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Campus Survivor Advocacy Services in Higher Education

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Naddia Cherre Palacios

2020



## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

### Campus Survivor Advocacy Services in Higher Education

by

Naddia Cherre Palacios

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Jessica Harris, Chair

To fill a research gap around student survivor navigation of on-campus policy and reporting structures, this study interviewed 14 campus survivor advocacy staff across four sites in California to explore the practices they use to support student survivors, as well as the challenges they face in that work. A literature review includes a brief history of Title IX's interpretation for college campuses and breaks down key studies. Analysis of interviews found that participants of the study engaged in trauma-informed practices to support student survivors both logistically and emotionally in navigating their healing. The study also found that advocates encounter challenging reactions to student survivor trauma as well as burnout from the lack of staff capacity and impact of federal regulations. Implications for practice and directions for future research address these challenges and put the onus on university administrators to take student and advocate experience into account. It also suggests potential benefits of adding a quantitative lens into the field.

The dissertation of Naddia Cherre Palacios is approved.

Brenda Stevenson

Christina Christie

Linda Sax

Jessica Harris, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

## DEDICATION

For Survivors.

You are believed.

You are supported.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

***ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION..... ii***

***DEDICATION .....iv***

***LIST OF FIGURES .....vii***

***LIST OF TABLES .....viii***

***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....ix***

***VITA..... x***

***CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ..... 1***

**Problem Statement ..... 4**

**Research Questions..... 6**

**Overview of the Study ..... 6**

**Research Sites and Population ..... 7**

**Significance of the Research ..... 9**

**Summary ..... 10**

**Key Terms ..... 10**

***CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE..... 13***

**Conceptual Framework..... 14**

**Campus Survivor Policy and Services Prior to the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter..... 18**

**Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 (Jeanne Clery Act) ..... 19**

**Title IX and Department of Education Guidance..... 21**

**Campus Sexual Violence Survivor Advocacy Research Before 2011..... 23**

**Campus Survivor Policy and Services After the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter..... 31**

**Office of Civil Rights DCL Guidance ..... 32**

**Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (Campus SaVE Act)..... 33**

**Not Alone: White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault..... 34**

**Office of Civil Rights Title IX Regulations..... 35**

**Campus Sexual Violence Survivor Advocacy Services After 2011..... 37**

**Summary ..... 45**

***CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN ..... 47***

**Research Design and Rationale ..... 47**

**Site Selection ..... 48**

**Sample Selection ..... 52**

**Access and Recruitment..... 56**

**Data Collection ..... 56**

**Data Analysis ..... 59**

**Ethical Considerations..... 60**

**Positionality ..... 60**

**Credibility and Trustworthiness ..... 61**

Summary .....	62
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Finding 1: CSAS Engage in Trauma-informed Practices That Support Student Survivors With Student-Centered Approaches That Focus on Healing, Self-Advocacy, and Empowerment .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<i>Subtheme One: Being Trauma-Informed.....</i>	66
<i>Subtheme Two: Offering Student-Centered Case Management.....</i>	78
<i>Subtheme Three: Positive Perceptions of Success and its Connection to Student Survivor Healing, Self-Advocacy, and Empowerment Outcomes.....</i>	86
<b>Finding 2: CSAS Encountered Challenges That Negatively Impact Their On-Campus Practice 92</b>	
<i>Subtheme One: Lack of On-Campus Advocacy Training Programs That Highlight the Student Experience .....</i>	93
<i>Subtheme Two: Federal Regulations and On-Campus Reporting Processes Negatively Impact the Student Experience and Alters CSAS Advocacy Approach .....</i>	96
<i>Subtheme Three: CSAS Generally Feel Supported by Their Campus but Find the Lack of Staff Capacity and Office Space a Challenge .....</i>	103
<i>Subtheme Four: CSAS Have Challenging Reactions to Student Survivor Trauma That Impacts Their Personal and Professional Experiences .....</i>	108
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Research Question One .....</b>	<b>116</b>
<i>Following Trauma-Informed Principles .....</i>	116
<i>Focus on the Minoritized Student Experience .....</i>	117
<i>Challenging Systems That Are not Trauma-Informed.....</i>	119
<i>Promoting Student Empowerment and Choice .....</i>	120
<b>Research Question Two .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<i>Negative Impacts of Federal Regulations.....</i>	122
<i>Inadequacies in State Certification Training .....</i>	124
<i>Lack of Staff Capacity .....</i>	126
<i>Impacts of Student Survivor Trauma.....</i>	127
<b>Limitations.....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Implications for Practice .....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Adopting Trauma-Informed Practices in Higher Education.....</b>	130
<b>Reevaluating the Title IX Process.....</b>	132
<b>Investing in Confidential Healing Services.....</b>	135
<b>Recommendations for Future Research .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>139</b>
<i>Appendix A: Study Recruitment Email .....</i>	<i>141</i>
<i>Appendix B: Study Information Sheet .....</i>	<i>142</i>
<i>Appendix C: Interview Protocol.....</i>	<i>144</i>
<i>Appendix D: Unit Analysis .....</i>	<i>146</i>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>149</b>



## LIST OF FIGURES

*Figure 1*      Participants With Job Assignments

LIST OF TABLES

*Table 1* Demographic Characteristics of Participants

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

College student sexual violence victimization rates have been high since scholars first started recording the issue in the 1980s (Campbell & Wasco, 2005). Sexual violence is an umbrella term that refers to rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual coercion, and intimate partner violence. In 1985, a random sample of 6,159 women and men college students enrolled in 32 institutions in the U.S. found that one in four women had experienced rape or attempted rape in their lifetime (Koss et al., 1985). Current rates remain similar. One in five college women (Karjane et al., 2005) and one in 16 college men (Krebs et al., 2007) will experience campus sexual assault. These statistics are often higher for LGBTQ+ identified students, particularly for those who identify as bisexual (Walters et al., 2013) or trans and gender non-conforming (Cantor et al., 2015).

For decades, the federal government has tried to address campus sexual violence (CSV) by issuing legislation including the Violence Against Women Act, the Jeanne Clery Act, and Higher Education Act Amendments, as well as guidance that impacted educational practices around CSV. A watershed moment for CSV legislation occurred on April 4, 2011 when the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issued a Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) that broadened the definition of school sexual harassment as previously interpreted in Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. Sexual harassment was still used as an umbrella term to define unwelcomed sexual harassing behavior, but it now included sexual violence, defined as “rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion” in the definition (Ali, 2011, p. 1). Additionally, institutions were asked to develop sexual violence policy, response procedures, and resources on college campuses (Ali, 2011). For example, the DCL encouraged institutions to hire

Title IX coordinators, identify a confidential resource and institute adjudication procedures that promoted due process rights for both student survivors and accused students.

The new guidance from the OCR in 2011 created tension within many higher education institutions because many colleges and universities were ill-equipped to comply with the federal guidelines due to lack of current campus structures and guidelines around Title IX reporting. For example, Karjane et al. (2002) found that most on-campus policies encouraged victims of sexual violence to file official reports with “the campus police (62.6%) or the local police (61.9%), [t]he only other source mentioned with any frequency (37.5% of the schools) was the dean or director of students” (p. 74). This 2011 update signified that most institutions now needed to designate a new reporting office, develop on-campus reporting procedures, develop on-campus resources and revise on-campus policies that addressed sexual violence, all without additional funding.

OCR guidance from 2001, on the other hand, only required schools to designate an employee to coordinate Title IX compliance, which at that time only addressed sexual harassment and sex discrimination (Office of Civil Rights, 2001). Prior to 2011, there was no mandated national model that required higher education institutions to align its sexual violence response with Title IX compliance. Therefore, the OCR guidance may have influenced coercive isomorphic organizational change, or the “formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations...in some cases [as] a direct response to government mandate” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 150). Such pressured change encouraged a compliance culture, “one in which liability is measured not by whether employers successfully prevent harassment, but instead by whether they comply with judicially created prophylactic rules” (Grossman, 2003, pg. 3). Additionally, many students across the nation began petitioning for OCR to initiate Title IX investigations against their higher education institutions for failing to

respond to sexual violence reports on campus. In 2012, six institutions were under investigation and by 2014, 55 institutions were under investigation; today, the number of pending investigations is close to 400 (Stratford, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

After 2011, and somewhat in response to the DCL, many campuses invested in campus survivor advocacy centers that offered on-campus intervention and confidential support services for student victims, also called student survivors, of sexual violence ([University Leader], 2015). The aim of victim advocacy centers is to encourage students to access free and convenient resources offered on their campus, rather than seeking off-campus services (Fisher et al., 2016). The Western University system, a cluster of 10 public universities in California, were among the campuses opening new advocacy centers as a to provide support to student survivors of sexual violence ([University Leader], 2015).

The organizational structures of centers within the Western system vary by institution, but victim advocacy staff aim to assist student victims of sexual violence with “crisis intervention, facilitating decision making, accompanying victims, serving as a liaison between agencies, safety planning and referrals” (Payne et al., 2009, p. 259). In a college campus these services include assisting students with both on- and off- campus referrals and reporting processes. For example, CSAS might be called by campus police to accompany a student survivor while they are reporting an incident of sexual violence to campus police, or they might meet a student survivor at the hospital and remain an emotional support while nurse practitioners are conducting a forensic exam. While victim advocacy is a key component of meeting the federal guidelines, and for providing individual support for student survivors and institutional well-being around sexual violence, little is known about the role of campus survivor advocacy offices and campus survivor advocates.

## **Problem Statement**

Sexual violence on college campuses has remained prevalent over the years, with national statistics stagnant (Cantor, 2015; Karjane et al., 2005). Since the 1970s, there has been an outcry over “society’s response to rape” (Carmody et al., 2009, p. 508). Feminist activists spearheaded the initial effort and developed rape crisis centers in order to assist victims of sexual violence (Brecklin & Ullman, 2004; Carmody et al., 2009). Student activists followed suit by demanding that higher education institutions properly respond to sexual violence on campus (Linder & Myers, 2018), exposing the reactive societal pattern of institutions only responding to issues that affect survivors if there is civil unrest both on- and off-campus. This pattern has treated student survivors of sexual violence in an inequitable manner and increased the feelings of institutional betrayal, or “feelings of treason that occur when an institution fails to prevent or respond appropriately to wrongdoings committed within the context of an institution” (Linder & Myers, 2018, p. 1).

Although campus survivor advocacy has been known as an “encouraging practice” (Karjane et al., 2002, p. 132) since 2002, it wasn’t until after 2011 that campuses began to invest in these services en masse. In 2002, only 10.2% of institutions of higher education provided on-campus victim services; now, nearly two decades later, 55% of institutions of higher education provide on-campus victim services (Karjane et al., 2002; Richards, 2016). The pressure to invest in these services was primarily the influence of student activists in 2014, who found support in Vice President Joe Biden and the Obama administration, which specifically proclaimed that “schools should identify trained, confidential victim advocates who can provide emergency and ongoing support” (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014, p.



11). Since then, these advocates have become a more common campus practice, valued by student victims of sexual violence (Munro-Kramer et al., 2017).

It has now been a decade since campus survivor advocacy has surged in higher education institutions across the nation (Richards, 2016). Yet research is very limited in scope for current practitioners in the field of campus survivor advocacy. Current research fails to catalog and analyze the evolution of this field on college campuses and the impact it has had on student survivors. Community and campus-based survivor advocates possess a crucial vantage point in providing insight into possible institutional barriers that survivors may experience while accessing resources (Payne et al., 2009; Ullman & Townsend, 2007). Ullman and Townsend (2007) suggest that “without an understanding of the larger context of survivors’ help-seeking experiences from both survivors’ and service providers’ perspectives, researchers may be less able to fully understand how survivors navigate their recovery and their support-seeking experiences following sexual assault” (p. 441). This study addresses that vantage point in the college setting by focusing on campus survivor advocacy staff perspectives. Given that they are the only campus staff members who can assist student survivors through their entire healing journey, they were positioned to provide a deeper understanding into how students who experience sexual violence on campus navigate the reporting process, begin their recovery, seek services, and continue their student life.

This research captured the stories of campus staff who served as the support person, or survivor advocate, for student survivors while they report to campus police and Title IX, attend adjudication meetings and the final hearing, navigate getting an on-campus accommodation, share their stories with families, friends, partners or no one at all, explore healing modalities and while they try to move on, move forward, or not move at all. Campus survivor advocacy staff

have a very unique role on the college campus, and they are key to finding out how campus response to student sexual violence works for student survivors on campus. Neglecting the campus survivor advocacy staff perspective feeds into the narrative of wanting only to address issues that affect compliance, rather than truly seeking to improve the student experience. Campus survivor advocacy staff are the uniquely placed to understand the possible systemic hurdles that student survivors might be experiencing in their college campuses and provided insight into specific systemic issues that were preventing the campus from providing an equitable student experience for all its students.

### **Research Questions**

The goal of my research was to explore the practices that campus survivor advocacy staff engage in on-campus and capture their experiences when assisting student survivor navigation of on-campus policy and reporting structures. The following research questions guided my study:

1. What are the practices that campus survivor advocacy staff use to support student survivors after they experience campus sexual violence?
2. What are some of the challenges that campus survivor advocates encounter as practitioners?

### **Overview of the Study**

Starting in 2014, the Western University system initiated a task force to address issues around sexual violence and sexual assault, including prevention and response. Students, staff and faculty from the task force brought forth seven recommendations for the WU President to consider, including a streamlined set of services for survivors and a new office, eventually named WU CSA office ([Western University], 2014). The school system became one of the first to create these systematic centers on all their campuses, and the centers covered confidential

advocacy, case management, prevention efforts and training, and policy input ([University Leader], 2015; [Western University], 2014). Six out of the 10 Western campuses had previously established campus advocacy offices; Site 3 was founded in late 1970s, Site 1 was founded in late 1980s, Southern A was founded in early 2000s, Southern B was founded in 2010, Southern C was founded in late 1970s, and Northern C was founded in 2010. The remainder of the institutions, Site 2, Site 4, Northern A and Northern B established their centers within a year-span after the task force convened in 2014. The implementation of Western's systemwide CSA offices set the context for where and how I conducted this research.

The goal of the study was to capture the experiences and perceptions of campus survivor advocacy staff and followed a qualitative research design. I approached my research from a qualitative perspective because I wanted to explore the lived experiences of campus survivor advocates in order to gain deeper insight into the practices used to support survivors. I scheduled individual interviews with campus survivor advocacy staff in a neutral on-campus location or provided a video conferencing option for remote interviews. This promoted privacy and confidentiality while eliciting rich narratives from study participants. In addition, I collected data through document collection of campus advocacy office marketing, website content and documents that guide advocacy services as well as campus policy or procedures. I established provisional codes connected to my research questions (survivor assistance practice and challenges). I transcribe all interviews while writing an analytic memo and keeping track of all emerging themes. Later I analyzed all document notes with the codes established by the interviews to validate interview data.

### **Research Sites and Population**

This research concentrated on four Western campuses: Sites 1 and 2 in southern

California and Sites 3 and 4 in northern California. These sites were selected because they host campus survivor advocacy offices that vary in years of operation but provide similar advocacy services or resources and have comparable staffing structures. Each region is host to a campus survivor advocacy office that was either founded prior to or after 2014, allowing for cross-comparison to be done between sites. In 2019, these four campuses collectively enrolled 146,102 students, a group diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, and first-generation experience ([Western University] Fall Enrollment at a Glance, n.d.). In 2019, Site 1's student population consisted of 35% Pell grant recipients, 38% first-generation students and 22% were underrepresented minorities ([Western University] Fall Enrollment at a Glance, n.d.). Site 2's student population consisted of 51% Pell grant recipients, 56% first-generation students and 42% were underrepresented minorities ([Western University] Fall Enrollment at a Glance, n.d.). Site 3's student population consisted of 35% Pell grant recipients, 42% first-generation students and 25% were underrepresented minorities ([Western University] Fall Enrollment at a Glance, n.d.). Lastly, Site 4's student population consisted of 25% Pell grant recipients, 26% first-generation students and 18% were underrepresented minorities ([Western University] Fall Enrollment at a Glance, n.d.).

This research focused on campus survivor advocacy staff who work either full-time or part-time for campus survivor advocacy offices and interact with student survivors of sexual violence at all four campuses, including directors, assistant directors, advocates, prevention coordinators, and intake coordinators. Their interactions consist of assisting student victims with safety planning, crisis intervention, referrals to on- and off-campus resources, accompaniments, coordinating accommodations and assistance in finding a healing modality. Each site had staff members whose primary job is to provide direct victim advocacy as well as staff with partial job

assignments to assist student survivors, in addition to primary administrative responsibilities, such as prevention programming, budgeting, strategic planning scheduling and policy development. This population was selected due to the similarity in practitioner roles and their membership in the same university system. All campuses have similar charters and staff organizational structures, facilitating the ability to cross-reference their responses.

### **Significance of the Research**

Through this study, I explored campus survivor advocacy practitioner perspectives by inquiring about the practices that they engage in on-campus, captured their experiences assisting student survivors navigate on-campus policy and reporting structures, and investigated the challenges they might encounter as practitioners. By examining campus survivor advocacy practices through the lens of campus survivor advocacy staff, the data shed light on how this office has been able to adapt advocacy practices into a higher education structure. Practitioner perceptions, insight, and recommendations for future practice reported in this study can potentially inform college leaders who are still seeking to create or improve campus survivor advocacy services. This campus service ultimately benefits student survivors of sexual violence. Survivors are a student population that have withstood a very distressful, violent, and isolating situation, often perpetrated against them by another member of the institution; it is essential to place the responsibility of properly addressing student survivor needs on the institution itself. The findings of this study can be utilized as a tool to benchmark current campus survivor advocacy programs or to assist in the development of services in the area of campus survivor advocacy, providing a roadmap to better support student survivors of sexual violence on college campuses.

## **Summary**

High college student sexual violence victimization rates have remained unchanged since the 1980s (Campbell & Wasco, 2005; Karjane et al., 2005; Koss et al., 1985; Krebs et al., 2007). For decades, federal policy has attempted to address campus sexual violence response through legislation, but 2011 federal guidance is the first significant change to campus response in decades (Richards, 2016). The 2011 DCL expanded the definition of sexual harassment in Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, to now include sexual violence (Ali, 2011). Additionally, higher education institutions like WU were tasked to develop policy, response procedures and to provide resources for student impacted by campus sexual violence (Ali, 2011). Growing and new campus survivor advocacy centers like offered on-campus intervention and confidential support services for student survivors of sexual violence, with on-campus victim services in higher education increasing by 45% in this period (Karjane et al., 2002; [University Leader], 2015; Richards, 2016). Research on campus survivor advocacy is very limited in scope, particularly studies centering on the campus survivor advocate experience (Brubaker, 2019; Brubaker & Keegan, 2019; Brubaker & Mancini, 2017; Carmody et al., 2009; Moylan, 2017; Munro-Kramer et al., 2017; Payne et al, 2009); this study addressed the unique and important vantage point that campus survivor advocates possess in providing insight into institutional barriers that student victims may experience while accessing resources. This research sought to address this vantage point by capturing the stories of campus survivor advocacy staff in order to better support student survivors of sexual violence.

## **Key Terms**

Below is a list of key terms used throughout this study that will be beneficial to define prior to delving into the literature review.

- **Campus sexual violence (CSV):** Sexual violence that occurs in a higher education institution and directly or indirectly impacts enrolled students.
- **Campus survivor advocacy staff (CSAS):** Professional staff that work for an on-campus office whose primary role is to provide resources and services to student survivors of sexual violence.
- **The Clery Act:** The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act is a consumer protection law that requires all federal financial aid eligible institutions of higher education to publicly disclose crime statistics, crime prevention, security policies and procedures on campus.
- **Community rape crisis centers (CRCC):** Off-campus community services whose primary purpose is to provide free services for victims of sexual assault in a designated jurisdiction, often a county or a city.
- **Compliance (Title IX):** The obeying of Title IX guidance issued by state and federal government agencies.
- **Sexual violence:** Umbrella term that refers to rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual coercion, intimate partner violence, and stalking.
- **Student victim/survivor:** A student who has experienced campus sexual violence while enrolled in a higher education institution. The terms victim and survivor are used interchangeably depending on the literature cited but for the purposes of this study, student survivor will be predominantly used.
- **Title IX:** A U.S. educational amendment that states that “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal

financial assistance.”

- **VAWA:** The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 became the first federal legislative act created to end violence against women.



## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

Driven by federal regulations imposed by the U.S. Department of Education since 2011, there has been a more active focus on sexual violence response on many U.S. college campuses, forcing many institutions to reallocate resources towards the Clery Act and Title IX compliance (Winn, 2017). Only 10.2% of institutions of higher education provided on-campus victim services in 2002, and the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter brought national attention to the lack of campus survivor advocacy services being offered to students, leading to new advocacy offices in many U.S. campuses, including those in the Western University (WU) system. Prior to 2011, six out of the 10 WU campuses had campus survivor advocacy offices, following national trends. By 2015, all WU campuses had a confidential survivor advocacy office for student survivors of sexual violence ([University Leader], 2015). Although the increase of campus survivor advocacy programs in the last eight years (2011 to 2019) in higher education institutions is a success in some ways, there is a lack of research providing the vantage point of campus survivor advocacy staff. This study sought to analyze the crucial campus survivor advocacy practitioner perspectives on their on-campus practice and capture their experiences supporting student survivors.

This literature review places particular emphasis on the landmark guidance issued to educational institutions via the 2011 DCL. The first section of the literature review explores the study's conceptual framework, trauma-informed principles, and their potential application to campus survivor advocacy staff practice. After describing the conceptual framework that guided this study, the literature review is divided into two sections: first, campus survivor policy and services prior to the 2011 DCL and second, campus survivor policy and services after the 2011

DCL. The first section gives a thorough description of college sexual violence policy, response, and victim services before the 2011 DCL and provides a historical perspective and context for the decisions and actions that follow the 2011 DCL. The latter section focuses on the 2011 DCL's impact on reshaping sexual violence policy, response, and victim services on college campuses.

### **Conceptual Framework**

A trauma-informed conceptual framework was most relevant to this study's purpose and design (Butler et al., 2011; Elliot et al., 2005; Harris & Fallot, 2001; National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health, 2011; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014; Wilson et al., 2015). Since the primary function of campus survivor advocacy staff (CSAS) is to assist student survivors of campus sexual violence post-trauma, this study applied trauma-informed principles to CSAS practice. Although there is limited research on the direct implementation of trauma-informed practices in campus survivor advocacy services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) (2014) trauma-informed approach framework is designed to influence sectors outside of behavioral health that "have the potential to ease or exacerbate an individual's ability to cope with traumatic experiences," such as campus survivor advocacy services (p. 3).

The SAMHSA (2014) framework consists of six key principles which are intended to be "generalizable across multiple types of settings" (p.10); *safety, trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; cultural, historical, and gender issues*. The principle of *safety* addresses the importance of assuring the physical and psychological safety of both its staff and the clients that they serve. The physical space where the services are provided need to ensure safety and promote "safe and

interpersonal interactions” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 11). The *trustworthiness and transparency* principle is connected to “building and maintaining trust with clients” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 11) in addition to other individuals that interact with the organization. This signifies that all decisions made by the organization on behalf of clients should aspire to be transparent, striving to build trusting relationships with not only clients but with those who work in the organization as providers. *Peer support* refers to connecting trauma survivors to others with similar lived experiences in order to “promote recovery and healing” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 11). In practice, this could be interpreted as providing survivor counseling groups or encouraging survivors to become peer educators. *Collaboration and mutuality* refer to the “leveling of power differences between staff and clients...demonstrating that healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 11). This principle promotes respect across all positions within the organization and acknowledges that all can be contributors to healing. *Empowerment, voice, and choice* encourages organizations to place the people they serve at the center of their work, as well as to believe in their resilience and their ability to heal and recover from trauma. It is essential for practitioners to encourage trauma survivors to take back their power, which has been taken away by the perpetrator of their trauma. This principle reassures that each trauma survivor is the expert of their own experience, meaning that the provider’s role is to facilitate access to resources, not mandate the direction of the healing. Lastly, the *cultural, historical, and gender issues* principle encourages organizations to reject cultural biases, leverage the “healing value of traditional cultural connections; [incorporate] policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to racial, ethnic and cultural needs of individuals served; and [recognizes] and addresses historical trauma” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 11). In practice, this principle encourages practitioners to value the cultural traditions of their

clients by seeking healing modalities that are culturally specific. The organization could also facilitate the access to cultural sensitivity training for practitioners and actively change policies that disproportionately impact minoritized populations.

The SAMHSA's (2014) trauma-informed principles, along with several researchers and services providers (Butler et al., 2011; National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health, 2011; Wilson et al., 2015) are influenced by Harris and Fallot (2001) and Elliot et al.'s (2005) work. In their study, Harris and Fallot (2001) identified that clients who were seeking mental health or substance abuse treatment care were also victims of sexual or physical abuse, and began to encourage service providers to "provide services in a manner that is welcoming and appropriate to the special needs of trauma survivors" (p. 51). Harris and Fallot (2001) defined being trauma-informed as acknowledging the history of trauma (past and present) of the client and also to seek to "understand the role that violence and victimization play in the[ir] lives" and use that knowledge to "design service systems that accommodate the vulnerabilities of trauma survivors" (p. 4). This is often interpreted by researchers citing their work to mean that all trauma-informed practice and service delivery should be influenced by the assumption that any person seeking services has "the possibility of a trauma history" (Wilson et al., 2015, p. 586). Additionally, Harris and Fallot (2001) emphasized that "the goal of the trauma-informed service system is to return a sense of control and autonomy to the consumer-survivor" by focusing on skill building and a strengths-based approach (p. 16). Lastly, Harris and Fallot (2001) established trauma-informed tenets that should be followed by service providers when interacting with trauma survivors, such as establishing an open and collaborative service relationship that acknowledges the survivor as the expert of their own experience and actively establishing "trust and safety" throughout the "collaborative service relationship" (p. 20).

