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Selected Texas University Stakeholders' Perceptions of Threat Assessment Teams and Their Impact on Campus Safety

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SELECTED TEXAS UNIVERSITY STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT
ASSESSMENT TEAMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CAMPUS SAFETY

A Dissertation

by

ELIZABETH SILVA

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ASSESSMENT TEAMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CAMPUS SAFETY

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July 2021

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ABSTRACT

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In response to the rising violence on university campuses many institutions of higher education (IHE) have formed Threat Assessment Teams (TAT) on their campuses (Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012). The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the impact that Threat Assessment Teams have had on the campus safety at two large state universities in Texas.

To examine this perception, Threat Assessment Team members as well as selected stakeholders were interviewed, as a method of collecting data. The research design for this study was a Qualitative Collective Case Study (Creswell, 2015). This research investigated the perceptions university stakeholders have about their Threat Assessment Teams and their impact on the safety of the campus. Sampling was purposive and criterion sampling (Creswell, 2015).

The findings have supported the research by reinforcing the need for these Teams to enhance the safety and security of the college community. The themes clarified the perception that these Teams have a positive impact on campus safety, including the support and resources provided to students in need. The study highlighted the importance of the role these teams play on campus. Showing several implications which could improve the TAT and their function for impacting the safety of the college. One of the key recommendations was an assertion that formalizing Threat Assessment Teams on a college campus was essential.

DEDICATION

The completion of my doctoral studies would not have been possible without the love of my family. The strength I have comes from my parents, Susana and Deciderio Silva, my aunt Lala and my uncle Popo, all of which raised me to value education and always place family above all else. I thank my siblings, Diana, Arnoldo, Desi, and David for always believing in me. To my best friend Let Salazar, I thank you for the countless times you listened and encouraged me, and mostly for sharing your family with me. My sister Hilda, thank you for guiding me and always being on my side. To my inspiration and my unwavering supporter, my brother Jim, this is for you, I miss you every day.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Need for the Study	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions.....	7
Methodology Overview	7
Definition of Terms.....	10
Significance of the Study	11
Summary	12
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	14
Historical Perspective	14
Theoretical Framework.....	19
Formation of Threat Assessment Teams.....	23
Campus Safety	32

Summary	36
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	38
Research Design.....	38
Research Questions.....	39
Site and Participant Selection	40
Instrumentation	41
Data Collection Procedures.....	42
Data Analysis Procedures	43
Summary.....	45
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS	47
Stakeholders’ Perceptions.....	50
Theme 1: Role and Impact of the Treat Assessment Team	52
Formation of the Threat Assessment Team	53
Promote Teams’ Existence and Role	56
Promote Access and Training to Report Concerning Behavior.....	59
Assessments of Incidents and Crisis Reports.....	60
Intervention and Case Management.....	61
Theme 2: Perceptions of Safety	62
Police Presence	63
Teams’ 24-Hour Access to Reporting Process	64
Appropriate Team Personnel Provides Specialty Support.....	66
Intervention Support Systems	67
Theme 3: Collaboration, Resources, and Funding Support	69

Alignment of Administration and Team Recommendations	70
Budget Allowances for Team Promotion, Training and Staffing	70
Training Opportunities for All University Stakeholders	72
Summary	72
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND	
RECOMMENDATIONS	75
Purpose of the Study	75
Research Questions	76
Theoretical Framework Summary	76
Findings Summary	79
Conclusions	85
Implications and Recommendations for IHE	88
Recommendations for Future Research	91
Limitations of the Study	92
Summary	92
REFERENCES	94
APPENDIX	101
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	107

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Number of Active Shooter Incidents 2000-2019.....	16
Table 2: Locations of Active Shooter Incidents 2000-2019.....	17
Table 3: 12 Principles of Threat Assessment Team Members	26
Table 4: Emergent Themes and Subthemes.....	51

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many institutions of higher education have formed Threat Assessment Teams on their campuses in response to the rising violence on college and university campuses (Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012; Toppe, 2017). Many of these Threat Assessment Teams have been established on college and university campuses since the tragic incidents that occurred at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 2007, Northern Illinois University in 2008 and Columbine High School in 1999 (Hemphill & Labanc, 2010). A great amount of research has taken place and issues pertaining to best practices and the significance of these teams have been addressed (Brunner, Emmendorfer & Lewis, 2009; Cornell, 2010; Cornell, 2020; Futo, 2011; Graney, 2012; Hoover, 2008; Kanan, 2010; Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009). These teams have been forged based on models from the Secret Service along with best practices from the U.S. Department of Education (Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012).

