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An Ethnographic Study of Grace Services: Understanding Resilience at an Organizational Level

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An Ethnographic Study of Grace Services: Understanding Resilience at an Organizational Level

By

Jessica Paredes Strong

Accepted in Partial Completion of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

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Jessica Paredes Strong

June 20, 2024
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A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

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Of the Requirements for the Degree
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Abstract

Drawing on organizational resilience theory, social support theory, and self-efficacy theory, this study explores the pivotal role of resilience among advocates working with survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence (DV), and sexual violence (SV). Conducted at Grace Services in Balevi County, the study engaged a total of five staff and volunteers. Grace Services is a non-profit organization that supports survivors of IPV, DV, and SV. They employ staff and volunteers who provide crucial services and support to these survivors. Given the emotional toll associated with their work, this research focuses on how Grace Services approaches fostering resilience among this dedicated workforce. I achieve this by examining how the organization translates the concept of "resilience" into concrete practices. This involves identifying key themes and sub-themes that contribute to building resilience among advocates within Grace Services. While existing literature acknowledges the challenges of advocacy work, there is a dearth of research on advocate perspectives and their experiences. Employing a qualitative research approach, this study involved ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews. This study identified evidence of active resilience-building practices within Grace Services. This study found Grace Services prioritizes staff and volunteer well-being through self-care support and a positive work environment. This reduces stress, boosts morale, and fosters collaboration, leading to improved service delivery and staff retention. It was also found that the well-designed physical space reinforces these themes, further promoting well-being and teamwork. While workload challenges exist, staff feel valued and equipped, demonstrating the organization's strong culture and commitment to its mission. However, further research, particularly on the impact of the physical workspace on staff and volunteer well-being,
would be valuable in strengthening these efforts. This research contributes to a broader understanding of organizational behavior, the challenges and rewards of advocacy work in social services, and offers valuable insights for Grace Services based on the experiences of its staff and volunteers. This research also adds to the growing body of knowledge on advocacy resilience within the field of medical anthropology.
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Through this collaborative research, I've been granted a unique opportunity to immerse myself in the narratives of individuals whose stories are often overlooked. My aspiration is that this project will prove to be beneficial to those who have been instrumental in shaping my academic and advocacy journey.
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Introduction

In the realm of advocacy, resilience is not only a desirable quality but an essential one that empowers individuals and communities to navigate the challenges and obstacles they may face in their pursuit of social change, particularly in addressing intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence (DV), and sexual violence (SV). In this context, where advocating for survivors' rights and well-being is paramount, understanding the role of resilience becomes critical. According to the American Psychological Association (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2018), resilience can be best defined as the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. Resilience can also be defined as successful adaptation in the face of high-risk, stressful experiences or trauma (Masten, 2001). For this study, resilience in Grace Services, a non-profit dedicated to empowering IPV, DV, and SV survivors (more information on the organization can be found in Chapter 3), is defined as the process of adapting and thriving in the face of challenges through a supportive work culture.

It is important to understand the resilience of advocates who work with survivors of IPV, DV, and SV for both medical anthropology and Grace Services, a non-profit organization supporting such survivors. This research contributes to the existing literature by providing a detailed examination of how a non-profit organization promotes resilience and highlighting advocates' real-life experiences.

Advocacy resilience is gaining increasing importance, particularly in fields like medical anthropology. There is still much to be discovered about its dynamics and long-term impacts (Frey et al., 2017). This emerging area of interest examines the positive effects of working with
trauma survivors impact the well-being of trauma workers. Engaging with survivors of trauma, such as torture and politically motivated violence, entails deeply connecting with their ongoing experiences of pain, joy, and hope. It also necessitates pushing the boundaries of personal and professional growth (Wolfe et al., 2014).

This profound engagement with survivors can take a significant emotional toll. Research indicates that female mental health professionals working with sexual assault survivors benefit from effective personal self-care routines to manage the "costs of caring" (Schauben et al., 1995). Similarly, Slattery and Goodman (2009) discovered that advocates experience improved emotional well-being when supported by colleagues and effective clinical supervision.

Moreover, organizations that embrace collaborative structures, respect diversity, and encourage shared decision-making offer better protection for advocates compared to more traditional, top-down hierarchies. Conversely, workplaces that neglect to prioritize the well-being and self-care of their employees risk subjecting service providers to harmful consequences like disengagement, cynicism, and inflexibility (Cherniss, 1980; Jenkins et al., 2002). When programs exclusively prioritize client needs, it can negatively impact the well-being and longevity of the workforce (Pearsall, 2017).

The examination of resilience practices is essential in supporting advocacy professionals (Pearsall, 2017), even though they may be challenging to implement. Many individuals in the helping field demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of adversity, abuse, and trauma. This research delves into how Grace Services approaches fostering this resilience within its staff and volunteers.
Understanding how resilience operates within an organization and impacts the individuals involved in advocacy work is critical. While this research focuses on advocacy work, the concept of resilience holds immense value for all organizations. Delving into how resilience operates within an organization and its impact on individuals is critical. Resilient organizations are better equipped to navigate setbacks, foster a thriving work environment, and achieve their goals in the face of adversity. In my research, I examine how Grace Services translates the concept of "resilience" into practical strategies for its advocates. This will involve identifying key themes and sub-themes within the organization that contribute to building resilience among its staff and volunteers.

Medical anthropology offers a valuable perspective for understanding the challenges faced by advocates of intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence (DV), and sexual violence (SV). This field recognizes the profound psychological and emotional impact of trauma exposure, highlighting the risk of secondary traumatization for professionals supporting survivors (Fass, 2008; Figley, 1995).

In medical anthropology, many studies have emphasized the crucial role of support networks and organizational structures in promoting resilience among individuals working in demanding social service fields (Slattery & Goodman, 2009; Chemtob et al., 2015; Spratt, 2013; Kaufmann, 2011). Factors such as strong workplace relationships, access to peer support, effective clinical supervision, and a focus on employee well-being all contribute to a more supportive and resilient work environment. Investigating how Grace Services approaches fostering resilience among its staff and volunteers aligns perfectly with the growing interest within medical anthropology in
understanding the dynamics and long-term implications of resilience in advocacy work. This research seeks to answer the following question: How does Grace Services, a non-profit supporting IPV/DV/SV survivors, approach fostering resilience within its staff and volunteers. To answer this question, current research draws upon the following theoretical frameworks: Organizational Resilience Theory, Social Support, and Self-Efficacy

Methodologically this research employed qualitative approaches to gain an in-depth understanding of how Grace Services approaches fostering resilience among its staff and volunteers. This included:

- Ethnographic Observation: Immersion within Grace Services allowed for firsthand insights into the environment, culture, and physical space that shape the experiences of staff and volunteers.
- Semi-structured Interviews: These interviews provided rich qualitative data on individual experiences and organizational dynamics.

This research aims to capture the lived experiences of staff and volunteers and how elements contribute to building resilience among advocates.
Chapter One – A Closer Look: A Review of the Literature

The chapter is structured into three sections. The initial section delves into the intricate realities of SV, DV, and IPV, emphasizing their effects on survivors. Next, it delves into the concept of resilience and its significance for survivors and advocates. Lastly, it delineates advocacy within the framework of Grace Services, underscoring its survivor-centered and trauma-informed approach. The second section examines existing literature on mental health challenges, resilience, and support, along with its impact on staff. It also addresses the difficulties of maintaining well-being and contributing knowledge within medical anthropology. The final section explores theoretical frameworks and the interconnected theoretical perspectives that guide how Grace Services nurtures resilience among its staff and volunteers.

Definitions and Constructs

This section provides definitions of sexual violence, domestic violence, and intimate partner violence, all of which are encompassed within the realm of advocacy work. While sexual violence is a specific act, domestic violence, and intimate partner violence describe patterns of behavior within a relationship. Importantly, sexual violence can be a component of domestic violence and IPV.

Within the field of advocacy, the thoughtful selection of methods to support clients who have experienced sexual assault and domestic violence entails consideration of numerous factors. This chiefly involves gaining a comprehensive understanding of sexual violence and domestic violence, as well as possessing the resilience to engage in this line of work.
Defining Key Terms and Concepts

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence poses a significant issue in the United States and has enduring effects on the health and well-being of its survivors. According to Tavara (2016), sexual violence is considered an extreme form of gender-based violence. The power disparity between men and women is closely associated with gender-based violence (Tavara, 2016). Socially constructed ideals regarding masculinity, such as strength, control, and sexual dominance, can lead to violent behaviors (McCarthy et al., 2018). A UN study in Asia and the Pacific involving 10,000 men revealed that controlling behaviors and inequitable gender attitudes were the main factors linked to both physical and sexual intimate partner violence (McCarthy et al., 2018).

From a statistical perspective, the CDC’s 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Study found that 45% of women in Washington State reported experiencing contact sexual violence in their lifetime, compared to 36% of US women, and 22% of men (Smith et al., 2011). Among 12th graders in Washington State, 31% of female students, compared to 13% of male students, reported being forced into a sexual situation. It's important to note that men can also be victims of sexual violence (Healthy Youth Survey, 2018). However, there is unfortunately less research on the prevalence and characteristics of male victimization (Sexual Violence Bench Guide, 2021). Moreover, the consequences of sexual assault can be physical, emotional, and long-lasting, potentially impacting a survivor's employment and personal well-being (Black, 2011).
Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Intimate partner violence (IPV) “refers to any behavior intended to cause physical harm to a romantic partner who is seeking to avoid harm” (Eckhardt, 2011: 2). Horner (2005, p. 1) defines domestic violence as “a pattern of various physical, sexual, and/or psychological behaviors carried out by a current or former intimate partner, rather than a single behavior.” In the U.S., IPV affects one in three women and results in significant social, psychological, and financial burdens for individuals, families, and communities (Kulkarni, 2018). The majority of IPV victims reside in marginalized and vulnerable survivor populations, with limited access to IPV services in many of these communities and with legal systems that often favor abusers (Kulkarni, 2018). IPV programs vary greatly in size, mission, and community contexts, leading to notable differences in how they are implemented and practiced across different programs (Kulkarni, 2018).

