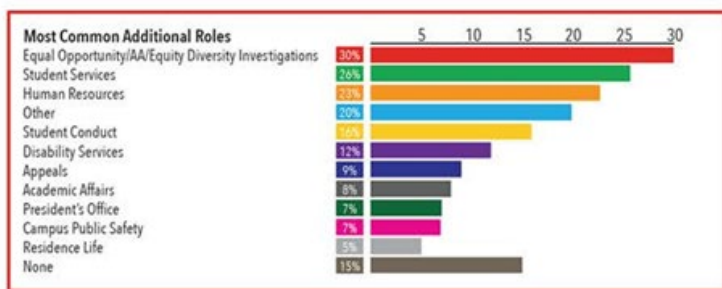
Brett Sokolow, J.D.
 Chair: TNG Board of Directors; TNG Management Committee; ATIXA Advisory Board; NABITA Advisory Board, ATIXA
brett.sokolow@atixa.org
 phone (610) 993-0229 | fax (610) 993-0228
www.atixa.org | www.tngconsulting.com | www.nabita.org
 475 Allendale Rd, Suite 200 | King of Prussia, PA 19406
[Click Here to Schedule a Direct Meeting](#)

Join us in Orlando for the 2023 January Title IX Training and Certification Courses Hotel Event. [Register now](#)
The information in this email is intended for the recipient only and may contain confidential information. If you have received this in error, please notify the sender immediately at brett.sokolow@atixa.org and delete the message. Any advice or opinion given in this message is never to be construed as legal advice.

From: Jennifer Q McCary <jmccary@bgsu.edu>
Date: Friday, December 23, 2022 at 11:40 AM
To: Brett Sokolow <brett.sokolow@atixa.org>
Subject: Permission to continue use of ATIXA figure

Hello Brett,
 I hope you're well. I am a doctoral candidate in the Allen W. and Carol M. Schmidhorst College of Business doctorate in organization development and change (D.ODC) program at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Bowling Green, Ohio. I am interested in understanding the experiences of Title IX administrators as they navigate case management and compliance, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources as supports or barriers and what factors into their decisions to remain in their roles. This study is supervised/chaired by Dr. Maureen E. Wilson who can be reached at mewilson@bgsu.edu.

You previously granted permission (attached) for me to use this figure for a paper. I am writing to request continued use for my dissertation. I will also be referencing and properly citing more recent ATIXA survey findings, but this is the only figure I intend to use.



Please let me know if I have permission to continue use at your earliest convenience.

Be well,
 Jennifer

Jennifer McCary, CDP, CAAP
 Chief Diversity and Belonging Officer
 Division of Diversity and Belonging
 207 Hayes Hall, Bowling Green, OH 43403
 419.372.2141 (o) | jmccary@bgsu.edu
 Pronouns: she/her/hers ([What is this?](#))

APPENDIX B. OD NETWORK PERMISSION TO USE HODGES 2020 ORGANIZATION
DEVELOPMENT ENGAGEMENT CYCLE

From: Amy Harger <AmyH@ewald.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 5, 2023 7:50 AM
To: Jennifer Q McCary <jmccary@bgsu.edu>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Seeking permission to use OD Engagement Cycle Image

Hi Jennifer,

Thank you for reaching out. Yes, we are okay with you using the image referenced below and you have OD Network's permission for use of the image.

All the best,
Amy Harger
Administrative Director
OD Network

From: Jennifer Q McCary <jmccary@bgsu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, January 4, 2023 3:27 PM
To: Amy Harger <AmyH@ewald.com>
Subject: Seeking permission to use OD Engagement Cycle Image
Importance: High

Hi Amy,

I hope this email finds you well. Kim provided your contact information as the person I should send the below request to. Please let me know if there is additional information you need.

Thank you,
Jennifer

From: Jennifer Q McCary
Sent: Sunday, December 18, 2022 1:26 PM
To: odnetwork@odnetwork.org
Subject: Seeking permission to use OD Engagement Cycle Image
Importance: High

Hello,

I am a doctoral student pursuing a doctorate in organization development and change (D.ODC) at Bowling Green State University. My dissertation study will focus on the experiences of Title IX administrators navigating case management and compliance, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources and what factors into decisions to remain in or leave a Title IX role. This research will explore what resources (e.g., financial, human, time) are needed to help Title IX administrators alleviate inherent stress brought on by the impact of working through Title IX cases and remaining in compliance with laws. A large section of my literature review focuses goals of the field of Organization Development and Change and its engagement. My review positions that Title IX lawmakers and administrators could benefit from using OD&C strategies.