The factors that contribute to the formation of Threat Assessment Teams are discussed in much of the research. The legal ramifications of developing these teams and the effects of mental health professionals managing cases referred by these teams have been an area that has required the formation of legal processes (Arrigo & Acheson, 2016; Eells, & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Nolan, & Moncure, 2012). Necessary insight to what contributions mental health professional can provide a Threat Assessment Team is also addressed (Blair & Schweit, 2014).

The basic steps for assessing threat on college campuses are to first identify the threat, evaluate the seriousness, intervene, and then monitor a safety plan (Blair & Schweit, 2014; Cornell, 2010). The case management, administrative support, communication, campus-wide education, and cross-disciplinary teamwork are all necessary for a successful Threat Assessment Team. It is essential to have a process and plan of action in place, and a trained team is vital (Kanan, 2010; Toppe, 2017).

As the study by Cornell, (2020) indicates, there are potential benefits to threat assessment beyond violence prevention, such as reductions in the use of school exclusion through suspension, expulsion, or transfer. The finding that schools can administer disciplinary consequences to students without generating racial/ethnic disparities is pivotal. Importantly, the responses to school climate studies in the research reveals some benefits in greater feelings of safety by teachers and reduced bullying reported by students in secondary schools. Threat assessment is a promising approach that merits broader adoption in our nation's schools. Studies such as these by Cornell, (2020) provide data relating to secondary schools, this type of data may also connect to institutions of higher education (IHE).

Researchers have studied various aspects of threat assessment and the function of Threat Assessment Teams on college or university campuses. Cornell (2010), Cornell, (2020), and Kanan (2010) looked at Threat Assessment Teams on college campuses and how students were identified. Graney (2012) and Randazzo and Cameron (2012) looked at best practices for creating a Threat Assessment Team on college campuses. Nolan and Moncure (2012) addressed legal implications for Threat Assessment Teams. Sokolow et al., (2009), focused on the role of mental health professional on Threat Assessment Teams. However, the perspectives and

experiences of Threat Assessment Team members have not often been considered. This study addressed the knowledge that can be gained by looking at how these teams should be formed and developed, as well as how the team members and other university stakeholders perceive the importance of the role, they play with campus safety.

Statement of the Problem

Violence on university campuses across the country has been on the rise, as evidenced by the tragic shooting at Virginia Tech (Hauser, 2007), Northern Illinois University (Muskal, 2012), the University of North Carolina in 2015 and the violent incident at the University of Texas in Austin in 2017 (Svrluga & Larimer, 2017) and more recently at Texas A&M Commerce in 2020 (Bacon & Moritz, 2020). In search of ways to ensure the safety of the college (Sokolow, 2009) and to address the climate of fear across the college community (Kaminski, 2010) many IHE's have formed Threat Assessment Teams (TAT). Threat Assessment Team is a term used to describe a group of purposefully selected staff, administrators, and faculty whose role is to help the campus community identify and respond to students or other individuals who may be exhibiting behaviors of concern. These teams are designed to deal with students that have alerted due to this type of behavior.

The most effective way to ensure the safety of the college from possible threats is to form a team that is trained and efficient (Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012). Due to the increased number of violent incidents on college campuses, the implementation Threat Assessment Teams have become an effective strategy to help mitigate threats. The goal of these multi-disciplinary teams is to identify, assess and provide intervention and case management (Deisinger et al., 2008).

Training the college community is an important aspect that must be considered. Focusing on the identification of a possible threat and training the college community the process for

reporting what is considered suspicious or alarming behavior is a principal component of the TAT process. Identifying these behaviors and reporting them to Threat Assessment Team members or school officials leads to preventing violence (Blair & Schweit, 2014; Graney, 2012; O'Toole, 2000).

Studies have found that schools using this approach can have reductions in the use of school suspension and improvements in student and teacher perceptions of school climate (Cornell, 2020). The most effective way to ensure the safety from possible threats is to form a team that is trained and efficient (Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012).

Golston (2015) spoke to the need for qualitative data, specifically surrounding the study of team training, team funding, and characteristics of functional teams. These teams are created in response to violent campus events and increases in student mental health and behavioral concerns. The mission of these teams is to identify and respond to behaviors categorized as disruptive, dangerous, disturbing, distressed, dysregulated, or due to a medical disability (Eells, Rockland-Miller, 2011; Golston, 2015; Sokolow, Lewis, Wolf, Van Brunt, & Byrnes, 2009).