Resilience

Frey and Beesley (2016) emphasize the significance of acknowledging resilience in both sexual assault survivors and the advocates who assist them. They examine the stressors and systemic barriers involved in this line of work, as well as the beneficial impact it can have on advocates. Factors such as organizational support, personal growth following trauma, and post-traumatic growth have all been found to influence the effects of sexual assault advocacy work. It's important to recognize that resilience isn't just about bouncing back after a challenge; it can also lead to personal growth and positive change. These varied perspectives on resilience are shaped by cultural and social contexts, which influence how individuals experience and exhibit resilience in their lives (Kirmayer, 2009).
**Advocacy**

Despite numerous studies on burnout, there has been little research on the impact of burnout on domestic violence and sexual assault agency staff (Behounek, 2011). Advocacy counseling primarily focuses on supporting and working with trauma survivors by actively promoting initiatives aimed at preventing intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence (DV), and sexual violence (SV), advocating for the rights and well-being of survivors, and working towards systemic changes to address and eradicate these forms of violence (Goodman et al., 2016). According to Frey (2017, p. 2), advocates typically lack formal mental health training but have specialized training in sexual assault and domestic violence. They primarily focus on crisis intervention and advocating for survivors' rights.

In addition, Grace Services along with Kulkarni (2018) acknowledge a person-centered approach necessary in advocacy. Kulkarni (2018) suggests that "Survivor-centered approaches call for advocacy aimed at improving survivor choices within their communities," and "trauma-informed care approaches" are crucial because they "invest in changing service delivery systems to become less triggering and more responsive to survivor needs." (Kulkarni 2018: 4). Both Kulkarni (2018) and Grace Services recognize the importance of tailoring services to meet the specific needs of clients, taking into account their unique experiences. This approach promotes individual healing and enables the organization to implement practices that are best suited to help clients thrive within their limitations.
Literature Review on Advocacy Work

The following literature delves into how a non-profit organization fosters resilience in its staff and volunteers who assist trauma survivors. Recognizing the importance of nurturing resilience in advocates is critical, given the emotional demands of their work and the significant impact resilience has on their well-being and effectiveness. The existing research helps to comprehend the hurdles that staff encounter, current approaches to building resilience, and the overall importance of the subject in medical anthropology. The literature covers various topics such as the effects of intimate partner violence, domestic violence, sexual violence in advocacy, organizational approaches to building resilience, the role of physical environments in fostering resilience, individual coping strategies and definitions of resilience, and the intersection of medical anthropology and resilience.

(1) Impact of IPV/DV/SV Advocacy Work on Mental Health

This section highlights the mental health challenges and protective factors faced when working with victims of trauma, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence.

A. Common Stressors

The following studies show that professionals in helping roles face numerous stressors that can lead to burnout and negatively affect their well-being. These studies highlight the impact of direct exposure to trauma through client stories on mental health professionals (Behounek et al., 2017; Benuto et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2022; Groggel, 2023). Long hours and demanding workloads are also prevalent stressors (Behounek et al., 2017; Wright et al., 2022). Lack of
control over work tasks (Kulkarni et al., 2013) and unsupportive work environments (Pearsall, 2017) further contribute to stress. Additionally, societal attitudes toward victims and discrimination within organizations can exacerbate these challenges (Stephanie et al., 2007). These studies depict a worrying work environment for many helping professionals, with factors such as exposure to trauma, excessive workloads, lack of control, and unsupportive environments posing a significant risk of burnout and compassion fatigue.

B. Negatives Consequences of Advocacy Work

The nature of work for helping professionals presents a significant risk to their mental health. Numerous studies, including research by Behounek et al. (2017), Kulkarni et al. (2013), and Pearsall (2017), underscore burnout as a major concern. Additionally, studies by Benuto et al. (2018), Hooft & Benuto (n.d.), and Singer et al. (2020) point to the pervasiveness of secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and related concepts in impacting helping professionals. Groggel (2023) and Hooft & Benuto (n.d.) further emphasize the risk of vicarious trauma in these professions. Moral distress, examined by Stephanie et al. (2007), adds another dimension to potential mental health strain. These findings underscore the substantial mental health burden faced by helping professionals. Exposure to trauma, demanding workloads, and ethical dilemmas all contribute to burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and related issues.

C. Protective Factors

Professionals in support roles have access to resources to manage the stress that comes with their job. According to research, protective factors can improve well-being and resilience. Bemiller & Williams (2011) and Frey et al. (2017) emphasize the significance of "good
soldiering," which involves a sense of duty and achievement that can act as a defense against burnout. They also highlight "vicarious resilience," the personal growth that can result from assisting others. According to several researchers, strong social support networks from colleagues and supervisors are protective factors. Feeling appreciated by the organization, or "perceived organizational support" (Frey et al., 2017), contributes to resilience. Alignment with job values is another protective factor. Lastly, training in coping mechanisms and self-care practices equips professionals with the tools to handle stress.

D. Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced unique challenges for helping professionals, potentially intensifying existing stressors. Research conducted by Garcia et al. (2022) and Wood et al. (2022) underscores the heightened workloads and service demands confronting helping professionals during the pandemic. Additionally, these studies (Garcia et al., 2022; Wood et al., 2022) highlight the shift to virtual service delivery as a significant influence on the work of helping professionals. Furthermore, during this time, Wright et al. (2022) observed a troubling decrease in access to services for survivors.

E. Compassion Fatigue

Supporting professionals who assist victims, such as victim advocates, presents distinct challenges and necessitates specialized support systems tailored to their work. Research conducted by Singer et al. (2020) highlights that compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue play an even more critical role in contributing to burnout among victim advocates compared to healthcare providers, indicating a unique set of stressors impacting this group. Additionally, Ojelade et al. (n.d.) emphasize the significance of considering cultural aspects in service
delivery, including the potential value of informal healing systems used by African Americans. These findings underscore the necessity of tailored support systems for helping professionals, particularly those, like victim advocates, who experience compassion fatigue profoundly. A uniform approach may prove insufficient. Therefore, culturally informed interventions and an acknowledgment of the distinct stressors faced by victim advocates may be imperative to promoting their well-being.

(2) Organizational Strategies for Building Resilience

This section highlights key findings from various studies on how organizations, in helping professions, can build resilience and support their staff:

A. Employee Well-being and Support

I. Workload Management

It is essential to effectively oversee workloads to mitigate burnout, particularly for professionals who work directly with trauma. Studies by Benuto et al. (2019) and Choi (2011) underscore the importance of workload management in preventing burnout among helping professionals, especially those who are directly exposed to trauma, which can be emotionally and psychologically demanding. Burnout can lead to compassion fatigue, cynicism, and a sense of ineffectiveness, ultimately impacting the quality of care provided. Benuto et al. (2019) likely emphasize the cumulative effect of trauma exposure on a helper's well-being, while Choi (2011) may focus on the necessity of manageable workloads to prevent overwhelm.
II. Supportive Work Environment

It is crucial to cultivate a supportive work environment for helping professionals in order to enhance their well-being and prevent burnout. Numerous studies have underscored the importance of a supportive work environment. For instance, Çayır et al. (2020) and Houston-Kolnik et al. (2021) have emphasized the role of strong leadership in fostering a positive and supportive work atmosphere. Estrada (n.d.), on the other hand, highlights the significance of positive relationships among colleagues in creating a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. All three studies (Çayır et al., 2020; Estrada, n.d.; Houston-Kolnik et al., 2021) emphasize the value of an organizational culture that prioritizes self-care, thereby encouraging professionals to prioritize their well-being.

III. Access to Resources

Ensuring that professionals have the necessary resources and support systems is crucial for their well-being during crisis response situations. According to Estrada (n.d.), access to resources and support systems before, during, and after a crisis event is vital for the staff involved. Crisis response work can be extremely stressful and emotionally challenging. Estrada (n.d.) likely underscores the importance of taking proactive steps to support staff well-being throughout the entire crisis cycle. This may include providing training and mental health resources before a crisis, ensuring sufficient staffing and supervision during the response, and offering debriefing and critical incident stress management (CISM) services after a crisis. Organizations engaged in crisis response have a duty to prioritize the well-being of their staff. Ultimately, this investment in staff well-being benefits both the responders and the communities they serve.
IV. Social Support

According to Houston-Kolnik et al. (2021), establishing strong support networks is crucial for enhancing the well-being of helping professionals and mitigating burnout. They underscore the significance of social support systems in helping professionals deal with the demanding aspects of their work, emphasizing the importance of both formal and informal support networks. Given the emotionally taxing nature of helping professions, social support plays a pivotal role in alleviating stress and fostering resilience. Houston-Kolnik et al. (2021) likely emphasize the value of formal support systems such as employee assistance programs (EAPs) and peer support groups, as well as informal networks like supportive relationships with colleagues and friends. Connecting professionals with formal support systems, such as EAPs and mental health services, can equip them with additional resources to manage work-related stress and enhance their overall well-being.

V. Training and Supervision

It is crucial to ensure that staff involved in crisis intervention work receive comprehensive training, supportive supervision, and constructive feedback. As highlighted by Logan & Walker (2018), effective training provides staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to assess situations, intervene appropriately, and prioritize safety for all involved. Given the complexities of crisis intervention work, it is imperative to prioritize the competence and well-being of staff by offering ongoing guidance, emotional support, and a safe environment for debriefing challenging situations through supportive supervision. Moreover, feedback mechanisms are essential for continuous improvement, instilling confidence in staff members'
abilities. Ultimately, providing staff with these resources enables them to deliver top-quality services, effectively manage stress, and mitigate burnout, benefiting both the staff and the individuals they serve during crises.

**VI. Addressing Staff Needs**

The existing literature demonstrates to effectively address a crisis, it is vital to recognize and tackle the emotional hurdles that staff may encounter and to implement strategies to support their well-being. Logan & Walker (2018) emphasize the importance of acknowledging the personal challenges that staff face in crisis intervention. This involves understanding the potential for vicarious trauma and emotional strain associated with this line of work. Crisis intervention exposes staff to traumatic situations and other people's suffering. Logan & Walker (2018) highlight the concept of vicarious trauma, which pertains to the emotional toll that helping professionals may experience when aiding those who have been traumatized. This, along with the inherent emotional strain of crisis work, can lead to burnout and compassion fatigue. Acknowledging the emotional challenges faced by crisis intervention staff is the first step to prioritizing the well-being of their staff.

**B. Organizational Practices**

**I. Collaboration**

Effective support for victims requires a strong collaboration between victim assistance professionals and healthcare providers. Payne (2007) highlights the importance of this collaboration, as it improves the overall support system available to victims. Victims of crime or trauma often have multifaceted needs, encompassing both mental and physical health. According
to Payne (2007), when victim assistance professionals and healthcare providers work together, it ensures a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to victim support. This collaboration may involve sharing information and referrals, developing treatment plans together, or addressing specific needs that arise in a joint effort. This collaboration can enhance access to mental health services, ensure the addressing of physical health needs, and ultimately contribute to the healing and well-being of victims.