Building on Harris and Falloot's (2001) work, Elliot et al. (2005) studied nine sites that provided mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and focused on violence against women services. Although the study was focused on trauma-informed services for women, they encouraged the application of their recommendations to impact all survivors seeking human services and hoped that their study would "provide guidance for those who wish to improve their service delivery in this way" (Elliot et al., 2005, p. 474). In their study, Elliot et al. (2005) developed 10 principles of trauma-informed services, which are all incorporated into the SAMHSA trauma-informed framework: 1. recognize the impact of violence and victimization on development and coping strategies; 2. identify recovery from trauma as a primary goal; 3. employ an empowerment model; 4. maximize the client's choice and control over their recovery; 5. services are based in a relational collaboration; 6. create an atmosphere that is respectful of survivors' need for safety, respect, and acceptance; 7. emphasize client's strengths, highlighting adaptations over symptoms and resilience over pathology; 8. minimize the possibilities of re-traumatization; 9. strive to be culturally competent and understand each client in the context of their life experiences and cultural background; 10. solicit consumer input and involve consumers in designing and evaluating services (p. 465-469).

There are several parallels between trauma-informed principles and campus survivor advocacy staff (CSAS) practices, as they can implement trauma-informed principles in their daily interaction with student survivors and model the approach with other campus administrators who might also be interacting with student survivors. CSAS are there to "respond to the physical, emotional, and social needs of survivors" (Ullman & Townsend, 2007, p. 412), support survivors through their healing journey post-trauma (Schauben & Frazier, 1995) and empower survivors to make their own choices (Ullman & Townsend, 2007). Trauma-informed

approaches as a conceptual framework for the study amplifies student survivor perspectives through those who serve them on campus. CSAS are best placed to observe possible systemic hurdles that student survivors experience in their particular higher education institution, and to provide insight into how federal guidance and policy implementation have impacted student survivors on campus. The parallels between CSAS practice and trauma-informed principles (Elliot et al., 2005; Harris & Fallot, 2001; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014) helped drive this study's focus.

### **Campus Survivor Policy and Services Prior to the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter**

The evolution of the current state-of-affairs surrounding sexual violence issues and the development of victim services on campus predates 2011. This section brings to light a national snapshot of policy, response, and resources, including victim advocacy centers and advocates, before the 2011 DCL. Throughout the 1990s, the Congress's primary focus in regard to CSV was to provide the public accurate crime statistics and pass legislation to protect victims (Karjane et al., 2002). Their effort manifested itself into several acts and guidance, issued over a decade.

Similar to Congress, the Department of Education (DOE) began shifting the interpretation of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 with the help of several court cases and DOE guidance letters beginning in 1992. Additionally, the 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) became the first legislative act created to end violence against women, providing protections for sexual assault survivors and enabled funding for the development of sexual assault response teams in the community (Biden, 1994). However, the services of this act extended minimally to college campuses. For example, the original version of VAWA only recommended a national baseline study on campus sexual assault, which mainly focused on sexual offense prevalence; in the later reenactments of VAWA (2000 & 2005) it was only

recommended to extend the authorization for the Grants to Combat Violent Crimes Against Women on Campuses Program (Morella, 2000; Sensenbrenner, 2006). The next section explains the ensuing legislation that directly impacted campus sexual violence policy development, including the Student Rights to Know and Campus Security Act of 1990, the Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights of 1992, Higher Education Amendments of 1998 that were embedded in the legislation, and Title IX and Department of Education Guidance.

### **Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 (Jeanne Clery Act)**

In 1990, Congress passed the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act (the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, 1990), a consumer protection law that required all Title IV or federal financial aid eligible institutions of higher education to publicly disclose crime statistics, crime prevention, security policies and procedures on campus (Karjane et al., 2002). Institutions that failed to report their crime statistics or published inaccurate statistics could be fined up to \$25,000 per violation (Higher Education Amendments of 1998, 1998). This incentivized institutions to provide accurate consumer reports to their students, staff, and the general public on a yearly basis (Annual Security and Fire Safety Report, n.d.). The Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act had several amendments that mandated increasing the safety of students and provided protections for victims on campus. The two most significant amendments before 2011 were through the Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights of 1992 and the 1998 Amendment of the Higher Education Act of 1965. The latter was renamed the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act in honor of a student who was raped and murdered in her university dorm room in 1986 (Karjane et al., 2002; McCallion, 2014).

## **Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights of 1992**

The Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights of 1992 was signed into law by President George Bush and integrated into the Clery Act (Biden, 1991). For the first time in history, higher education institutions were mandated by the federal government to make assurances to victims and memorialize the Campus Sexual Assault Victim Bill of Rights into campus policy. Some of those assurances involved: informing students of their options to notify proper law enforcement authorities, including on-campus and local police, and the option to receive assistance by campus authorities in notifying such authorities, if the student chooses; written notification about existing counseling, health, mental health, victim advocacy, legal assistance, and other services available for victims both on-campus and in the community; and written notification to victims about options for, and available assistance in, changing academic, living, transportation, and working situations, if so requested by the victim and if such accommodations are reasonably available, regardless of whether the victim chooses to report the crime to campus police or local law enforcement. Overall, this legislation was a symbolic step forward for campus survivors because it described procedures that institutions were required to follow when a student was sexually assaulted on campus.

## **Higher Education Amendments of 1998**

The amendments that followed had four significant contributions to campus sexual violence policy and response. First, it involved the integration of dating violence, domestic violence and stalking definitions into the Clery Act. Second, it defined victim services on campus as "a nonprofit, non-governmental organization that assists domestic violence or sexual assault victims, including campus women's centers, rape crisis centers...including campus counseling support and victim advocate organizations with domestic violence, stalking, and



sexual assault programs, whether or not organized and staffed by students” (Higher Education Amendments of 1998, 1998, p. 112 STAT. 1818). Third, it expanded upon the Higher Education Amendments of 1992 grants for campus sexual offenses education and created the grant program to combat violent crimes against women on campus, to specifically “develop and strengthen victim services in cases involving violent crimes against women on campuses” (Higher Education Amendments of 1998, 1998, p. 112 STAT. 1815). Lastly, it committed to conducting a national study that addressed “nine issues relating to prevention efforts, victim support services, reporting policies, protocols, barriers, and facilitators, adjudication procedures, and sanctions for sexual assault” (Karjane et al., 2002, p. vi). For the first time in history, the federal government specifically designated funds to develop on-campus services. It also invested in a national study that looked beyond sexual assault rates and focused on gathering data that would provide a more comprehensive outlook of sexual assault services on campus.

### **Title IX and Department of Education Guidance**

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 is simple, stating that “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Education Amendments Act of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§1681—1688 (2018), n.d.). Given its status as a federal statute, it has evolved over the years, modified by guidance, and left to be interpreted by states (Biegel et al., 2016). In its evolution, a statute that was once synonymous with women’s access to athletics has now become interchangeably used to discuss sexual harassment and sexual violence. The shift began in 1992 when *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* “established that sexual harassment at school constituted gender discrimination under Title IX” (Kuznick & Ryan, 2008).

Soon after, the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (1997) issued sexual harassment guidance, where it affirmed that “sexual harassment of students is a form of prohibited sex discrimination, under the circumstances described in the guidance” (p.1). This guidance required schools to “adopt and publish grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of sex discrimination complaints, including complaints of sexual harassment, and to disseminate a policy against sex discrimination” (Office of Civil Rights, 1997). In 1999, the *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* ruling confirmed that educational institutions could now be held liable for peer-to-peer sexual harassment when it demonstrated deliberate indifference of known sexual harassment that is “so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it can be said to deprive the victims of access to the educational opportunities or benefits provided by the school” (p. 629). Prompting guidance to be revised in 2001, requiring schools to designate an employee to coordinate compliance, and providing procedures for victims to file grievances on campus and against their schools if: a. the school had actual knowledge of the harassment and remained deliberate indifferent to act; b. the harassment was reported to an appropriate person with enough authority to take corrective action but did not; and c, the harassment was so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it deprives the victim of access to the educational benefits or opportunities provided by the school (Office of Civil Rights, 2001). The added procedure, allowing victims to file grievances against their schools by utilizing the Office of Civil Rights as a grievance mechanism, would later become very significant in mobilizing student activism on college campuses. By including the definition of sexual violence into Title IX guidance in 2011, it designated the Office of Civil Rights as the federal entity to receive complaints from students against their college campuses (Ali, 2011).

## **Campus Sexual Violence Survivor Advocacy Research Before 2011**

In 2002, prior to the 2011 DCL, Karjane et al. (2002) used a national sample of 2,438 institutions of higher education in the United States and Puerto Rico and found that only 10.2% of the institutions reported having on-campus victim services. Confirming a similar percentage found in Lewis and Farris's (1997) study, which discovered that "a rape crisis center or hotline run by the institution was much less common, [and] available at 10% of the institutions" (p. 31). Consequently, there are minimal studies on campus survivor advocacy service providers before 2011. In one of the few available, Carmody et al. (2009) investigated the needs of sexual assault advocates in campus-based sexual assault centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia, focusing on campus sexual assault advocates' perceptions on what was lacking in services for university students. A focus group with 17 on-campus sexual assault advocates who worked in residential, four-year, state universities in Virginia was analyzed; the authors affirmed that campus advocates identified four needs that should be addressed in order to improve campus response to sexual assault: strategies to better serve international students, increased funding, increased education and awareness, and statewide coordination of sexual assault services and policy response. Overall, there were limitations on how results were confirmed for this study, since the researchers only quoted focus group participants twice and reported a very limited methods section.

The second study, Payne et al. (2009) investigated the perceived structural barriers to preventing and responding to sexual assaults in accordance with campus-based and community-based victim advocates, in Commonwealth Virginia. Given the similarities to Carmody et al. (2009), the researchers, which are the same in both studies, likely used the same campus-based advocates sample for this second study. For example, the Payne et al. (2009) methodology

shared the same campus-based advocate sample size of 17, description of the campus-based advocate sample affiliation with a four-year, residential, state university, and the same interview protocol utilized for campus-based advocates. The difference in Payne et al. (2009) is the inclusion of the community-based advocacy sample, as 32 professionals were also included in their sample and the overall findings of the study focused on structural barriers. The structural barriers that were identified by the participants in Payne et al. (2009), who identified as campus-based advocates, were connected to the “demographics and socio-cultural makeup of the students that they served” (p. 269), the “transience of the student population” (p. 270), and the “competition for funding” (p. 271) that often happens with community-based advocacy centers. Similarly to Carmody et al. (2009), focus group participants that identified as campus-based advocates were not as often quoted directly and findings reported in the study that related to this sample did not showcase the majority of the sample’s responses. Instead, words like “most” were used to validate findings rather than informing the reader the number of participants from the sample that shared the same perceptions.

### **California Campus Blueprint to Address Sexual Assault**

In 2004, the California Campus Sexual Assault Task Force published the *California Campus Blueprint to Address Sexual Assault* report, which reviewed a sample of 52 colleges and universities across the state. Jones (2004) presented legislative recommendations for the state governor and legislature to consider in order to “enhance the sexual assault-related policies and practices of colleges and universities” and made recommendations for campus administrators in order to “improve individual campus responses to sexual assault” (p. 8). In relation to campus survivor advocacy services, Jones (2004) recommended that legislation be enacted that required “all institutions of higher education to create a plan for the delivery of victim services...using

resources from campus, community or a combination thereof” (p. 10) and encouraged the enactment of legislation that afforded student survivors served by campus-based advocates the “same confidential privilege as sexual assault victims served by ‘sexual assault victim counselors’ [in the community]” (p 11). Additionally, campuses were encouraged to develop “a strategy for delivering and coordinating a continuum of services to address victim needs,” (Jones, 2004, p. 15), appoint someone on campus to oversee the survivor services delivery, and consider consistent funding for the services and assure that they were accessible at all times. Lastly, Jones (2004) recommended that every campus either refer to or create survivor services that provided the following: crisis counseling, referrals to 24/7 services, information about reporting options, confidential resources, case management that is inclusive of accompaniment services, counseling, and education about resources and options.

### ***Western University Victim Advocacy Offices Before 2011***

Before the DCL letter, six out of the 10 WU campuses had victim advocacy offices that provided services to student survivors of CSV. The six WU campuses are as follows: Site 1, Site 3, Southern A, Southern B, Southern C, and Northern C.

In Karjane et al.’s (2002) study, two of the eight field research sites selected for a campus visit were WU campuses: Southern B and Northern B. Their study is the only empirical research that addresses campus survivor advocacy services at WU before 2011. In spite of the fact that Northern B did not have a campus survivor advocacy center prior to 2015, it did offer confidential services to student survivors, through their student peer advocates and educators on sexual harassment. Northern B peer advocates received training to speak confidentially with their peers and share information about sexual harassment, rape and sexual assault, and also provide support to students who had complaints about the overall process (Karjane et al., 2002). In many

more cases, student survivors were routed to the health center, counseling center, or to their Community Rape Crisis Center for professional victim support services after they experienced sexual violence on campus (Karjane et al., 2002).

Southern B had a center in founded in the early 1970's that provided extensive sexual violence prevention and education services and hosted the Rape Services Consultation Team (RSCT), consisting of a team coordinator and Rape Services Consultants (RSC). The RSCT provided students information on filing a police report, County Victim-Witness Assistance Program aid, university adjudication process, medical services, and academic and housing assistance (Karjane et al., 2002). After a student made a report to either a campus representative (faculty or staff) or directly to the RSCT, the student was assigned an RSC to provide ongoing assistance. The RSC then became the point person for helping the sexual assault survivor navigate options, rights, and services (Karjane et al., 2002). In addition to on-campus support, the Southern B campus partnered with the Rape Treatment Center (RTC) at [Mary Louise] Medical Center which provided free and comprehensive forensic examinations and long-term counseling to student survivors. The Southern B campus survivor advocacy program has two founding dates because the CWM was integrated into the Southern B Counseling [Center] and redesigned to be a program within that structure in 2010, losing its previous structure and campus center autonomy.

While Karjane et al. (2002) only focused on two Western University sites for their field research, one of which had a professionally staffed campus survivor advocacy office (Southern B), it is important to address what we know about the other five WU schools that also provided campus survivor advocacy programs during that timeframe (Site 1, Site 3, Southern A, Southern C and Northern C). Southern C founded its Rape Prevention Education Program in the late

1970's, then renamed it [Campus Survivor Advocacy] in 2013 in order to expand services to students who had been impacted by other forms of sexual violence ([Southern C] History of [CSA], n.d.). Similarly, Site 3 founded its Rape Prevention Program in the late 1970s and renamed its name twice before settling on the name [Campus Survivor Advocacy] in 2015. Since its founding, Site 3 has provided various confidential resources on campus for [Site 3] community members who undergo sexual violence ([Site 3] [CSA] History, n.d.). Site 1 founded its Student Safety Awareness Program in the late 1980s, included the terms resource center in its name shortly after, and, in 2015, renamed it the [Campus Survivor Advocacy] Center. Since its founding, Site 1 has “provided direct victim services as well as spearheaded [Site 1] violence prevention efforts” ([Site 1] [CSA] About Us, n.d.). Southern A founded its [Campus Survivor Advocacy] office in the early 2000s and provided student support services to those impacted by relationship abuse, sexual assault and stalking ([Southern A] About [CSA], n.d.). Lastly, Northern C founded its Violence Prevention Program in 2010 becoming the first program on campus that provided advocacy and prevention education that addressed dating violence, sexual violence and stalking ([Northern C History of [Northern C] [CSA], n.d.). Similar to other established offices in the WU system, the Northern C Violence Prevention Program was also renamed the [Campus Survivor Advocacy] Office in the early 2010s. This pattern to rename previously existing campus survivor advocacy offices in the WU system is due to the recommendations proposed by the 2014 WU President's Task Force on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence and Sexual Assault, to streamline all student survivor support services in one self-contained office, WU CSA a move which will be discussed further in the chapter.

### **Community Rape Crisis Centers**

Prior to 2011, there was a nationwide lack of commitment to funding victim advocacy practices within institutional structures; therefore, most on-campus survivors were being routed to off campus services, particularly to Community Rape Crisis Centers (CRCC) (Karjane et al., 2002; Lewis & Farris, 1997). CRCCs are a critical component in the history of CSV advocacy, and many current advocacy centers and programs on campuses continue to be modeled after them. Student survivors were assisted by CRCC advocates who provided students survivors with legal and medical advocacy, individual and group counseling and 24-hour support via county crisis hotlines (Campbell & Martin, 2001; Morella, 2000; Ullman & Townsend, 2007). CRCCs have offered an advocacy practice framework that was initially developed in the 1970s by the feminist movement (Campbell & Wasco, 2005) but have “learned how to adapt to the changing political climates since the 1970s to continue to provide services for victims” (Campbell et al., 1998, p. 480). Over time, their practice framework has been shaped through national (Bein, 2010; Biden, 1994) as well as state coalition standards (Bowen et al., 2010; California State Advisory Committee on Sexual Assault Victim Services, 2016; State of California, n.d.). Nationally, CRCC practice has been shaped by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and grant-awarding federal offices connected to VAWA like the Office on Violence Against Women. The federal government has influenced the type of clients that CRCCs serve and how they report data to continue to maintain federal funding (Biden, 1994). National service provider consortiums like the National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project have continuously “provide[d] technical assistance, support, and...facilitate[d] peer-driven resources for all statewide sexual assault coalitions” (Bein, 2010, p. 2). In California, service standards are driven mainly by the California Emergency Management Agency (CAL-EMA), through the California Advisory Committee on Sexual Assault Victim Services. This body that determines



standards for sexual assault advocate training (Bowen et al., 2010) and overall service standards for rape crisis centers (California State Advisory Committee on Sexual Assault Victim Services, 2016). Additionally, by taking federal and state grants, CRCCs are expected to provide services to designated California counties or major metropolitan cities, including all college and university campuses within their service area.

While shaped by national discourse, it is important that rape crisis center advocates are aware of the additional stigmas that survivors from marginalized communities face. Sexual assault survivors sometimes experience bias “because of age, race, sexual orientation, occupation, mental illness, or immigration status [and] are viewed as unworthy of the system’s attention or response” (Ullman & Townsend, 2007, p. 421). Researchers have challenged rape crisis centers to confront racism, not only in society but within their center structures, as it “undermines an agency’s ability to provide quality services to victims of color and replicates within the agency dynamics of oppression that are related to the cultural causes of violence against women” (Ullman & Townsend, 2007, p. 428). When providing services, advocates need to assess if a component of a victim’s identity is impeding their progress in seeking counseling support, reporting, or reaching out to support systems at home (Karjane et al., 2002; Ullman & Townsend, 2007). It is crucial that advocates view the victims they serve as people that are impacted by several intersections of their identity when responding to their needs (Crenshaw, 1991; Ullman & Townsend, 2007).

Furthermore, those who work with victims of trauma at times experience vicarious traumatization which refers to the psychological effects that persons who work with trauma survivors experience, which can be painful and disruptive and last “for months or years after work with traumatized persons” (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, p. 133). Vicarious trauma is also

often experienced by counselors who directly worked with survivors of sexual violence (Schauben & Frazier, 1995). Schauben and Frazier (1995) sent 118 psychologists and 30 sexual violence counselors a very extensive questionnaire about participant work information (percentage of clients who are sexual violence survivors), prior victimization, cognitive schemas, PTSD symptomology, perceptions of experiencing vicarious trauma, assessed negative effects, burnout and coping strategies. The study also included open ended questions that asked participants to list the five most difficult and enjoyable aspects of working with sexual violence survivors, which added a qualitative component to their study. The two primary enjoyable aspects of working with survivors mentioned by participants in Schauben and Frazier (1995) were having the ability to watch their clients “grow and change” and “being part of the healing process” (p. 57). Additionally, data showed that “counselors who work with a higher percentage of survivors report more disrupted beliefs about themselves and others, more PTSD-related symptoms, and more ‘vicarious trauma’ than counselors who see fewer survivors” (Schauben & Frazier, 1995, p. 61). It also noted many counselors named the ineffectiveness and injustices of other systems, such as the legal and mental health systems, as the most difficult aspect of working with survivors. A similar finding was made by Wasco and Campbell (2002), who found that rape victim advocates experienced anger and fear while interacting with individuals or systems while providing accompaniment for rape survivors. Their anger is primarily directed towards those in the criminal justice system, particularly when insensitivity is shown towards rape survivors while they reached out for help in the community setting. Although limited by the size of their sample (N=8), the study captures very rich responses and narratives provided by rape victim advocates with the most experience at each of the sites contacted (Wasco & Campbell, 2002).

## **Campus Survivor Policy and Services After the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter**

After the Department of Education issued the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter, the landscape of sexual violence policy and response changed significantly on college campuses. In a nationally representative sample of institutions of higher education (IHE), Richards (2016) examined the state of sexual violence response and policy development on college campuses. The study found a 58% increase in the development of specific policies for sexual violence and a 65% increase of sexual assault policies printed in student handbooks (compared to 19% 14 years before) (Richards, 2016). There was a clear shift in focus by institutions to comply with federal guidelines. Part of this shift was in connection to a series of guidance letters from the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, additional amendments to the Clery Act and White House guidance.

It may be coincidental, but during this time, Senator Joe Biden became the Vice President of the United States and student survivors and sexual assault prevention activists now had an ally in the White House. Vice President Biden had been the sponsor of two of the most important pieces of legislation that protected survivors in our country, the Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights Act of 1991 and the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, which instituted the Office on Violence Against Women, which administers the Campus Programs grant to combat violent crimes against women. In 2014, President Obama and Vice President Biden assembled the White House Task Force for Protecting Students from Sexual Assault, which is discussed in this section, alongside additional policy, response, and resources that emerged after the 2011 DCL, showcasing the evolution of the current state-of-affairs surrounding sexual violence issues and the development of victim services on campus. Lastly, in 2017, the Trump administration brought to a halt DCL guidance and approved regulations that amended Title IX in 2020.

## **Office of Civil Rights DCL Guidance**

The OCR's 2011 Dear Colleague Letter brought sexual violence into the definition of sexual harassment for the first time on the federal scale, affording victims of sexual violence protections under Title IX. The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) connected this issued guidance to institutional financial aid eligibility through the Clery Act, which incentivized colleges and universities to actively respond to the guidance of the DOE to avoid jeopardizing their status as a federal financial aid granted institution (Higher Education Amendments of 1998, 1998). The 2011 DCL informed schools that they had to begin processing sexual violence incidents in a similar manner as sexual harassment in the OCR Sexual Harassment Guidance of 2001. Specifically, the 2011 DCL elaborates on the specifics of the notice of discrimination on the basis of sex, recommending that a "recipient's nondiscrimination policy state that prohibited sex discrimination covers sexual harassment, including sexual violence, and that the policy include examples of the types of conduct that it covers" (Ali, 2011). The 2011 DCL clarified the role of the designated Title IX coordinator as the person on campus having ultimate oversight and responsibility over Title IX compliance, including "identifying and addressing any patterns or systemic problems that arise during the review of such complaints" (Ali, 2011). Furthermore, it required institutions to create equitable grievance procedures that lead to "adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of complaints" (Ali, 2011). Lastly, it required schools to implement campus-wide sexual violence prevention education and make comprehensive victim services available.

The subtle inclusion of the definition of sexual violence into Title IX created disarray in higher education, since over 60% of on-campus policies encouraged victims of sexual violence to file official reports with the campus or local police" (Karjane et al., 2002). This sudden

guidance turned the responsibility of addressing any official reports to the Title IX coordinator, in addition to developing on-campus reporting procedures, resources, and revising on-campus policies that addressed sexual violence. Meanwhile, there was a national increase of OCR-initiated Title IX investigations of several institutions of higher education (IHE). Within a two-year span, the number of investigations rose from six to 55 in 2014 (Stratford, 2014), and then to around 400 pending investigations in 2019 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). On April 29, 2014 the Office of Civil Rights released a guidance document on students' rights and schools' obligations under Title IX to answer the flood of question that IHEs had; many concerns involved procedural requirements, confidential resources, responsible employee reporting, investigations, hearing and appeals, interim measures and remedies, required Title IX training, education and prevention, retaliation protections and First Amendment guarantees but these measures ultimately fell short, allowing OCR investigations to continue rising until 2017 (Lhamon, 2014).

### **Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (Campus SaVE Act)**

In 2013, the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act or the "Campus SaVE Act" was integrated into the Clery Act. It served to "to improve education and prevention related to campus sexual violence, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking" (Maloney, 2013). It required IHEs to provide prevention education for all incoming students and new employees, including bystander intervention, risk-reduction, definitions of consent and sexual violence (dating/domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking), as well as ongoing prevention campaigns for students and faculty (Maloney, 2013). It also provided procedures for institutional disciplinary cases that addressed incidents of campus sexual violence requiring prompt and equitable disciplinary processes conducted by impartial officials who received annual trainings

on sexual violence investigations and hearing procedures (Maloney, 2013). Additionally, it required for both parties (the survivor and the accused) to be allowed an advisor present during proceedings and be notified simultaneously of proceeding results, appeals, and result changes (Maloney, 2013). Lastly, it required greater transparency in Clery Act reporting by including incidents of dating or domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in IHEs annual campus crime statistic reports (Maloney, 2013).

### **Not Alone: White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault**

The Obama/Biden White House Task Force for Protecting Student from Sexual Assault published the Not Alone report listing best practices for institutions of higher education (IHE) to follow (Richards, 2016). The report recommended IHEs “identify trained, confidential victim advocates who can provide emergency and ongoing support,” noting that survivors wanted someone on campus to talk to in a confidential manner about their options before their incident was investigate (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). The report encouraged IHEs to provide clarity, through campus policies, on confidential designations so that sexual violence survivors could make an informed decision before disclosing their experience (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). This new guidance catapulted the creation of confidential campus survivor advocacy offices in higher education and pushed forth for states to consider expanding confidentiality to campus survivor advocates through state laws (Richards, 2016). This was evident in the State of California passing Assembly Bill 1896 that protected sexual assault victim-counselor privilege on campus (Cervantes, 2018).