The Virginia Tech shootings in 2007 pushed campus safety to the top of colleges' agendas, prompting administrators at hundreds of colleges to create Threat Assessment Teams to serve as task forces aimed at mitigating threat. Among other factors in that tragedy, which claimed 33 lives, was a system that did not share student information: Concerns about the shooter from counseling staff, faculty, and the police were kept in silos (Hoisington, 2017). This incident helped encourage colleges to become proactive and build teams to facilitate a safer college campus and positively impact campus climate.

Need for the Study

It was essential to study the significance of Threat Assessment Teams and the perception of the impact these teams have on campus safety. Threat Assessment Teams have a vital role in the safety of the students and the entire college community, including college faculty and staff. Statistics show that murders on college campuses have ranged from 12 in 2012, 24 in 2013 and 11 in 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). There has also been significant research about Threat Assessment Teams on college and university campuses. Many teams have been formed and developed after tragic incidences such as Virginia Tech and the Columbine shootings. On April 16, 2007, the shootings at Virginia Tech led to the recognition, in many reviews and task-force reports, that a multidisciplinary on-campus Threat Assessment Team is considered a best practice for preventing, assessing, and managing on-campus violence. According to the director of the National Behavior Intervention Team Association (NABITA), an estimated 1,600 Threat Assessment Teams are in operation at U.S. colleges, schools, and workplaces; of these, the majority have been established since 2007. Early identification and proactive intervention are the main functions of TAT's and important to student success and campus safety.

Researchers have studied various aspects of threat assessment and the function of Threat Assessment Teams on college or university campuses. Cornell (2010), and Kanan (2010), looked at Threat Assessment Teams on college campuses and how students were identified. Graney (2012) and Randazzo and Cameron (2012) looked at best practices for creating a Threat Assessment Team on college campuses. Nolan and Moncure (2012) addressed legal implications for Threat Assessment Teams. Finally, Sokolow et al., (2009), focused on the role of mental health professional on Threat Assessment Teams.

However, the perspectives and experiences of Threat Assessment Team members have not often been considered. Therefore, this study addressed the knowledge that can be gained by looking at just how these teams should be formed and developed, as well as how the team members and other university stakeholders perceive the importance of the role these teams play on those campuses in respect to campus safety.

Cornell's (2020) research finds there are potential benefits to threat assessment beyond violence prevention, such as reductions in the use of school exclusion through suspension or expulsion. The finding that schools can administer disciplinary consequences to students without generating racial/ethnic disparities. Importantly, the study's responses to school climate surveys reveal some benefits in greater feelings of safety by teachers and reduced bullying reported by students in secondary schools. Building and supporting the use of Threat Assessment Teams is a favorable strategy that can have value for schools. A threat assessment can prevent violence by helping those having issues resolve problems that are causing their threatening behavior. Even if an individual is not actively planning an attack, addressing the underlying conflict can prevent the situation from escalating. A Threat Assessment Team and the support provided can prevent a violent incident (Cornell, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

This research studied the perspective of selected stakeholders on Threat Assessment Teams and their perceptions of the impact on campus safety on two state universities in Texas, one of which has experienced a violent incident and one which has not. Studying these teams and their experiences and perceptions can assist in building effective teams on campuses.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the impact that Threat Assessment Teams have had on the campus safety of two large state universities in Texas. To

examine the perception of this impact, Threat Assessment Team members and selected stakeholders were interviewed to understand better how the formation and function of Threat Assessment Teams have impacted that perception.

The researcher looked at the perception of how these teams have impacted campus safety since their formation. Research has found that school TAT's have been able to resolve thousands of student threats with no serious acts of violence, permitting the majority of students to return to school (Cornell et al., 2018; Randazzo & Cameron, 2012; Sokolow et al., 2014b).

Research Questions

The following research questions served as a guide for the researcher in this study:

1. What are selected university stakeholder perceptions of the threat assessment teams on their campuses?
2. How do members of the Threat Assessment Teams at two selected universities perceive their role with respect to campus safety?
3. How do selected university stakeholders perceive the Threat Assessment Team's impact on campus safety?
4. How do stakeholder perceptions of the impact that Threat Assessment Teams have on campus safety differ from one location that has experienced a major violent incident compared to the other site where a major violent incident has not occurred?