II. Training for Staff

It is imperative to provide specialized training for staff to improve the quality of services offered to victims of crime or trauma. Lopez's (n.d.) research emphasizes the importance of training staff, particularly victim advocates, to effectively work with victims. This training should cover areas such as trauma-informed care and the ability to communicate effectively with victims. Effectively supporting victims requires staff who understand the impact of trauma and can engage with them in a sensitive and supportive manner. Lopez (n.d.) likely emphasizes the value of trauma-informed care training, which equips staff with the knowledge and skills to identify trauma symptoms, create safe and supportive environments, and prevent re-traumatization. Training in effective communication can enhance rapport-building, active listening, and the ability to respond to the specific needs of each victim. Investing in staff training enables victim service organizations to offer more effective and supportive services. Trauma-informed training creates a more sensitive and healing environment for victims, while effective communication skills ensure that victims feel heard and understood.
III. Diversity and Inclusion

Promoting diversity and inclusion within staff teams is critical to improving the effectiveness and responsiveness of services provided to diverse communities. According to Houston-Kolnik et al. (2021), nurturing diversity and inclusion within staff teams serving various communities is crucial. A diverse staff team brings a broader range of perspectives, lived experiences, and cultural competencies to the fore, which can be pivotal in understanding community needs, responding in a culturally sensitive manner, and cultivating trust with clients. Houston-Kolnik et al. (2021) likely emphasize that a staff team that mirrors the diversity of the community being served is better positioned to provide culturally competent care. Organizations working with diverse communities should prioritize diversity and inclusion within their staff teams.

C. Individual Strategies

I. Self-Care Practices

Researchers have shown that it is crucial to advocate for self-care practices among staff to mitigate compassion fatigue and burnout, particularly in professions that involve supporting others through difficult situations. Research by Wasco et al. (2002) highlights the importance of promoting and fostering self-care practices for staff who encounter the emotional challenges of aiding others. Occupations that involve assisting others can be emotionally demanding, potentially leading to secondary traumatic stress or compassion fatigue. Wasco et al. (2002) likely emphasize that self-care practices equip staff with the necessary tools and strategies to handle stress, prevent burnout, and preserve their emotional well-being. This might entail stress management techniques, mindfulness exercises, or healthy lifestyle choices.
D. Additional Considerations

I. Survivor Advocates

According to the existing literature it is essential to prioritize the well-being of survivor advocates to maintain a supportive workforce and ensure effective services for survivors. Wilson & Goodman (2021) stress the significance of recognizing the experiences of survivor advocates, cultivating a sense of belonging within the organization, and appreciating their unique strengths. The work of survivor advocates can be emotionally demanding and vicariously traumatic. Wilson & Goodman (2021) likely emphasize that acknowledging the challenges faced by survivor advocates demonstrates respect and empathy. A supportive work environment is created by fostering a sense of belonging within the organization, and valuing each advocate's unique strengths and experiences empowers them to use their full potential.

(3) The Role of Physical Space in Fostering Resilience

The relevant literature collectively highlight how physical space plays a critical role in fostering resilience, both for individuals and organizations.

A. Impact on Well-Being and Productivity

The layout of a workplace significantly influences the well-being and productivity of its employees. Numerous studies have demonstrated that aspects such as natural light, connection to nature, and a sense of autonomy within the workspace can contribute to decreased stress, an improved emotional state, and higher job satisfaction. While a pleasing work environment can bolster job contentment, there is a growing focus on the well-being advantages of practical
design components. By prioritizing employee well-being through workplace design that incorporates elements such as natural light, and access to nature, and empowering employees with control over their workspace, positive effects on their well-being and potentially increased productivity can be achieved. Investing in well-designed workspaces can be advantageous for both employees and organizations.

B. The Importance of Control and Belonging

Employee well-being and organizational resilience are enhanced in workplaces that provide a sense of control and belonging for staff. Research by Lu (n.d.) emphasizes the importance of both control and belonging in the workplace. This research suggests that design features that allow for personalization and adjustment of the workspace contribute to a greater sense of control, which can improve employee well-being. Lu's work (n.d.) aligns with a growing body of research that suggests well-being thrives in environments where employees feel a sense of agency.

When staff have some control over their workspace, they are likely to feel more comfortable and invested in their surroundings. Furthermore, Lu (n.d.) highlights the significance of belonging within the workplace. Organizations that foster a sense of community and social connection can benefit from increased motivation, commitment, and overall resilience among staff.

C. Limitations of Future Directions

The impact of workplace design on employee well-being and productivity is widely acknowledged. However, there are still areas that require further investigation. Studies by Lu
(n.d.) and Veitch (2011) stress the need for more research to identify the specific design elements that have the most positive impact. This targeted approach would enable more effective design interventions. While there is ample research on the general benefits of supportive workplace design (Heerwagen et al., 1995; Evans, 1984), Lu (n.d.) and Veitch (2011) propose a deeper exploration of specifics. Understanding which elements are most effective can guide evidence-based design practices. Ronda & Gracia (2022) also suggest that individual preferences for aesthetics and workspace features play a significant role. Future research on these individual variations can contribute to more personalized and effective design solutions. Furthermore, with the increasing popularity of remote work arrangements, further investigation is necessary (Awada et al., 2021). Understanding the long-term effects of remote work on productivity and well-being compared to traditional office settings is crucial. This research can inform best practices for design in both physical and virtual workspaces.

(4) Individual Coping Mechanisms and Definitions of Resilience

This section explores various articles on how helpers working with trauma (victim advocates, social workers, mental health professionals) navigate the challenges they face and maintain their well-being.

A. Impact of Trauma Exposure

Professionals are confronted with a multifaceted challenge when confronted with trauma exposure. Some individuals may find themselves experiencing vicarious resilience, while others may grapple with a fundamental shift in their perception of their work. AbiNader’s research (2023) emphasizes the potential impact of trauma exposure on a helper’s sense of purpose and
their view of their work. Bearing witness to client trauma can be a significant stressor, causing some professionals to reassess their approach and redefine who they consider a client in the future. This research indicates the need for a more nuanced understanding of how professionals react to trauma exposure. While vicarious resilience has been shown to be a positive outcome for some (Frey et al., 2017), AbiNader's work (2023) suggests that for others, the experience can be deeply disruptive. This underscores the importance of recognizing the spectrum of responses to trauma exposure among helping professionals.

B. Coping Mechanisms and Self-Care

Conventional self-care practices may not fully address the requirements of professionals in caregiving roles. A more holistic approach is necessary to promote their overall well-being. As noted by Bressi and Vaden (2017), self-care for caregiving professionals should extend beyond individual routines and acknowledge the diverse aspects of their identities that they bring to their work, encompassing both personal and professional roles.

C. Additional considerations

The research conducted by Posluns & Gall (2020) underscores the significance of discovering meaning and purpose in one's professional life, maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life, and establishing clear boundaries. They also highlight the importance of integrating habits that promote physical and mental well-being, such as regular exercise, nutritious eating, and strong social connections (Posluns & Gall, 2020). Additionally, Smith (2017) emphasizes the critical need for culturally appropriate self-care resources, particularly for professionals who work with diverse communities. These studies suggest that
conventional self-care approaches, focusing solely on individual activities, may not sufficiently support professionals in the helping industry. The distinctive challenges they encounter necessitate a more comprehensive approach that considers the impact on their personal and professional identities, encourages a sense of purpose, and acknowledges the significance of work-life balance and culturally relevant support systems.

D. Importance of Support Systems

According to Muse (2022) and Frey et al. (2017), strong support systems are critical for the well-being of professionals in the helping professions. This includes both workplace support, such as collaboration with colleagues and supervisors, and support outside of work, such as social support networks. These systems can help alleviate the stress that often accompanies helping professions.

E. Finding Meaning and Growth

Assisting professionals can discover significance and development through their work, even in the presence of trauma. According to AbiNader's research (2023), sharing experiences and championing systemic change can help individuals in caregiving roles process trauma and rediscover purpose in their work. Benchimol (n.d.) examines the journey of survivors who evolve into advocates, portraying it as a process of conquering silence and stigma and leveraging their own experiences as a force for positive change. Delker et al. (2020) present the concept of "redemptive storying," emphasizing the potential for trauma to lead to personal growth and social impact while acknowledging that this may not be applicable universally.
(4) Resilience and Medical Anthropology Key Themes

Studies in medical anthropology highlight the interplay between culture, social connection context, and resilience in healthcare.

A. Cultural Influences on Help-Seeking

Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping help-seeking behaviors for mental health issues. Research conducted by Arnault & Woo (2018) and Oxtoby (n.d.) has shed light on the influence of cultural beliefs and norms on various aspects of mental health care. Perceptions of illness: Cultural backgrounds can significantly impact how individuals perceive and interpret the symptoms of mental health conditions. Stigma: Mental health stigma varies widely across cultures and can affect an individual's willingness to seek help. Preferred forms of healthcare: Cultural preferences may determine whether someone seeks help from traditional healers, faith-based counselors, or Western medical professionals. These findings emphasize the importance of cultural competence for mental health care providers.

B. Importance of Social Support

It is essential for effective healthcare delivery to establish robust social support networks and encourage collaboration among service providers. Numerous studies have underscored the significance of these elements: Bhatt & Bathija (2018) and De La Rue et al. (2023) have highlighted the role of strong social connections in promoting overall health and well-being. Frey et al. (2017) have identified social support as a protective factor for professionals, helping to alleviate stress and burnout. Furthermore, McGrath et al. (2012) have emphasized the importance of collaboration between service providers, which enhances access to care and ensures a more
holistic approach to meeting client needs. These findings illustrate the interconnected nature of various factors that influence health.

C. Culturally Responsive Care

It is crucial to provide culturally responsive care to promote health equity and improve access to healthcare services for diverse populations. Research by Lomazzi (2023), López et al. (n.d.), and Marques et al. (2021) emphasizes the positive impact of culturally sensitive services:

Improved access: By acknowledging the specific needs and perspectives of different cultures, healthcare providers can create more welcoming and accessible environments. Community empowerment: Culturally responsive care validates the experiences of communities and fosters a sense of ownership over their health and well-being. The studies stress that a one-size-fits-all approach to healthcare is inadequate. Culturally responsive care requires healthcare providers to understand and respect the values, beliefs, and practices of the communities they serve. This helps to build trust, improve communication, and ultimately lead to better health outcomes. Investing in culturally responsive care is a crucial step toward achieving health equity.

D. Systemic Challenges

Effective healthcare interventions must address not only individual needs, but also the systemic social and economic factors that influence health outcomes. Research by Bhatt & Bathija (2018) and McGrath et al. (2012) emphasizes the importance of looking beyond individual-level interventions. They argue that broader social and economic factors, such as poverty, gender roles, and limited access to resources, have a significant impact on health outcomes. While individual-level interventions are important, they are not sufficient on their
own. Ultimately, promoting health equity requires a multifaceted approach that tackles both the root causes of health disparities and the individual needs of patients.