## **Office of Civil Rights Title IX Regulations**

On September 22, 2017, under the guidance of the Trump Administration, the Office of Civil Rights withdrew the 2011 DCL and the 2014 OCR frequently asked questions guidance, replacing them with a 2017 Dear Colleague Letter. In the 2017 DCL, Candice Jackson, acting Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights, noted that institutions were asked to implement a “confusing and counterproductive set of regulatory mandates...affording notice and opportunity for public comment” (p. 2). The 2017 DCL also referred to the lack of due-process rights afforded to the accused and its disagreement with the chosen standard of proof chosen in the DCL of 2011, which was a preponderance of the evidence standard. The letter encouraged campuses to continue to follow the Sexual Harassment Guidance issued in 2001 and the DCL of 2006, which only addresses sexual harassment. This therefore disregarded any guidance offered by the DCL of 2011 and the 2014 OCR frequently asked questions. On November 29, 2018, the Department of Education published a notice of proposed rulemaking, allowing the public to submit feedback to their proposed regulations, and received over 124,000 comments.

On May 19, 2020, the Office of Civil Rights published regulations on the *Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance* with the Federal Register that came into effect on August 14, 2020. These new regulations amended Title IX by: 1. expanding the definition of sexual harassment to also include the sexual assault definition used in the Clery Act and the dating violence, domestic violence and stalking definitions used in the Clery Act VAWA statutes; 2. clarifying to postsecondary institutions the meaning of “actual knowledge” of an incident of sexual harassment, by specifying that in order for an institution to have actual knowledge, the allegation will need to be officially reported to the Title IX Coordinator or any official with authority to

institute corrective measures on behalf of the school; 3. prompting institutions to respond to sexual harassment only if it occurs in a school's educational program or activity in the United States; 4. confirming the need to designate and authorize an employee as the Title IX Coordinator, and delineates expectations for accessible reporting (via email, phone, mail, in-person, encourages website prominence and outside of business hours options); 5. requiring schools to respond promptly to sexual harassment "in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent" by offering supportive measures to survivors, grievance processes that do not impose disciplinary sanctions towards the respondent before a disciplinary process is completed, and mandating that schools not restrict First Amendment, Fifth Amendment, and Fourteen Amendment rights; 6. mandating that schools investigate formal complaints filed by a survivor or signed by the Title IX Coordinator, alleging sexual harassment, and create a grievance process that complies with the regulations; 7. defining the terms "complainant," "respondent," "formal complaint" and "supportive measures"; 8. adding privacy protections to investigations and confirmation of written notices when the investigation begins; 9a. including a "live hearing with cross-examination" mandate for postsecondary Title IX hearings, allowing advisors (which could be an attorney) to question the other party; 9b. determining that if a party or witness does not submit themselves to cross-examination, their written statements will not be considered at the live hearing; 9c. encouraging schools to provide an advisor to parties that do not have an advisor for a live hearing that is free-of-charge; 9d. allowing live hearings to occur with parties in separate rooms or virtually, and for the hearings to be audio recorded and accessible for inspection and review; 9e. instituting a "rape shield" protection for survivors, which prevents respondents and their advisors from asking questions or bringing forth evidence that discloses the survivor's "sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior," unless it is offered to prove that



someone other than the respondent committed the alleged conduct or it is offered to showcase prior sexual behavior between the respondent and survivor that “are offered to prove consent”;

10. requiring schools select the same standard of evidence (preponderance of the evidence or clear and convincing) for students, staff, and faculty; 11. mandating that schools offer both parties appeals equally, following determinations of responsibility and dismissal of a formal complaint, based on procedural irregularity, submission of new evidence, and/or conflict of interest or bias by the investigator, Title IX Coordinator, or decision-maker; 12. allowing schools to determine their own informal resolution options but requesting that both parties “give voluntary, informed, written consent,” that could be withdrawn at any time and choosing to resume the formal grievance process; 13. prohibiting retaliation against any individual who files a Title IX complaint (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

### **Campus Sexual Violence Survivor Advocacy Services After 2011**

After the DCL 2011, many campuses, including Western University’s, began investing in campus survivor advocacy centers that offered on-campus intervention and confidential support services for student victims of sexual violence ([University Leader], 2015). In the spring of 2015, the Association of American Universities (AAU) administered the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct to twenty-seven institutions of higher education. The survey not only assessed campus prevalence and incident characteristics but also assessed the knowledge of resources available to victims. It found that the vast majority of the survivors, over 90%, interacted with on-campus resources over off-campus ones during that school year (Fisher et al., 2016). Of those student survivors who sought out services on-campus, the largest percentage of survivors went to “counseling (38.4% to 50.7%), followed by victim services (16.4% to 34.7%) and health centers (17.5% to 26.3%)” (Fisher et al., 2016, p. xxii).

Research in the area of campus survivor advocacy is still limited, but five key studies have considered the perspective of campus survivor advocates since 2011. Munro-Kramer et al. (2017) studied the perceptions of sexual assault survivors, sexual assault advocates, and healthcare providers on two Midwestern university campuses to explore new models for caring for survivors. Nineteen participants created the sexual assault advocate stakeholder group, but the definition used to recruit this group was very broad and included people who assisted student survivors in any capacity (employed or volunteer), not necessarily full-time. It is therefore challenging to scale the results to a staff demographic who works in campus survivor advocacy full-time. Nevertheless, Munro-Kramer et al.'s (2017) research highlights five themes to consider when developing interventions for college campus survivors that are promising: promoting a campus-wide culture of caring, one-stop shop for survivors to access services, survivor validation, survivor control and agency, and on-campus confidential services.

The second study examined how Virginia's SB 712 campus sexual assault legislation was being rolled out on college campuses, looking at the perceptions campus staff held about the policy, practice, and protocol changes (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017). Researchers developed a robust survey, Survey of Campus-Based Sexual Assault Advocates, that inquired about the impact that a newly enacted legislation, Virginia SB 712, was having on Virginia campuses. The researchers sent the survey via email to 44 four-year public and private colleges and universities in Virginia and received a 45% response rate. Similar to Munro-Kramer et al. (2017), there were limitations on the sample used for campus survivor advocates; though they were initially only interested in the views of victim advocates on campus, as they believed that victim advocates are the campus personnel "who are the closest to victims/survivors themselves" and are "in a unique position to observe, assess and participate in the response to sexual assault," only 28% of the

participants who participated in the study was an advocate, prevention specialist, or a counselor (N=5) (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017, p. 287). Instead, the majority of the participants identified as Title IX officers, vice presidents, directors, and a police chief. Their findings captured concerns over new legislative requirements, particularly in the section of the survey that asked open-ended questions of participants. The themes that arose were regarding “survivors’ loss of control and choice over the process, reduced reporting due to decreased protections of confidentiality, and an absence of training among campus personnel” (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017, p. 293). One of their participants stated that the “university at this point is more concerned with liability and compliance than providing a victim-centered, trauma-informed response” (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017, p. 296), which captured the tensions that the new legislation was causing on their campus. Overall, researchers acknowledged the challenges with victim advocate recruitment and called for scholars to continue investigating the evolving role of campus advocates and their lived realities in future research (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017).

The third and fourth studies were conducted by Brubaker (2019) and Brubaker and Keegan (2019) who used the same sample for both articles. Some participants were recruited from the Brubaker and Mancini (2017) survey study, and others were recruited using snowball sampling and interviewed between January 2016 and May 2016. In total, their sample consisted of 15 campus-based sexual assault victim advocates, of which 12 “identified White, one as Black, one as Latina, and one as biracial” and 11 “identified as straight or heterosexual, and four as queer or bisexual” (Brubaker, 2019, p. 316). Brubaker (2019) described the importance of campus victim advocates and contrasted their role “with the historical reliance of the feminist antiviolence movement on the criminal justice system” (p. 308). Brubaker (2009) specifically focused on “participants’ training, background, and experiences in advocacy, as well as their

understandings of and experiences with Title IX regulations and their impact on campus-based advocacy” (p. 315). Brubaker and Keegan (2019) discussed the “impacts of Title IX’s framing of campus sexual assault on advocates’ roles and their ability to serve and support survivors” and observed a major theme that arose from the interviews, that of “professionalizing the field of advocacy” (p. 1118). In that study, the researchers focused on participants’ training and background and their experiences as advocates, but their questions also inquired about “changes to their role, what they liked and disliked about advocacy, what they thought campuses should be doing to address sexual assault, and their thoughts on the future of advocacy” (p. 1122).

Brubaker (2019) found that most of the advocates interviewed described their attitudes and approaches as a “version of a survivor- or victim-centered, or trauma-informed approach and several articulated a ‘social justice’ or explicitly ‘feminist’ approach” with a few describing and using an empowerment model (p. 316). Advocates in Brubaker (2019) found themselves constricted on actively supporting student survivors from an “empowerment approach” given the Title IX office’s “approach to handling campus sexual assault” which was mainly focused on investigations and adjudication of cases (p. 318). Participants noted an increase in adjudication staffing and a focus on liability and compliance. Findings included campus advocates describing “losing the authority and ability to support survivors’ empowerment and autonomy from an activist/advocacy perspective” and their observance of “campus priorities shift[ing] from supporting survivors to compliance and protecting universities from liability” (Brubaker, 2019, p. 317-318). Campus victim advocates widely reported the negative impact the presence of respondent attorneys brought to the Title IX process, as it creates an imbalance of power in conduct hearings and extends the process for survivors. Additionally, campus victim advocates reported that Title IX practices on their campus were described as “harming victims, especially

those from marginalized communities” in particular when reflecting on the lack of confidential spaces designated by their campus for survivors (Brubaker, 2019, p. 320). In contrast, Brubaker (2019) also found that some campus victim advocates were supportive of “DOE’s application of Title IX to address campus sexual assault,” as it provided survivors an “alternative to the criminal justice system” and afforded them on campus accommodations “without requiring that they go through a formal investigation process” (p. 322). Lastly, Brubaker (2019) reflected on the limitations of their study, as that their sample was mainly composed of “advocates from largely privileged social locations in terms of race, class, and sexuality” and acknowledged that “despite their best intentions, their perspectives may not represent the experiences of survivors, particularly those from more marginalized populations” (p. 323). A participant provided their account on their perception of the demographic makeup of the advocacy field and described as being mainly composed of White women. The researcher then encouraged campuses to “prioritize efforts to provide services and resources to members of marginalized groups, including enhancing the diversity of services providers” (Brubaker, 2019, p. 325).

Brubaker and Keegan (2019) found that campus advocates acknowledged that Title IX brought more visibility and increased awareness of sexual assault on campus, which has increased campus staff sizes “typically attorneys, into Title IX officer or coordinator positions,” and mandated training for faculty and staff (p. 1124). Their study also found that generally, the relationships between campus victim advocates and Title IX officers was positive and their experience with community police was perceived as negative in comparison to on-campus police. Brubaker and Keegan (2019) reported that campus advocates disclosed some tensions coming from their community counterparts, as community advocates perceived the on-campus advocate role as “not able to truly support survivors because they are employed by the

university,” some campus advocates shared narratives of hearing community advocates actively demean their role on-campus and refusing to provide them with training (Brubaker & Keegan, 2019, p. 1125). Campus advocates also reported a “sense of being undervalued” as there has been an increase of involvement of Title IX officers and campus lawyers (Brubaker & Keegan, 2019, p. 1126). Additionally, the study documented the negative effects that mandatory reporting had on non-confidential advocate roles on campus and during the time of the interviews, as many participants participated in the study when “there was no provision for confidential reporting” (p. 1127), therefore leaving many without the legal protections of privilege and confidentiality. Lastly, the study found that participants found that professionalizing their field might enhance “the value, authority, and status of the role” by sharing the need for “common policies, guidelines, and standards of practice” that advocates from across the nation could follow (Brubaker & Keegan, 2019, p. 1128).

Moylan (2017), the fifth and final study that focuses on the campus victim advocacy perspective, recruited 14 participants that identified as “campus-based sexual assault advocates and prevention staff in the Northeastern region of the United States” (p. 1125). All interviews were held during the 2013-2014 academic year and “investigated the experiences of campus-based advocates in the current era of campus rape reform and their perspectives of the implementation process happening on their campuses” (Moylan, 2017, p. 1125). Moylan (2017) found a “shift toward[s] compliance” and it’s “mixed effects on campus responses” such as an increase of focus by senior administration on issues that have been identified by advocates for many years, as well as an increased focus on compliance (p. 1127). Moylan (2017) reported that all campus advocates witnessed an increase in motivation to address sexual assault on campus, which was mainly driven by the current climate of compliance, but 10 participants acknowledged

that their campuses were “focused on achieving a minimal level of compliance rather than thinking more broadly about how to translate the reforms holistically on their campus” (p. 1132). Moylan (2017) reported campus advocates’ negative reactions towards the lack of information received by federal guidelines and the lack of research around campus response, causing feelings of confusion on “how to interpret and implement the federal regulations” (p. 1128), including the “inconsistent status of victim advocate confidentiality” (p. 1133). This may be due to the timeframe of when the participants were interviewed, as the April 29, 2014 OCR frequently asked questions in a document may not have been published, which addressed many concerns that were posed by campuses around procedural requirements, reporting processes, investigations, trainings and confidential resources, among many other topics (Lhamon, 2014). Lastly, campus advocates reported feeling overshadowed and undervalued by colleagues (lawyers, Title IX coordinators, senior administrators) who did not possess the knowledge and expertise in victim services, sexual assault, or trauma, but were now tasked to lead campus reforms that resulted in “victim-insensitive policies and procedures” on campus (Moylan, 2017, p. 1135). For example, a campus advocate shared concerns over witnessing student survivor “power and control taken away from them” by their institution as their campus focused more on complying with the DCL initial recommendations to investigate all reports, rather than honoring a survivor’s choice (Moylan, 2017, p. 1133).

### ***Current (2020) Description of Campus Survivor Advocacy Services***

Presently, campus survivor advocacy centers, and more specifically, survivor advocates, are responsible for responding to the needs of survivors, ranging from the physical and emotional to the social (Ullman & Townsend, 2007). Survivor advocates, also called victim advocates in

California are trained to assist survivors through sexual assault counselor certification programs that address topics such as law, medicine, societal attitudes, crisis intervention and counseling techniques (State of California, n.d.). In a university setting, this translates to services that assist students with safety planning, emotional support, case management, restraining orders, accompaniments to hospitals for forensic exams, accompaniments to investigative interviews (i.e., local police, on-campus police, Title IX office and district attorney), accompaniments to student conduct meetings, accompaniments to court hearings and referral to on and off-campus resources (Site 2 [CSA] Advocacy Services, n.d.). In California, interactions that campus survivor advocates in any higher education institution have with student victims are now protected with confidentiality under CA Evidence Code 1035.4, which protects “all information regarding the facts and circumstances involving the alleged sexual assault...transmitted between the victim and the sexual assault counselor in the course of their relationship” (Cervantes, 2018; State of California, n.d.).

**Western University System-Wide Victim Advocacy Office Model.** After the 2011 DCL, multiple student groups filed federal complaints against Site 4: nine students in 2013 and 31 current and former students in 2014 ([Reporter], 2014). In response, the WU Presidential Task Force was created with students, staff, and faculty representation bringing forth recommendations to the WU President. These recommendations included a streamlined version of confidential services for survivors through a WU CSA office in all WU campuses ([Western University], 2014). These offices, some new and renamed version of existing offices, were to help in case management, campus education around sexual assault, and advocate on a policy level ([Western University], 2014). The WU system thus became an early system to mandate a campus survivor advocate on all of their campuses in this way ([University Leader], 2015).



Within a year of the task force convening, all ten WU campuses had campus survivor advocacy offices.

### **Summary**

The review of the literature emphasized landmark guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education 2011 Dear Colleague Letter, highlighting its impact on campus survivor advocacy services in higher education by exploring what came before and after it. After presenting the conceptual framework of the study, trauma-informed principles, and its possible applicability to campus survivor advocacy (Elliot et al., 2005; Harris & Fallot, 2001; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014), this literature review was conducted in two parts. The first seeks to describe campus survivor policy and services prior to 2011 while the second focuses on campus survivor policy and services after 2011. The first section provides a thorough description of college sexual violence policy that has been enacted by Congress through a series of acts, amendments and bills over a period of decades. Literature on the scarcity of campus survivor advocacy services in higher education is presented and positioned as problematic. This addressed why it is important to highlight community rape crisis centers and their role in assisting student survivors prior to 2011.

The second portion of the literature review describes the impact of the U.S. Department of Education 2011 Dear Colleague Letter on reshaping sexual violence policy, response and victim services on college campuses. A thorough description and analysis of Title IX guidance and regulations are provided, with particular focus on the inclusion of sexual violence terminology in higher education. The section contextualizes a number of Dear Colleague Letters issued to college campuses over a span of six years and addresses the impact of campus student activism on encouraging federal legislation, regulations and direct support from the White

House. The literature review concluded with discussion of the status of campus survivor advocacy practice in higher education, highlighting a series of studies conducted to address campus survivor support services and introducing the Western University system-wide advocacy office model. Overall, the literature review addresses the lack of research that directly focuses on campus survivor advocacy practice development in higher education. This points to the importance of this study, which sought to highlight campus survivor advocacy practitioner perspectives. To answer the research questions, the study explored the practices that campus survivor advocacy staff engage in on-campus while assisting student survivors navigate on-campus policy and reporting structures.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN**

This research explored campus survivor advocacy practitioner perspectives by inquiring about the practices that they engage in on-campus, capturing their experiences when assisting student survivors navigate on-campus policy and reporting structures, and inquiring about any challenges they might encounter as practitioners. Campus survivor advocacy services are shaped by scholarly research, higher education policy, and community rape crisis center approaches, but this study was designed to more deeply explore the current state of practice. Campus survivor advocates provide insight into barriers that student survivors encounter at their institutions and therefore further the work of assisting students on campus (Ullman & Townsend, 2007). My research questions were as follows:

1. What are the practices that campus survivor advocacy staff use to support student survivors after they experience campus sexual violence?
2. What are some of the challenges that campus survivor advocates encounter as practitioners?

### **Research Design and Rationale**

In this study, I followed a qualitative research design because the goal of the study was to capture the experiences and perceptions of campus survivor advocacy staff. Qualitative research positions studies to “understand, describe, and sometimes explain social phenomena ‘from the inside’” (Flick, 2018, p. 6). I approached my research from a qualitative perspective because it encouraged the analysis of experiences and practices of participants through observations, interviews, recording practices, and documents collection (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018). Although a survey could have informed me about their practice, the responses would not have captured the narratives of their lived experiences while managing their roles, interacting with

campus survivors of sexual violence, and navigating challenges. The qualitative methods used to obtain data for this study included open-ended interviews with campus survivor advocacy staff and collection of documents (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). Interviews revealed the experience of campus survivor advocacy staff who design, coordinate, administer or directly assist student victims of sexual violence. The documents collected pertained to the training of staff, historical documents that captured office structure or practice, the promotion of campus survivor advocacy services, and on-campus policies and procedures. Using multiple methods allowed me to triangulate data and reduce the risk of bias (Maxwell, 2013). Using methodological triangulation gave a deeper and more secure foundation for data analysis (Maxwell, 2013).

### **Site Selection**

In 2014, the Western University (WU) system initiated a Presidential Task Force centered on preventing and responding to sexual violence and sexual assault ([Western University], 2014). The task force had students, staff and faculty representation and brought forth several recommendations for the WU President to consider. One recommendation was to streamline confidential services for survivors of sexual violence through the coordinated efforts of one self-contained office, WU CSA office ([Western University], 2014). In addition to confidential advocacy, this office would assist in the management of all complaints reported to the university, as well as create content for education, prevention, programming, and training and working on policy input ([Western University], 2014). The Western University system was one of the first university systems to mandate a campus survivor advocate on all of their campuses and coordinate a systematic response to sexual violence advocacy ([University Leader], 2015). Six of the 10 Western campuses had previously established campus advocacy centers and the

others established their centers within a year-span after the taskforce convened, establishing its last office in 2015. The implementation of WU CSA offices sets the context for where and how I conduct this research.

This research was conducted at four Western University campuses in southern and northern California regions: Sites 1 and 2 in the southern region and Sites 3 and 4 in the northern region. These sites were selected due to the range in years of experience, office founding date, and their membership in the same university system. Each region is host to a campus survivor advocacy office, with two founded prior to 2011 (Site 1 and Site 3) and two opened after (at Site 2 and Site 4). These campus survivor advocacy offices also ranged in resources and staff sizes. In addition to direct advocacy services, these offices also offer campus wide resources that are designed to educate the campus community on how to support student survivors and reach students who are not yet aware of advocacy resources. Because the Western University system was one of the first systems to coordinate a systematic response to sexual violence advocacy, and because these four campuses serve nearly 147,000 students ([Western University] Fall Enrollment At a Glance, n.d.), studying these WUs provided historical depth and breadth that would not be available in institutions that have limited student populations or a more recent adoption of sexual violence campus advocacy offices.

### *Site 1*

Site 1 was founded in the mid 1900s and its main campus is in [San Leoncio], a city located in [Eugenio] County, California. Additional Site 1 locations are connected to their Health campuses in two locations. Site 1 enrolls close to 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students and offers 130 undergraduate majors and over 85 graduate programs ([Site 1] Campus Profile, n.d.; [Site 1] Graduate Division Departments, n.d.). Based on its Annual Security and Fire Safety

Report (2019), Site 1 and all its locations reported the following combined crime statistics for calendar years 2016, 2017, and 2018: 81 sex offenses (rape, fondling, incest, and statutory rape), 62 incidents of domestic and dating violence, and 29 stalking reports. Site 1 is home to one of the oldest campus survivor advocacy offices in the WU system, an office originally named the Student Safety Awareness Program in the late 1980s and has had numerous iterations of their office name since then. Like other WU campus survivor advocacy programs established before 2011, Site 1 adopted the CSA name in order to align itself under a common system-wide office, as recommended by the 2014 WU President Task Force ([Western University, 2014]).

### ***Site 2***

Site 2 was founded in the mid 1900s and its main campus is in the city of [San Sebastian], which is located in [Santiago] County, California. There is an additional Site 2 location in [Adriana] Valley, which is about 80 miles away. Site 2 enrolls over 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students and offers over 100 undergraduate majors and over 90 graduate programs (About [Site 2], n.d.; [Site 2] Ranks and Facts, n.d.). Based on their Annual Security and Fire Safety Report (2019), Site 2 and all its locations reported the following combined crime statistics for calendar years 2016, 2017, and 2018: 54 sex offenses (rape, fondling, incest, and statutory rape), 37 incidents of domestic and dating violence, and 17 stalking reports. In accordance with 2014 WU President Task Force recommendations, Site 2 opened their inaugural campus survivor advocacy office after 2014, calling it [Campus Survivor Advocacy] office ([Site 2] About [CSA], n.d.). Site 2 CSA offers advocacy, resources and support to student survivors of sexual violence on campus.

### ***Site 3***

Site 3 was founded in the early 1900s and its main campus borders the city of [San Evangelina], which is located in [Hugo] County, California. Additional Site 3 locations include a Health Center, an Environmental Research Center and Laboratory. Overall, Site 3 enrolls close to 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students and offers over 100 undergraduate majors and over 100 graduate programs (About [Site 3], n.d.). Based on their Annual Security and Fire Safety Report (2019), Site 3 and all its locations reported the following combined crime statistics for calendar years 2016, 2017, and 2018: 69 sex offenses (rape, fondling, incest, and statutory rape), 82 incidents of domestic and dating violence, and 45 stalking reports. Site 3 is home to one of the oldest campus survivor advocacy offices in the WU system. Since the late 1970s, the Site 3 CSA office has offered survivors who are members of its community confidential resources on campus. The office was initially named the [Sexual Violence] Program and in 2015, adopted the name [Campus Survivor Advocacy] (CSA). The final name change, like Sites 1 and 2, was an effort to align itself with the 2014 WU President Task Force recommendations.

#### ***Site 4***

Site 4 was founded in the second half of the 19th century and its main campus is in the city of [San Ramon], which is located in [Isabella] County, California. Unlike other WU campuses, Site 4 only has one campus. It enrolls over 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students and offers a combined 350 undergraduate majors and graduate programs ([Site 4] By the Numbers, n.d.). Based on their Annual Security and Fire Safety Report (2019), Site 4 reported the following combined crime statistics for calendar years 2016, 2017, and 2018: 213 sex offenses (rape, fondling, incest, and statutory rape), 111 incidents of domestic and dating violence, and 84 stalking reports. Site 4 opened its first campus survivor advocacy office in 2014, [Campus Survivor Advocacy] (CSA), along with Sites 1, 2, and 3 ([Site 4] [CSA] Center

History, n.d.).

### **Sample Selection**

This research focused on campus survivor advocacy staff who were 18 years old or older, and whose job is to design, coordinate, administer or directly assist student survivors of sexual violence at any of the four Western University campuses. This included, but was not limited to, directors, assistant directors, advocates, prevention coordinators, and intake coordinators.

Definitions of their interactions included assisting student victims with safety planning, crisis intervention, referrals to on and off campus resources, accompaniments, accommodations, and assistance in finding a healing modality. Each site has staff members whose primary job function is to provide direct survivor advocacy and also has staff with partial job assignments that in addition to assisting student survivors, their responsibilities include prevention programming, budgeting, student and staff training, office management, strategic planning, and campus-wide policy development. The goal was to interview three to four staff members from each site, but I was only able to interview two participants at Site 4. A third potential participant from that site filled out the demographic information sheet but did not participate in the interview process.