I wish to use the image found on the Organization Development Network website <https://www.odnetwork.org/page/what-is-od>. Is this something I have permission to use? If this is not the correct way to request permission, please direct me to the appropriate person or area.



OD Engagement Cycle

from *Organization Development: How Organizations Change and Develop Effectively*, Hodges (2020)

[Click graphic to view full size](#)

Respectfully,
Jennifer

Jennifer McCary, CDP, CAAP
Chief Diversity and Belonging Officer
Division of Diversity and Belonging

APPENDIX C. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL



Dear (Insert Name),

I am a doctoral candidate pursuing a doctorate in organization development and change (D.ODC) at Bowling Green State University. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the experiences of Title IX coordinators, deputy coordinators, and investigators (hereafter referred to as Title IX administrators).

The study is to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. This research will explore what resources (e.g., financial, human, time) are needed to help Title IX administrators as they navigate Title IX cases and remaining in compliance with laws.

This study seeks approximately 8-12 participants, who currently have job-related duties (non-volunteer) pertaining to Title IX. All participants must be 18 years of age or older and should work in Ohio at a public college or university either remotely or on-site at the start of the study. All research participants must have a minimum of three years of experience in Title IX investigation, adjudication, or compliance (years can be combined and do not need to be at one institution).

The total time commitment for participants is expected to fall in the range of 1 hour to 2.5 hours (30 to 60 minutes for the interview, 10 to 60 minutes for the optional transcript review, 30 minutes for the optional group discussion). Arranged at your convenience, the interview(s) will be recorded and conducted via Zoom during the Winter and Spring 2023 semesters. An initial interview will last approximately 60 minutes. If a follow-up interview is necessary and agreed to, that interview will last approximately 30 minutes. In addition, you may choose to participate in an optional group discussion of study results with other participants.

Interviews will be conducted virtually and will be audio recorded. Data will be stored electronically in a secured place and a transcript will be provided to each participant to allow an opportunity to ensure accuracy. Responses will be kept confidential, with no participant names or institution names being included in the research findings. While there are no direct benefits to you, participants will receive a summary of findings of resources and supports.

Your participation in my study is valuable to help close gaps in what is known about the experiences of Title IX administrators. The results of this research will contribute to the field of higher education and the functional area of Title IX, particularly to assist in providing college and university leaders with examples of the types of improvement initiatives necessary to retain

Title IX administrators and provide a roadmap for initiating or revamping support for Title IX administrators. Please confirm whether you are willing to participate by emailing me at jmccary@bgsu.edu.

For more information, please feel free to contact me, Jennifer McCary, at jmccary@bgsu.edu or my dissertation chair, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, at mewilso@bgsu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer participant in this research, contact the BGSU Institutional Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or the Office of Research Compliance at irb@bgsu.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

Jennifer McCary
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D. PARTICIPANT SCREENING TOOL

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

BGSU[®]**Demographics**

The purpose of this study is to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. This research will explore what resources (e.g., financial, human, time) are needed to help Title IX administrators as they navigate Title IX cases and remaining in compliance with laws.

Please fill in your first and last name and preferred email address.

What is your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Transgender
- Cis gender
- Genderqueer/gender non-conforming/non-binary

What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 - 84
- 85 or older

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- Yes
- No

How would you describe yourself? Please select all that apply.

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Not listed (please share below)

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- Less than a high school diploma
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college, no degree
- Associate degree (e.g., AA, AS)
- Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)
- Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, MEd)
- Doctorate or professional degree (e.g., MD, DDS, PhD)

What is your current primary employment status?

- Employed full time (40 or more hours per week)
- Employed part time (up to 39 hours per week)
- Unemployed and currently looking for work
- Unemployed not currently looking for work
- Student
- Retired
- Homemaker
- Self-employed
- Unable to work

Have you been in a Title IX role in Ohio for three or more years?

- Yes
- No (if no, list other states below)

How many years have you served as a Title IX administrator (deputy, investigator, coordinator) across your career?