(5) Medical Anthropology and Building Resilience

Medical anthropology offers valuable tools for understanding the cultural context of health and illness. Culturally informed outreach is crucial for promoting help-seeking behaviors for mental health concerns in diverse communities. Research by Arnault & Woo (2018) and Oxtoby (n.d.) highlights the significant impact of cultural beliefs on mental health: Perceptions of mental illness: Cultural backgrounds can shape how people understand and interpret symptoms. The stigma surrounding mental health: mental health stigma can vary greatly across cultures, influencing a person's willingness to seek help.

These findings demonstrate the need for culturally sensitive approaches to mental health outreach. Understanding the specific beliefs and norms of a community is essential for effectively addressing mental health concerns. By developing culturally appropriate messaging and reducing stigma, healthcare providers can encourage help-seeking behaviors and improve access to care.

A. Empower Individuals and Communities

Empowering individuals and communities is essential for achieving health equity and improving health outcomes, as highlighted by research from Bhatt & Bathija (2018) and Lomazzi (2023). These studies emphasize the need to move beyond individual-level interventions and address social determinants of health, such as poverty and limited resources, as well as the strengths and expertise of communities in improving their health.
To achieve this, advocating for systemic changes affecting factors like poverty, access to education, and quality housing is crucial. Lomazzi’s (2023) work suggests that leveraging the existing strengths and resources within communities is essential for sustainable health improvements. Empowerment can take various forms, such as providing educational resources, promoting community organizing, and advocating for policies that address social determinants of health. Healthcare professionals can play a critical role in achieving health equity by collaborating with communities to dismantle these barriers, leading to more effective interventions, improved health outcomes, and a stronger sense of community ownership over health. In conclusion, medical anthropology is instrumental in fostering culturally responsive healthcare practices and building resilience within diverse communities.

Theoretical Frameworks

Organizational resilience theory emphasizes an organization's ability to adapt and thrive in the face of challenges (Sanderson et al., 2009). Organization Resilience Theory provides a broader framework for understanding how organizations build resilience through various strategies and practices. This framework incorporates concepts from social support and self-efficacy theory. While each theory has its own distinct focus, they are interconnected and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how resilience is built and sustained within organizations like Grace Services.

On the other hand, social support theory suggests that strong social networks among staff and volunteers, fostered by open communication and team-building activities, can provide emotional support and a sense of belonging (Feeney et al., 2015). Social support theory also suggests that when staff and volunteers have access to supervisors, mental health professionals,
and peer support networks, they are better equipped to manage challenges and maintain well-being (Feeney et al., 2015). Strong social support systems within an organization create a sense of belonging and community. This fosters collaboration, trust, and a willingness to help each other, all of which contribute to the organization’s ability to overcome challenges and adapt to changing circumstances.

Lastly, self-efficacy theory suggests that programs that teach staff and volunteers stress management techniques, healthy coping mechanisms, and work-life balance strategies can enhance their self-efficacy, empowering them to manage demanding workloads and maintain a sense of control, leading to a more resilient workforce (Schunk et al., 2008). Self-efficacy theory also emphasizes that by providing opportunities for skill development and successful completion of tasks, the organization can cultivate a sense of competence among staff (Schunk et al., 2008). Self-efficacy is a crucial building block for individual resilience. When individuals believe in their capabilities and ability to cope with challenges, they are better equipped to bounce back from adversity (Maddux, 1999). Individual resilience contributes to the organization’s overall resilience. Strong social support networks can significantly boost self-efficacy. Having access to guidance, encouragement, and emotional support from others fosters a sense of confidence and belief in one’s ability to manage challenges (Hobfoll, 2018). When individuals feel supported, they are more likely to attempt difficult tasks and persevere in the face of setbacks, ultimately strengthening their self-efficacy.

These theories informed my research in several ways. The organizational resilience theory, which emphasizes the importance of organizational structures and practices in fostering resilience, informed my approach to analyzing how Grace Services approaches fostering resilience within its organization. Social support theory’s focus on emotional, instrumental, and
informational support guided how I looked at the open-communication channels and emotional support systems offered within the organization and how that may promote resilience among staff and volunteers. Self-efficacy's emphasis on self-belief and perceived capabilities influenced my approach to understanding how Grace Services equips staff and volunteers with the knowledge and skills to manage their well-being. In addition, applying the organizational resilience theory lens and social support and self-efficacy theory to my research allowed me to explore how Grace Services cultivates a supportive work culture that fosters resilience across its staff and volunteers, ultimately leading to a stronger organization. These theoretical perspectives provide the tools to analyze how Grace Services, as a system, cultivates a supportive environment that fosters resilience among advocates serving survivors of IPV, DV, and SV.
Chapter Two – Methodology: Approaches to Studying Resilience

Research Location: Grace Services

The Grace Services location that I researched is in the Pacific Northwest, in a medium-sized metropolitan town in a rural county named Balevi. I anonymize the names of the organization, city, and county to maintain confidentiality. Grace Services is a volunteer-based organization that serves individuals aged 13 and above affected by domestic violence and sexual assault (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021). The agency provides client-centered services that promote empowerment and safety (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021). They are committed to providing a wide range of services, including crisis intervention, shelter, medical and legal advocacy support, as well as prevention and education in the community (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021). Grace Services also takes a leading role in promoting collaborative approaches to community engagement in the fight against domestic and sexual violence (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021). Their mission is to support individuals affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, and commercial sexual exploitation, leading the community to end these abuses of power (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021).

The women’s rights movement, which gave rise to organizations like Grace Services, originated during the early wave of feminism in the United States between 1840 and 1920. During this period, laws concerning divorce and custody became more widespread; women faced limitations on property ownership; and many were staunch advocates for the anti-slavery movement. Fast forward to the 1960s and 1970s, when women's rights gained greater prominence. This led to significant actions, including the founding of the first rape crisis center in San Francisco, California, in 1971. The following year, the first 24-hour Crisis Line became
operational in the Bay Area and Washington, and the first Battered Women's hotline and shelter was established in Minnesota (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021).

Grace Services, formerly known as Balevi Crisis Services, has been committed to providing vital support services to adults and teenagers affected by domestic and sexual violence for over four decades. The organization underwent a name change in 2003, transitioning from Balevi Crisis Services to Grace Services. In 2014, Grace Services expanded its scope by incorporating WomenCare into its operations. Presently, Grace Services manages WomenCare and operates three confidential shelters within the region (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021).

In 2018, the organization saw significant community engagement, with 100 volunteers contributing a total of 12,000 hours to serve 2,400 clients. Notably, the team responded to 105 sexual assault exams, and the shelters provided a total of 6,307 bed nights. The prevention education department actively reached out to the community, educating 1,300 students on topics such as consent, healthy relationships, and setting boundaries. Over the past seven years, the 24-hour services manager has been conducting advocacy training programs at Grace Services in Balevi County (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021).

**Population served**

Grace Services is an organization dedicated to providing support and advocacy to survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence (DV), and sexual violence (SV) of all genders. They maintain strict confidentiality and work exclusively with survivors, not perpetrators. The range of services includes immediate assistance, ongoing support, safe housing, and educational programs. Grace Services also offers teen violence prevention programs,
professional training, and support within the legal system. For individuals aged 13 and older, their child-oriented programs cover important topics such as consent and self-expression. Additionally, organizations seeking information and resources on domestic and sexual violence can rely on Grace Services. The organization values and respects the diverse backgrounds and identities of the individuals it serves (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021).

**Organizational Funding**

The majority of Grace Services funding comes from either the state, county, or city governments. Additionally, private donors and foundations provide targeted funding. Grace Services is the government-designated service provider in Balevi County.

**Staff and Volunteers**

Grace Services provides comprehensive advocacy and support to address a wide range of needs. However, they understand that some needs may fall outside of their scope, and in such instances, they connect clients with other specialized service providers. The organization offers various on-call roles, including relief advocates, advocacy counselors, safe housing advocates, medical advocates, and victim advocates. Relief advocates handle helpline duties after hours, while safe housing advocates primarily assist clients seeking shelter. Medical advocates work in hospitals, whereas victim advocates work in court.

A critical component of their services is advocacy-based counseling, which includes individual, family, or group sessions with advocacy counselors. These sessions are designed to focus on safety, planning, and empowerment, with the goal of providing support to individuals
affected by domestic violence and sexual assault, ultimately working towards ending these forms of abuse within the community.

**Principle Values of Grace Services**

Grace Services uses the following as its core mission statement:

*All people have the right to be in a safe, non-violent community free from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Certain cultural and societal beliefs lay the foundation for sexual assault and domestic violence. Sexual assault and domestic violence result from the abuse of power and control. Community-based solutions are essential to ending violence. Volunteerism empowers the community to help and care for itself. Diversity promotes understanding, sensitivity, and respect. Individuals who choose to abuse are always responsible for that behavior. Personal empowerment is essential to an individual’s growth and healing* (Advocacy Core Training, October 2021).

**Research Methods**

To address the research question, I utilized a comprehensive approach employing two methods. These methods involved (1) participant observation at Grace Services and (2) one-on-one interviews with volunteers and staff.

As a researcher at Grace Services, I engaged in participant observation by shadowing two staff members or volunteers for a specific period. This observation's results were not used in this study. This involved actively participating in their daily routines and observing interactions with staff and volunteers. I also documented the physical, cultural, and functional aspects of the organization. However, I did not observe or document client-provider interactions due to
confidentiality concerns, which are further explained in this chapter. This method provided valuable insights into how Grace Services operates, as well as how staff and volunteers experience and utilize its resources.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five staff members and volunteers to explore how advocates demonstrate resilience within the context of Grace Services. These interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Atlas.ti software to identify recurring themes through a comprehensive codebook. This method provided an in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives on resilience and their role in their work and organizational dynamics.

**Research Design**

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. Ethnography allows for in-depth exploration of a culture or social setting through participant observation and interviews. Medical anthropologists and other scholars in allied fields have extensively leveraged these methods to examine intricate social dynamics within healthcare systems. This approach was ideal for gaining a holistic understanding of the experiences of staff and volunteers at Grace Services.

**Ethnographic Fieldwork**

To delve deeper into the experiences within Grace Services, ethnographic methods were employed. Observations and semi-structured interviews facilitated a nuanced exploration of the active resilience demonstrated by staff and volunteers. Immersing myself in the organization's daily operations provided insight into the multifaceted nature of advocacy work and how
individuals navigate challenges and support IPV survivors. This method yielded a comprehensive understanding of the organizational dynamics and the lived experiences of those involved, contributing to the broader discourse on advocacy resilience.