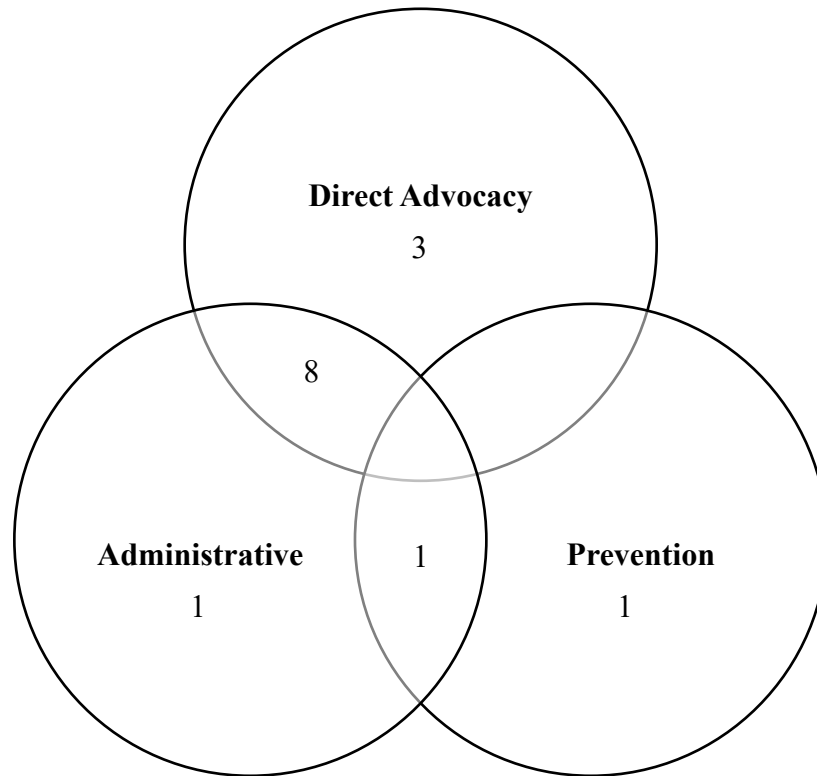
Follow-up questions were sent to the two participants who chose to participate from Site 4 inquiring about why they thought the response to participation was low in comparison to other sites (See Appendix C), but no responses were received from the outreach. All campuses have similar charters and staff structures, which facilitated my triangulation of their responses. The collective sample included: five associate or assistant directors, four of which provided direct survivor advocacy; four directors, three of which provided direct survivor advocacy; three victim advocates whose core function is to provide direct survivor advocacy; one intake coordinator who provided direct survivor advocacy; one violence prevention coordinator who did not provide



direct survivor advocacy. Figure 1 provides an overview of the participants in the sample with an overview of their primary and partial job assignments.

**Figure 1**

*Participants With Job Assignments*



*Note.* This Venn diagram indicates the number of participants with primary and partial job assignments whose tasks focus on administrative, direct advocacy and/or prevention in this study.

I interviewed 14 participants from four Western University campuses from January 2020 to February 2020. Eleven of the 14 participants (84.6%) offered confidential advocacy services in their current role. The three participants that did not varied in role (two with a violence prevention focus and one director) but still had direct interactions with student survivors in their

roles on campus. The usage of “victim advocate” and “survivor advocate” in participant professional titles vary by the office founding date but are comparable roles across campuses. Offices that were founded prior to 2014 use the term “victim advocate” in their professional titles, and offices that were founded after 2014 use the term “survivor advocate” in their professional titles. During the interview process, participants referenced the students they served as either clients, victims, or survivors, but the term survivors was more frequently used. Given this observation, this study will use the term survivor in referencing the students that these offices serve, as well as the acronym that defines the participants’ role, as Campus Survivor Advocacy Staff, or CSAS.

Participants’ experience in the field of survivor advocacy was vast. Two participants had three to five years of experience, four participants had six to 10 years of experience, six participants had 11 to 20 years of experience, and two participants had more than 21 years of experience. Similarly, their on-campus advocacy experience was extensive. Given that five participants had between six months and five years of experience, six participants had six to 10 years of experience, two had 11 to 20 years of experience, and one participant had more than 21 years of experience. Lastly, participants racial and ethnic backgrounds were very diverse; one participant identified as Asian, one as Biracial, two as Black, two as Indigenous, four as Latinx, one as Middle Eastern and three as White. In this study, the reference to women of color (WOC) will be used as a descriptor for participants who identified as woman, cis woman or female and also identified their race and ethnicity as either Asian, Biracial, Black, Indigenous, Latinx or Middle Eastern. Table 1 provides an overview of the participants that were interviewed, with their pseudonym and demographic characteristics.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Participant Pseudonym	Sexual Orientation	Currently provides direct advocacy	Years of experience in advocacy services	Years of experience in campus advocacy services	Highest degree earned
Rebeca	Straight	Yes	35	30	Masters
Elsa	Straight	Yes	10	3.5	Bachelors
Mercedes	Straight	Yes	12	12	Masters
Juana	Straight	Yes	6	6	Bachelors
Ana	Straight	Yes	8	8	Masters
Liliana	Straight	No	10	1.5	Masters
Teresa	Straight	No	15	7	Masters
Francesca	Straight	Yes	5	0.5	Masters
Katie	Straight	Yes	16	10	Bachelors
Nina	Bisexual	Yes	3	1	Bachelors
Fernanda	Straight	Yes	13	8	Bachelors
Marita	Bisexual	Yes	21	2.5	High School
Alex	Bisexual	No	13	13	Masters
Claudia	Pansexual	Yes	12	6	Masters

*Note.*  $N = 14$ . Participants identified as female, woman, or cis woman. Participant racial and ethnic demographic indicators are not noted in an attempt to respect confidentiality.

## **Access and Recruitment**

I have been a campus survivor advocate for eight years of my professional experience in higher education and have built connections with campus survivor advocate practitioners, particularly at Western University (WU). I had established a positive collegial relationship with all WU CSA directors, assistant directors, and some advocates, relationships that have persisted even after my departure from the field. This provided me access to the campus sites to conduct the research. Before beginning the full sample recruitment process, I emailed the CSA director at each site, attached a study information sheet, and set up a call to introduce the study. In these calls, I emphasized the reason why their particular site was selected, laid out the time commitment needed from participants, and answered any questions that they have. After this call with the CSA directors, I emailed all CSAS members at each site informing them of the study, attached a study information sheet, and requested their participation. Once participants emailed back confirming their participation, they were sent a Doodle link with available times for either an on-campus interview or a remote interview via Zoom. I confirmed their scheduled interview by sending them a calendar invite and a demographic form used to gather basic information such as job title, race, gender, years of experience, and years working at the institution. A week prior to their scheduled interviews, I sent participants a reminder email confirming the on-campus location where the interview would take place or sent them an individualized Zoom invite.

## **Data Collection**

### ***Interviews***

The primary method of data collection was interviews. Since the focus of this study was on-campus survivor advocacy practice development, I interviewed staff members from WU campus offices that provide direct victim advocacy services to student survivors of sexual

violence. All interviews with campus survivor advocacy staff at each site were semi-structured (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018; Maxwell, 2013) and guided by an interview protocol, which questions connected back to my two research questions (See Appendix C). My interview protocol was influenced by my conceptual framework, trauma-informed principles (Elliot et al., 2005; Harris & Falloot, 2001; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014) and its six principles guided my research questions and were connected to my Units of Observation (See Appendix D). For example, interview questions that aligned with Research Question 1 which addressed how CSAS helped student survivors, was connected to SAMHSA (2014) trauma-informed principles of safety, trustworthiness, peer support, collaboration and empowerment (See Appendix D). My interview questions were open-ended to encourage participant input and explored campus survivor advocacy practitioner perspectives by investigating the practices that they engage in on-campus while assisting student survivors navigate on-campus policy and reporting structures, and the challenges they face as practitioners (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). I conducted 14 interviews that ranged from 25 to 64 minutes. They were predominantly hosted remotely and recorded on a Zoom audio-only conferencing feature and backed up by a digital recording device. One of the interviews was held in-person in a private and neutral location and recorded in a digital recording device and backed up by an iPhone recording function. Immediately after each interview, the recordings were saved to a password protected computer and a cloud drive. After Chapter 4 was drafted, all participants had access to an optional member-check. The researcher emailed all participants their individual transcript, their assigned pseudonym and a draft of Chapter 4, and were encouraged to provide feedback within two weeks of the email.

### ***Confidentiality***

All personal information regarding the participants remained confidential. When interviewing participants, either in-person or remotely, the researcher conducted the interview in a private room where conversation could not be overheard by others. In-person research interviews and in-person participant follow-up were not conducted after March 17, 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. All interviews scheduled after that date were conducted remotely via Zoom, and participant follow-up was done in email. Each participant was given the opportunity to designate their own pseudonym in an effort to promote confidentiality. Four participants chose a preferred pseudonym, the remainder refused the offer and was designated a pseudonym by the researcher.

### ***Document Collection***

In addition to interviews with campus survivor advocacy staff, I engaged in the collection of documents as a secondary method of data collection. Document relevance was judged by their usefulness, fit with my research questions and the quality of their content (Flick, 2018). Documents collected were limited to those that pertain to the training of staff, historical documents that captured office structure or practice (RQ1), the promotion of campus survivor advocacy services (RQ1) and guidance, memos or policies that are perceived as challenging (RQ2) for staff. I reviewed California state certification training manuals, professional development materials, and administrative memos referring to advocacy services. The historical documents collected included various past and current organization charts, job descriptions, and staffing models (contracted, full-time, part-time). I collected any promotional materials that inform the campus community of the services provided (website, social media, pamphlets, etc.). Lastly, I collected any perceived policies or documents mentioned as challenging during the interviews. To catalog all documents collected, I created a Microsoft Excel sheet that organized

documents by site and by categories connected to my research questions.

## **Data Analysis**

I first listened to the interview recordings in order to discover initial ideas about the data's categories drawn from participant answers, and the relationship between those categories (Maxwell, 2013). All categories or relationships that arose, were noted in the form of an analytic memo, which was used to capture any preliminary themes. After the listening process was completed, the digitally recorded interviews were transcribed by an online transcription service, *temi.com*, and then checked for accuracy. My categorizing analysis began by establishing 2 provisional codes that were connected to my research questions, for example "survivor assistance practice" and "challenges" (Saldana, 2013). I manually coded each interview transcript line by line and sorted the data based on the identified organizational categories in a matrix, created in a Microsoft Excel workbook, that was also organized by site. Each Excel sheet was labeled with the site number (Site 1, Site 2, Site 3, and Site 4) and the provisional codes (survivor assistance practice and challenges). All interview transcript sections that addressed these categories were copied to the designated code section, with the pseudonym designated for each participant, the question that was answered, and participant response. After interview data was organized in this manner, I engaged in open coding and looked for emerging themes to create substantive categories that capture the beliefs and ideas in participants' reports (Maxwell, 2013). In this first cycle of coding I generated a total of 22 primary codes and 14 sub codes; the "survivor assistance practice" provisional code expanded to include 17 primary codes and 9 sub codes; the "challenges" provisional code expanded to include 5 primary codes and 5 sub codes. All codes were assigned a color and listed in a key on the top of each document. Additionally, I conducted a second cycle of coding by engaging in axial coding by looking for relationships

between open codes and exploring potential relationships between primary codes and sub codes (Allen, 2017; Saldana 2013). Axial coding prioritized 7 primary codes (trauma-informed, student-centered, positive response, training, Title IX, campus support, and impact of trauma) and identified 7 secondary codes (culturally aware, systemic change, case-management, empowerment, student well-being, student diversity, and staff capacity). Lastly, I analyzed the documents previously collected by judging their usefulness in supporting interview data. All documents were connected to the research questions using a unit analysis (See Appendix D) and was cataloged in a manner that facilitated the process of connecting their content to the interview transcripts (see Documents).

### **Ethical Considerations**

No ethical concerns emerged from my study. I informed participants that the research sites would be given pseudonyms and only broad information regarding each site would be provided. Additionally, each participant was assigned a pseudonym, and optional 30-minute member checks were offered to interview participants to ensure that I was accurately representing their perspectives. All participants were sent a study information sheet before participating in the study, where information about confidentiality and voluntary participation was addressed. Lastly, I clarified that all data would be owned by me, including interview audios, interview transcripts, and all notes made on the documents collected. This data was stored in a password protected computer and cloud drive.

### **Positionality**

In California, campus survivor advocates hold confidential positions on college campuses. The topic of sexual assault and the students going through such traumatic experiences make this study sensitive to all those involved in the work of providing a supportive and safe



campus environment. Therefore, I was mindful about my approach to carrying out this study. I informed the site that the goal of my study was to gather information about how campus survivor advocacy practices have developed on-campus and to capture their experiences of supporting student victims navigate on-campus policy and reporting structures, rather than criticizing the effectiveness of their role. When contacting the school site, I positioned myself as a UCLA graduate student first and a former campus survivor advocacy practitioner second. My previous connection to the sites assisted with rapport and trust, as I remained consciously objective to participant responses.

### **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Two main credibility threats to my study were participant reactivity and my personal bias. As discussed, I am a former campus survivor advocate and am familiar with WU staff, and was recognized by some of participants as such. Participants might have told me what they thought I wanted to hear during interviews. A key strategy to minimize reactivity was triangulation, which I used across data sources and methods. I also followed an interview protocol for each participant in order to standardize my data collection. In addition, I assured each participant that they can be of most help to other programs by being completely candid about the challenges they have faced in this work and how they have dealt with those challenges. Lastly, my own personal bias is an additional credibility threat. I have previously held a similar role to the participants which can lead me to draw conclusions based on my own perceptions or beliefs. Although my personal experience gave me a more in-depth understanding of participant responses, I utilized rich data in order to address this credibility concern. I used direct quotes from interview transcripts and triangulated the data obtained from both methods used (interviews and document collection) to assure that they agree on a common conclusion and, therefore,

alleviate personal bias in the findings (Maxwell, 2013).

### **Summary**

This qualitative research study investigated campus survivor advocacy staff perspectives at four Western University campuses (Site 1, Site 2, Site 3, and Site 4). The Western University system was one of the first university systems to mandate a campus survivor advocate on all of their campuses and coordinate a systematic response to sexual violence advocacy ([University Leader], 2015). Each site was selected due to the range in years of experience, WU CSA office founding date, and membership in the same university system. Two of the sites (Sites 1 and 3) have WU CSA offices founded prior to 2011, whereas the two others (Sites 2 and 4) founded their on-campus survivor offices after 2011, as a response to WU Presidential Task Force recommendations issued in 2014 ([Western University], 2014). The sample for this study was campus survivor advocacy staff who design, coordinate, administer, or directly assist student victims of sexual violence at all four WU campuses. I used professional connections as a previous campus survivor advocate to gain access to the sites and relied on WU CSA director buy-in to begin the recruitment process at each site. The qualitative methods used to obtain data for this study included open-ended interviews with campus survivor advocacy staff alongside the collection of documents (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). All interviews were transcribed, and the provisional codes connected to my research questions (survivor assistance practice and challenges) were utilized to analyze all interviews and documents collected. Issues of potential credibility and bias, given my previous position as a WU CSA Director, were addressed with the triangulating of data. The findings of this study could be utilized as a tool to benchmark current campus survivor advocacy programs or to assist in the development of

services in the area of campus survivor advocacy. It provides recommendations on how to better support student survivors of sexual violence on college campuses.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

Through this chapter, I report the findings of a qualitative research study that focused on four campus survivor advocacy offices in higher education. All offices belong to the Western University system, sharing a common charter but serving distinct regions and student populations. The objective of the research was to interview and investigate the practices that staff engage in on while they assist student survivors of sexual violence and inquire about any challenges that campus survivor advocacy practitioners face. I conducted 14 semi-structured interviews, in addition to document analysis, to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and lived experiences of campus survivor advocacy staff. In this chapter, I present two main findings and seven sub-findings from analysis of participant responses that answer the two research questions of this study.

Research Question 1 (RQ1) investigated the practices that campus survivor advocacy staff (CSAS) engage in on-campus while supporting student survivors after they experience campus sexual violence. RQ1 is addressed by Finding 1, which uncovered how CSAS engage in trauma-informed practices that support student survivors with student-centered approaches that focus on healing, self-advocacy, and empowerment. Finding 1 is supported by three sub-findings; the first sub-finding is that CSAS engage in trauma-informed practices that are culturally aware, and work towards systemic change on campus; the second sub-finding is that CSAS practice student-centered case management to empower student survivors after they experience sexual assault; the third sub-finding identified CSAS perceptions of success and its connection to student survivor healing, self-advocacy, and empowerment outcomes.

Lastly, Research Question 2, explored the potential challenges that CSAS encountered as practitioners and is addressed by Finding 2 which confirmed that CSAS encountered challenges that negatively impacted their on-campus practice. Finding 2 is supported by four sub-findings; in the first sub-finding CSAS identified the lack of specified on-campus advocacy training programs as a challenge, as state certification trainings did not address student diversity or provide insights on student-centered practice; the second sub-finding found federal regulations and on-campus reporting processes challenging for CSAS, as they have negatively impacted the student experience and have altered their advocacy approach; the third sub-finding identified challenges from the lack of staff capacity and office space; the fourth sub-finding described CSAS reactions to student survivor trauma and their impacts on personal and professional experiences.

## **Findings**

### **Finding 1: CSAS Engage in Trauma-informed Practices That Support Student Survivors With Student-Centered Approaches That Focus on Healing, Self-Advocacy, and Empowerment**

In exploring the research questions concerning the practices that CSAS engage in on-campus and the assistance that they offer student survivors, data indicated that CSAS engage in trauma-informed practices that support student survivors with student-centered approaches that focus on healing, self-advocacy, and empowerment. First, I will elaborate on my first sub-finding by providing two specific ways that participants spoke about being trauma-informed, through cultural awareness and in changing systems. Then I will share my second sub-finding, which determined that CSAS practice student-centered case management that seeks to empower student

survivors on campus. Lastly, my third sub-finding will identify CSAS perceptions of success and its connection to student survivor healing, self-advocacy, and empowerment outcomes.

### ***Subtheme One: Being Trauma-Informed***

In this study, the term “trauma-informed” was directly mentioned by nine participants, while the remaining five participants referenced words that connected to SAMHSA (2014) trauma-informed principles (See Chapter 2) such as “empowerment,” “trust,” “safety,” “choice,” and “inclusive” when describing their practice or the services offered to student survivors. When specifically referenced, the term “trauma-informed” was used by participants to discuss their training background, advocacy approach, prevention practice, and in references to policy development. For example, Teresa, from Site 2, described her work approach as “grounded in trauma-informed approaches” which she described as “a necessary foundation” that guided the work of the office. “Everything that we do is imbued with a trauma-informed framework,” Teresa confirmed. Furthermore, she elaborated that the CSAS role on campus was to ensure that survivors were aware of advocacy services and “have all the information and know all their options so that they can make an informed decision [and] that they have access to...confidential support that is trauma-informed.” A similar example comes from, Katie who discussed her role during campus meetings:

I also view my role as an advocate in the sense that if I'm sitting in a meeting, in a case management meeting or workplace violence meeting or we're talking about policy, I view my role as the individual in the room who's going to raise questions about, does this really follow the principles of trauma-informed care?

Katie elaborated that ultimately, she and her staff “are always striving to provide services in a way that's going to build trust, that's going to allow for empowerment for the survivors, that is

going to allow the survivor to have choice, that's culturally aware and culturally sensitive.” This was a sentiment supported by other CSAS. Ana, for example, described her role as one “to empower and support decisions and choices, choice, voice and safety or whatever that means for that person who's coming to us for help.” Similarly, Rebeca, remarked:

We want to share all the choices and then whatever their decision is, we will move forward with their decision, so it's truly empowerment and it's based on their choice and what they feel ready to do at the time.

Overall, all participants used words that connect back to trauma-informed principles developed over the past decade, indicating how campus survivor advocacy offices have applied trauma-informed theory into practice. As CSAS, participants were especially inclined to look at trauma-informed practices in conjunction with considering the diversity and empowerment of survivors and connecting the practices to systemic change.

**Trauma-Informed Care and Cultural Awareness.** Researchers have discussed the importance of trauma-informed service providers educating themselves to grow intentionally sensitive to the cultural history and background of their clients (Butler et al., 2011), and understanding how their clients’ cultural identity might impact their experiences with trauma and healing (Elliot et al., 2005). In this study, 12 participants confirmed that their on-campus practices considered the diversity of the students that they serve. Liliana exemplified the participants attitudes toward cultural awareness when she stated that “being trauma-informed is really important in understanding diversity and the barriers that students are facing.” Campus survivor advocacy staff have engaged in trauma-informed practices that have included becoming aware about the socio-cultural experiences of various sub-groups that they served on their campuses, including based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexuality. Such awareness

leads them to help students visualize therapist appointments, explore culturally specific healing modalities, and avoid stereotypes of their students.

CSAS in this study expressed investing their professional development funds and time in trainings that focus on the minoritized student experience and considering the diversity of the students they serve. Mercedes, for example, “applied for professional development funds to go to the Northwest Networks training for providing services to LGBTQ survivors” which she utilized to “expand services [they] were providing to LGBTQ+ students”; she mentioned working “really closely with [their] LGBT resource center director to develop some really specific initiatives like working with trans survivors and survivors who are maybe part of other types of queer communities where there's even more stigma coming forward.” Katie encourages her staff to “stay up to date” and understand “what some of the challenges and barriers might be for survivors who have a disability, for survivors who are undocumented, survivors who may identify as queer or gender non-binary.” This is exemplified by a member of her staff, Fernanda, who confirmed that she has participated in trainings that focus on the specific barriers that underserved populations (Hmong, African American, and LGBTQ+) might encounter.

Nina, Mercedes, and Rebeca specifically mentioned taking advantage of trainings offered by other on-campus offices to expand their understanding of diverse student communities. Nina discloses the advantages of being in a college campus, as it related to having access to trainings, she states,

here on campus there are a lot of opportunities for us as employees to attend and learn about various marginalized communities. As an example, I recently attended one called undocu/ally, a program for educators [about] learning how to support the undocumented student population. This was important because a lot of the folks that seek our services



come from many different walks of life and sometimes reporting can be really scary and can be daunting, and they might feel that, depending on their status, it may affect them.

All of the sites have partner offices on campus that serve diverse student populations such as LGBTQ+ students, undocumented students, first-generation students, ethnic specific groups, and students with basic needs. Juana added that the trainings help staff “approach a situation that involves minorities or specific populations that [they have] on campus” and develop a “trauma-informed space.”

CSAS provided examples of how being culturally aware impacts their advocacy practice and interaction with students. Elsa described how she looks “at the survivor as a whole” and considers the socio-cultural experience of student survivors when offering advocacy services, stating that this means “not just looking at the trauma but the socio-cultural experience of that individual, and that really informs what their response might be and what their response to support might be.” Marita described observing how talk therapy and counseling are not the only healing modalities for student survivors and has explored more culturally relevant resources for students sharing, “I’ve had Native students where they are looking more for Native resources like ceremonies or something, so [the best options in looking for healing modalities] depends.” Francesca takes into consideration certain stigmas first-generation students may carry towards seeking mental health services and helps them by walking them to seek help and visualize their therapy appointment, she stated:

for the first generation or the individuals who have this stigma for mental health, walking into that environment has also been very helpful for some students. Then also going over what would a therapist appointment look like. What are some of the questions? What are some of your fears? And then navigating where fears are coming from, so when they step

into the therapist appointment, it's not as scary because they were able to process what the first one's going to look like.

Additionally, Mercedes detailed how the center she works at is “very intentional about being inclusive.” She described how their materials, confirmed by their website, are designed intentionally not to look “stereotypically feminine.” she also explained how important it is for staff to come “into the work through a very intersectional lens” in order to consider students different identities, as “it really impacts their access to services and barriers to coming forward...also how trauma impacts them.” Mercedes reflects how she approaches her role to include student identity by being:

very against the universal survivor narrative that floats around for college campuses, which is, it's a white-sis, sorority girl. That's basically what all of the work is rooted in and that's not what we see on the daily and it's pushing back against that narrative to make room for other stories and other experiences so that the services can be for everybody and not just what we think is happening.

Mercedes pointed to the fact that sexual violence prevention resources and training are often available for students “who are opting into organizations where this is a prevalent issue” and fit the dominant narrative of who is assumed to be a survivor on a college campus, like Greek life.

Although Mercedes acknowledges that assault prevention throughs Greek life is important, she expressed the need to also focus on marginalized communities. She explained: “where I want to spend my time is not Greek life, it's with other groups that are being targeted just by simply walking on the street because of who they are and what they look like.” Similarly to Mercedes, Ana touted the importance of pushing back on the normalized narrative of who is impacted by sexual violence as it leaves out vulnerable populations. Ana stated:

If I were to continue to carry on just that basic model of what advocacy looks like, we're leaving out populations and communities who are statistically...the most impacted by things like sexual violence and relationship violence, you're talking about vulnerabilities in systems and racism, all these -isms that exist.

Both Ana and Alex, directors who identify as women of color, identified their work as being “grounded in equity.” Alex elaborated on how the anti-violence field has had a difficult history “as it relates to white supremacy and heterosexism and transphobia in the movement,” and her work is grounded in the work of organizations that are “led predominantly by women of color and queer people of color that are doing grass roots work outside of the criminal justice system.” Alex continued to share that she has “an imperative to lead, supervise, envision, and implement services that challenge the status quo and challenge...normative efforts that sustain oppression.” This sentiment was supported by Ana, who believes that if advocacy practices are able to “center” their work and strategy around the “most minoritized and vulnerable communities, then essentially [they will] remove barriers for the rest of the community.”

**Empowering Student Survivors With Their Practice.** In efforts to center survivors, CSAS develop practices that empower the survivors they work with by using “empowerment, voice, and choice,” one of the key principles of a trauma-informed approach (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 10). This concept encourages practitioners to steer away from coercive or controlled assistance and actively facilitate the voice and choice of those they serve. This translates into practice by supporting student survivors in making their own decisions, goals, and plan of action to heal in their own way (SAMHSA, 2014). Campus survivor advocacy staff use the concept of empowerment to support student survivors after they experience campus sexual violence. All participants referenced either following an “empowerment model,” the act of empowering

survivors, an “empowerment approach”, or otherwise referenced descriptors of empowerment when describing their services. For example, Elsa describes the empowerment model by saying that it about “making sure that [survivors] are really aware of their rights and options so they can make the decision that's best for them at the moment.” Juana describes how the empowerment model is at the center of her interactions with survivors, sharing:

when we are meeting for the first time, something that we really always emphasize is empowerment. Giving the power of decision back to the person who just was assaulted or is in a relationship where there's violence and they feel that their voice can't be heard. We always handle these conversations [through the] empowerment model.