- Under 3 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 9 years
- 10+ years

To submit this survey, please click on the orange “Next” icon below.

APPENDIX E. PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM



KEY INFORMATION: This is a study on the experiences of Title IX administrators. If you choose to participate in this study, your responses will be used in research publications, not limited to the dissertation, and presentations as part of requirements for my doctoral program. The total time commitment for participants is expected to fall in the range of 1 hour to 2.5 hours (30 to 60 minutes for the interview, 10 to 60 minutes for the optional transcript review, 30 minutes for the optional group discussion to review findings). Participants must be 18 years of age or older, working at an Ohio college or university at the start of the study, and in a Title IX administrator role for three or more years. Your participation is completely voluntary and confidential. The risks to participants in this study are no greater than you experience in everyday life if you discuss your experiences in Title IX work. I will protect your identity by using a pseudonym of your choice for you and any person or department mentioned, and your organization will not be named. All documents and files related to the study will be stored in password protected accounts.

INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCHER: I am a doctoral candidate in the Allen W. and Carol M. Schmidthorst College of Business doctorate in organization development and change (D.ODC) program at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Bowling Green, Ohio. This study is supervised/chaired by Dr. Maureen E. Wilson. This dissertation research involves the study of Title IX administrators and their experiences. You are being asked to participate in this study because of your role as a Title IX administrator or someone doing the work of a Title IX administrator in the college or university setting.

Before you agree to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and are informed on the information provided in this Informed Consent Form.

PURPOSE: I am interested in understanding the career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education. When it comes to case management, Title IX administrators are often working with complainants, respondents, and witnesses who are providing statements often containing intimate details of instances of reported non-consensual sexual violence, or other forms of gender-based discrimination. Understanding the challenges and supports for those doing this work will be central to this study. Additionally, the United States Department of Education through the Office for Civil Rights, releases Title IX regulations which over the years have placed a great deal of responsibility and liability on Title IX administrators. This study will explore the experiences navigating compliance or making a good faith effort to follow the laws.

PROCEDURE: If you are interested in participating in the study, I will ask you to review and acknowledge your consent to participate in the study by emailing me, Jennifer McCary, at jmccary@bgsu.edu expressing continued interest in participating. Oral consent will be confirmed

during the interview. Next, I will work with you to schedule an interview to take place via Zoom at a time and date convenient to you. In the interview I will ask approximately 20 questions about your experience as a Title IX administrator with follow up questions to get more detail. I will wrap up the interview with a few logistical questions about how to contact you regarding the transcript of the interview and overall findings of the study. I expect the interview to take approximately 60 minutes to complete. Approximately 10 days after the interview, I will send you a copy of the interview transcript. I will ask that you take time to review the transcript, and using track changes, delete any information you would like omitted from the study. You may also expand on any thoughts. I will ask you to please return the reviewed materials to me within 7 calendar days; it should take between 10 and 60 minutes to do this, depending on how much you choose to edit. You will also be asked during the interview if you want to participate in an optional group discussion to review results and provide your feedback. You may also request to do this one-on-one; or you may decline reviewing preliminary results. I expect this group discussion will take not more than 30 minutes of your time. Your input on the accuracy of the results will be used to create the final manuscript.

VOLUNTARY NATURE: The Institutional Review Board at Bowling Green State University has approved this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. Deciding to participate or not will not impact any relationship you may have with BGSU. During the study, you may choose not to answer questions, and can revoke consent for interviews before, during, and after the interview takes place. You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after your participation, without negative consequences. Should you withdraw, your data will be eliminated from the study and will be destroyed upon written notice of withdraw.

CONFIDENTIALITY PROTECTION: Your participation in this study and all information will be kept strictly confidential. Identifying information, such as your name or your institution's name, and any case or legal information will not be used in the findings. I will remove or obscure identifying details from any direct quotes I use to avoid inadvertently identifying you or your institution. I will keep a record of your real name, your selected pseudonym, and your contact information including your preferred email, your phone number, and your institution, in a password-protected file within a password-protected, two-step authenticated, cloud-based electronic storage platform. The transcript of your interview, including your name, the names of any individuals or departments, and your institutions name will be deidentified after your review. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. If there are hardcopy materials, they will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

The digital recordings will be reviewed only by the researcher and supervising faculty. There is also the possibility of a transcription service being utilized and recordings may be used to fully provide service.