Methodology Overview

The research design for this study was a Qualitative Collective Case Study (Gay et al., 2012; Creswell, 2015). The study examined the perception of the impact that Threat Assessment Teams have had on campus safety of two large state universities in Texas. To examine this impact, Threat Assessment Team members, as well as selected stakeholders, were interviewed to

better understand how the formation and function of Threat Assessment Teams have impacted this perception. The setting of the study included two large state universities in Texas. Data was collected and analyzed from these two universities, named University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter. Data collection began following the approval by the Institutional Review Boards of all participating IHE's. Written consent forms were signed by all parties involved. Stakeholder interviews were conducted individually except for the Student Government interview from University I-Active Shooter, two members of this stakeholder group participated together. Interviews were held individually and via zoom instead of as a focus group to comply with Covid-19 safety protocols. Interviews of stakeholders, consisting of TAT members and representatives from college community, were used to collect data (Creswell, 2015). The researcher interviewed participants, and questions were constructed to gain a solid understanding of the members' perspectives, experiences and the factors that led to the formation of the Threat Assessment Team. Questions, which are included in the appendix, and interviews, were formulated around the perception of the impact that these Threat Assessment Teams have had on the safety of the college community. Sampling was purposive and criterion sampling (Creswell, 2015). Participants included both TAT members and selected members of students and faculty and staff. Representatives of the college community were taken from the Student Government Association and the Staff and Faculty Councils. The data was collected and analyzed using a case study approach. Common themes and perceptions of the members interviewed and observed were noted. The data was analyzed, and the trustworthiness and credibility of the study verified by using the triangulation method (Maxwell & Miller, 2008).

This type of study was selected because it allows participants to express the perspectives and experiences, they have gained by serving on a college or university Threat Assessment Team

(Gay et al., 2012) or by sharing the impact participants feel these teams have had on their college safety. The study allowed for the understanding of the factors that were considered by each institution of higher education when forming these teams and what the significance these team members play in maintaining the perception of the safety of these institutions. According to Gay et al., (2012), qualitative research should include detailed descriptions of the experiences and perspectives of the participants studied. There were a small number of participants, with data collected over a period involving many hours of research (Gay et al., 2012). Data for this study was collected during the spring semester with interviews taking place with each stakeholder.

The researcher was considered the primary data collection instrument (Gay et al., 2012). Stakeholders consisted of both TAT members and other members of the college community. Interviews, both group and individual, were used to collect data from the selected groups. Interview questions and answers were documented. Threat Assessment Team artifacts including procedure manuals and policy manuals were available for review.

Interviews were purposeful interactions where one gains information from another. Information was obtained about past events, and the person's feelings and experiences (Gay et al., 2012). Questions were structured and open ended, with detailed responses, and included probing questions. The questions were the same across all participants but allowed for additional questions based on the group's direction (Gay et al., 2012). Interviews with TAT members were conducted by concentrating on these topic areas: a) perceptions of their role on the university Threat Assessment Team as it pertains to college community safety, b) their experiences while serving on the Threat Assessment Team, c) perception of the presence of the Threat Assessment Team on campus climate. Interview questions for student and faculty members included topic areas such as a) familiarity with the university Threat Assessment Team and their reporting

processes, b) perceptions of impact of the TAT on campus safety, c) perceptions of impact of TAT on campus climate. Interviews were audio, video recorded and transcribed for accurate record (Gay et al., 2012).

The data collected using the processes described and common themes and perceptions of the members interviewed and observed were noted. The transcriptions of the interviews were shared with participants to conduct a member-check to confirm the transcriptions were accurate, valid, and authentic (Creswell, 2015; Mills & Gay, 2016). After the participants verified the transcribed interview data, it was analyzed for themes and common language (Creswell, 2015). These reoccurring statements, themes and descriptions were entered into NVivo. This software program facilitates the coding of qualitative data for interpretation and organization (Creswell, 2015). This coding process assisted the researcher in the analysis of the data and facilitated the naming of themes (Creswell, 2015). The data was analyzed, and the trustworthiness and credibility of the study was verified by using the triangulation method (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). This was the process of strengthening the findings obtained from a qualitative inquiry by cross-checking information. A researcher who argues that his or her findings are derived from many kinds of people across many different situations will be more convincing than another researcher whose conclusions are based on observations of one person in one setting (Patton, 2002).

Definition of Terms

Threat Assessment Teams is defined as interdisciplinary team trained in threat assessment, whose role is to assess, intervene and manage students that display concerning behavior (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012).

The National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA) is a nationwide network of thousands of behavioral intervention team colleagues. This

association provides access to expert violence risk assessment professionals and best practices (Van Brunt, 2012).

Campus Climate is defined as the current attitudes, behaviors, standards and practices of employees and students of an institution. The climate is often shaped through personal experiences, perceptions, and institutional efforts (Coulter & Rankin, 2020).