In addition to using the word empowerment, CSAS used phrases that described how they practice empowerment when interacting with student survivors, including “their choice,” “with their permission,” “they can make the decision that’s best for them,” “validating their feelings,” “always respect their decision,” “establish trust,” “I don't ever want to assume I know what's best for them,” and “help them to reach...goals.” Juana confirmed this when describing her office approach as “very focused on empowerment and positive intervention.” Ana specified that her role was “to empower and support decisions and choice, voice and safety...for that person who's coming to us for help.” Claudia viewed her role in a similar way, as one “based on an empowerment model and really allowing the client to choose where they want to go and really honoring that and moving with them through that process.” When discussing the concept of supporting student survivor choice, CSAS like Katie and Claudia affirmed that their job is “not to persuade or dissuade anybody from any course of action” or to “dictate or force [student survivors] to go in a certain direction,” which supports the notion of supportive instead of coercive assistance noted by SAMHSA (2014). Juana also described ensuring that student

survivors understand that, regardless of the choice that they make, she “will always respect their decision” and continue to “provide the support that they need, regardless of who they want to report or not.”

Interviews indicated a pattern of practice common among CSAS across all campuses. The pattern included providing student survivors with all of their options so the survivor could make an informed decision, waiting to hear their choice, and then supporting that choice. This practice supports Elliot et al.’s (2005) empowerment principle that encourages practitioners to increase the knowledge of their clients and reassure them into taking action on their personal goals. A sexual violence survivor has many pathways to consider: reporting or not reporting; seeking or not seeking medical attention; exploring a healing modality (individual counseling, yoga, group therapy, and others); seeking a restraining order; exploring their current academic and housing options; seeking shelter services. A campus survivor advocate is there to relay all possible pathways for student survivors and expand their “resources and support network such that [they] become less and less reliant on professional services” (Elliot et al., 2005, p. 466). For example, Marita described that in her practice she always tries to “make sure that [student survivors] have important and relevant information so that whatever decision [they are] making, it's an informed one.” Similarly, Elsa presented their guiding practice:

We're not telling them what to do and we're not rescuing or handholding to an extent where they're dependent on us. We really try to make sure that we meet them where they're at. So for some clients that does require a little bit more supportive assistance, like sitting down and making a phone call together, writing an email together but for most, it really is providing them with the tools and resources that they need in order to make the

decisions that's best for them in their lives or to help them kind of regain some power back in their lives.

In Elliot et al.'s (2005) empowerment principle, the authors urge trauma-informed services to employ an empowerment model where survivors' experiences and decisions are validated. In this study, seven participants referenced the word "validate" and all mentioned the word "support" when describing either the choices, feelings, or next steps that student survivors take. For example, Katie describes a scenario when a student felt pressured by her family to report the incident to the police and shared her approach to assisting the student, explaining:

I felt like my role in that moment was to just validate that this gets to be her choice, that somebody else has already taken away a choice of hers and I'm going to do everything I can to give her some power back and allow her to make choices that are best for her and support her in that.

This data affirms that CSAS services are centered around supporting student survivor experiences and choice. Discussing how student survivors are supported, Nina mentioned that she practices "empathy, active listening...validate their feelings, identify their options, reinforce their strengths and just do it all with compassion and an open mind." This includes validating feelings of self-blame and normalizing their experience as survivors of trauma by providing them with education on the body's response to trauma. Katie detailed that she provides student survivors with this education by saying to them that "what they're going through is a normal response to a really abnormal situation, the abuse or the violence that they experienced is not their fault but how they're responding to it is common and normal." Lastly, this also includes validating student survivors' choices and acknowledging that the act of sexual violence is ultimately about taking someone's choice away, and campus survivor advocacy practices are

about restoring that individual choice and power. Participants upheld this empowerment principle, expressing that their practice is there to “restore that sense of control,” “regain that power and control back in their life,” and doing everything they can “to give them some power back.” Fernanda reflected that ultimately, all she hopes for is for student survivors “to have at least one person who is not judging them, who believes them because they need that, they deserve that...they deserve nothing less than that.”

**Changing Systems That Are Not Trauma-Informed.** In the process of providing trauma-informed care with an awareness of student diversity and empowerment, CSAS work on changing systems and individuals that are not already trauma-informed. Eight participants described studying trends that impacted student survivors and actively worked toward changing campus systems and processes that are not trauma-informed. Campus survivor advocacy staff reported addressing problematic campus partner interactions with survivors, challenging policies, and educating others on campus on how to respond to survivors. Mercedes, for example, reported that her job is “very much problem solving,” observing any trends that “are impacting survivors and disproportionately impacting some survivors,” and advocating for those students at a systemic level. Mercedes stated about helping educating others on trauma-informed responses to survivors:

I'm flagging things for other stakeholders who are involved in this work, that maybe are not confidential, and saying things like ‘have you thought about the fact that our African American students distrust the university and are not going to come forward to report? So what are other options that we have for them if they would like any kind of resolution?’ So just like bringing that to the attention of rooms where... they're not thinking about identity issues and how it impacts people's process of healing or seeking justice.

All four directors—Ana, Katie, Alex, and Rebeca—specified how their roles were to actively challenge policies to be more inclusive or trauma-informed. Ana actively advocates to “create policy that's trauma-informed,” and “tr[ies] to shift systems, tr[ies] to shift policies so that environments can be more inclusive for folks who've experienced violence.” Katie similarly stated that her role has become “much more about reviewing policy, reviewing adjudication models, providing feedback and pushing back when...it's not actually trauma-informed.” In meetings where policy is being discussed, she sees her role as raising questions about whether practices are trauma-informed care.

Alex also observed that her “role is to challenge policies, practices that create a barrier for prevention, and create a climate where survivors are supported.” Participants gave examples of directly advocating for a student in the face of failing policy or processes that are difficult to navigate. Ana saw that though her role included empowering students to navigate a process, it also required her to “look at the system that we also need to change, to be able to meet that goal of continuously being inclusive for folks of all identities, of all intersections.” Rebeca shared that while she is listening to a student survivor and while helping them,

the other part of [her] brain is thinking, are there any policies or procedures that we could be improving so that this individual might've had an easier experience? Finding resources, getting accurate information, whatever it seems that it might've been the challenge for them...what else can we do to make sure that whatever was a difficulty for them, it doesn't happen again?

Rebeca recalled accompanying a student to file a report with campus police and hearing the officer ask the student a question not informed by trauma: “are you willing to prosecute this?” She remembered “sitting there thinking ‘that is the stupidest question’” even though it was not



the first time she had heard a police officer ask it. In response, she spoke to the campus detective to discuss her concerns with the question and sought to understand why that question was being asked. Rebeca recalled saying, “we've got to look at that question because it's a terrible question because first of all, they [police] don't control what a DA could choose to not prosecute and they [survivor] haven't even given a report.” Rebeca understood that although some policies, procedures, or questions cannot be changed, she had agency in the interaction to make the process more trauma-informed for student survivors. By focusing on educating on the individual and systemic level, she hoped to prevent such negative experiences for survivors. She stated: “they're either trained that way or there's some policy or procedure that I don't know about, but it still doesn't mean that we can't make it more trauma-informed.”

Additionally, Rebeca, Claudia, Nina, Ana, and Alex believe that their roles are also about educating others on campus on how to respond to individuals who have been victims of sexual violence. Rebeca explained her belief that interfacing with colleagues is a part of supporting survivors:

The more we educate other people and dispel myths and get accurate information out and help them with how they're going to respond to somebody they know. The more we do that, the more we are helping survivors because that means that people will be more compassionate when they respond, they will be more accommodating, and they'll be more loving.

Claudia declared that one of her responsibilities is to help members of the campus understand “the body's natural response to trauma and stress and helping to normalize some reactions that folks have once they have experienced any of these forms of violence.” Nina does this through informal dialogues about consent, sexism, objectification, and being an active bystander with

campus partners and students, conversations that she believes “are necessary to move [them] forward.” Ana mentioned how part of her role is to work with faculty and staff to support students who also hold the survivor identity, declaring that if the “institution[’s] mission [is] to recruit, retain, and support diverse student populations,” it should also include students who have “experiences of sexual trauma and violence.” Alex called this “systems advocacy,” which provides employees with “education and skill development opportunities” and “trauma-informed practices” to properly address the needs of student survivors on campus.

CSAS thus use trauma-informed practices on levels beyond individual students. They consider the complex and intersecting identities of students to best support them and their traumas. In keeping with studies, CSAS empower the decisions of student survivors to encourage their choices and respect their experiences. CSAS supported them through education of colleagues and work to reform policy and create change on a systemic level. By bringing the trauma-informed lens to the larger scale, participants expressed hoping to center the experiences and needs of survivors.

### ***Subtheme Two: Offering Student-Centered Case Management***

To discover how CSAS support student survivors and what practices they use in this process, participants were asked about how they support students’ cases. In addition to attending to the cultural aspect of their students’ experiences, as well as other social dimensions, CSAS also offer student-centered case management. The trauma-informed care CSAS refer to is often implemented in human service with ten principles, including resource coordination and advocacy (Elliot et al., 2005). Although the study that founded the principles was based on trauma-informed services for women, they have been applied widely in the years since (Butler et al., 2011; SAMHSA, 2014; Wilson et al., 2015). Therefore, the principles could also be applied to

the resource coordination, also called case management, of student survivors in college campuses. CSAS offer a student-centered version of case management by using *empowerment*, a principle that is referenced when describing trauma-informed care in any field. According to Elliot et al. (2005), case management is most effective when it empowers those who are served and encourages those who are seeking assistance to see themselves “as experts on their own lives...[who] set their own goals and make their own decisions” (p. 471). Empowerment is supported by campus survivor advocates when they provide student-centered case management by assisting with the facilitation of on-campus accommodations and accompanying students while they seek on- and off-campus services and reporting options.

Through the facilitation of accommodations and accompaniments, CSAS are able to interact with several campus partners on behalf of or with the student survivor they are assisting, and actively keeping track of where survivors are in their healing and academic journeys. CSAS and student survivor interactions can vary in frequency, as some students choose to request services from the campus survivor advocacy office only once, while others seek services throughout their entire academic journey, which can range from four to six years. Mercedes reflected that her role “in the more recent years has been at the case management or at the policy level.” She describes her role as often “mapping out an action plan” while asking student survivors questions such as “What do you want to do? And how do you want to do this? Where do you want to go next?” Fernanda iterated that when she is listening to student survivors, she is also “paying attention to how they're discussing their fears, how they're discussing their sleep, how they discuss their friend group and what that support looks like, and then starting to put some options out there proactively.” Marita, when describing case management, referenced the process as being “with that person from the start to the end.” Similarly, Elsa described case

management as “following up and connecting them to resources, really making sure that we are following [student survivors] through either the reporting process or through...what their goals or needs are.” As Fernanda reflected on the case management aspect of her role, she mentioned that it was what she loved most about the role and described the process:

I start with somebody early on in their healing and their disclosure. I get to be with them to the extent that they want me to be with them for their whole process, whatever that may look like. So I could work with somebody once or I could work with somebody for years and so it really allows for a strong rapport to be built, a lot of trust, a lot of communication, and really feeling like you're helping somebody and watching somebody evolve in their journey.

The student status of the survivors they are assisting is at the forefront of campus survivor advocacy practices and therefore are student-centered in their approach. Alex shared how being student-centered has “really influenced the way that [she] makes decisions and the way that [she] works with students to make decisions and that has influenced [their] center quite a bit.” Similarly, Mercedes mentioned how her center’s practice is “very student-centered” and elaborated that “it is about trying to create access for the students and being available for them.” As an advocate Elsa, believes that being “aware of their status as students” assists her to think ahead and ask critical questions about how trauma has impacted their education, making campus advocacy staff “really integral sometimes in [the students’] ability to be successful academically.” Liliana, from Site 2, has a similar view of her role and believes that one of her duties is to develop prevention practices that give students the “tools they need to make safer and informed choices” and the other task is to “develop leadership and student success.” She rejects the perception of students as “one dimensional” and often reminds colleagues that students are

“holistic, they're complex, they're coming in with so much history that's in trauma, and their narratives are going to impact how they succeed in our classrooms, in the institution.”

When discussing the impact that campus advocacy had on the student experience, the leadership of all four campus survivor advocacy offices, directors, associate or assistant directors, spoke about the impact their services have had on student retention. Mercedes, from Site 1, expressed that “people don't really understand how this work is directly connected to retention and I think about so many of the students that we've helped who would have quit school if it hadn't been for the services and the support that they received from us.” Ana, from Site 2, agreed and stated that “advocates play a huge role with student success with the retention and support of survivors on campus.” Katie, from Site 3, emphasized this by stating that she was aware of students who dropped out, withdrew, or became academically dismissed, and is “aware of how the support that [the CSAS] provide can assist with retention if it's right for the survivor.” This sentiment was supported by Mercedes, who shared that “retention can look different” for student survivors, as some may need a break from school and come back later, “but if that's what they need in order to feel safe and to feel whole, then that's what [the center is] here to help facilitate.” Lastly, Alex, from Site 4, reflected on the impacts violence and harassment has had on student retention and success at an institutional level by framing “forms of violence within a broader context of oppression” and connecting “violence and harassment and other issues of inequity as a threat to student retention and success.” Given the prevalence of sexual violence incidents on college campuses, Alex firmly stated that “our educational institutions have a deep moral and ethical obligation to address these forms of violence and harassment because they are preventing or at least negatively impacting the success of all of our students.”

**Accommodations and Accompaniments.** All 14 participants consistently referenced how accommodations and accompaniments are a component of their on-campus services and how it actively assists student survivors academically, emotionally, and in reaching their goals. On-campus accommodations are often requested by student survivors to facilitate their degree progression or facilitate their healing journey. A trauma-informed policy around accommodations considers designing services that accommodate the needs of survivors (Butler et al., 2011; Carello & Butler, 2015; Harris & Fallo, 2001). The confidential nature of campus survivor advocacy offices on campus help facilitate accommodations for student survivors. A student survivor can request an accommodation even if they choose not to officially report the sexual violence incident with Title IX or campus police, only if that accommodation directly impacts them but not their perpetrator. Campus survivor advocacy staff are able to interact with campus departments and faculty, as well as assist student survivors in requesting alternate arrangements that impact their housing, class schedule, assignment due dates, counseling center appointment frequency, on-campus job hours, and mandatory athletic practice, among other factors. CSAS explore all possible accommodation options with student survivors in order to alleviate any stress impacting them post-trauma, which could encourage the beginning of the student survivor healing journey. Fernanda declared that “a confidential advocate gives the time and the space for a victim to think about and process the options and then make the choice that they want to make and not have it made for them.”

***Academic Accommodations.*** Accommodations can be divided into two categories: academic accommodations and other accommodations that impact various aspects of student life. Twelve participants mentioned facilitating on-campus accommodations as a function of their role as CSAS members. Ten participants specifically mentioned providing academic

accommodations, and of that group seven participants mentioned working directly with academic deans on behalf of student survivors to get assistance with academic accommodations. Juana provided an example of a student survivor she was assisting who had the same class as their perpetrator and connected them with the Dean. She stated that “sometimes [the Dean’s] able to work with the student to either find a different section or maybe sometimes the student actually says ‘I don’t want to take this class this quarter’ so there’s a withdrawal involved.” Elsa spoke about contacting the dean only with the permission of the student survivor, especially if the student “had a previous history of academic concern,” such as being on “academic probation or they’re close to disqualification,” and acknowledged that it was best to rely on the academic expertise of the dean. Katie, Fernanda, and Claudia referenced additional scenarios in which they assisted students with academically specific accommodations, including contacting faculty to request extensions on a paper, miss a quiz, or miss a class. Sometimes, students delay their graduation plans or withdraw from the institution, like a student survivor Fernanda helped, who has withdrawn from the University and is currently appealing for their full tuition to be refunded. “I’m currently writing a letter for somebody to get a full refund for this quarter because their assault occurred after the quarter had started and it was too late to take a planned leave,” she narrated. Ana calls facilitating any type of academic accommodation “academic advocacy,” as the accommodation draws advocates to work with faculty and academic support services on the campus.

***Non-Academic Accommodations.*** On-campus accommodations facilitated by CSAS often go beyond academics, as they partner in significant ways with on-campus offices in order to assist student survivors with accommodations that impact other aspects of their student life. Marita called this process a “team effort,” sharing about a time that the office partnered with the

campus's student disabilities department for an accommodation. Likewise, if students reside on campus, campus advocacy staff partner with residential education to provide the proper accommodation; both Elsa and Juana recalled activating on-campus protocols on behalf of students that provide "safe housing" or "emergency temporary housing." Francesca had worked as an off-campus advocate and shared that, in comparison, on-campus student survivors have more access to resources than off-campus survivors. She attributes this to the many on-campus offices that exist to provide student services. "Students at [Site 2] and on these campuses have a phenomenal support system," Francesca said, "with case management and counseling and all the resources that they have, the [wellness center], food insecurity support, versus being out in the community."

***Providing Accompaniment.*** Students who experience sexual violence on campus have the option of reporting and seeking medical assistance. Some, depending on how fast they seek medical assistance, are able to request a forensic examination, which is often referred to by advocates as a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) exam. Katie explains, "depending on the timeframe, [survivors] may be interested in having physical evidence collected, if the assault happened recent enough, so we'll accompany them to their evidentiary exams." All 14 participants stated that their office offered students accompaniments, usually to local hospitals who offer SART exams. Only Site 1 participants mentioned on-campus SART examinations as an option. Rebeca shares,

we are really fortunate in the fact that we can provide the forensic exams on campus if the case occurred on campus and our police are investigating the case. So that makes it even more convenient for the students that they don't have to be driven about 20 miles away to the local, the nearest facility.



CSAS also provide accompaniment to reporting agency appointments, such as the Title IX office, campus police, and off-campus police agencies (if the incident happened outside of the campus police jurisdiction). This includes all criminal justice proceedings such as restraining order hearings, criminal hearings, and follow-up meetings with detectives and the district attorney's office. Mercedes, confirmed this by sharing how they "do accompaniments to the on-campus proceedings for Title IX but also off-campus if [survivors] have restraining orders or any kind of criminal reporting process that they're needing assistance with." Similarly, Alex stated: "we provide accompaniment to medical exams, accompaniment to law enforcement, court assistance in ensuring that survivors and victims have access to their legal rights, legal aid and victim's compensation."

Student survivors often meet with campus advocates to find out more information about their options, and that includes the reporting process, whether that is with the Title IX office or law enforcement. Claudia reflected on how she is there to help student survivors "learn about what is available to them, learn about resources and help them to navigate processes because usually a lot of our students are having first experiences where they are away from support." Alex shared that "an advocate usually would be discussing what those processes are and how they typically go and what to expect from those." Elsa added that part of her role as a campus survivor advocacy staff member is to be "knowledgeable on legal information [and be] a supportive presence through the reporting process."

***Impacts of Accompaniment.*** During the accompaniments, campus survivor advocacy staff are present to emotionally support student survivors as they disclose their experience to another entity, whether that is a nurse, police, judge, professor, or a Title IX officer. Ana discussed how hearing about or recounting the details of an assault can be "re-triggering and can

cause a lot of pain and can cause a lot of dissociation.” Advocates are there to accompany a student survivor, assisting them with grounding work and support; Ana clarified that advocates are not there to “impede the process” but “there to make that process easier for the person who's being accompanied.” She specifically recounted students needing support during meetings with law enforcement and Title IX, inclusive of Title IX appeal hearings. Francesca brought up an interaction she had with law enforcement during a health center accompaniment, who followed the students wishes to not report the incident. She stated:

the student did not want law enforcement there, so I was able to have conversation with law enforcement prior to them walking in with the student to just give them a heads up and they were very receptive and able to respect the student's wishes.

In her previous job, Francesca had served as an advocate for human trafficking victims who were forced to participate through the criminal justice process. When reflecting on the difference in the campus approach, she stated that “it [is] nice talking with the survivor prior and that survivor being able to have a choice, versus talking to the survivor after they've been interviewed for hours.” As such, the advocacy and accompaniment aspects of CSAS roles helps to navigate the institution to make it more trauma-informed. In the process of seeking accommodations and accompanying students, advocates empower the survivors and the pathways they face.

Throughout a student survivor’s process of reporting, making decisions, and healing, CSAS are available to them to center the students’ experiences.

### ***Subtheme Three: Positive Perceptions of Success and its Connection to Student Survivor Healing, Self-Advocacy, and Empowerment Outcomes***

The third and final part of CSAS supporting survivor healing, self-advocacy, and empowerment is how CSAS perceive and define success. By working with a definition that

prioritizes the empowerment and choices of survivors, CSAS use their practice to provide intentional support to students. Campus survivor advocacy staff were asked how student survivors responded to the support offered by them; all participants perceived that their support was received positively by student survivors seeking assistance. CSAS made statements like “quite positively,” “really receptive,” “they respond in a positive way,” and “very responsive” about their perceptions of student survivor response. They gave examples about the direct feedback that was given by student survivors, including students reaching out to them post-graduation to share life milestones or years after receiving advocacy services. Mercedes specified on the positive encounters “I think I've had really good encounters with student survivors, some of them keep in touch with me still... I feel like it's been really awesome to hear back from them when they're doing really well post-graduation, so I think overall I've had really good experiences.” Additionally, CSAS recall receiving thank you emails and calls, and receiving cards and gifts. For example, Fernanda reflected,

I feel really blessed, I have a lot of thank you cards and graduation announcements. A lot of loving emails and text messages that I've been able to get over the years that just let me know that the work that I do had meaning and value for them. I feel pretty good about how I'm received.

Participants described reassuring statements made by student survivors about their services that is used as confirmation that their practice is perceived positively by student survivors. Ana, for example, recalled a student saying, “I wouldn't have been able to graduate if I didn't have an office and an advocate to help me through all of this.” Similarly, Juana shared an example that came from a student survivor that she accompanied through a reporting process, which she described as “very long and very, very invasive and very harsh,” stating:

I received an email expressing her gratitude, when it came to me being able to be with her along the way and saying that without my support and my help, they couldn't even imagine how they would have been able to survive this entire process.

Additional indications of student perception of services come from student survivors expressing to CSAS that they feel “relieved,” “glad,” or that they “feel so much better,” based on the feedback received from students. Marita for example elaborated on this, “the verbiage I hear a lot is like, ‘Oh I'm so relieved, I'm so glad I came in, I feel so much better.’” Nina reflected on why they receive such a positive response, guessing that their role makes student survivors “feel comfortable, they feel heard, and they feel understood.” CSAS were very swift to focus the shift of the positive responses they receive back to the students that they serve, noting that it is student survivors who deserve the praise. Katie, for example, noted that it was vital that CSAS place the “ownership” back on the students, as they are the “ones who had the courage to come in, in the first place, and they are the ones who are doing the hard work.”

Participants were asked how they perceived a successful interaction with a student survivor, and the majority named qualities that referenced survivor behaviors of healing, empowerment, self-advocacy, and giving back to the sexual violence movement as student activists, peer educators, or through future career choices. Their focus on healing opportunities for student survivors was prominent in their responses. Healing was mentioned by all participants and was collectively said by the participants 54 times throughout their responses. It was the most mentioned descriptor connected to their office practices and student survivor assistance and success. Offices were described both by participants and on their websites as “healing-centered,” offering “healing programs,” exploring a “healing process for survivors,” and prioritizing a “healing path” for student survivors. Which validates previous findings

connected to empowerment and providing trauma-informed care, as it connects the concept of success to the student experience and individual healing journeys (Schauben & Frazier, 1995).

Alex captured the connection of success to witnessing the evolution of the student survivor healing journey:

I think survivors reconnecting with their voice, with their body, with their needs, and beginning to assert that, is another sign of success. That can be as simple as making a choice with respect to their path for healing and what they do to take care of themselves, whether or not they choose to report. Any of those decisions could be an indicator of that, as well as student leaders when they demonstrate and embody their full power and their full agency is one of the sort of peaks of success and it's an honor to witness that.

Similarly, Elsa reflects that the work as CSAS is to explore how to “ best facilitate [the survivor’s] direction towards the healing process,” which she connects back to assisting students to regain their “power and control,” she confirms that there needs to be an acknowledgement “that part of the healing process is regaining that power and control back in their life.”

In addition to healing, CSAS described other qualities when disclosing their perceptions of a successful student survivor interaction. Ana and Francesca, who come from the same site and serve the most diverse student population in comparison to other sites, both described scenarios connected to first-generation students practicing self-advocacy and accessing services as a sign of success. They both acknowledged several factors that might prevent first-generation students from accessing services, so success might be measured in different ways for them as well. Ana acknowledged that although that success story might be interpreted by the general population as common or easy, sometimes for populations that are not used to seeking assistance,

like first-generation students, seeking services and asking for an accommodation is considered success by campus survivor advocacy staff. Ana stated:

on our campus we have a majority, first gen student population, students of color, we have working class students who are working three jobs and they make it to a 30-minute appointment with an advocate because they need something, and to me, success sometimes is that.

Similarly to self-advocacy, the connection to empowerment as success was made by CSAS. Some referenced equipping student survivors with all the information needed for them to make an informed choice as a sign of success. Marita shared that “if they walk away with more information, more, like, clarity about their options and about what they're wanting to do, I think that's success.” In addition to supplying student survivors with information so they could feel empowered to make an informed choice, CSAS mentioned witnessing students actually make an informed choice as success. For example, Elsa stated that “if the student survivor is able to identify their strengths and if they are able to identify their goals and are working towards those goals...is for me a positive or successful experience.”