Records that could identify you will be destroyed approximately five years after the study is completed to allow the results of this research to be published in my dissertation, and future related publications and presentations on the findings following the completion of my degree.

An optional session will be held with participants to discuss the results of the study. For those participating there will be an additional form asking each participant to acknowledge consent and not to share anything you do not want others to know within the group setting.

RISKS: The risks to participants in this study are no greater than what you experience in everyday life and work. As outlined in protections, I will limit risks using a pseudonym for you, anyone you mentioned, any department, and not naming your institution. I will also deidentify interview transcripts. One potential risk is that any data transmitted over the Internet, such as information sent in email, cannot be guaranteed as secure. This does not present any greater risk than you would encounter any time you send or receive information over the Internet in your daily life.

BENEFITS: You will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences in Title IX work, including, what has helped you stay in your role, exploring if you have considered leaving the field (Title IX as a function, or higher education as a field), understanding resources and supports provided or needed, and understanding connections to the field. The aim is to help further inform the needs of Title IX administrators as you navigate case management and compliance.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have questions about this study, including how to express interest in participating, please contact me, Jennifer McCary, at jmccary@bgsu.edu or 419-740-1126 (will ring to personal cell phone). If you have questions or concerns about the research or your participation in the research, you may contact my supervising faculty, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson at mewilso@bgsu.edu, 419-372-7321. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer participant in this research, you may contact the chair of the Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board at 419-372-7716 or irb@bgsu.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

PARTICIPANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND CONSENT: I am confirming that my rights as a research participant have been explained and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study. I have been informed of the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. By emailing jmccary@bgsu.edu to confirm participation in this interview, I am indicating my consent to participate in this research study and acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.

APPENDIX F. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

DATE: February 3, 2023

TO: Jennifer McCary
FROM: Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [1987402-2] Dissertation research on the experiences of Title IX administrators
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 1, 2023
EXPIRATION DATE: January 15, 2024
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the IRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on January 15, 2024. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

If you have any questions, please contact the Institutional Review Board at 419-372-7716 or irb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board's records.

APPENDIX G. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Prior to the Interview:

Participants will confirm that they had time to review the information on this research study, have asked all questions prior to the interview, and had satisfactory answers to all questions. The researcher will confirm that the informed consent form was provided to the participant and that the participant has given consent prior to beginning.

The interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for both the participant and the interviewer. Interviews will be conducted over Zoom. Interviews will begin with introductions, followed by a conversation designed to help participants feel comfortable and in control of what they share.

Introduction to Interview:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Before beginning any recording, I want to share the purpose of this qualitative study is to understand career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources. From 2010 to 2023, I served in several Title IX positions. I was a deputy coordinator, investigator, the Title IX coordinator for a small private and a large public, I handled informal resolutions and was an appeal officer until January 2023. My intentions are to engage with Title IX administrators about their experiences, based on current conditions of the field, to hear what it is they need to navigate case management, compliance with regulations, and maintain a continuing commitment to remain in a Title IX role.

During your participation in this study, please note that you can choose not to answer questions, and can revoke consent for interviews before, during, and after the interview takes place. This

study will be published in the form of a dissertation and will be used for conference presentations. I want to emphasize that the study is confidential and your identity as well as the identity of your organization will be protected. If you already know the pseudonym you would like to use, there will be an opportunity for you to share it with me before we wrap up.

Recording:

We will begin the interview shortly, and I anticipate this will take approximately 60 minutes. I will transcribe the interview and you will be given the opportunity to review and edit the transcription within seven days of receiving the document. Should concerns come up about the transcription after that time, you will be able to share edits with me directly. Do I have your permission to audio record the interview? I will now begin recording. I have confirmed that you have provided consent to participate. I will now begin by getting a bit of background information.

Phase 1: Background Information

*Probing questions may differ based on the participant's responses.

I look forward to getting to know a bit more about you and your organization during our time today.

1. Let's begin with you telling me more about yourself and your organization.
2. How long have you been in a full-time role as a Title IX administrator?

I would love to hear about your journey to Title IX work. How did you get to serve in these roles and what has been your experience?