**Ethical Considerations**

Before commencing my research, I obtained approval for a human subject application from Western Washington University (WWU). For a variety of reasons, I chose Grace Services as the research site. Firstly, it offered a unique environment for studying resilience and advocacy within a community support organization. Secondly, the diverse programs and services provided a rich context for exploring the experiences of staff and volunteers. Finally, Grace Services' dedication to supporting vulnerable populations strongly aligned with my research focus, making it an ideal location for conducting a comprehensive study on resilience and advocacy.

**Recruitment**

To recruit participants for the interviews, I followed the advice of the 24-hour manager and created a well-crafted email. This email outlined the research study on resilience, emphasizing participant anonymity and providing details on how observations and interviews would be conducted. The consent form was included as an attachment to the email. This approach allowed me to invite staff and volunteers who were interested in sharing their experiences, which was essential for gathering initial insights for my research objectives. The same week, I received five emails from interested participants. In January, I scheduled interviews and observation time that aligned with the organization's operational hours and staff
convenience. The specific settings for observation were chosen based on their relevance to the research themes.

**Informed Consent**

Before conducting any research activities, I provided Grace Services with comprehensive information about the study's purpose, nature, and potential outcomes, and obtained their formal consent to participate. I then constructed a consent form that encompassed the study's objectives, voluntary participation, confidentiality protocols, and withdrawal rights for individuals involved in my observations and interviews. Both WWU and Grace Services carefully reviewed the consent form to ensure it conformed to their respective guidelines.

After obtaining approval from WWU, the 24-Hour Services Manager, and Grace Services, I distributed the consent form to volunteers and staff members via email, ensuring adherence to ethical standards and respect for participant autonomy and confidentiality. All individuals who were observed or interviewed were fully informed about the research objectives, their role in the study, and their rights as participants. Based on this information, they were allowed to ask questions and voluntarily consented to participate. This ethical approach ensured the principles of respect, autonomy, and transparency throughout the research process. All participants gave informed consent before using their interview data in the thesis. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent to accurately capture their responses and insights.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The research involved one in-person visit to Grace Services and five remote calls, totaling approximately 11 hours. Semi-structured interviews were the primary method for
delving into employee and volunteer perceptions of resilience within Grace Services. Interviews were conducted with key individuals holding advocacy roles within the organization, using a semi-structured interview template. The semi-structured interview template used is included in Appendix B for transparency and to facilitate future research efforts. It consisted of open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses and enable the exploration of emerging themes. The duration of each interview varied depending on the depth of discussion and participant availability, typically ranging from 45 minutes to 1 hour. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of topics while respecting participants' time and maintaining engagement. 1 follow-up interview was conducted to clarify points raised during the initial interview and to delve deeper into resilience and well-being.

In addition to the interviews, participant observation involved immersing in the daily activities and interactions at Grace Services, with detailed notes taken on the physical environment, organizational culture, staff interaction, and operational procedures. These observations yielded valuable insights into the organization's functioning and the experiences of staff and volunteers.

The data collection for this research encountered inherent challenges due to the nature of the target population. Working with vulnerable groups poses data-gathering challenges due to the sensitive nature of the topics involved. Gaining access and building trust with participants is a complex process compared to research with non-vulnerable populations, which restricted the number of participants who could be recruited, impacting the overall scope of data collection.
Data Analysis

All Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim to carefully analyze and interpret the collected data. Following transcription, qualitative data analysis software (Atlas.ti) was utilized to organize and examine interview transcripts and observational notes. The process of coding and analyzing the data involved several steps. Initially, the data, including interview transcripts and observational notes, was imported into the software. A systematic coding process was then employed to identify and assign codes to relevant themes and concepts, enabling systematic data organization based on key topics and concepts of interest. After coding the data, data segments were reviewed and analyzed to identify connections, patterns, and relationships between different codes and themes. A comprehensive codebook was then developed for systematic categorization and labeling of data based on emerging themes and patterns.

During the analysis process, several themes and topics emerged from the data:

- **Supportive Work Environment**: This theme focuses on organizational practices that foster a positive and well-being-oriented environment for staff and volunteers. It includes elements such as open communication, encouragement, and emotional support.

- **Mental Health and Wellness**: This theme emphasizes the importance of prioritizing mental health, opportunities for additional support, and accessible resources for mental health services.

- **Workload Management**: This theme explores the unique challenges and experiences of advocates in supporting survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV). It examines resource limitations, the emotional toll of working in this role, and the difficult balance between personal life and work.
• **Fostering a Sense of Community:** This theme delves into the organization's integration efforts and the impact of training programs.

**Gaining Rapport and Positionality**

In this research, my position occupies a unique space on the inside-outsider continuum. The established partnership with Grace Services grants me some insider perspective, allowing me to access their inner workings and fostering a sense of trust. However, I remain essentially an outsider to the daily experiences of staff and volunteers. This detachment enables me to analyze their perspectives objectively, interpret their experiences, and translate them into meaningful insights. Ultimately, this dual role offers a balanced perspective, drawing on my knowledge as an insider and outsider to provide a comprehensive understanding of Grace Services.

I established a partnership with Grace Services due to a shared interest in addressing the needs of intimate partner violence (IPV) survivors. I initially contacted Grace Services by phone to introduce my research goals and seek their cooperation. They directed me to the 24-hour services manager for further communication. This initial contact laid the groundwork for conducting research within the organization. Subsequently, through email exchanges, I clarified my research intentions and purpose, eventually obtaining approval for the partnership.

After initial discussions and receiving their approval, I gained access to their recorded advocacy counselor training (ACT). To formalize the partnership and gain access to the training materials, I completed all the required documentation diligently. The forms included the Staff, Volunteer, and Board Member Confidentiality Agreement, Conflict of Interest Form, and Background Check Consent Form. Once I submitted the completed forms and a copy of my ID, the Program Administration Specialist reviewed and approved all documentation. Subsequently,
Grace Services provided me with access to the October 2021 ACT playlist, along with relevant reading materials.

During the training sessions, I gained knowledge about Grace Services' services and resources, which included: (1) how to respond to calls as an advocacy counselor; (2) understanding legal terminology, laws, and policies related to domestic violence and sexual assault cases; and (3) utilizing community resources, such as legal and safe housing services, to refer survivors for help if the organization is unable to legally assist them.

From January 2022 to April 2023, I actively engaged with the 24-hour services manager to establish and nurture a collaborative partnership. The collaboration began with discussions to define mutual goals and expectations for the project. Frequent communication via email and phone calls covered various aspects of the research project and the organization's involvement. Challenges and logistical issues were addressed collaboratively, ensuring the research remained ethical, respectful, and beneficial to all involved parties. This partnership fostered a transparent and trusting atmosphere characterized by mutual respect.

Grace Services' collaboration was invaluable in providing access to their staff, volunteers, and resources necessary for data collection. Their role as a research partner was crucial in granting me access to valuable insights and firsthand experiences within their organization. For example, they permitted me to conduct interviews and observations, significantly enhancing the depth and authenticity of my research. Additionally, their input and feedback throughout the research process ensured that the study remained relevant and aligned with the needs and realities of advocacy work. Grace Services' collaboration played a vital role in generating meaningful findings and advancing my understanding of resilience in advocacy roles.
Confidentiality

It's important to note that neither the interview participants nor Grace Services had the chance to review their interviews or transcripts before including them in my thesis. I prioritized confidentiality and anonymity by removing any identifying information and strictly following ethical guidelines throughout the research process. To further uphold confidentiality standards, I anonymized and securely stored all collected data, including interview transcripts and observational notes. Prior to data analysis, I took rigorous measures to remove any identifying information associated with participants, such as names, addresses, and contact details.

I used pseudonyms for all participants in the transcripts and analysis to further safeguard anonymity and ensure their identities remained confidential throughout the research and in the final thesis. I excluded direct observation of client-provider interactions to respect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals seeking Grace Services. Instead, the research focused on the experiences and perspectives of staff and volunteers to gain valuable insights into the organization's dynamics while upholding ethical data collection and respecting client dignity. These comprehensive measures ensured that participant confidentiality and the sensitive nature of the research were prioritized throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting stages. This commitment to ethical research practices fostered trust and respect for everyone involved in the study.

Confidentiality concerns and the agency's client privacy protocols posed logistical challenges in obtaining direct client feedback. Internal barriers related to survey data also hindered the agency's ability to solicit and incorporate client feedback effectively. As a result, the
research focused more on insights obtained from staff and volunteers to comprehensively understand the agency.

Additional considerations: COVID-19 Pandemic

The use of remote interviews via Zoom provided scheduling flexibility and eliminated geographical barriers, facilitating broader participation from both staff and volunteers. This approach was particularly beneficial in minimizing potential health risks associated with in-person interactions, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic necessitated significant adjustments in the planning and execution of ethnographic fieldwork for my research. It prompted a transition to remote data collection methods, including virtual interviews conducted through platforms like Zoom, ensuring safety while maintaining meaningful engagement. Adhering to social distancing measures and addressing logistical issues became essential for in-person observations. Despite the challenges, the pandemic also presented opportunities to explore innovative approaches to ethnographic research by leveraging digital technologies to remotely engage with participants. Overall, while the pandemic brought about logistical obstacles, it also fostered creativity and adaptability in tailoring research methodologies to unique circumstances.
This chapter is structured into three sections. The first section delves into the organization's design, exploring the perspectives of staff and volunteers in their work environment. The second section focuses on the themes and subthemes uncovered through interviews with Grace Service volunteers and staff, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors influencing individual resilience within an institutional context. The third section examines how the open layout, dedicated spaces, and calming ambiance all collaborate to support the themes and subthemes identified in the interviews.

(1) Grace Services: A Supportive Environment

This phase of the research draws upon ethnographic fieldwork to examine the physical, cultural, relational, and functional aspects of Grace Services. This approach provided insights into how Grace Services is experienced and utilized by staff and volunteers.

A. A Haven for Support: The Welcoming Atmosphere of Grace Services

Upon entering Grace Services, guests are welcomed by an elegantly designed lobby. A welcoming reception window is situated to the right, and tranquil artwork decorates the walls. Ample and inviting seating, such as sofas, chairs, and tables, facilitates comfortable gatherings and interactions. This inviting ambiance is inclusive of families, featuring a designated children's play area that fosters a feeling of relaxation and warmth.
B. Functionality Meets Comfort: A Workspace Designed for Well-Being

Grace Services prioritizes the well-being of its staff and volunteers within the workspace itself. Ample natural light streams through large windows, filling the office with a vibrant and energizing ambiance. Wood-finished desks offer a calming aesthetic compared to industrial furniture, further contributing to a comfortable environment. Each staff member has a Dell computer at their disposal, ensuring efficient work completion. Even the basement workspace, lacking windows, is well-lit, maintaining a sense of comfort and productivity.