Lastly, CSAS have witnessed several student survivors use their experience to give back, either to the offices by becoming peer educators, to the institutions by becoming student activists, or by focusing their future careers to assist survivors of trauma. This concept of giving back correlates with Elliot et al. (2005) notion of an empowerment model, one that supports survivors healing to the point where they can engage with their community and become an advocate for others, themselves. Participants revealed that students shared with them that they had changed career trajectories after their experience with sexual violence, and were now seeking to be therapists, enroll in programs for a master's in social work or master's in family

therapy, or becoming police officers. Francesca described students “wanting to change the world” sharing to her that they want to seek careers that “put into practice what [they] have taught.” Rebeca connected this to students feeling “understood while they were survivors here with us, so now they want to give back to their community.” Another form that participants observed student survivors giving back was through peer education and activism. For example, Mercedes shared that they have had “survivors who've done really well and worked a lot on continuous healing of their trauma and they come back and they want to work with us, they want to be peer educators, or they want to be interns.” She elaborated on how her role shifts to being a supervisor that is focused on continuing to make access to services accessible to that student, Mercedes added, “we make sure [survivors] still know [they] can access our services and it’s safe and confidential for [them] to talk to an advocate that’s not [their] supervisor.” Alex, who currently does not offer direct advocacy services, elaborated on how her role as director has shifted to support student leaders who are survivors:

in my work with student leaders, many of whom are survivors, I'm involved in helping them think through how to navigate their survivorship, with their student leadership role or their activism role. Helping them hone their strategy for their approach or their priorities or their policy...I do know that their experience as a survivor is often underpinning those interactions

In interacting with student survivors, participants had an overwhelmingly positive perception of the survivors’ experiences with their staff and offices. CSAS disclosed the healing of survivors, which they described as looking many ways, as central to how staff recognize success. Their means of perceiving student growth and success was frequently through unofficial

reaching out by students in months or years after the experience with the staff. Participants also saw students' frequent advocacy for themselves and for other survivors as a sign of success.

Participants' definitions of success were consistently based in the healing of survivors, on their empowerment in personal and career choices, and related to their ability to self-advocate. CSAS thus engage in healing and empowering practices on campus and help survivors by supporting their academic, social, and emotional healing and growth in advocacy, which answers RQ1. The reports of students' affirmative emails, letters, and career choices makes clear that this work is over both the short and long term.

## **Finding 2: CSAS Encountered Challenges That Negatively Impact Their On-Campus Practice**

In exploring the research question concerning the challenges that CSAS experience in their practice, I observed how CSAS encountered challenges that negatively impacted their on-campus practice. The first sub-finding will discuss CSAS challenges with advocacy state certification trainings and their lack of focus on diverse student populations and the overall student experience. The second sub-finding will disclose CSAS challenges with federal regulations and on-campus reporting processes, as they have negatively impacted the student experience and have altered CSAS's advocacy approach. Then I will share my third sub-finding which identifies that although CSAS feel generally supported by their campus, they find the lack of staff-capacity and office space challenging. Lastly, my fourth sub-finding describes the challenging reactions to student survivor trauma that CSAS have while discussing the impacts on personal and professional experiences.



***Subtheme One: Lack of On-Campus Advocacy Training Programs That Highlight the Student Experience***

This study sought to document the challenges that CSAS encounter in their roles on campus. One such area was the difficulty participants found in locating and accessing student-centered education for advocates, with little change in the field over their years of experience. The 14 participants of this study have been in the field of survivor advocacy an average of 12 years and worked on campus an average of 7.78 years and have all participated in the California state certification trainings through their Community Rape Crisis Center (CRCC). Although this state certification allows CSAS to actively practice confidential advocacy on campus, there are no required training standards that focuses on college student diversity, or the college student experience. In California, CRCCs are encouraged to follow the standardized training standards developed by the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA, 2009) and supplemental facilitator's guide that was developed for advocacy training specific to supporting survivors (CALCASA, 1999), neither instruct CRCCs to focus its training on the college student experience. In this study, five participants elaborated that they perceived the state certification program as lacking in content relating to student diversity. Claudia confirmed this when she reflected on the state certification:

I don't believe that the training in itself is a good foundation, it does not prepare you for working with all types of populations. It doesn't prepare you for more marginalized experiences. I would say that it's good for kind of a starting point, and I think it's important to have it, but I think that having supplemental training and being able to access that is really critical.

The other four participants characterized the state certification training as “outdated,” “antiquated,” or not fully preparing them or addressing student diversity. Mercedes, for example, shared that the training was “very minimal” when it focused on the diversity of survivors, saying that the training for LGBTQ+ survivors was “maybe one hour...and it was a guest speaker.”

Currently, CSA offices supplement this lack of training by using their department’s professional development funds or relying on campus student services centers to partake in additional training needed on diverse student populations. For example, CSAS mentioned attending and being encouraged to attend trainings from the office of student basic needs and centers that focus on minoritized student populations, including around LGBTQ+ identities, undocumented status, and ethnic-specific cultural centers (See Trauma-Informed Care and Cultural Awareness). Although CSAS from all four sites shared that they partake in trainings that address how to support diverse student populations, only two sites, Site 2 and Site 4, disclosed being intentional about organizing training for CSAS in their office. Specifically, Ana, from Site 2, shared that she had specifically trained staff on “intersectionality and identity work around equity,” while Claudia, from Site 4, reported that her team met once a month to engage in trainings, which included “trainings around supporting undocumented students, supporting the deaf community, thinking about survivors with disabilities...expanding on that kind of foundational training and certification.” Katie, from Site 3, shared that she “emphasized” the importance of seeking education and training with her staff, which was confirmed by staff responses stating that they would individually seek out additional training but were often limited by their capacity to attend due to caseloads. In Site 1, there was a lack of emphasis on additional learning or coordinated training for CSAS. Three out of four participants from Site 1 described the trainings as “not structured” or “lacking.”

Regarding specific training that focused on providing student-centered services, eight participants described acquiring their experience by working directly with diverse student populations and using the skills learned in their prior work experiences to implement services on campus. Teresa elaborated that “the actual work of just interfacing with the students and learning as you go is, and has been, really, really important and necessary to understand the diverse population on our campus.” Elsa also shared: “there wasn't any additional campus-based advocacy training that I received formally, but it was a lot of taking my previous experience and knowledge and applying it to this population.” Additionally, Marita who has 21 years in advocacy, described her years of experience as “relevant and transferable.” Participants had previously worked in local Rape Crisis Centers assisting survivors, in district attorney’s offices providing advocacy services, with the military as victim advocates, and as prevention educators in community clinics. Francesca alone has previously worked with youth who were on criminal probation, youth in the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) system, human trafficking survivors, individuals who are developing delayed, autistic, or on the spectrum. Regardless of the individual skill and experience that each of these staff members bring to campus, they did not disclose any coordinated on-campus training offered by the Western University system that focuses on skill development for on-campus survivor advocates. The WU system leaves each office, which vary in budget size, to figure out professional training development expenses and coordination on their own.

Because state certification provides limited training to CSAS, many participants have sought out additional learning opportunities. This includes provision and/or encouragement of training opportunities at three of the four sites, and participants particularly sought to train to

work with social and cultural awareness by taking trainings around aspects of student identity and student-centered practice.

***Subtheme Two: Federal Regulations and On-Campus Reporting Processes Negatively Impact the Student Experience and Alters CSAS Advocacy Approach***

In addition to the difficulties presented by the limited nature of advocacy training programs, CSAS also reported that reporting processes on campuses create additional barriers for their support of student survivors. This upholds the overall finding that CSAS face challenges in their work on campus settings. A core campus advocacy staff function is to accompany student survivors through the Title IX process, requiring that CSAS have thorough knowledge of law, campus policy, and federal guidance. Katie believes that it is “critical” for CSAS to possess this information, in order to “advocate for victim’s rights” on campus. In the ever-changing political climate, Title IX guidance on campus has shifted several times since 2011, adding additional challenges to CSAS as they need to navigate “to learn and relearn” how sexual violence is reported and adjudicated on college campuses, according to Claudia. Only one participant, Rebeca, believed that federal policy and guidance “legitimized [their] campus advocacy work” because it signaled to the campus community that CSA offices were needed; her perception was starkly different than others who participated in this study. Ten participants recounted the negative impact that Title IX processes had on the student experience and their own practice. As they focused on needing to assist student survivors in navigating a process that some called “re-traumatizing,” “not victim-centered,” and ultimately more supportive of respondent rights.

**Impact of the Title IX Process and Guidance on the Student Experience.** CSAS reflected on the negative impact the changing Title IX process was having on the student survivors that they serve. Katie shared a common perception carried by CSAS of the criminal

reporting process as difficult and often “very re-traumatizing” for student survivors that choose to go through that process:

the Title IX process is equally as difficult, if not, even more difficult because a lot of times survivors think that their institution is really there to help protect them and in many ways it does not feel like that for folks that [have] choose[n] to go through that process. CSAS from three sites, Site 1, Site 2, and Site 3, mentioned the length of the Title IX process as a challenge. Juana provided examples of how, on her campus, the Title IX reporting process is set to be resolved in a 60-day period, but that has not been the case, she stated, “as victim advocates we have been seeing that the process is not resolved in 60 days, more so, in some of the cases that I’ve had recently, it’s been about between 10 months and 12 months long.” She recounted going to constant meetings, interviews, and evidence review meetings with student survivors, who must attend these meetings “in addition to completing their classes.” Juana had witnessed a pattern of re-victimization, as student survivors are having to share their experiences with several campus administrators “over and over again and having to relive [the sexual violence] as they’re reading their statements.” She already found the Title IX process “a very long, tedious and very just really bad process,” and the new 2020 regulations bring concern that the process will only become longer. Ana perceived the role of the CSA to be more crucial to “student success [in terms of] retention and support,” as colleges are now “not obligated to follow a specific time frame for responding to reports [and] are only required to have ‘reasonably prompt’ periods for carrying out each step in the Title IX complaint process.” Additionally, Ana expressed concerned for students who are victimized abroad, as “Title IX is not compelled to respond to any harassment or assault that happens in American education[al] programs abroad.”

An additional layer of bureaucracy that student survivors need to overcome is the Title IX appeal process hearing, which changed in 2017 after the U.S. Department of Education rescinded the guidance issued in 2011 and has changed once more in 2020. Fernanda called this new era of Title IX “a respondent’s world” in which “all of the rights, options and benefits of doubt in this process are afforded to an individual who’s been accused.” She elaborated that even when respondents are found to have violated the Title IX policy, it is presumed that they will contest the finding and will “automatically get a hearing, a second chance to go through everything.” The appeal process prolongs the adjudication process, and although student survivors are given the opportunity to not participate, there is pressure on student survivors to continue participating in the process. Fernanda disclosed that colleagues who oversee the appeal process say “we’re not gonna make the victims go through that hearing process, but you need to make them aware of what happens if they don’t.” Which she in turn interprets as “the bottom line is if they don’t participate, the person’s probably not going to face any sanctions.” This new process poses a challenge for CSAS, as they need to share this new information with the students they are working with, given that their approach is connected to student survivor empowerment, but they also need to be clear with survivors about what to expect if they choose not to participate. Nina observed a spike in hearings and confirmed “going to more hearings at the end of the investigations” mainly “due to the federal policies that have impacted [the] adjudication process.” Moreover, she explained that the changes have “a negative impact on the survivors” as she now provides additional “emotional support for the impact the process has on their well-being.” Marita projected “that [this new guidance] will make it harder for victims to come forward” and shared being frustrated as the process is “not very victim-friendly.”

The last phase of the Title IX process is the sanctioning phase, in which a respondent who is found responsible in the adjudication process gets a sanction for their behavior. Francesca compared on-campus sanctioning with what she had previously encountered in the criminal justice process. She shared that on campus, “respondents don’t get the same” consequences, as she has witnessed perpetrators in the justice system get 25 years to life in prison. At the university level, Francesca observed that sanctions can be “nothing or an education[al] conversation.” Although Francesca has only worked on campus for six months, Juana, who has worked on campus for six years, made a similar observation: “very rarely [there’s] an outcome where the respondent will get a sanction and even when that happens there’s an appeal process, and if the respondent appeals, oftentimes...there’s no sanctions at all.” Juana confirmed that the Title IX reporting process is one of the biggest challenges that CSAS go through because it’s “a terrible process.” She described her observations of a student’s reaction to the outcome of the process, Juana stated “when the student that I’m working with receives the outcome of the process months later after going through this really, really long process they are disheartened and just sad and angry.” Marita stated her belief that “every person deserves dignity and respect,” but the Title IX process isn’t “always kind and doesn’t always leave victims or survivors feeling very good.”

### **Impact of the Title IX Process and Guidance on Campus Advocacy Approach.**

Campus survivor advocacy staff have seen a shift in their advocacy approach as it relates to their interactions with the Title IX office and campus processes. This shift in practice in the Title IX office has created “so much stress at some points at [Site 4] that it really created some very tense professional and collegial relationships...and created professional barriers to getting our job and our mission done,” recalled Alex. Katie agrees, as she has experienced working with individuals

who investigate and adjudicate Title IX processes and said the interactions can “feel very tense.” She believes that the strain is due to the self-created narrative by Title IX officers “that they are helping [to] protect the community,” when they “have no idea what they're doing to the [survivor].” Katie has witnessed CSAS “picking up the pieces” after student survivors engage with Title IX investigative and adjudicative processes. Mercedes noted that “it was around 2015 when things started to change [as] litigation by respondents became very common and has completely changed how federal guidance and policy are implemented.” Prior to 2015, Mercedes had observed “positive changes for survivors under Title IX” as there were protections for survivors during the reporting process, hearings, and access to “various remedies and accommodations to enhance their safety.” Katie observed a similar shift on her campus, recalling that in prior years she had felt that her office, along with Title IX, student conduct, and several other offices, had come together as a team “to help keep the campus safe.” Recently, however, she feels her office doesn’t “really have any say in how they do that work.” When she has told them that their process is “harming survivors,” their response is that they “have to do it this way,” which Katie interprets as Title IX and student conduct “trying to avoid lawsuits from the respondent.” Katie described viewing the CSA office as an:

ad hoc member of that team. We do what we can, but our attention is on the survivor.

We're going to help them the best way that we can, but we don't need to take ownership or apologize for the Title IX process because we don't own that.

As campuses began to focus on respondent litigation, Mercedes noted that the Title IX “process became so much more combative and for many advocates, the passive role just didn’t feel ethical anymore.” CSAS felt limited by this passive previous approach as they began to observe that student survivors had limited understanding of the campus adjudication proceeding, including



how to formally pose questions during their sexual violence adjudication hearings. Mercedes noted how they “didn’t know what to ask in these proceedings, the survivors, didn’t know how to phrase their questions to get at what they wanted,” and noted that it was more manageable “when the policies and protocols were fair and protective of survivors.” New Title IX regulations are now required to allow cross-examination during their hearing processes which will exacerbate a gap in resources between survivors and respondents as her office’s effort to find attorneys willing to take on cases pro-bono has been challenging, Mercedes disclosed that “often times, the survivors [they] are working with can’t afford attorneys.” CSAS are focusing on helping student survivors feel as prepared as they can be prior to encountering Title IX interviews and hearings, as well as offering emotional support. Nina commented on the new guidance and their impacts on student survivors, “the changes have had a negative impact on the survivors, and it feels like as an advocate I’m needing to provide even more emotional support for the impact the process has on their well-being.”

Fernanda characterized campus survivor advocacy work as “really hard,” pointing out that although it’s empowering and uplifting, the reality of their work is to try “to create change in a system that is slow, it’s slow to evolve, it’s slow to move through the process that we currently have, and then when you couple that with the culture and the climate.” With the recently published Title IX regulations, Ana said she expects on-campus “policies and procedures to adversely impact students coming forward to report and or participate in Title IX processes.” For Ana, this also impacts how CSAS strategize on how to “advocate for students who have been impacted by violence on campus and who will now face larger barriers to succeeding on campus.” When reflecting on the impact that campus partners have on their practice, Alex remarked that campus partners have the option of becoming “barriers and obstacles or the most

amazing facilitators of a particular services.” She mused that Title IX could really “use the compliance obligations to really bolster and support” what needs come out of CSA offices or they use compliance as a way to “insert power, control or decision making” over services offered by CSA offices. Based on the perceived experiences of CSAS, Title IX offices seem to be choosing the latter. Over the past five years there has been an increase in compliance and reporting nationwide which has led to magnified protections for respondents and university jurisdiction rather than protections for student survivors. Mercedes recommended shifting the focus towards survivor healing rather than solely on the reporting experience. She observed that “the weight of a survivor’s experience is put on reporting” and because of this emphasis, student survivors are not getting “the outcomes that they are wanting out of the reporting process.”

*Interacting with Colleagues.* As federal regulations change, the need for CSAS to interact with other members on campus becomes more pronounced. Rebeca acknowledged that one of the challenges of addressing concerns with campus colleagues who work for reporting offices or facilitate adjudication procedures, is the need to “not come across confrontational.” Both Fernanda and Katie shared similar experiences of colleagues perceiving them as either “adversarial” or “not everybody’s favorite person.” They both believe it's because they “push back” on policies or processes that are not trauma-informed. Fernanda believes that she should “bring questions and points of view to the table that are through the lens that is more victim-centered and trauma-informed.” Katie has called out campus colleagues who have claimed the school has a trauma-informed Title IX process, feeling compelled to do so because “they know full well that whatever they're doing or something that they've done in the past has not actually followed those principles of care.” Katie mentioned that she understands that campus investigations need to be impartial and fair, but also believed trauma should be a central tenet of

the processes, from the investigators' type of questions (which should be open-ended) to their style of interviewing (not interrupting), as well as “demonstrating some care and concern for the person's experience.” Fernanda takes solace in knowing that CSAS’s only connection to the Title IX process is through the survivor and their only goal is to support the student survivor through that process, since CSAS do not “have ownership or control over the Title IX investigation outcome,” they can focus solely on student empowerment and healing.

After one presidency brought on the pivotal 2011 Dear Colleague Letter that changed the usage of Title IX, another has reframed campus investigations to be more favorable to respondents and more difficult for survivors. For CSAS supporting students as they face these changing federal regulations and reporting processes, this has changed their advocacy to be more active in the process, and less reliant on reportage. By focusing on empowering the student, participants report continuing their work despite the circumstances evolving in ways unfavorable to survivors.

***Subtheme Three: CSAS Generally Feel Supported by Their Campus but Find the Lack of Staff Capacity and Office Space a Challenge***

Adding to the challenges posed by the lack of appropriate trainings and reporting processes, CSAS also identified low staff capacity and limited office space as further challenges in their daily work. This remains a challenge despite recent increases in funding since the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter. In 2014 and 2015, campus victim advocacy offices began receiving sharply increased funding allocations for staff and services for student survivors. Two of the offices were founded before 2015, Site 1 and Site 3, and their staffing models had been minimal, but generally felt supported by the institution. Mercedes, from Site 1, described her perception of how the campus treated them prior to 2015: “the first 20 [years,] the approach from the

university was really just like give them one to two staff and leave them alone and we don't really think about it very much.” Mercedes then acknowledged that after the national focus shifted to campus sexual assault, that within a four-year window, they were able to increase their staff size, almost one staff member per year. Mercedes shared that now “the campus has really come around to seeing our program as a point of pride and heralding it was like, this is a great program.” She clarified that although their office feels mostly supported, the staffing they currently have is still insufficient. Mercedes reflected on “the unrealisticness of having three or four people on-call for 37,000 students and 25,000 staff and faculty, and then you layer on top, now we're supposed to take care of the med[ical] centers, it's unrealistic.” The three other participants from that site referenced the lack of staffing, or the impacts of the lack of staffing, as a challenge. So much so, that Elsa reported having to advocate for herself and her needs by placing limitations on the number of clients she would take, reducing the frequency she would be on-call, and reducing her role to part-time. She said that she “has been learning to apply what we teach all our student survivors and any individual that we are supporting and advocating for myself.”

Site 3 participants shared a pattern of responses with Site 1. Katie confirmed the increase of support that the office received after 2015, sharing that her campus took the recommendations by Western University (WU) to fully fund campus survivor advocacy offices “very seriously.” Her site received operational funds, the office moved organizationally to report to a senior administrator (Assistant Executive Vice Chancellor), and there were designated funds for a full-time campus survivor advocate to provide services for the campus. Katie did acknowledge that although the WU guidance included mandatory education for all, it did not provided funding for

a prevention educator. She highlighted a disparity between guidance, enforcement, and resources as she stated that

an area of struggle just in general is trying to find the resources to do [prevention education]. It's funny because the requirement is that the Title IX officer ensure that all of the education happens but it's really my office that does it all.

Regarding staff capacity, three participants from Site 3 mentioned “increase caseload,” “limited capacity,” and “not having enough staff” as a challenge. Marita shared the pressure of having to manage the “high expectations of the quality services that [they] provide.” Nina expressed concern about the retention of staff and the impact of the increase of “volume of folks that [they] get seeking [their] services.” Katie also detailed the impact of an increased workload on their daily routine, which “ends up meaning really long hours and having to eat at your desk really fast while you’re trying to answer emails.” Lastly, though Marita was the only staff member from that site to address space, revealing that for a staff size of five, there were only two private offices available for them to share. Marita expressed that it was challenging to navigate confidential phone conversations with clients on the phone sitting in cubicles in an open space.

The remaining two sites, Site 2 and Site 4, were both founded after 2014, and participants described the institutional support that the centers received upon opening. Teresa, a prevention specialist from Site 2, had been working on campus prior to 2014 and commented on the campus commitment, or lack thereof, before the campus survivor advocacy office was established in 2015. She recalled that “there didn't seem to be any formal funding or official department created to address sexual violence issues, to address advocacy, to address education,” and that these duties were split and absorbed by default among various departments and staff.

Teresa has, however, seen a significant shift in support for the office since its founding. She acknowledged that “there was definitely a lot of change, a lot of growth and a lot more commitment and investment,” towards the office but explained that funding is still a challenge as it is limited in supporting prevention education efforts. Two of the participants at the site had been working on the campus for less than six months, and had limited knowledge on institutional support, but shared that they perceived that the support was there. Liliana mentioned feeling supported by Student Affairs, based on the increase of personnel in the office. She noted that “space has been an issue,” as the office has been “pushed around” in terms of getting office space but shared that there was an institutional commitment to securing space within a year. Francesca interpreted campus support as the direct access that the office director has to the vice chancellor (VC) overseeing the unit and perceived the VC to be “very open...to go over needs assessments and what our students are needing.” This perception is supported by the organizational structure of this campus, as this office directly reports to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. Lastly, Ana acknowledged the support of the institution but also expressed her concerns with the increase in demand for more advocacy services and about her staff capacity. She disclosed the challenge of balancing “not burning out advocates and staff and at the same time being able to serve the needs of our students.”

Site 4 is the other location that was founded after 2014. Claudia explained that prior to the founding of the office, sexual violence advocacy was being done on campus “on and off over time but there was never a centralized place where folks could come to receive resources and have a confidential space specifically.” When the office was founded in 2014, it witnessed the exponential growth of their staff size, as it grew from one staff member to 12 in five years. Claudia reported “we have a full prevention and survivor support team as well as an operations

team that helps us do all of the work that we do.” Although the staff generally grew on other sites, the growth seen in Site 4 is significantly larger, almost double the rate of others. One of the reasons for the support in resources may be the result of student activism. According to Alex, Site 4 student activists “gained significant national media attention” and this media attention, and the attacks on the “brand and reputation” of the institution, “created an environment where senior leaders had a lot of fear.” She attributed “that fear in collaboration with student activism” as the factors that allowed for the office to grow “rather quickly.” Alex disclosed that discussing institutional support is tough to do, since “there are some ways in which [she] personally and [their] office [has] received amazing support and there are some ways in which the institution itself has been the most challenging aspect of [their] work.” Although there was no mention of staff capacity challenges, there was mention of “an under-resourcing” of their physical space on campus by Claudia. This challenge was also raised by participants from Site 2 and Site 3.

All CSA office sites also perceive campus support coming from campus partners but Site 2 and 4 acknowledge the limitations of their work when students are not properly referred to their services or there is lack of knowledge that their offices exist. Teresa expressed that a big challenge is establishing trust with campus partners, sharing:

one of the biggest challenges right now is establishing trust and building relationships with other departments on campus to ensure that our advocacy work, that we become a part of other department's process of getting help for anyone who might identify as a survivor or even getting education to hopefully minimize sexual assaults from occurring on campus.

Claudia elaborated, “I think that there are of course some challenges in that a lot of folks don't understand our work as it doesn't traditionally happen...on a college campus setting and so folks

are often confused.” She sees campus partners as “gatekeepers of information” and disclosed wanting to nurture “good partnerships” in order to “really holistically support survivors and victims.”

Though they generally feel supported by their campus and hold different histories based on how they were founded and how they grew, all sites experience challenges in resources. This is due primarily to the lack of staff in these intensive advocacy roles and the limitations or organizations on space. Still, all sites report a financial boon and feeling of general support from the institution that began in the years after Western University’s 2014 commitment to CSA offices on all WU campuses.

***Subtheme Four: CSAS Have Challenging Reactions to Student Survivor Trauma That Impacts Their Personal and Professional Experiences***

To address RQ2, the second major finding indicates that CSAS face constant challenges in their jobs, including limits on training, reporting, staff, and space. The final challenge facing CSAS in their on-campus roles is the CSAS reaction to survivor trauma, and how the delicate nature of the work continues to affect them in their professional and personal lives. Nine participants described the demanding impact that student survivor trauma has had on their experiences both in and outside of their roles. Campus survivor advocacy staff used words like “vicarious trauma,” “burnout,” and “secondary trauma” to narrate the personal and professional challenges that they have faced while serving in this role. The responses were varied, but generally focused on the difficulty of adopting self-care practices in their work and the challenges of creating a balance between setting emotional boundaries and being empathetic towards student survivors. Their continued worry about student support and safety have to co-



exist with managing work boundaries and interactions with the Title IX office. Lastly, they discussed how their role has impacted their personal relationships and experiences.

CSAS are regularly exposed to numerous stories of trauma that student survivors encounter and must self-impose a balance between setting emotional boundaries and demonstrating empathy towards student narratives. Nina perceived the work as “really challenging at times as the information can be really heavy,” and having an impact on mental health, in particular by “vicarious trauma.” In response, she “[tries] to be really mindful and aware of that and take care of [her]self.” Fernanda described the challenge of finding balance between setting emotional boundaries and demonstrating empathy, as she reflected on the impact it has had in her practice:

It's to watch somebody struggle with the emotional and sometimes physical aftermath of abuse or an assault...so sometimes it's a struggle to maintain that, that stoicism that we have to have, because we're their support, and if they see their support falling apart, that's not super helpful. I think there are challenges daily and they're small, just in like “All right [Fernanda] don't cry, you gotta keep it together.”