Phase 2: Inquiring about experiences and intent to remain in or leave their role

Thank you for sharing your journey. I now want to dig a bit deeper to learn more about your experiences by giving you the chance to share stories. Due to the nature of the work, I want to remind you that if you need to pause or discontinue the interview at any point, please let me know, and resources, such as the contact information for the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) will be provided to you.

3. For the next question I am going to ask you to reflect on a time when you were supported in your Title IX role.

a. Could you explain the circumstances?

Follow-up questions may include:

- i. What were examples of support provided?
- ii. Who supported you?
- iii. How were you feeling?
 1. Physically?
 2. Emotionally?
 3. Mentally?

That's great. Thank you for sharing.

4. For the next question I am going to ask you to reflect on a challenging incident or case in your Title IX role.

a. Could you explain what was happening?

- i. What made it a challenge?
- ii. Could you explain your thoughts during that challenging period of time?

Follow-up questions may include:

1. Did you considering leaving your role?
 - a. If yes, could you elaborate?
 - b. If no, has there ever been a circumstance where you considered leaving Title IX work?
 - i. Please describe that circumstance.
- iii. How were you feeling?
 1. Physically?
 2. Emotionally?
 3. Mentally?

Follow-up question for use if the participant mentions stress may include:

5. What are the primary sources of stress?
6. Please describe how you cope with stress that may surface resulting from your role as a Title IX administrator.

I appreciate you sharing your experience during that challenging time. Thank you.

7. For the next question I am going to ask you to reflect on a time when the system worked since you have been in your Title IX role.
 - a. Could you explain what was happening?
 - b. What went well that stands out?
 - c. Was there a difference in this case from others that allowed the system to work?

Phase 3: Understanding support and resources

8. Could you describe the resources (e.g., financial, human) your institution provides to support you in your role?

- a. Are these resources sufficient to assist you in your work?

Follow-up question may include:

- i. If no, what additional types of resources would be helpful for supporting you in your work?
9. Would you mind sharing your reporting structure, both where you report in and what roles directly report to you?
- a. When reflecting on your organizational structure or what you know about other models, is there anything you would change?

Phase 4: Career considerations

Thank you for that example. We are more than halfway through. Thank you for helping me understand your experiences. I would like to switch gears. One piece I am looking at through this study is your interest in remaining in your role. I also want to learn about your broader engagement in the Title IX community.

10. Are there career investments you have made that influence your commitment to remain in a Title IX role?
- a. Does your organizational commitment influence your commitment to remain in a Title IX role?
11. How does the level of support you receive affect your continuing commitment to remain in a Title IX role?
- a. How does the level of organizational commitment to Title IX affect your continuing commitment to remain at your institution?
12. How long do you envision remaining in your current role?
- a. What do you envision doing next?
 - b. Share more about why you envision this as the next direction.

- c. What would help you remain in your current role or similar work?
 - d. What might pressure you to leave your current role?
 - e. Would you consider leaving higher education?
13. If you have worked through regulation changes, has the compliance aspect of the job affected your intentions to remain in a Title IX role?
14. How do you engage with affinity groups (e.g., professional affiliations such as ASCA, ATIXA, etc. or social groups such as Facebook, GroupMe, regional listservs) are you able to connect with other Title IX administrators?

Follow-up questions may include:

- i. What are your thoughts about affinity spaces for the role of Title IX administrators?
 - ii. Are resources or other forms of support found in these spaces?
15. Given your experience, what would you tell someone interested in Title IX work to expect in the role?

Phase 5: Wrapping up

Thank you for that insight. I truly appreciate your time. I have a few wrap up questions and some final information to share about the study.

16. Is there anything else that you want to share about your experiences as a Title IX administrator?
17. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview if necessary?
18. I plan to share a copy of the transcript with you for accuracy and approval. Could you please confirm the email address you want me to send the transcript to?
19. Do you have questions for me?

20. The Informed Consent Form mentioned that you nor your institution will be named in the research findings. Would you like to choose your pseudonym?

- a. What would you like your pseudonym to be? You do not need to decide right now, but please email me your chosen pseudonym within 7 calendar days of this interview.
- b. As mentioned in the informed consent document, you may choose to participate in an optional group discussion of the study results with other participants.
Would you like to be included in this group discussion?

I wish to thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Research results, minus any institution or participant identifying information, will be published in my dissertation and any future related publications and presentation.