Significance of the Study

This study was important to all educational systems. The study provided a view into the perceptions of selected university stakeholders on Threat Assessment Teams at University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter and the perception of the impact the formation of these teams had on campus safety. It described the significance in the roles these teams play in ensuring the safety of the entire college community. Factors that contribute to the teams' development was noted in the study as well as the perceived significance of the roles the team members have in ensuring the safety of the college community and the perception of the impact this has had on campus safety. The factors included the creation of these teams to address the support and resources needed by students exhibiting concerning behavior. The cross-discipline membership of each team supports varying functions that facilitates team success. Counselors and Support members provide the mental health and resources that students may need. Police Department members and Student Discipline members provide the necessary action to secure the safety of the college community. The cross-discipline team allows for reporting from all areas of the campus.

The reason for much of this research has been to gain a broader understanding of violence on college and university campuses and to be able to develop teams that can effectively mitigate threats, propose strategies, and denote training that can help prevent targeted violence

(Albrecht, 2010; Cornell & Allen, 2011; Scalora, Simons, & Van Slyke, 2010). In many instances the beginning for such teams on school campuses came from the National Center for the analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), which provided a model that provided a process for evaluating a possible threat and then deciding what needed to be done to neutralize the potential threat (O'Toole, 2000). The research then shows the Safe School Initiative (SSI) significance, presented in 1999 by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education (Pollack, Modzeleski, & Ronney, 2008). According to a study by Deisinger, Randazzo & Nolan (2014), the need for a safe and secure campus is instrumental to providing an effective learning environment. "Many institutions of higher education recognized after the April 2007 tragedy at Virginia Tech that having a threat assessment and management (TAM) team is a best practice, and many have recently created teams or enhanced the operations of existing teams" (Deisinger et al., 2014, p. 105). The formation and function of these teams was essential to address the current campus climate which is showing increases in various measures of fear throughout campuses (Hoisington, 2017; Kaminski, 2010), while formation of these teams have shown improvements in perceptions of campus safety (Cornell, 2020).

Summary

The study provided a deep understanding of the experiences and perspectives of university Threat Assessment Team and group members at two state universities in Texas and to study the perception of this impact on campus safety that the formation of these Threat Assessment Teams have had on these two large state universities.

A contribution of the study was to the understanding of the roles Threat Assessment Teams play in the perceived safety of the college community and perceived impact on campus

safety to decrease campus violence by contributing to student support, awareness, and even institutional policy development.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to investigate selected university stakeholders' perceptions of the Threat Assessment Teams (TAT) on two large state universities, University I Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter, and the perceived impact these teams have on campus safety. The study examined the team members perceptions of their role and the significance of that role for the safety and security of the college community. One research site has experienced an active shooter incident of violence, and the second research site has not seen an incident of such magnitude. Campus safety and the perceived impact that TAT's have on campus safety was addressed. This chapter contains the related research in subsections listed: (1) historical perspective of campus violence and university Threat Assessment Teams, (2) the theoretical framework that provides the basis for this study, (3) the factors that contribute to the formation and role of Threat Assessment Teams, and (4) the impact the formation and functions that these teams have on campus safety.

Historical Perspective

The first incident of college campus violence in the United States can be traced back to the University of Texas Austin in 1966. Charles Whitman climbed to the top of the clock tower in the middle of the campus and killed 17 people and wounded 31 others. The very same day, he killed his wife and mother at their homes. This 1966 shooting at the University of Texas Austin

helps provide us with an understanding of this type of campus violence. The fact that Whitman had expressed his violent thoughts helps us note the importance of the role of Threat Assessment Teams. Whitman had a record of violent outbursts and had been disciplined for threatening a fellow Marine. His records have shown that he told a university psychiatrist that he had thought about climbing the university's clock tower and shooting people (Toppe, 2017). Had a TAT been in place the possibility that the college would have been alerted and provided intervention may have increased the chance of keeping the community safe.

There have been dozens of school shootings during the last two decades, some of the worst being the Columbine massacre, Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University and, of course, Sandy Hook Elementary (Fox, 2014; Gelzhiser, 2018; Hemphill & Labanc, 2010;). An early incident occurred on April 20, 1999, in Colorado where teenagers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold shot up Columbine High School in Colorado. They killed 13 people and wounded 21 others. They killed themselves after the massacre. Another incident took place on April 16, 2007, 32 people died after being gunned down on the campus of Virginia Tech by Seung-Hui Cho, a student at the college who later died by suicide (Hoffman, 2017). On February 14, 2008, on the Northern Illinois University campus, Steven Kazmierczak killed 5 students, wounded 21 and then killed himself. Then on December 14, 2012, in Newtown, Connecticut, Adam Lanza, 20 years old, killed 20 children and six adults at the Sandy Hook Elementary School. He killed his mother, at her home prior to the massacre at the school (Hoffman, 2017).