C. Diverse Resources to Empower: Amenities Supporting Every Need

Grace Services is equipped with a wide range of resources and amenities to support its staff and volunteers. Multiple client rooms provide private spaces for confidential meetings, ensuring that clients are safe and comfortable. A dedicated volunteer room meets their specific needs, while a staff office encourages collaboration and teamwork. The convenience of kitchens on both floors allows for breaks and refreshments throughout the workday. For added convenience, easily accessible bathrooms are located throughout the space. Finally, books and plants enhance the overall visual appeal, creating a calming ambiance that reduces stress and promotes focus.

D. Design with Purpose: Fostering Collaboration and Success

The design choices at Grace Services go beyond aesthetics; they are strategically implemented to promote positive outcomes. The open layout fosters communication and interaction among staff and volunteers, creating a collaborative and supportive environment. Natural light is efficiently utilized, creating a vibrant space and promoting well-being by
reducing reliance on artificial lighting. Comfortable furniture encourages longer stays and fosters a welcoming environment, contributing to a positive work environment. The inclusion of a children's play area provides peace of mind, allowing staff and volunteers with families to focus on their work knowing their children are safe and entertained.

In conclusion, Grace Services' design and layout create a supportive environment for staff and volunteers. The space is welcoming, functional, and adaptable, fostering collaboration, positive interactions, and contributing to the success of the organization's mission.

(2) Building Resilience: A Look Inside Grace Services

Building resilience is a crucial attribute for every organization, particularly for those, like Grace Services, that operate in demanding fields. In this section, I will delve into how the organization prioritizes a supportive work environment, mental health and wellness, effective workload management, and fostering a sense of community.

Supportive Work Culture

A. Supportive Work Environment

At Grace Services, open communication is highly encouraged. During my interviews with volunteers and staff members, I consistently found that they feel supported because they are urged to discuss their feelings and well-being. Despite being a non-profit organization, Grace Services maintains a humane approach by establishing practical standards for its volunteers and staff. When addressing workplace support, Amy and Sam shared their personal experiences, underscoring their organization's commitment to fostering an environment that embraces open dialogue and offers flexibility to prioritize mental well-being:
having that support makes a big difference...we are able to, you know, take mental health
days as necessary... any time that I’ve expressed feeling like I needed maybe a little bit
more support with my mental health, um, it’s always a very easy and open conversation
between me and my supervisors, um, to accommodate whatever that looks like.

When reflecting on the support they receive within their professional environment, Sam,
a valued volunteer, expressed his feelings of being well-supported. He shared:

I feel very supported.... I get emails from time to time, like, ‘Hey, I just wanna check in
with you.’ And usually I, you know, I say, ‘Hey, thanks for checkin’ in. I’m doing, you
know, I’m doing great.

The organization further enhances this environment by placing a strong emphasis on
encouragement. The organization utilizes various approaches to promote support and motivation
for both staff and volunteers. Linda specifically highlights one form of encouragement,
emphasizing the importance of self-care and well-being:

there is a lot of encouragement for employees and volunteers to take the time for things
that make them happy, um, and to reach out to community and not feel like they have to
carry someone else’s—like th-they don’t ha—that you’re not alone. That even if you’re
having a really hard time in this, somebody else is there to—not necessarily make it all
better, but to hold your hand or to just stand next to you and be-be supportive.

Amy, a staff member, emphasized a different form of encouragement: the importance of
being honest. She explained that any time she has “expressed any sort of feeling a little bit, um,
burnt out,” she was always encouraged to be “honest” and open about her “need[s] in that
moment and what [she] need[s] to do.” Linda and Amy’s experiences with the organization show
Grace Services' commitment to volunteer and staff well-being, which maintains a healthy work
environment.
Emotional support systems at Grace Services can be quite demanding due to the nature of the work. Staff from various departments are available to provide support whenever a volunteer or staff member needs to process emotions triggered by their interactions with clients. During a recent conversation, Sam mentioned, “There’s just been a lot of kind of reminders that, um, you know, to reach out and to not take on things that are gonna be too much for us. Um, that’s just what I’ve seen.” Another volunteer, Daniela, highlighted the organization’s focus on positivity and inclusivity, emphasizing that support extends to all members, including staff and volunteers:

“I guess it makes sense that it, you’d feel really, um, you hope you’d feel really positive that you’re, when you’re working with a bunch of people who are meant to be good listeners and meant to be supportive, right? Like, [laughter] it makes sense that they extend that to the other staff too, and the-and the volunteers.

In my conversations with Linda and Cori, I discussed how this support is provided and implemented within the organization. During my interview with Linda, she shared her experience, saying, “I would say that almost every shift I have, I have at least one, like, debrief or just, like, verbal processing session with either one of, um, my point people or with another volunteer who just has the time.” Cori adds to her experience with support by saying:

we also have annual reviews [with] my supervisor...I was able to ask questions. You know, get feedback on, you know, improvements. 'Cause you never wanna be stale. You want to improve, especially when you are in such a, um, such a, uh, impactful role in someone's life.

She goes on by expressing: “seeing that you’re heard, um, I think is the most important thing. And [Grace Services] is definitely always making sure that, you know, we have what we need.” Drawing from the experiences of Linda and Cori, Grace Services is committed to cultivating a positive work environment where every individual's voice is valued through
efficient communication channels, illustrating the organization's unwavering commitment to the well-being and development of its volunteers.

Grace Services, in essence, fosters resilience by encouraging transparent communication, providing motivation, and extending emotional support. These are fundamental components of the nurturing work environment at Grace Services, establishing it as a place where both employees and volunteers are recognized, esteemed, and given precedence.

B. Mental Health and Wellness

Prioritizing wellness is essential for upholding good physical and mental health at Grace Services. The organization recognizes the demanding nature of the work and is committed to supporting the well-being of both its staff and volunteers. During my discussion with Daniela, she underscored the organization's emphasis on prioritizing mental health for clients, as well as for staff and volunteers:

*Like the culture at [Grace Services] is, like, your mental health comes first. Um, even for employees, like, you know, like if you need a day, you take the day, and you don’t get judged for it.*

In addition, Grace Services offers an opportunity to prioritize individual well-being through regular check-ins and thoughtful exit questions. These check-ins are aimed at supporting individuals in managing their mental health effectively and fostering self-awareness. They also offer the chance for extra support when necessary. In a discussion with Sam, he mentioned that these check-ins typically occur at the conclusion of Zoom calls and involve queries such as “What do you plan to do for yourself tonight?” Grace Services also offers mental health resources and services to all members of the organization to support their staff and volunteers.
with their mental health. Cori mentions the accessibility of reaching out to a supervisor when needed:

> if I have a very difficult Sunday, you know, there’s on-call supervisors, shift supervisors that I can reach out to so that, you know, I can also sort of get advocacy as an advocate. Right, and that’s very important for us because some of these conversations can be very heart-wrenching.

Similar to Cori, Amy conveys her experiences with contacting the organization by stating:

> any time that I’ve expressed feeling like I needed maybe a little bit more support with my mental health, um, it’s always a very easy and open conversation between me and my supervisors, um, to accommodate whatever that looks like.

Amy also highlighted that they “are able to, you know, take mental health days as necessary.” At Grace Services, both volunteers and staff are encouraged to take mental health days as necessary. The organization conducts regular check-ins through Zoom calls, making it easy for employees to discuss their mental health with supervisors. Additionally, they provide flexible work arrangements to accommodate mental health needs. These efforts are designed to foster a healthier and more resilient workplace for all those involved in Grace Services' mission to aid survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. It's evident that the organization is dedicated to prioritizing mental health through accessible resources, frequent check-ins, and flexible work options to support the well-being of its staff and volunteers.

C. Workload Management

Maintaining realistic job expectations and manageable workloads at Grace Services can be challenging. During my interviews with volunteers and staff, most, if not all, had something to say about the challenges related to workload management. Linda points out: “The workloads
are not easy and it really does take a whole team to support a community that is underrepresented in society.” In my conversation with Linda, she also expressed a demand for services beyond their usual scope that can strain resources and staff, leading to additional stress:

*everyone at [Grace Services] is busy all the time, constantly...there’s a lot being asked of, uh, [Grace Services]/ as an organization, um, specifically being asked of us to provide resources and knowledge that are not within, um, our scope of services just because of the lack of services in other places.*

Daniela also reveals the emotional toll of working in such roles. She explains: “the work is stressful and can be draining and-and hard to hear sometimes. Like, being faced with the reality of the darkness-the dark side of the-of the world.” In my conversation with Sam, he highlights the emotional burden faced in his supportive role as an advocate:

*there have been times when, you know, I’ve been really challenged or really, you know, uh—sometimes you get stressed out about, like—I mean, some of the times it’s—some of the conversations, you know, because—’cause people tell you about really stressful, horrible things that happen to them.*

On top of the emotional toll, the ability to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life can be challenging for some volunteers and staff. They all have different responsibilities outside their advocate roles, which is why there is a delicate balance between personal responsibilities and their desire to make a positive impact. Sam reflects on the difficulties of finding time to volunteer due to a busy life while also highlighting the flexibility that volunteering offers:

*it’s challenging to be able to find the time to volunteer. Um, and I want—you know, I want to contribute...to the community, and, um—but I have to balance...I mean, I work. I go to school; I have a family. So just balance all those time constraints...so I can volunteer any time, you know, of the day. And that’s easy—it’s easy to do, and it’s no problem.*
The challenges Sam encounters when contemplating volunteering underscore Sam's strong commitment to community engagement. Both the staff and volunteers demonstrate a high level of dedication to their work. It's noteworthy that the organization prioritizes flexibility and acknowledges the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. However, there are additional aspects of work management that need to be considered, such as the significance of support systems and stress management skills. Addressing these factors within the organization will contribute to fostering a healthier, more supportive work culture.

D. Fostering a Sense of Community

For all members of an organization, it is essential to have some sense of feedback to make adequate improvements that will benefit not only the organization itself but also the people working in it. For volunteers and staff to be able to have time and space given for their opinions, allows volunteers to feel more engaged and integrated. For example, in my conversation with Cori, she mentioned a concern she had that was taken into consideration:

_for us volunteers, we feel—at least I do—a little bit removed from the day-to-day...Not all of us can sort of congregate together, um, on a daily basis...so [Grace Services] is actually working on scheduling some events for everyone to attend so that we can, you know, just feel more part of the organization...those are things that I’ve, you know, sort of recommended, and they’re actually taking into account._

By integrating Cori’s feedback, Grace Services creates a sense of belonging.