If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me, Jennifer McCary, at jmccary@bgsu.edu or my dissertation chair, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, at mewilso@bgsu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer participant in this research, contact the BGSU Institutional Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or the Office of Research Compliance at irb@bgsu.edu.

Thank you and be well.

APPENDIX H. SAGE PERMISSION TO USE MILES & HUBERMAN COMPONENTS OF
QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS: INTERACTIVE MODEL

From: Mary Ann Price (she/her/hers) (Jira) <permissions@sagepub.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 20, 2022 10:54 AM
To: Jennifer Q McCary <jmccary@bgsu.edu>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RP-8877 figure for use in Dissertation

Reply above this line.

Mary Ann Price (she/her/hers) commented:

Dear Jennifer McCary,

Thank you for your request. I am pleased to report we can grant your request without a fee as part of your thesis or dissertation.

Please accept this email as permission for your request as you've detailed below. Permission is granted for the life of the edition on a non-exclusive basis, in the English language, throughout the world in all formats provided full citation is made to the original SAGE publication. Permission does not include any third-party material found within the work.

Please contact us for any further usage of the material.

If you have any questions, or if we may be of further assistance, please let us know.

Kind regards,

Mary Ann Price
(she/her/hers)
Senior Rights Coordinator
SAGE Publishing

www.sagepublishing.com

Mary Ann Price (she/her/hers) resolved this as Done.

APPENDIX I. OPTIONAL GROUP DISCUSSION CONSENT FORM



*An inquiry into the experiences of Title IX administrators
(Title IX coordinators, deputy coordinators, and investigators)*

KEY INFORMATION: Thank you for your participation in a research study conducted by me, Jennifer McCary, a doctoral student in the Allen W. and Carol M. Schmidthorst College of Business doctorate in organization development and change (D.ODC) program at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Bowling Green, Ohio. This study is supervised/chaired by Dr. Maureen E. Wilson. I will protect your identity by using a pseudonym of your choice for you and any person or department mentioned, and your organization will not be named. All documents and files related to the study will be stored in password protected accounts.

PURPOSE: I am interested in understanding career commitment influences for Title IX administrators in higher education, with a specific focus on the role of institutional resources.

PROCEDURE: If you are interested in participating in the optional group discussion, I will review preliminary results and you may provide your feedback. You may also request to do this one-on-one; or you may decline reviewing preliminary results. I expect this group discussion will take not more than 30 minutes of your time. Your input on the accuracy of the results will be used to create the final manuscript. A group scheduling link will be sent, and you are to use your selected pseudonym for scheduling purposes. A date and time will be selected that is convenient for all participants. This group discussion will take place on Zoom. You will rename yourself in Zoom using your pseudonym prior to joining and will turn off your camera.

VOLUNTARY NATURE: You expressed interest in participating in an optional group discussion on the preliminary results of the study with other participants. The Institutional Review Board at Bowling Green State University has approved this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. During the discussion, you may choose not to participate, and can revoke consent for participation before, during, and after the optional group discussion takes place. You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after your participation, without negative consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY PROTECTION: Your participation in this study and all information will be kept strictly confidential. Identifying information, such as your name or your institution's name, and any case or legal information will not be used in the findings. Your name, the names of any individuals or departments, and your institutions name has been deidentified.

RISKS: The risks to participants in this study are no greater than what you experience in everyday life and work. As outlined in protections, I will limit risks by requesting cameras to be

turned off and using a pseudonym for you, anyone you mentioned, any department, and not naming your institution.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have questions about this study, including participating in the preliminary results discussion, please contact me, Jennifer McCary, at jmccary@bgsu.edu or 419-740-1126 (will ring to personal cell phone). If you have questions or concerns about the research or your participation in the research, you may contact my supervising faculty, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson at mewilso@bgsu.edu, 419-372-7321. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer participant in this research, you may contact the chair of the Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board at 419-372-7716 or irb@bgsu.edu.

PARTICIPANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND CONSENT: This section is to indicate that you give your verbal informed consent to participate in the optional group discussion on the preliminary result of the research study. I have been informed of the purpose, procedures, and risks, of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any point in the research process. By completing the group scheduling link and participating in the group call, I am indicating my consent to participate in this research study and acknowledging that I am 18 years of age or older and that I should not share anything I do not want others to know within the group setting.