Similarly, Ana described that in “advocating [for] and meeting students in some of their darkest times,” one of her objectives is to not to “stay in the darkness all the time” and being intentional about “find[ing] light in the work that [they] are doing.” Elsa explained that historically, in the advocacy field, “there has been a lot self-sacrificing and boundaries that have been blurred,” and she had seen the impact of that demonstrated in the 10 years she has been in the field. She said she hopes to continue to advocate for policies and procedures in the workplace that “protects advocates from secondary trauma and compassion fatigue.” She has learned from experience that she needs to give herself space to “have a breather from constant contact with trauma” by not

scheduling appointments or intakes back-to-back. Ana agreed that advocacy work has often been grounded “in advocating until...you burn out,” and shared the difficulties of shifting that culture. She expressed trying to be strategic in her approach to self-care, in order not to “burn bridges or burnout.” This may mean being able to “step back and be able to set boundaries and being okay with saying ‘I can't take that on right now’ because of capacity,” according to Ana. Rebecca, who has been practicing advocacy for 35 years, longer than any other participant, recalled “physically feel[ing] the pain that the survivors” while they were sharing their stories with her, and found it difficult to “separate [herself] from their experiences.” She explained that it was a supervisor who encouraged her to create boundaries and find a healthy distraction, and that the “challenges of this work [are] really making sure that you have some kind of distraction, outside of your work here.”

CSAS shared their difficulty around weighing work boundaries while providing enough student support. Alex remembered struggling with the balance when her office staff size was small: “if there isn't somebody to answer the phone then that survivor isn't getting assistance.” That constant worry was also present for Mercedes, who stated that “vicarious trauma is real” as she described the rise of dating and domestic violence cases and the “toll” those cases have taken on her as a provider. This difficulty was exacerbated when the campus did not respond with urgency, and she recalled waking up throughout the night “hoping and praying...that the students are safe and that [she doesn't] wake up in the morning and find out that somebody was murdered because of their abusive partner.” Such constant anxiety has become “more regularly a fear” for Mercedes, and “it's really hard to work when you're dealing with that.” Lastly, Juana shared that she had difficulty setting up boundaries and managing self-care, stemming from her personal passion for the role itself. She reflected that “there's a sense that you have to be here for your

clients because they need you, so if you're not here, who's going to support them?" adding that there was "guilt" that develops in her that "sometimes [make] setting up boundaries...really difficult."

Both Mercedes and Fernanda mentioned how negative interactions with the Title IX office have impacted and contributed to advocate burnout. These are common reactions for practitioners, whose anger and other negative reactions are oftentimes focused on the lack of sensitivity demonstrated by systems where a survivor goes for assistance (Wasco & Campbell, 2002). For many advocates, one of the most difficult aspects of working with survivors is "dealing with the ineffectiveness and injustices of other systems" (Schauben & Frazier, 1995, p. 62). For example, Mercedes characterized the Title IX office as an unsavory place, "not where you're going to get the outcomes that you're necessarily hoping for"; she had witnessed the same pattern of outcome "over and over in the reporting process," and she had observed that it contributed to "some of the burnout that many advocates are having." Fernanda observed that the Title IX office were often "waiting until five o'clock on Fridays to send out these traumatic and upsetting investigation outcomes and then expecting [CSAS] to work late or be available over the weekend to process that trauma," which had a negative impact on her personal well-being, diminishing the time that her and other advocates needed to recharge from their caseload the week prior. She observed that these Title IX practices

further depletes [their] well, as advocates and support people [be]cause we have no time or space to breathe in and take the time that we need for ourselves and I just personally, as an advocate, got just to a really dark place.

Although she tried to provide feedback of the impacts this was having on not only advocates but student survivors, to a Title IX supervisor, it was to no avail as she was told that they couldn't

talk to her about the matter. What has helped Fernanda cope with negative interactions with the Title IX office is focusing on things that she can control, rather than those she cannot like “the investigation” and “the investigator.” Fernanda mentioned that she has learned to only focus on things she can control, for example she states,

I can control how I support, how I inform and how I advocate but ultimately whatever happens is going to happen and that I can't, I have no piece in that, so I'm doing the best that I can with what I can.

Which is a similar approach that Mercedes also adopted when she affirmed to herself “you've done as much as you could in your own role.”

Lastly, CSAS shared the impacts that their role has had on their personal relationships and experiences. Alex believes that “any trauma work is difficult and creates risk for vicarious trauma and health concerns and disclosed how the CSAS role has had “both mental health and physical medical consequences from the stress of [her] job.” She described that it reverberated into her personal relationships, such as her spouse, friends and family. Similarly, Katie felt the work has been “hard...for [her] personally,” as she still has “intrusive thoughts about some of the stories that [she] has heard” from student survivors, “stuff that keeps [her] up at night for sure.” This has had impacts on her dating life, particularly the concept of online dating, and giving a stranger personal information. Katie acknowledged that she has become “really cynical about relationships” but expressed that “when you hear the worst of the worst, it definitely changes you, it keeps you up at night, it affects your relationships, it pops into your head at the most inconvenient times.”

Many CSAS are impacted both personally and professionally by their work with survivors. From experiencing second-hand trauma that impacts their daily decisions to struggling

with boundaries that may entail feeling guilty for not supporting survivors, they experience high stakes decisions as they navigate their sometimes difficult and intense reactions and makes their workplace a complex space.

### **Summary**

This chapter delineates two major findings addressing the experiences and practices of CSAS as they support students in navigating institutional policy and reporting structures. The first finding addresses RQ1, which asked what practices CSAS use to support student survivors after they experience campus sexual violence. The three sub-findings revealed that CSAS practice trauma-informed care through a socially and culturally aware lens, that they empower survivors using student-centered case management, and that they define success by survivor healing, self-advocacy, and empowerment. The final research question asked what challenge CSAS encounter as practitioners. The second finding answers RQ2 by expounding on the challenges presented by the environments within which CSAS work. Four corresponding sub-findings illustrate these challenges: the lack of on-campus advocacy training programs that address the diversity of students, the federal regulations and campus reporting processes that negatively impact student survivors, a low staff capacity and office space, and the personal and professional costs of vicarious trauma from their work. Each of these effects has a nuanced impact on the lives of CSAS, and this study attempts to fill a research gap by shedding light on their experiences and perceptions. Such research may prove fruitful to CSAS, their organizations, and their institutions in varied ways.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to amplify the perspectives of campus survivor advocacy staff (CSAS) to add to research in new ways that may eventually lead to a more equitable student experience for survivors of sexual violence on-campus. CSAS is the only staff role on campus that assists student survivors of sexual violence through on-campus and off-campus reporting processes and offers them continuous assistance while they embark on a lifelong healing journey. CSAS are uniquely placed to understand systemic hurdles that student survivors might be encountering on their college campuses; their often-overlooked perspective is crucial to better understanding how to support survivors and address sexual assault on campus. This study adds to the limited body of literature that focuses on CSAS perspectives.

Existing literature on CSAS is primarily centered around seven main studies that intentionally incorporated them as participants, two studies that were published before 2011 (Carmody et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2009) and five studies after 2011 (Brubaker, 2019; Brubaker & Keegan, 2019; Brubaker & Mancini, 2017; Moylan, 2017; Munro-Kramer et al., 2017). Although CSAS were recruited to participate in these previous studies, there were limits to the final sampling of most of the studies. Brubaker and Mancini (2017) initially set out to provide the campus survivor advocate perspective, but their overall sample was primarily made up of administrators in roles such as Title IX officers. Carmody et al. (2009) and Payne et al. (2009) may have used the same focus group sample of 17 campus advocates as showcased in their methods section and usage of participant responses was limited. Munro-Kramer et al. (2017) used a very broad definition to recruit its participants and their final sample consisted of 19 members of two universities who interacted with survivors, either as volunteers or as their main work-role and did not specify who worked full-time as CSAS. There have only been three

published studies that intentionally recruited and interviewed campus-based victim advocates (Brubaker, 2019; Brubaker and Keegan, 2019; Moylan, 2017). Brubaker (2019) and Brubaker and Keegan (2019) used the same sample of 15 participants and the findings in each study provided thorough findings that connected specifically to the campus survivor advocate experience. In the third study, Moylan (2017) specifically recruited 14 campus-based sexual assault advocates and prevention staff, yielding results that represented the CSAS experience.

The current study interviewed 14 participants from four Western University campuses in northern and southern California regions who collectively enrolled close to 145,000 students. These sites were selected based on their membership in the same university system, their range in years of experience, and campus survivor advocacy (CSA) office founding date, as two sites were founded before 2011 (Site 1 and Site 3) and two opened after (Site 2 and Site 4). All participants identified as campus survivor advocacy staff (CSAS), whose primary job function is to provide direct survivor advocacy and also staff with partial job assignments that assist student survivors, in addition to primary administrative responsibilities, such as prevention programming, budgeting, strategic planning, and policy development. This included staff members who held the titles of directors, assistant directors, advocates, prevention coordinators, and intake coordinators in CSA offices at each site. All participants were asked open-ended interview questions that were guided by an interview protocol. Interviews ranged from 25 to 60 minutes and were predominantly hosted remotely and recorded with a Zoom audio-only conferencing feature and backed up by a digital recording device. Since the focus of this study was to discover on-campus survivor advocacy practice development, this study explored two research questions:

1. What are the practices that campus survivor advocacy staff use to support student

survivors after they experience campus sexual violence?

2. What are some of the challenges that campus survivor advocates encounter as practitioners?

This last chapter will focus on discussing key findings through a trauma-informed framework in addition to the extant research that informs campus survivor advocacy staff practice. Finally, the chapter will discuss implications for practice, present the limitations of the study, and propose recommendations for future research.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

### **Research Question One**

The first research question inquired about the practices that campus survivor advocacy staff utilized to support student survivors. Participants in this study asserted that they engaged in trauma-informed practices that support student survivors with student-centered approaches that focus on healing, self-advocacy, and empowerment. Their consistent responses contextualize the wide extent of the CSAS role, which was described as a role that aimed for more equitable and humane experiences for survivors.

### ***Following Trauma-Informed Principles***

This study confirmed how CSAS assist student survivors with trauma-informed practices, and exhibited the principles adopted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). In 2014, the SAMHSA published their trauma-informed approach framework in order to influence sectors outside of behavioral health to utilize in their practice. SAMHSA encouraged sectors who directly assisted those who have been impacted by a traumatic experience to adopt trauma-informed practices in order to assist with their ability to cope. Many participants in this research indicated the adoption of a trauma-informed framework



in campus survivor advocacy staff (CSAS) practice, a significant finding given that Brubaker (2019) has been the only study to find that campus advocates described their approaches as a “version of a survivor- or victim-centered, or trauma-informed approach,” with a few describing and using an empowerment model (p. 316). In this study all participants referenced words connected to SAMHSA (2014) trauma-informed principles when describing their practice or the services offered to student survivors. Participants referenced the term “trauma-informed” when discussing their training background, advocacy approach, prevention practice, and in references to policy development. They also utilized words such as “empowerment,” “trust,” “safety,” “choice,” and “inclusive” when describing their practice or the services offered to student survivors. These words are indicative of the trauma-informed framework presented by SAMHSA (2014) and this study. Interviews confirmed that campus practice is centered around providing trauma-informed services to student survivors and empowering them in individualized ways. Specifically, CSAS honor student survivor choice by supporting their decisions, developing trust, and assisting in their healing journeys.

### ***Focus on the Minoritized Student Experience***

In this study, CSAS addressed the importance of considering the socio-cultural experiences of student survivors and shaping their advocacy response based on that experience, supporting the SAMHSA trauma-informed principle of *cultural, historical and gender issues*, which encourages practitioners to be “responsive to racial, ethnic and cultural needs of individuals served” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 11). Although the word “responsive” can be interpreted and applied in multiple ways by practitioners, in this study CSAS focused on being responsive through an intentionality around learning about the diversity of students that they serve and directly implementing what is learned in their practice. Additionally, this study addressed one of

the noted limitations in Brubaker (2019), the lack of the diversity in their predominantly White female sample participants; according to the author, the responses of such a homogenous group may not represent the experiences of survivors from marginalized communities, and urged for a prioritization of “enhancing the diversity of services providers” as well as “efforts to provide services and resources to members of marginalized groups” (p. 325). This study’s participant sample, in contrast to Brubaker (2019), was racially diverse, with a majority of participants identifying as women of color. Study participants’ responses exemplified their focus in providing services that served marginalized student populations, as 12 participants confirmed that their on-campus practices considered the diversity of the students that they serve.

For example, CSAS recounted stories of serving a diverse group of students, such as first-generation, Black, Native American, Hmong, LGBTQ+, and many more identities, and discussed the importance of being inclusive and shaping prevention and intervention services to be perceived as inclusive. Mercedes, for example, challenged the perceived universal survivor narrative held in college campuses, which is of the white, cis sorority girl, and is intentional about shaping campus services to include the experiences of other students, steering services away from being perceived as stereotypically feminine and encouraging other advocates to become very intentional about being inclusive and intersectional. Other advocates, such as Marita and Francesca, recounted their observations of how a student survivor’s identity could potentially impede their ability to seek counseling services and assisted them in finding a healing modality that best suited their identity or took the time to assist the survivor in visualizing their first therapy appointment, in order to ease the perceived negative stigmas in seeking services. Participant narratives confirmed through their practice the importance of crafting services that serve diverse student identity and the intersections of that identity (Crenshaw, 1991; Ullman &

Townsend, 2007) as well as how they assess and address impediments to student survivors seeking services on campus (Karjane et al., 2002; Ullman & Townsend, 2007). CSAS found it imperative to center their work around the minoritized student experience and grounded their practice in equity by being actively responsive to the diverse needs of the students they serve and incorporating the SAMHSA (2014) trauma-informed principle of *cultural, historical and gender issues*. Lastly, this study demonstrates the importance of practitioner sample diversity, as participants shared narratives of marginalized student populations, validating Brubaker's (2019) plea to enhance the diversity of providers studied to capture the experiences of a more diverse range of student survivors.

### ***Challenging Systems That Are not Trauma-Informed***

This study found CSAS using their positions to influence campus systems that are not trauma-informed, often challenged the campus to exhibit SAMHSA (2014) principles of *collaboration and mutuality*, which promotes respect across all positions within the organization, including the survivor, and acknowledges that all members of the organization can contribute to a survivor's healing journey. CSAS often practiced systemic advocacy and actively challenged policies and practices to make them more inclusive or trauma-informed, and to consider survivor impact. While acknowledging that not all service sectors have a core mission that focuses on trauma, SAMHSA (2014) encourages for collaboration across sectors to be "built on a shared understanding of trauma and principles of a trauma-informed approach" (p. 13). In this study, participants described actively utilizing information learned from individual student survivor cases to shift the process toward trauma-informed care for the next student accessing resources, actively utilizing their observation of the survivor experience to collaborate with on campus entities to shift their future approach. Participants pushed back against campus policies or

processes that were difficult for student survivors to navigate. Citing the importance of creating a campus climate where survivors are supported, CSAS indicated actively promoting the *safety* principle (SAMHSA, 2014), which promotes the psychological safety of survivors through interpersonal interactions on the campus. Several participants indicated thinking of such work as their duty and attempting to educate the campus community to dispel sexual violence myths and normalize common reactions to trauma. They hoped such work around safety could create an environment on campus that supports survivors and shows compassion for their experience.

### ***Promoting Student Empowerment and Choice***

Munro-Kramer et al.'s (2017) study provided colleges with a list of recommendations that were labeled as promising; creating a one-stop shop for survivors to access services, survivor validation, survivor control and agency, and on-campus confidential services. These recommendations align with the SAMHSA (2014) trauma-informed principle of *empowerment, voice and choice*. This study confirmed that CSAS in the Western University system have created a practice that supports student survivors as recommended by Munro-Kramer et al. (2017) by developing offices at each of their campuses that provide student survivors with confidential services that promote validation, control, and agency. Since this study utilizes the SAMHSA (2014) recommended trauma-informed principles as a framework, it interprets Munro-Kramer et al.'s (2017) recommendation of validation, control and agency, to validate SAMHSA's principle of *empowerment, voice, and choice*. In this study, participants demonstrated the importance of promoting *empowerment, voice, and choice* through their practice by recounting numerous encounters with students where their goal was to give the decision-making power back to the student. These encounters showcase the CSAS focus on student growth, as well as on institutional learning, and support Elliot et al.'s (2005)

recommendation that practitioners use a case management practice that adopts empowerment as a core identifier in their services, encouraging and validating survivors' decisions and experiences. This study confirms this connection, as participants placed student survivors as the experts of their own experience and facilitated access to resources without mandating the direction of the healing. For sexual violence survivors, services that promote empowerment may be crucial in encouraging their healing journey since their power was initially taken away by the person who perpetrated the violence (SAMHSA, 2014). Katie, for example, described her role as being one to validate survivor choice, a choice that somebody else had already taken away, and to do everything she could do give the survivor their power back and allow them to make choices that are best for them.

Lastly, CSAS services and measurements of success are centered around supporting student survivor healing experiences and choice. In line with Schauben and Frazier's (1995) framework, participants connected their positive interactions to survivor outcomes of healing and growth. Participants described offices as "healing-centered," offering "healing programs," and prioritizing a "healing path" for student survivors. They connected a successful survivor interaction to witnessing the evolution of their healing journey and described the facilitation of the healing process as a vehicle to assist student survivors in regaining power and control back in their life's. This finding identifies a fairly new on-campus practice as being both student-centered and trauma-informed, both supporting current research and adding to a framework for further studies.

## **Research Question Two**

The second research question inquired about the challenges that campus survivor advocates encountered as practitioners. Participants in this study disclosed challenges with the

negative impacts of federal regulations on the student experience, their state certification training's lack of focus on their on-campus practice, their overall staff capacity, and the impact student trauma had on their personal and professional experiences. CSAS must face the shifting, politicized decisions and policies around Title IX, which are outside their control. In response, participants maintained that despite federal changes, their central concern remains the healing of the survivors they hope to serve.

### ***Negative Impacts of Federal Regulations***

Participants in this study confirmed the negative impacts federal regulations and on-campus reporting processes have had on the student experience and their advocacy approach. CSAS recounted several scenarios of challenging policies that impacted student survivors and being keenly aware of how potential Title IX trends would impact student survivors and their healing journeys. Since 2011, Title IX guidance has shifted several times, the last shift occurring in May 2020, adding additional challenges for CSAS to learn multiple iterations of this federal guidance to properly assist student survivors through the Title IX reporting process.

Similar to Brubaker (2019) and Brubaker and Mancini (2017), this study found the Title IX process as being centered in compliance and university liability. Participants described the process as not victim-centered, retraumatizing for student survivors, and more supportive of respondent rights. Participants reported the length of the Title IX process as a challenge, as some processes are initially presented to student survivors as only lasting 60 days, when in reality Title IX processes have lasted more than 10 months, sometimes due to the almost automatically approved appeal hearings and involvement of respondent attorneys. This supports campus victim advocates' negative accounts reported in Brubaker (2019), which described the impact of respondent attorneys and their connection to elongating the Title IX process.

The May 2020 Title IX regulations are likely to continue to add distress to the student survivor experience, as it now encourages all Title IX processes to conduct live hearings. These new regulations also mandate that all reporting parties be subject to cross examination, and if they refuse to participate, any statement submitted either verbally or written to the Title IX office disclosing the violence that they have endured will not be admissible in the live hearing. Thus these regulations create the potential to remove student survivor *voice and choice* from the Title IX process and operating in a manner that is not trauma-informed. The Title IX process will diminish student survivor *choice* by adopting a process that has the potential of coercing survivor participation by forcing them to subject themselves to cross-examination. Additionally, it will not be considerate of student survivor *voice* as previous statements (written or verbal) submitted to Title IX investigators will not be considered in the live hearing if the survivor chooses not to participate, adding an additional layer of coercion to process participation and effectively silencing some survivors. This is the antithesis of trauma-informed care, as practitioners are always encouraged to steer away from coercive practices and to actively facilitate the voice and choice of those they serve. Student survivors who choose to file a Title IX report asking that the institution either expel or suspend their perpetrator from campus will be subjected to a live hearing that subjects them to be cross-examined by their perpetrator's attorney or advisor. Participants in this study challenged campus colleagues when they defended the Title IX process or claimed that it was fair, as they are the only practitioners on campus who accompany student survivors through the entire process and are able to see the negative impact it has had on survivors. They disclosed observing a lack of respondent sanctioning, leaving student survivors disheartened, sad, and angry. One participant, for example, described the Title IX process as equally difficult compared to the criminal justice process, if not even more difficult; she

described observing student survivors first believing that their institution is there to help protect them, but losing such an understanding in going through the Title IX process. This perception is supported by Linder and Myers (2018), who confirmed the institutional betrayal felt by student survivors on college campuses and noted the negative impact of campus policies, procedures, and practices.

Participants reported frustrations with the way the Title IX process had altered their own practice and created very tense professional and collegial relationships on campus. Participant narratives around their frustrations are similar to the feelings of anger rape victim advocates experienced towards the criminal justice system in Wasco and Campbell (2002), as the anger was particularly anchored towards the insensitivity shown towards rape survivors by entities that were meant to help them. Participants shared that prior to 2015, there was a perception that they, along with Title IX officers and other campus colleagues, were part of a team that assisted in the development of a campus-wide response to address sexual violence. The tone of their partnership changed as respondent attorneys were introduced to the Title IX process and the university became more focused on respondent litigation rather than protections for survivors. Ultimately, participants reported separating their practice from the Title IX process, as they have no control or oversight over how the process is designed or implemented and can only focus on supporting survivors through the reporting process regardless if it is on or off campus.

### ***Inadequacies in State Certification Training***

Participants in this study demonstrated extensive experience in the field of survivor advocacy, averaging 12 years of experience overall and an average of eight years on campus. All participants, inclusive of those who also held roles such as prevention coordinators and intake coordinators, completed sexual assault counselor training offered by their local Rape Crisis



Center, which affords them the ability to provide confidential advocacy in a California campus per the CA Evidence Code 1035.2-1035.4 (State of California, n.d). This state certification requirement is required of all Western University CSAS who work for the system, which benefits the protection of confidential information relayed to CSAS by student survivors. This CSAS requirement connects to the trauma-informed principle of *safety*, which addresses the importance of assuring the psychological safety of those who seek services (SAMHSA, 2014). By providing student survivors the safety of a confidential space on campus, they have choice in the reporting process and removes the constant worry of having the narrative of their violent experience being shared to others on campus without their consent. Fernanda confirmed the importance of CSAS confidentiality by sharing that it gave survivors the time and the space to think about and process all their options, then make the choice that they want to make and not have it made for them by the institution.

The Western University approach addresses a main concern brought up by several participants in other studies (Brubaker & Keegan, 2019; Brubaker & Mancini, 2017; Moylan, 2017) who disclosed negative reactions towards the inconsistent guidance of their confidential status, as many campus advocates interviewed in previous studies were unsure if their role was confidential on campus. Many states do not designate campus advocates confidentiality through state evidence codes and rely on their Title IX office designating them as confidential. Despite the uniformity of the California state certification requirement, participants disclosed that they found the training outdated and not adapted to serve a diverse student population. Many participants found individual supplemental trainings that focused on the student experience and developed partners across their campuses to gain more insight into minoritized student populations, such as LGBTQ+ and undocumented students. This illustrates a training gap in the

curriculum that is used in state certifications, which may be an opportunity for a more robust training that focuses not only on marginalized populations but also the college student identity. This could be particularly impactful in states where higher education institutions require staff to possess such certifications before starting an on-campus job. A lack of attention by state certifications to the experiences of marginalized student populations is counter to the SAMHSA (2014) principle of *cultural, historical, and gender issues*, as it fails to address the needs of survivors on campus despite the historical prevalence of sexual violence rates on campus (Cantor, 2015; Karjane et al., 2005).

### ***Lack of Staff Capacity***

Participants in this study expressed feeling generally supported by their institution but that this was mainly due to the initial investment made by Western University to create their office system-wide and their commitment to designate funds for a full-time campus survivor advocate at each of their campuses. Their praise about the creation of the office, however, quickly turned to disclosing the impact of inadequate staffing for the large population that they serve. Although this study only focused on CSAS practice as it relates to supporting student survivors, all CSAS offices in the Western University system also provide confidential advocacy services to faculty and staff, amounting to a much more significant service load. A participant from Site 1 shared how unrealistic it was for three or four people to be on-call for 37,000 students and 25,000 staff and faculty. In response to caseload and lack of staffing, at three of the sites (Site 1, Site 2, and Site 3), CSA Directors assist with advocate caseloads. Site 4, which had a sizeable staff of 12, was the only site whose director no longer provided direct advocacy on campus.

The SAMHSA (2014) *empowerment, voice, and choice* principle is also applied to members who work in an organization, like CSAS. SAMHSA's (2014) encourages organizations to empower staff "to do their work as well as possible by adequate organizational support," which is not what the Western University (WU) system is promoting. WU's funding commitment to staffing CSA offices adds to previous observations made by Moylan (2017), in which participants disclosed that their campuses were only "focused on achieving a minimal level of compliance rather than thinking more broadly about how to translate [Title IX] reforms holistically on their campus" (p. 1132). When addressing their staffing model, participants in this study shared their concerns about staff retention and its connection to large caseloads, long hours, and burn-out. The WU system has failed to assess their designated small staffing model and its impact on CSA staff at each of their campuses, confirming Brubaker's (2019) findings indicating an increase in focus on liability and compliance rather than on campus advocacy services. Overall, this finding about low staff capacity confirms the funding challenges shared by campus advocates and found in Carmody et al. (2009), which continues to be a challenge 11 years later.