Grace Services also gives priority to immediate support through post-call debriefing opportunities. Daniela mentioned this during our conversation:
after you do a call, you can call and talk to a supervisor about how you handled it, to check in to make sure that you felt like you were doing the right thing or h-how you might handle it different next time.

Debriefing after a call allows employees to connect with supervisors following challenging interactions.

Grace Services also recognizes the work's long-term impact and actively addresses the risk of burnout. In my conversation with Amy, she emphasized the presence of training programs focused on self-care and secondary trauma:

we get lots of training on simple things like, you know, self-care or may—bigger things. Um, like, you know, having secondary trauma and stuff like that. Also just having, um, supportive staff members just to talk to. Um, and yeah, having that support makes a big difference.

Training programs focused on self-care and secondary trauma equip staff with practical skills and knowledge to manage their well-being and build resilience against the emotional strain they may encounter.

Grace Services also fosters a sense of community within the organization, which plays a crucial role in preventing burnout.

just having that support, I think, really, for us, and within, it prevents burnout, and it prevents, it gives you, uh, helps you build confidence over time, that you’re approaching things the right way

Having this informal network provides a sense of belonging and allows staff to connect with others who understand their work’s unique challenges and rewards.
Grace Services demonstrates a clear understanding of the emotional toll associated with assisting people in difficult circumstances. Recognizing the potential for burnout within their staff, they have implemented a comprehensive support system that goes beyond simply acknowledging the challenges. By combining immediate support, comprehensive training, and a supportive work environment, Grace Services demonstrates a holistic approach to staff well-being. This proactive strategy not only helps prevent burnout but also fosters a sense of confidence and resilience among its staff, allowing them to continue providing impactful services to the community they support.

(3) Bridging the Gap: Physical Space and Thematic Reinforcements at Grace Services

In my examination of resilience at Grace Services, I have identified several key themes. This section will delve into how the physical space supports these themes, promoting interactions that cultivate a resilient staff and volunteer team. Grace Services' commitment to a nurturing work culture goes beyond just words; it is deeply embedded in the core of their physical environment. This is evident when analyzing the fundamental aspects of the layout.

A. Physical Layout: Supportive Work Culture

Grace Services prioritizes open communication by strategically placing departments on the same floor. This fosters an environment where volunteers and staff feel comfortable voicing concerns or seeking support, knowing that help is readily available. The open layout with multiple rooms and departments located on the same floor also encourages easy interaction and communication, making check-ins natural and accessible for both staff and volunteers. This fosters a sense of connection and allows for readily available support.
The welcoming lobby, outfitted with comfortable seating, encourages informal interactions and casual conversations. This extends open communication beyond designated workspaces, allowing for spontaneous connections and idea sharing. The overall design, with calming colors, artwork, and abundant natural light, creates a positive and uplifting environment. This atmosphere subtly encourages staff and volunteers, fostering a sense of well-being and motivation.

The dedicated volunteer room serves as a space for volunteers to connect, share experiences, and build a sense of belonging. This fosters mutual encouragement and strengthens the supportive network within the organization. Separate client rooms ensure confidentiality during sensitive interactions, providing a safe space for both clients and staff. This demonstrates the organization's commitment to emotional well-being and respect for privacy.

The basement space offers dedicated rooms for families and clients, complete with a kitchen and bathrooms. This caters to the emotional needs of those seeking support, creating a comfortable and secure environment for healing and processing. Break rooms stocked with healthy snacks and beverages, along with comfortable furniture and calming décor, provide a haven for staff and volunteers to de-stress and recharge.

The well-lit staff room, with its comfortable seating and amenities, provides a designated area for staff to relax, debrief, and receive emotional support from colleagues. This space recognizes the importance of staff well-being and fosters a sense of community within the organization. A dedicated volunteer room and staff office encourage collaboration and teamwork among colleagues.
Additionally, collaborative spaces like the basement meeting area encourage brainstorming sessions and problem-solving. This strategic balance of individual work areas and collaborative spaces ensures staff and volunteers have the space they need to manage their workloads effectively. By providing designated areas that promote focus and productivity, the physical layout reinforces practices of workload management while simultaneously fostering teamwork and creating opportunities for workload distribution.

In conclusion, physical space plays a crucial role in cultivating resilience at Grace Services. It is strategically designed to reinforce the themes that contribute to a resilient staff and volunteer team, from fostering open communication to promoting self-care practices. The layout and amenities all work together to create a supportive and empowering environment.
Chapter Four – Fostering Resilience in Advocacy: Lessons from Grace Services

In this chapter, I will present a summary and conclusion based on the study I conducted at Grace Services. This research delves into Grace Services' approach to cultivating resilience among its dedicated staff and volunteers. By examining how the organization translates this abstract concept into concrete practices, the study identifies key themes and sub-themes that contribute to building resilience within the advocacy workforce. At the end, I will provide recommendations that can be implemented within Grace Services. This research found Grace Services prioritizes staff well-being through open communication, emotional support, and regular check-ins. They offer accessible mental health resources and training to address the challenges of the work. Despite workload demands, Grace Services fosters a sense of community by integrating feedback and offering training programs. The physical space itself contributes to staff well-being with its welcoming atmosphere, amenities, and design promoting collaboration.

Review of Findings

The results underscore the significance of Grace Services' organizational culture and support system. They showcase the organization's commitment to fostering resilience among advocates in a nurturing, flexible, and mission-driven setting, ultimately playing a pivotal role in its success.

Several overarching themes emerged from the data that represent key areas where Grace Services cultivates resilience among its staff and volunteers. They include a supportive work environment, mental health and wellness, workload management, and fostering a sense of community. These themes are further supported by specific subthemes that detail how these
practices are implemented. These subthemes include open communication, emotional support, encouragement, mental health support, regular check-ins, accessible resources, challenges, integration efforts, and training programs.

Findings indicate that fostering open communication and providing emotional support enable staff and volunteers to express challenges and receive help, ultimately building trust and reducing stress. Regular debriefing sessions help staff connect with supervisors, process difficult interactions, and develop coping mechanisms and emotional resilience, enhancing their confidence and readiness to address future challenges. Promoting self-care and mental health demonstrates the organization's commitment to staff well-being, potentially mitigating burnout.

Proactive support systems such as regular check-ins and accessible resources to supervisor’s aid in early issue identification and connecting staff with necessary resources, promoting overall well-being. Integrating volunteers and addressing self-care and secondary trauma in training programs showcases the organization's proactive stance in addressing staff challenges, equipping advocates with self-care strategies and stress management skills. However, the data also points to instances of conflicting experiences of active resilience within the organization.

Under the theme of work management, the data suggests that maintaining a healthy work-life balance proves challenging in their demanding roles. Staff also encounter situations beyond their expertise, leading to stress and emotional strain.

The organizational environment at Grace Services is designed to foster resilience in several ways. An open floor plan promotes easy interaction and communication between staff and volunteers, facilitating check-ins and support. The inviting lobby extends open
communication beyond workspaces, while the break rooms offer a comfortable place for relaxation amidst calming décor. The soothing colors, artwork, and ample natural light create a positive and uplifting atmosphere, subtly encouraging well-being and motivation. Staff rooms are well-lit, providing a space for emotional support and relaxation, and the volunteer room is a dedicated space for volunteers to connect and build a sense of belonging. Workspaces like the volunteer room and staff office promote collaboration and teamwork, while the basement meeting area encourages brainstorming and problem-solving. These workspaces balance individual work areas for focus and productivity with collaborative spaces for teamwork and workload sharing.

**Conclusion**

Based on the indicated findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

By prioritizing mental health and self-care, the organization can help staff and volunteers manage stress and maintain resilience in demanding roles. Feeling supported can help prevent burnout, leading to higher staff retention and improved service delivery to clients. A positive work environment can lead to increased job satisfaction and motivation among staff and volunteers. Open communication and support can foster collaboration and teamwork, ultimately benefiting clients. The calming atmosphere and dedicated spaces for relaxation can contribute to stress reduction and improved mental health. The open layout and dedicated collaborative spaces can facilitate communication, teamwork, and knowledge sharing. A comfortable and supportive work environment can lead to higher job satisfaction and motivation. By prioritizing staff and volunteer well-being, the organization can indirectly improve the quality of services provided to clients.
It appears that Grace Services has cultivated a strong organizational culture and support system that promotes resilience among its staff and volunteers. The physical environment also serves as a critical factor in reinforcing the organization's dedication to wellness and teamwork. Nevertheless, there are certain challenges related to workload and intricate cases that require additional focus.

An organization’s true character can often be revealed by examining how it treats the people who represent it. At Grace Services, advocates are a living embodiment of the organization, mission, and values. They’re not simply parroting positive messages but genuinely experiencing the support and empowerment the organization claims to offer. These advocates feel valued and equipped to do their job effectively. They are a powerful testament to the organization’s integrity.

**Contribution to Understanding Resilience**

This research contributes to a better understanding of fostering resilience within organizations in several ways: It highlights the importance of not just client well-being but also the well-being of staff and volunteers who provide crucial services. The research showcases a comprehensive approach to fostering resilience that goes beyond simply offering resources. It emphasizes the creation of a supportive work culture, workload management strategies, and a sense of community. The research underscores the value of lived experience among staff members. Their unique perspectives can inform practices and strengthen the support offered to clients.

This research also contributes to medical anthropology by offering a deeper understanding of how a non-profit organization fosters well-being within a workforce dedicated
to supporting survivors of trauma. It explores how organizational culture, support systems, and even physical space design can be utilized to mitigate the emotional toll of advocacy work. By examining these factors within the context of Grace Services, this research adds valuable insights to the growing body of knowledge on resilience in medical anthropology, particularly its focus on the human experience within healthcare and social service settings.

Overall, this study on staff and volunteer experiences at Grace Services offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of those working within the IPV, DV, and SV support system. This knowledge can inform policy and practice changes, enhance resilience-building strategies, and ultimately contribute to improved service quality and client outcomes.

**Resilience as Collective Endeavor: A New Perspective**

Resiliency is not only a topic we need to investigate in the lives of individuals. It is also necessary to look at resilience from a collective perspective. Traditionally, resiliency research has focused on individual coping mechanisms and psychological factors that influence how a person bounces back from adversity. However, I suggest that researchers should emphasize the importance of collective resiliency, which examines the support systems in environmental factors that contribute to a group's well-being.