Table 1 shows the number of active shooter incidents from 2000 to 2019, broken down by year, clearly shows the increase in incidents (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2019).

Table 1*Number of Active Shooter Incidents 2000-2019*

Year	Number of Incidents
2000	3
2001	10
2002	7
2003	12
2004	5
2005	11
2006	12
2007	14
2008	9
2009	19
2010	27
2011	13
2012	21
2013	19
2014	20
2015	20
2016	20
2017	31
2018	30
2019	30
Total	333

The total number of casualties resulting from active shooter incidents for this time frame was 2,849, with 179 killed and 240 wounded in educational facilities (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2019). Threat assessment experts credit the recent rise in gun violence on the increasing use of social media (Follman, 2015). Although there is no definitive research yet, widespread evidence suggests that the speed at which social media bombards us with memes and images exacerbates the copycat effect (Follman, 2015).

Table 2 is a statistical breakdown of the location categories where the 333 active shooter incidents took place in the U.S. from 2000 to 2019 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2019).

Table 2

Locations of Active Shooter Incidents 2000-2019

Location	Number of Incidents	Percentages
Areas of Commerce	147	44.1%
Educational Environments	62	18.6%
Government Property	30	9.0%
Open Spaces	50	15.0%
Residents	13	3.9%
Houses of Worship	15	4.5%
Health Care Facilities	15	4.5%
Other Locations	1	0.3%

Statistics show that murders on college campuses have ranged from 12 in 2012, 24 in 2013 and 11 in 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). There has also been significant research about Threat Assessment Teams on college and university campuses. Many teams have been formed and developed after tragic incidences such as Virginia Tech and the Columbine shootings. The shootings at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007, led to the recognition, in many reviews and task-force reports, that a multidisciplinary on-campus Threat Assessment Team is considered a best practice for preventing, assessing, and managing on-campus violence.

A leader in threat assessment and behavior intervention has been Marissa Randazzo, a former Secret Service agent that now serves as a consultant for those colleges and universities that seek to form Threat Assessment Teams. The basis for creating and managing a Threat Assessment Team comes from the United States Secret Service (USSS) model, known as the

Protective Intelligence Model, and the Safe School Initiative (SSI) that was established in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) (Randazzo & Cameron 2012). This model provides the institution with a guide to build a team that will be tasked with assessing and managing a possible threat or person of concern. The framework for much of the research on Threat Assessment Teams, their developments and functions, comes from the Secret Service model, of threat assessment and the U.S. Department of Education Safe School Initiative (Randazzo & Cameron 2012). The DOE and the USSS collaborated to study planned or targeted violence incidents in the nation's schools. The result, the Safe School Initiative (SSI), examined whether past school-based attacks had been planned and strategized about possible prevention of future attacks (Cornell, 2010; Pollack et al., 2008). A full report of the findings and their implications for applications and further research can be found in the collaborative reports published by the Secret Service. Pollack, Modzeleski, and Rooney (2008) identified the ten key findings from the SSI. Although each is important, the most significant is that at least one other individual had some knowledge or awareness of the attacker's plan in approximately 81% of the incidents; in 59% of cases, more than one individual had prior knowledge. These were primarily peers (93%) such as friends, classmates, and siblings (Pollack et al., 2008; Vossekul et al., 2002).

The Randazzo and Cameron (2012) article on threat assessment also provides the necessary insight to what contributions mental health professional can provide a Threat Assessment Team. The reason for much of this research has been to gain a broader understanding of violence on college and university campuses and to be able to develop teams that can effectively mitigate threats, propose strategies, and denote training that can help prevent targeted violence (Albrecht, 2010; Cornell, 2020; Cornell & Allen, 2011; Fox, 2014; Scalora,