### ***Impacts of Student Survivor Trauma***

Participants in this study confirmed the negative impacts of constantly hearing student survivor trauma on their professional and personal experiences. Given CSAS's direct interactions with student survivors, they are exposed to numerous stories of traumatic experiences encountered by students. Many participants disclosed experiencing vicarious trauma, secondary trauma, and burnout in response, confirming prior studies which observed that practitioners who worked with survivors of trauma demonstrated experiencing vicarious trauma symptoms mirroring the survivors themselves (McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Schauben & Frazier, 1995).

Participants in Schauben and Frazier (1995) shared that one of the most difficult aspects of working with survivors was “dealing with the ineffectiveness and injustices of other systems” (p. 62). Similarly, participants in Wasco and Campbell (2002) experienced anger and fear while interacting with individuals or systems while providing accompaniment for rape survivors. In this study, CSAS shared similar frustrations while disclosing their interactions with the Title IX office on their campuses. CSAS characterized the Title IX office as place that contributes to their burn out, as students did not experience desired outcomes from the reporting process and disclosed that Title IX office practices had a negative impact on their personal well-being. Participants also shared the impacts that their role has had on their personal relationships and experiences. They specifically mentioned the impacts on their mental and physical health, and how intrusive thoughts have affected their dating life and outlook on relationships in general. McCann and Pearlman (1990) forewarned practitioners of the potential PTSD symptoms that may be experienced while supporting trauma survivors, one of them being intrusive thoughts; researchers recommended that practitioners “acknowledge, express, and work through these painful experiences in a supportive environment,” recommending support groups for professionals working with survivors (p. 144). Lastly, participants shared that they struggle with the adoption of self-care practices and the creation of emotional boundaries that both show empathy and also allow for self-preservation. Although participants did not provide an extensive list of self-care practices, some did describe finding healthy distractions, rearranging their schedules to prevent constant contact with trauma, seeking counseling, and ultimately establishing boundaries at work. The SAMHSA (2014) trauma-informed principle of *safety* is meant to also ensure the psychological safety of staff who provide services to trauma survivors, which is not something that is currently being addressed by the Western University system. The

WU system has a potential opportunity to properly support CSAS on their campuses by creating self-care programs and other intentional opportunities for CSAS to interact and process, as well as to objectively analyze the negative impacts that the Title IX office is producing in both student survivors and CSAS.

### **Limitations**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the goal of the study was to interview three to four CSAS from each site, but the researcher was only able to interview two participants in Site 4. Six staff members from Site 4 had responded to my initial outreach, but two declined due to lack of capacity or time, one declined without giving a reason, and the last agreed to participate and filled out a demographic form but did not attend the scheduled interview. Presumably, this was related to the fact that the March interview was scheduled the week before many colleges and universities across the nation transitioned to remote learning due to COVID-19. An additional limitation was my strict follow of the interview protocol; although the questions were open-ended, initial interviews did not request follow up questions of the participants. More flexibility with additional questions would have been helpful, as some interviews scheduled first were with staff members who had worked on campus for less than a year in a CSAS capacity and the interview time was shorter. Those who had worked on campus longer tended to have longer interview times, because more follow-up questions were asked. In hindsight, the data collection process would have been more generative if the researcher had taken advantage of the semi-structured, open-ended structure of the interview protocol.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study presents three major implications for higher education practice, using a trauma-informed lens and centering the experiences of student survivors and their advocates.

These implications are drawn from the rich data provided by interviews with CSAS, with particular attention to patterns in the interviews across sites. These suggestions can be adopted by institutions as well as individuals and would benefit student survivors on both the short and long-term scales.

### **Adopting Trauma-Informed Practices in Higher Education**

The intent behind the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) development of trauma-informed principles was to influence sectors outside of behavioral health, including higher education. The principles can be adopted by any person or institution directly assisting those who have been impacted by a traumatic experience. Although this study presented sexual violence victimization rates for college-aged students attending a higher education institution, the very high childhood sexual abuse rates should be engaged with by colleges and universities. For example, the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study found that in a sample of 8,056 adults, 22% of respondents reported having experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18 (Felitti et al., 1998, p. 252). In a higher education setting, this could translate into the assumption that almost a fourth of all incoming students have experienced some form of sexual abuse. Sexual violence does not only occur in a campus setting but is a reality that many students have already encountered, and higher education institutions should consider this fact when developing programs and services. This study presents an example of how an office that provides trauma-informed services in a higher education setting interacts and provides assistance to survivors of sexual violence. Although the practice is trauma-informed the institutions where they work are not, therefore these findings can facilitate the implementation of trauma-informed practices in all student-facing campus offices that are often interacting with students, such as departments within Student Affairs, counseling services, student disability offices, academic

advising units, residential education, case management offices, campus police, student conduct and Title IX.

SAMHSA (2014) acknowledges that in order for a trauma-informed approach to be implemented in an organization, there would need to be change in “multiple levels of an organization and systemic alignment with the six key [trauma-informed] principles” (p. 12). The SAMHSA (2014) framework has recommendations for organizations interested in establishing a trauma-informed organizational approach, which are broken down into 10 domains: 1. governance and leadership, 2. policy, 3. physical environment, 4. engagement and involvement, 5. cross-sector collaboration, 6. screening, assessment, treatment services, 7. training and workforce development, 8. progress monitoring and quality assurance, 9. financing, 10. evaluation (p. 12). Although this list of 10 domains is not designed to be step-by-step checklist, they do compliment other models of trauma-informed care implementation and “organizational change management literature” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 12). Along with the provided domains, SAMHSA (2014) encourages organizations to keep the six principles of trauma-informed care at the forefront of implementing a systemic trauma-informed approach. Therefore, a list of guiding questions are provided as a guide that considers both the domains and the principles, which could be instrumental in assisting higher education institutions in transitioning their practices to be trauma-informed. Here is an example of some of the questions that SAMHSA (2014) provides for the policy domain: “How do the agency’s written policies and procedures include a focus on trauma and issues of safety and confidentiality?”; “How do the agency’s staffing policies demonstrate a commitment to staff training on providing services and supports that are culturally relevant and trauma-informed as part of staff orientation and in-service training?”; “How do human resources policies attend to the impact of working with people who have experienced

trauma?” (p. 14). In higher education institutions, this could translate into assessing how Title IX policies and procedures enforce the safety of survivors (inclusive of physical and psychological safety) and identify confidential resources that assist survivors in receiving on-campus support. A starting point in the Western University system, as well as at other institutions of higher learning, could be by asking CSAS to share their observation of the Title IX process and its impact on students. In terms of staff training, although all campuses have already implemented mandatory Title IX training for students, staff and faculty, it could assess if this training is culturally relevant to the student population that is served on that particular campus. Lastly, in regard to human resources policies, the institution could assess if they have developed the appropriate resources for staff who often interact with students who experience trauma, like CSAS, to encourage self-care, promote their psychological safety, and address the emotional stress that can arise when working with individuals who have had traumatic experiences (SAMHSA, 2014).

### **Reevaluating the Title IX Process**

This study found that CSAS practice placed student survivor identity, choice, and empowerment at the forefront of their work, which runs counter to the direction in which the Title IX process has evolved, placing university liability and respondent rights at the forefront instead. If a higher education institution strives to become trauma-informed and honor the experiences of its students, it needs to reevaluate the Title IX process. It is pressing that universities evaluate, on every level, how students experience the Title IX process. Participants of this study characterized student experiences with the Title IX process as “very long,” “tedious,” “really bad,” and “not victim-friendly,” which should be disconcerting for the administrators at these four sites as well as all administrators. With new regulations taking effect



in August 2020, colleges and universities should intensively consider the impact these regulations will have on survivors, particularly the mandatory live hearings with cross-examinations, campus response based on geographic location, and the so-called “rape shield” guidance.

Starting August 2020, student survivors in higher education will be asked to participate in mandatory live hearings with cross-examination. They will be coerced to participate, since the new regulations have recently determined that if a reporting party or witness does not submit themselves to cross-examination, their written statements will not be considered at the live hearing. This means that if a student survivor shares how they were the victims of sexual violence and subject themselves through the thorough Title IX investigation interview but choose not to participate in the live hearing, which usually happens at the end of the process, all the evidence submitted to the Title IX investigator will not be admissible. Therefore, institutions are effectively coercing survivors into reliving their victimization at least twice: during the Title IX investigation interview and the live hearing. This does not take into consideration that this same survivor will most likely also go through several follow-up interviews and an appeal hearing, given the narratives provided by participants this study, and subject themselves to further re-traumatization. There should also be considerations and funds for providing student survivors lawyers to assist them with the process, especially if cross-examination is now a mandatory component of the process. Participants in this study discussed the inequities found in the Title IX process, as student respondents often have a lawyer assisting them, while student survivors have their advocate present for emotional support. Although the regulations encourage schools to provide students an advisor for a live hearing that is free of charge, this does not mean that the

advisor that will be provided will be a lawyer. Some schools ask faculty and staff to step into these roles, which creates an imbalanced process.

Additionally, there should be considerations for students who choose to participate in study abroad programs and those who live off-campus (in apartment complexes other than fraternity and sorority houses), as the 2020 Title IX regulations will not apply to students whose perpetration does not occur in very specific geographic locations or did not occur during an educational program or activity hosted by the university in the United States. Higher education administrators should consider developing a process that is equitable for all students who experience sexual violence, regardless of their geographic location, as long as the student survivor is a current student and if the perpetrator of the violence is currently affiliated with the university. If institutions only develop a response based on the current guidance, they will not be protecting survivors of sexual violence who either participate in study abroad programs or live off-campus.

The new Title IX 2020 regulations also introduce a so-called rape shield protection which is supposed to protect survivors from respondents and their lawyers from inquiring about their prior sexual history. This rape shield protection has a loophole, as respondents and their advisors are now able to ask questions or bringing forth evidence that discloses the survivor's "sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior" if such information is offered to showcase prior sexual behavior between the respondent and survivor that "are offered to prove consent" (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The concept of "prior consent, does not mean consent" is null under these new regulations. This means that if students engaged in a prior consensual relationship prior to the incident in question, it could be brought forward as evidence in the Title

IX process. This actively contradicts affirmative consent campaigns that are commonly practiced on college campuses and must be reconsidered on the university level.

Overall, higher education institutions should consider the SAMHSA (2014) evaluation domain when determining the impact the Title IX office has had on the student experience, as it provides guiding questions that could contribute to systemic change. The questions provided in the evaluation domain by SAMHSA (2014) are the following: “How does the agency conduct a trauma-informed organizational assessment or have measures or indicators that show their level of trauma-informed approach?”; “How does the perspective of people who have experience trauma inform the agency performance beyond consumer satisfaction survey?”; “What processes are in place to solicit feedback from people who use services and ensure anonymity and confidentiality?”; “What measures or indicators are used to assess the organizational process in becoming trauma-informed?” (p. 16). Unlike other offices on campus, the Title IX office is charged with providing services for those who have been specifically impacted by sexual trauma; adopting a trauma-informed approach within this office should not be optional, it must be imperative. Based on this study, CSAS can provide a crucial vantage point for higher education institutions as they have directly observed the impact of Title IX policies and procedures on the student experience. It would be essential for administrators to utilize CSAS narratives to facilitate the improvement of Title IX practices and for their perspectives to be instrumental in creating any future policy or procedures that interface with survivors on campus.

### **Investing in Confidential Healing Services**

This study presented the CSAS perspective as it relates to their experiences assisting student survivors, and many participants recounted stories of how the Title IX process negatively impacted student experiences. The significant focus by universities on compliance and liability

has derailed higher education into developing student-centered offices that address sexual violence. Though there has been a focus on the reporting some numbers for federal compliance, Title IX outcome numbers where the respondent is found responsible are difficult to locate, and participants believe them to be low. The priority has been on creating a risk-averse process that is not considerate of student survivors on campus and their overall well-being.

To invest in student survivor well-being, campuses need to consider the monetary investment being made to properly staff offices that offer direct confidential services to survivors; in particular offices that provide advocacy and survivor-specific counseling services would be essential. A similar staffing formula needs to be created for campus survivor advocacy (CSA) offices to properly staff counseling centers in higher education. For the Western University system, for example, CSA offices provides services for students, staff, and offices, which is a larger constituency than their student counseling center counterparts, yet their staffing levels are significantly less. Providing an opportunity for higher education institutions to properly assess the quantity of staff needed would properly staff CSA offices on their campuses. This would alleviate the high caseload that campus advocates carry and might help address the vicarious traumatization that providers are experiencing as well. Campuses can begin by looking into the number of full-time compliance officers they have on campus and compare the number to their campus advocacy staff; if the number of CSAS is lower than compliance officers, then they should consider matching their staff sizes. Although this study did not evaluate case load, one could assume that CSAS carry a higher sexual violence case load than their counterparts in Title IX. To investigate these discrepancies, campuses are encouraged to inquire from each office the number of survivors that are served and concretely ameliorate staffing size.

Since the DCL of 2011, the focus has been on compliance and reporting, but it is time to shift gears and value survivor healing. Institutions should develop other ways of supporting student survivors that gives them access to fulfilling, healing, and survivor-centered services, which could expand their prevention education to include information on how to compassionately support a friend who has experienced sexual violence and trauma in general, common survivor responses to trauma, and creating a campus culture that promotes healing and well-being. Higher education administrators should assess if current budget lines are designated for prevention education that is not solely based on compliance and actively invest in education that could normalize help-seeking behaviors and emphasize the importance of student survivor healing. This could promote successful student survivor outcomes as they relate to healing, rather than solely in reporting numbers.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research in the education field should deepen the focus on campus survivor advocates and student survivors themselves, particularly examining the impact of the 2020 Title IX regulations. Although this study has highlighted CSAS perceptions of the impacts these regulations have had on student survivors, it is important for researchers to specifically focus on student experiences navigating the Title IX process. Further exploring and documenting their impact on student survivor well-being and retention would add to the growing body of research in this field. These studies would particularly be essential to combating any negative impacts and petitioning, on a larger scale, for an alternative federal process that facilitates healing and justice for student survivors. Future practice would also benefit from learning more about the connection between student retention and access to campus survivor services. In this study, participants referred to the perceived connection between the two, but further study is needed in

order to solidify this connection, which may assist other student services areas in their practice. Future research could explore the potential benefits of leading a trauma-informed student services office in higher education and analyze the impact it has on retention numbers of students on campus.

Most qualitative research focusing on campus advocates, including this one, have focused on specific regions or states, like Virginia (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017; Carmody et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2009), Midwestern university campuses (Munro-Kramer et al., 2017) and the Northeast region of the U.S (Moylan, 2017), except for Brubaker's (2019) study which sought a national sample but had a limited sample size. Future practice would benefit from a national qualitative study that considers accurate diversity in its sample demographics, including participant socio-cultural identities and regions of campus advocacy practice. In this study, the focus was on practitioners from California, a state that provides confidentiality protections to campus advocates, which might not provide an accurate perception of practice for those who live in states where confidential protections are not afforded. It would be important to explore the implications that confidentiality or lack thereof has on student survivor support and particularly explore how it impacts student sense of *safety, empowerment, voice, and choice* (SAMHSA, 2014). Studies from these states could analyze the impact that state and federal regulations have on student survivors on campus.

Additionally, prior research with the focus on CSAS has been limited to qualitative studies, and this field would benefit from a national quantitative study that seeks responses from those who practice in the campus survivor advocacy field full-time in a higher education institution. Such a study could assess CSAS staff to student ratio and present recommendation on proper staffing ratios for areas that are constantly providing services for students who experience

trauma, a recommendation that was aforementioned in the Implications for Practice section. An additional point of inquiry could be regarding the adoption of trauma-informed practices in the CSAS field; qualitative questions could center around the six principles promoted by SAMHSA (2014), which could inquire about protected confidentiality for students, campus support for their practice (physical space, budget and psychological safety), their perceptions of the Title IX process in connection to trauma-informed practices, and their perceptions of student *empowerment, voice, and choice* and its connection to student survivor well-being. Quantitative and qualitative methods together would provide the most thorough understanding of student survivors and CSAS experiences on college campuses.

### **Conclusion**

Because I had experience in this field of work, I was well-aware of the difficulties CSAS face, both on a daily basis and on a systemic level. By centering their perceptions and realities, I sought to add to the literature and fill a research gap. I also hoped to apply the trauma-informed lens that most researchers have neglected, to highlight that the CSAS were committed to the healing of the students they served. All participants told a familiar and consistent story about the student survivors' frustrations in the academic system, and how the bureaucratic nature of the institutional procedures also impacted them negatively. Unfortunately, in the months after I embarked on this research topic, further developments by the Trump Administration made the changes to Title IX guidelines even less empowering for student survivors, causing stress to many of the participants of this study. I came to realize that this work is highly pertinent and will only become more essential to investigate. My hope is that the academic fieldwork and writing around these issues lead to a change at the higher level, and that student survivors will ultimately be granted true rights that are not subject to change drastically with each new presidential

administration. This study makes clear that it is essential for everyone involved in creating these systems at universities, from the Secretary of Education to the individual administrators holding hearings, revolve decisions around the experiences and well-being of survivors of sexual violence on college campuses.



## Appendix A: Study Recruitment Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Naddia Palacios, from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). I am conducting a research study about the development of campus victim advocacy services in higher education and I'm writing to invite you to participate. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a professional working for a campus victim advocacy office at [Western University].

Participation involves one 90-minute interview. We can meet in person on your campus, via Zoom, or another telecommunication software. In all publications and public communications, you and your site will be given a pseudonym. All identifiable information will be deidentified. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. Additionally, you may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Please let me know if you are interested in participating in the research.** If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, please feel free to email me or call me at [number] and [email]

I am also attaching a Study Information Sheet for your review.

I look forward to hearing from you to set up a time to meet.

Best,

Naddia Palacios

## **Appendix B: Study Information Sheet**

### **University of California Los Angeles**

#### **Study Information Sheet**

##### *Campus Victim Advocacy Services in Higher Education*

Naddia Palacios and Dr. Jessica Harris from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) are conducting a research study to explore the development of campus victim advocacy services in higher education. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a professional working for a campus victim advocacy office at [Western University]. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

#### **Why is this study being done?**

Campus victim advocacy staff have a very unique role on college campuses and they are a large component to finding out how campus response to student sexual violence is working for student survivors at higher education institutions in the U.S. Findings from this research could give insight into specific successes and challenges involved in providing victim advocacy services for students on campus and be utilized as a tool to benchmark or assist in the development of campus victim advocacy services.

#### **What will happen if I take part in this research study?**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Participate in one 90-minute individual interview with the lead researcher.
- Individual interviews will take place in person, via Zoom or another communication software preferred by the participant. The researcher will conduct the interview in a private room.
- The interviews will be recorded and you will be able to review, edit, and erase the recordings of your interview if you wish to do so.
- During or after the interview, I may request that you send me available documents or artifacts that are relevant to your work/your interview, e.g., brochures, pamphlets, manuals, policies.
- After the interview, if follow up questions arise, I will send participants those questions through email.
- Participate in an optional 30-minute member check.

#### **How long will I be in the research study?**

Participation will take a total of about 120 minutes, depending on your optional participation in the member check.

**Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts connected to this research.

**Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**

You may benefit from the study as you will have the opportunity to reflect on your current practices. You may also find satisfaction in knowing that sharing your experiences might help higher education institutions better serve student survivors.

**Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. In all publications and public communications, you and your institution will be given a pseudonym. Any information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies. As with all research studies, your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission. Data will be saved on a password protected laptop and an encrypted cloud based storage platform.

**What are my rights if I take part in this study?**

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact: Naddia Palacios at [number] and [email] or Dr. Jessica Harris at [email]

**UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):** If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: [participants@research.ucla.edu](mailto:participants@research.ucla.edu) or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

### Interview Protocol

RQ1: What are the practices that campus survivor advocacy staff use to support student survivors after they experience campus sexual violence?

1. Please share with me your on-campus victim advocacy services and your approaches to these services?
2. Can you share how your on-campus practice has been supported in its development by the institution?
3. What type of training did you receive to perform your duties as campus victim advocacy staff and how does this training inform your practice?
4. Can you share how your training prepares you to assist diverse student populations?
5. What are some of the main reasons you approach your job, or practice, in the way that you do?
6. What do you perceive is your role as a campus victim advocacy staff member?
7. What do you perceive as a successful student survivor interaction?
8. What type of support, if any, do you provide to student survivors?
9. How do student survivors respond to you when you offer this support?
10. Are there any other ways that you see yourself as being integral to students' experiences post-sexual violence?

RQ2: What are some of the challenges that campus victim advocates encounter as practitioners?

1. As campus victim advocacy staff, please share any professional challenges that you face or have faced while serving in this role? How do you navigate these challenges?
2. As campus victim advocacy staff can you share any personal challenges that you face or have faced while serving in this role? How do you navigate these challenges?

3. In what ways do other campus resources, colleagues, and/or departments influence the work that you are able to do with student survivors? How do you navigate these challenges?

**Follow-up Questions** (sent via email):

All participants:

1. How has federal policy or guidance influenced your campus victim advocacy staff practices?

Participants from one site where full sample was not reached:

1. What motivated you to participate in this study?
2. Only two participants from your site replied to participate in this study. Do you have any thoughts on why you think that is?

## Appendix D: Unit Analysis

### Unit Analysis

The objective of the research was to interview and investigate the practices that staff engage in while they assist student survivors of sexual violence and inquire about any challenges that campus survivor advocacy practitioners face.

### Units of Observation Chart

Research Question	Data Collection	Units of Observation and Trauma-informed principles
<p>RQ1: What are the practices that campus survivor advocacy staff use to support student survivors after they experience campus sexual violence?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Please share with me your on-campus victim advocacy services and your approaches to these services?</li> <li>2. Can you share how your on-campus practice has been supported in its development by the institution?</li> <li>3. What type of training did you receive to perform your duties as campus victim advocacy staff and how does this training inform your practice?</li> <li>4. Can you share how your training prepares you to assist diverse student populations?</li> <li>5. What are some of the main reasons you approach your job, or practice, in the way that you do?</li> <li>6. What do you perceive is your role as a campus victim advocacy staff member?</li> <li>7. What do you perceive as a successful student survivor</li> </ol>	<p>Interviews Document Analysis</p>	<p>-Trauma-informed practice: emphasis on physical, psychological, and emotional safety; empathetic conversations, accommodate verbal and non-verbal communication; build rapport and trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-State Training</li> <li>-Diversity Training</li> <li>-National Training</li> <li>-No training</li> <li>-State Certification</li> <li>-No Certification</li> <li>-National Certification</li> <li>-Document- service description on pamphlets, websites or social media.</li> <li>-Document-state, university and federal guidance and policy.</li> <li>-Document-institutional support via email, memo, communication.</li> <li>-Document-training manuals</li> <li>-Document-historical documents that capture office structure or practice</li> </ul> <p>Due to advocacy services student victims are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Graduate</li> <li>-File a report with the police</li> <li>-File a report with Title IX</li> <li>-Getting a SART exam</li> <li>-Coming to their next appointment</li> <li>-Going to counseling</li> </ul>

<p>interaction?</p> <p>8. What type of support, if any, do you provide to student survivors?</p> <p>9. How do student survivors respond to you when you offer this support?</p> <p>10. Are there any other ways that you see yourself as being integral to students' experiences post-sexual violence?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participating in healing programs</li> <li>-Validating their experience</li> <li>-Demonstrating emotion</li> <li>-Filing a restraining order</li> <li>-Delivers full range of resources</li> <li>-Connection to a case manager</li> <li>-Taking a leave of absence</li> <li>-Drop a class</li> <li>-Not having additional appointments</li> <li>-Empowering the survivor</li> <li>-Assisting with healing</li> <li>-Considers the intersectional identity of the client (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, ability, age, year in school,</li> <li>-Tailor response to victim's identity</li> <li>-Take into consideration cultural perspectives in victim response</li> <li>-Not take into consideration intersectionality</li> <li>-assisting with accommodations</li> <li>-informing students of campus policies</li> <li>-Document-description of advocate role via social media, website or pamphlets.</li> <li>-Document-thank you cards, emails or notes from student survivors.</li> </ul> <p>Trauma-informed principles that might apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Trustworthiness and transparency</li> <li>• Peer support</li> <li>• Collaboration and mutuality</li> <li>• Empowerment, voice, and choice</li> <li>• Cultural, historical and gender issues</li> </ul>
<p>RQ2: What are some of the challenges that campus victim advocates encounter on-campus?</p> <p>1. As campus victim advocacy staff, please share any professional challenges that you face or have faced while serving in this role? How do you navigate these challenges?</p> <p>2. As campus victim advocacy staff can you share any personal</p>	<p>Interviews Document Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Institutional pushback by administrators</li> <li>-Work/life balance</li> <li>-Vicarious trauma</li> <li>-Current rescinding of Dear Colleague letters</li> <li>-State and federal regulatory practices</li> <li>-Increased focus on compliance</li> <li>-Lack of funding</li> <li>-Lack of institutional support</li> <li>-Increased caseloads</li> <li>-Low staffing capacity</li> <li>-Lack of staff</li> <li>-Navigation of resources</li> </ul>

<p>challenges that you face or have faced while serving in this role? How do you navigate these challenges?</p> <p>3. In what ways do other campus resources, colleagues, and/or departments influence the work that you are able to do with student survivors? How do you navigate these challenges?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Stress</li> <li>-Lack of office space</li> <li>-Institutional support</li> <li>-Great on-campus supervision</li> <li>-Community support</li> <li>-Staff attrition</li> <li>-Integrate self-care into staff practice</li> <li>-Integrate self-care into individual practice</li> <li>-Finding a supportive network off-campus</li> <li>-Document-systemwide support</li> <li>-notes, emails, memos, etc. that document challenges or support from colleagues.</li> <li>-Document-policies that are perceived as challenging to staff practice</li> <li>-Document-guidance that is perceived as challenging to staff practice</li> </ul> <p>Trauma-informed principles that might apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Trustworthiness and transparency</li> <li>• Peer support</li> <li>• Collaboration and mutuality</li> <li>• Empowerment, voice, and choice</li> <li>• Cultural, historical and gender issues</li> </ul>
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