Similar to anthropology's focus on groups and cultures, organizational resilience theory emphasizes the importance of organizational structures and practices in fostering resilience. Just as anthropologists look at social structures and cultural norms, organizational resilience suggests that organizations can build resilience through various strategies and practices. These may include open communication, fostering a culture of learning, encouraging innovation, building
strong social networks, and investing in staff development (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Organizational resilience theory often draws from social support theory, which highlights the importance of strong social networks for individual and organizational well-being (House, 1981). By focusing on collective resilience, we can expand the concept of social support beyond immediate social circles. Grace Services, for example, demonstrates the power of collective support through its focus on building strong social networks among staff and volunteers. This aligns with social support theory by highlighting the importance of belonging and access to emotional support within a group setting. Self-efficacy, an individual's belief in their ability to manage challenges, can also be influenced by the collective environment (Bandura, 1977). When individuals are part of a supportive and empowering group, their sense of self-efficacy is likely to be stronger. This aligns with my research on Grace Services, where access to resources and a sense of belonging likely contribute to advocates' self-efficacy in handling demanding work. Ultimately, this research offers valuable insights for translating theoretical frameworks into actionable strategies. By examining Grace Services' specific practices (open communication, training programs, etc.), my research provides a practical roadmap for organizations to implement these theories and build resilience within their workforce.

While psychology and anthropology share the goal of understanding human behavior, their approaches diverge when it comes to the unit of analysis. Psychologists traditionally focus on the individual, seeking solutions through therapy, cognitive interventions, or medication that target the internal workings of the mind. Their approach assumes that if an individual's problems can be addressed, the issue is resolved.

Anthropologists, on the other hand, take a broader view, examining human behavior within the context of groups and cultures. They see problems as potentially collective, arising
from social structures, cultural norms, or environmental factors. By analyzing group dynamics and cultural influences, anthropologists believe they can identify patterns and root causes that can then be addressed through social programs, community outreach, or policy changes. This focus on the collective allows for a more comprehensive approach to complex issues. The differing definitions of "the problem" stem from the inherent practices within each field.

While psychology's strength lies in its ability to provide targeted support to individuals, by incorporating a collective resilience perspective, psychologists and other researchers can develop more comprehensive solutions. Individual therapy remains important, but understanding the broader social and cultural factors that contribute to individual struggles allows for the development of holistic interventions. These interventions might address not only individual psychology but also social programs, community outreach, or even organizational policy changes that foster collective well-being.

**Recommendations for Grace Services**

The research revealed contradictory findings about workload management that require attention. As a result, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Training:** Continuous training should prioritize preparing employees to handle situations beyond their expertise, as well as emphasizing the importance of support systems. This should equip them with the skills to manage challenging situations and establish boundaries effectively.

- **Encouragement:** Encouragement of peer support networks can provide additional emotional support for both staff and volunteers.
• **Workload management:** The organization should explore strategies to effectively manage workloads and alleviate stress. A focus on workload management will allow staff and volunteers to manage their workloads and personal commitments effectively, reducing stress and promoting overall well-being, a key component of resilience.

Based on feedback from volunteers and staff, I suggest that several key recommendations can significantly improve Grace Services’ effectiveness and responsiveness to their needs.

• **Training and Development:** Volunteers expressed a desire for more training opportunities, particularly in areas such as lethality assessment and unfamiliar topics. This highlights the need for Grace Services to offer ongoing training programs to support volunteer development and confidence.

• **Mental Health and Well-Being:** Staff and volunteers emphasized the importance of mental health support. Grace Services can consider offering workshops or resources on coping mechanisms and self-care strategies to address this need and promote staff and volunteer well-being.

• **Client Services:** Feedback included suggestions for expanding services to better support clients. These included:
  
  o **In–House Legal Advocacy:** Volunteers see a need for in-house legal advocacy to offer support to clients.
  
  o **Shelter Expansion:** Increasing shelter bed capacity was identified as a critical need for the organization.
  
  o **Accessibility of Support Groups:** bringing support groups directly to shelters would improve accessibility for clients and reduce transportation burdens.
- **Mental Health Resources:** Integrating and connecting more with community mental health support services would provide valuable resources for both clients.
- **Professional Counselor:** Having an accredited counselor or social worker on staff, or working closely with the organization, could provide additional support for both clients and staff.

  - **Community Building:** Both staff and volunteers expressed a desire for more opportunities to build connections with each other. Grace Services can explore team-building activities or social events to foster a more cohesive and supportive environment.
  - **Post-Pandemic Environment:** As the pandemic subsides, creating opportunities for in-person interaction and collaboration will be critical for staff and volunteer morale, as well as community building.

By implementing these recommendations, Grace Services can enhance its ability to serve its clients and create a more supportive and rewarding work environment for staff and volunteers.

**Limitations of this Study**

- **Sample Size:** A larger volunteer and staff pool would provide more comprehensive insights into their experiences and perspectives on resilience. This would enhance understanding of the organization's needs for staff and volunteer well-being.
- **Client-Advocate Interaction:** Omitting client perspectives limits understanding of the methods' full effectiveness. Future research should explore client-advocate dialogue to gain a clearer picture of how methods function and contribute to advocacy success.
• **Study Period**: Extended observation would offer richer, longitudinal data. Tracking changes and developments within the organization over time would be particularly valuable for assessing the impact of interventions or policy changes. Additionally, incorporating the opinions of advocates and determining whether their physical environment genuinely boosts their resilience is crucial.

• **Resilience Anecdotes with Family and Friends**: how does the support of family, friends, and romantic partnerships contribute to the resilience of volunteers and staff members? Identifying this would elaborate on volunteer and staff resilience, creating an overview of how external factors guide the way advocates interact within their work and how they help clients.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research should explore three key areas:

1. **Positive Impact of Advocacy**: Understanding the positive impact of advocacy work can empower leaders to leverage strengths and develop strategies for staff and volunteer growth, going beyond solely preventing vicarious trauma (Frey et al., 2016; Pearsall, 2005).

2. **Long-Term Change**: longitudinal studies can assess how staff and volunteer engagement with resilience evolve potentially influencing organizational practices and priorities.

3. **Quantitative Research Methods**: surveys could be used to measure the impact of Grace Services' practices on staff well-being in a more statistically robust way.
Additionally, incorporating feedback from the community and survivors themselves would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Grace Services can improve its services to better meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Advocate Core Training October 2021 (Link Confidential)


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Appendix A: Consent Form

An Ethnographic Study of Grace Services

Researchers
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We are asking you to take part in a research study. Participation is voluntary. The purpose of this form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to participate. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about anything that is not clear. When we have answered all of your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” You will receive a printed copy of the consent form for your own records.

Purpose of Research
The purpose of this study is to examine how the center is experienced by survivors, staff, and volunteers. Additionally, we want to learn how survivors understand and explain “resilience.” In its entirety, my research will strive to understand individual and institutional resilience so that organizations are able to challenge the services they provide to better help people become resilient.

Specific Tasks
If you wish to participate in this study, you can choose to participate in one or more of the following tasks:

- First, I will train at the organization and take notes on how it works (delegations, departments) and what services are provided (housing, advocacy counseling, safety planning). While researching, I will observe how the office runs and how clients engage with the center (for example, is the organization welcoming?). Why or why not?) Private calls or sessions between staff, volunteers, and clients will never be observed. Observations will consist of the following types of ethnographic considerations: where the organization is located, the values and mission of the organization, and how individuals engage with space, such as the office. When observing the organization, I will be in the office space (front desk, volunteer and desk space, all areas, and spaces of the organization except for rooms where private calls between clients and advocates are held). I will observe at least once a week for a minimum of 2.5 hours. There will be no observations of client interaction. People's words will not be recorded. Variables that I will write about are whether it is welcoming and how the individuals engage with the space, for example, the front desk, staff, volunteers, and office space.

- Second, I will invite you to join me in a 30 to 60-minute audio-recorded interview where you will be asked questions about your engagement with the center and your ideas about “resilience.” Demographic questions will also be asked at the end of the
interview. Participants may skip any question. I will pose research questions to figure out why some clients and staff are more resilient than others. Interviews will use sensitive language to provide ethical consideration of traumatic experiences that the participant endured when speaking on their experience of becoming resilient. Samples will be identified and accessed through themes found in clients and staff who have developed resilience.

**Risks and Benefits of Participation**

There are some anticipated risks to participating in this research. If data is leaked or stolen, there is a possibility that data can be linked back to you (for example, someone might recognize your voice, or I might say your name in the interview).

Survivors may appreciate having a say in the services they receive. Survivors may also welcome an opportunity to share their experiences with resilience so that others may learn from them. Volunteers and staff may appreciate sharing ways to improve services.

**Compensation**

By participating in the study, you will receive a physical $25 Amazon gift card.

**For Research Purposes**

Your participation will be kept confidential, meaning I won't share your real name when I write up my reports. Your data will not be used or distributed for future research. Your real names will never be used in this study's reports. I will use pseudonyms (made-up names) to report what I learn.

You may withdraw from the study at any time, and if you want, we will delete any information we have collected. For participants who decide to stay in the study, this signed consent form and field notes from observation and interviews will be scanned and retained for 6 years in a password-protected server managed by Western Washington University.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Jessica Paredes Strong at (360) 448-1966 or paredej@wwu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the Western Washington University Office of Research and Sponsored Program (RSP) at compliance@wwu.edu or (360) 650-2146.

By agreeing to be in this study, you are saying that you are 18 years old or older, have read this form, have had your questions answered, understand the tasks involved, and volunteer to participate in this research.

Do you have any questions for me?

Do you wish to participate and agree to let me observe how you use the center and interview you?

You may keep this form for your records.
Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Guide: Previous/Current Volunteers & Staff

1. Are you a volunteer or are you a staff member?
2. What is/was your position at Grace Services?
3. Approximately how long are your calls?

Resilience can be defined as the process and outcome of adapting to difficult or changing life experiences.

4. How do you define resilience?
5. Has this work made you resilient? How so?
6. What resources has your organization provided for you to be successful? (example: benefits package, work from home stipend)
7. What were or are the options given to you at Grace Services to take care of your mental health? (example: taking a Fridays off each month for your mental health)
8. How are you encouraged by Grace Services to take care of yourself? In what ways?
9. What other resources have they provided for you to take care of your mental health?
10. As a nonprofit, how difficult is it to be provided with resources to help clients in need of services?
11. What challenges do you face as an organization?
12. What challenges have you faced in the past and are still facing today as a staff member/volunteer at Grace Services?
13. What resources has Grace Services provided you with to help survivors?
14. From these resources provided to you to help survivors, what was most helpful?
15. From these resources provided to you to help survivors, what was not so helpful?
16. What would you like to see from Grace Services in the future? (resources, services, policies)