Simons, & VanSlyke, 2010). In many instances the beginning for such teams on school campuses came from the national Center for the analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), which provided a model that denotes a process for evaluating a possible threat and then deciding what needed to be done to neutralize the potential threat (Cornell et al., 2018; O'Toole, 2000). This reviewed the way shooters behaved prior to the violent incidences and if these patterns could help prevent future attacks. The SSI stated that in many incidences of this type of violence, the perpetrator had mentioned the possibility of this targeted violence. In most cases, nothing was done to prevent the attacks. Training the college community is an important aspect that must be considered. Making the surrounding people understand the importance of identifying a possible threat and reporting what is deemed suspicious, or alarming is essential. Identifying these behaviors and reporting them to Threat Assessment Team members or school officials leads to preventing this violence (Cornell, et al., 2018; O'Toole, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Student Development Theory such as Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009) was the basis from which this study stemmed. The study investigated the formation and perceptions of Threat Assessment Team (TAT) members and how they manage college students, the development of these students and what may cause them to be reported to the TAT for assessment, provided solid foundation for the study. When considering Student Development Theory, we can look at Schlossberg's Transition Theory which addresses how a student handles a significant change, loss or event as a transition (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). These transitions may contribute to a student being reported and assessed as "concerning". Theories of Student Development profess that the college years are ripe with growth and changes, both psychosocial and developmental. And within the developmental realm,

there are issues of personal development as well as moral development. The student development theories of Chickering and Boyer all address developmental stages that focus on college students and their experiences and growth (Coye, 1997; Hall & Chickering, 1982; Higbee, 2002).

The formation of these teams and their process to manage and support the students' developmental needs contributes to the safety of the college community. This study addressed some of the variables or constructs included TAT formation, team training, team management, students of concern, disruptive behavior, college stressors, mental health, isolation, assessment, case management, support, counseling, discipline, separation, campus climate. These variables provide an organized map of Threat Assessment Teams, how they are formed and how they manage students concerning behavior, providing support and case management to contribute to campus safety and possibly impact campus climate. There has been a significant amount of research conducted about campus violence and Threat Assessment Teams and many studies focusing on campus climate. There is limited research concerning Threat Assessment Teams and their impact on campus climate; of course, it provides the foundation for this study's need.

There have been studies that have used student development theories as to their theoretical basis. Self (2017), addressed college Threat Assessment Teams at four Universities in Oklahoma, created in response to violent campus events and increases in student mental health and behavioral concerns. The mission of these teams was to identify and respond to behaviors categorized as disruptive. Threat Assessment Teams were designed to prevent campus violence and address concerns through information gathering, analysis, and intervention. While it may never be known how these teams have prevented many acts of violence, suicides, or other student issues, this research allowed for a better understanding of team functioning, team member experiences, and of the value of having these teams on college campuses. This research

may be used by teams, administrators, and other decision-makers to maximize student success, safety, and retention (Self, 2017). Schlossberg's Transition Theory provided a framework for conceptualizing TATs. Transition Theory was focused on the individual, the transition, the context of the situation, and the timing surrounding the transition. These factors, along with situation, self, support, and strategies, formed the theoretical lens through which TAT activities were viewed (Self, 2017).

In Dennison's (2017) research the purpose of the phenomenological study was to describe how the chairs of the Threat Assessment Teams from universities comprising the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) gauge the effectiveness of their Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) or Threat Assessment Team (TAT). The creation and utilization of a TAT was explored. The focus was on the formation and the dynamics of the group under a variety of circumstances. This study enabled institutions to learn from one another and improve how we collaborate across campus to work with individuals who express the propensity toward being in danger or dangerous.

The researcher used Student Development in Higher Education as the theoretical framework for the study. Chickering's Seven Vectors theory of college student development was determined with many student development theoretical perspectives from which to choose for this particular study. Vector 2 focusing on the skill of managing emotions; vector 4 concentrating on developing mature interpersonal relationships and vector 7 expressing proficiency in developing integrity (Hall & Chickering, 1982).

In Kramer-Jefferson (2017) the study looked at the Americans with Disabilities Act. This research focused on the change that removed the threat of harm to self from the direct threat standard, which potentially limits the actions that colleges can take when working with and

responding to students who threaten self-harm. This study sought to determine how this change influenced the work of TATs when responding to community college students who threaten self-harm. Higher numbers of students are arriving on college campuses with significant mental health challenges, especially community colleges that typically have open enrollment policies and attract at-risk students. Many Threat Assessment Teams were formed in the aftermath of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University shootings in April 2007, some through state mandates, and others as best practices (Fox, 2014; Hemphill & Labanc, 2010). The theoretical framework the study evolved from a type of student development theory. This framework connected this study to the origins of student development theory in higher education. It tied it to the evolution of specific behavior intervention models used by practitioners in the field. This framework provided the foundation for a multiple-case study investigating Maryland community colleges' decision making and intervention practices when working with students threatening self-harm (Kramer-Jefferson, 2017).

According to Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn (2009), Schlossberg's Transition Theory was developed to better understand and support those going through a time of transition. The research shows that better-understanding students as they transition into college will help them adjust successfully. As a Threat Assessment Team understanding the transition these students face can make the difference needed to provide the students' resources. Students often referred to the team for assessment and case management display concerning behavior and often struggle with a time of transition, a loss, a failure, or even mental health issues.

Gale and Parker (2014), focused on student development theory based in psychology and was later applied to counseling, which allowed for a practical theory-to-practice framework. A "transition" forms the basis of the first parallel between transition theory and student

development. For example, transition theory states that any event or non-event perceived by the individual as a significant event, change, or loss that alters the individual's assumptions, roles, or view of self can be a transition.

Threat Assessment Teams and the possible impact they may have on changing campus climate lies first with supporting and impacting the student development of the students that can most benefit from intervention. The studies show that a main function of a TAT is to help provide that support (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008). This theory supports the study as it addresses the way these Threat Assessment Teams assess, intervene, and support those students with behavioral issues that may affect the safety of the college. The understanding of these student developmental theories can help guide this support process. The theoretical framework in this study considers the development of students being reported and does not consider the reported behavior of employees or visitors to the campus.

Formation of Threat Assessment Teams

A Threat Assessment Team is a multidisciplinary team that interacts and operates regularly and as needed for crises (Deisinger et al., 2008). The team evaluates reports of threats or other behaviors of concern by any student or employee of a college or university, including people who are not affiliated with the institution but who may directly impact the campus community's safety and develops management and response strategies that are meant to be both rapid and effective (Deisinger et al., 2008).

An intricate part of a successful TAT is leadership (Van Brunt, 2012). Graney's (2012) adheres to the practice of TAT leaders ranging from vice president of student affairs to the director of disability services. Studies show the most frequently reported leader was the assistant or associate of the dean of students' office. The vice president of student affairs primarily

provides oversight of the team. NABITA provides information stating that counseling center directors were the chairs of about 10% of the surveyed teams and senior student-affairs officers (66%) most commonly serves as chairs. The profile noted that senior student-affairs administrators were particularly well positioned to be team leaders because many team concerns and functions tend to reside within their areas of oversight and their leadership tends to demonstrate a student-support focus (Schiemann & Van Brunt, 2018). Brian Van Brunt (2012) noted that although the most common leader is someone within student affairs, there has been a recent trend of hiring case managers or team chairs as stand-alone positions.

Graney (2012) covered the best practices recommended by the U.S. Department of Education and focuses on constructing teams that represent areas from all over the campus. The areas or departments represented should have repeated student contact and should be able to submit information about students that alert and may have exhibited disturbing behavior. The purpose of these Threat Assessment Teams, or behavior intervention teams was to deal with students in crisis situations, which may include disturbing behavior, or medical or psychiatric situations. Threat Assessment Teams help reduce the likelihood of threat and have become increasingly effective in addressing the increased number of violent incidences on college campuses. The goal of these multi-disciplinary teams was to identify, assess and provide intervention and case management (Deisinger et al., 2008). The research references the Secret Service and the U. S. Department of Education when discussing the recommendations for establishing Threat Assessment Teams (Brunner, Emmendorfer & Lewis, 2009). There was an emphasis on creating teams that are cross-disciplinary and that also include professionals from outside the educational setting; municipal law enforcement agencies and mental health agencies

may be able to provide critical information when trying to identify and assesses students of concern (Okada et al., 2011).

Maher (2014) also focused on increasing violence on college campuses, just as Graney (2012) covers in his article. According to Maher (2014) this increase of violence forced colleges and universities to establish legal processes to keep the college communities safe. The implementation of Threat Assessment Teams has been one way that colleges have taken steps towards safer campuses. The incident at Virginia Tech, where a student killed 32 people and wounded 23, then killed himself, triggered many IHE to form their Threat Assessment Teams to secure the college community's safety (Cornell, 2010). Research has focused on the importance of creating Threat Assessment Teams and the processes and procedures these teams follow. There are two different focuses when looking at Threat Assessment Teams and the approach that they focus on. Target-based violence is aimed a certain person or group (Reddy, Borum, Berglund, Vossekuil, Fein, & Modzelski, 2001). The other focus is concentrating on risk assessment and warning behaviors. "Warning behaviors are acts which constitute evidence of increasing or accelerating risk. Acute, dynamic, and particularly toxic changes in patterns of behavior may aid in structuring a professional's judgment that an individual of concern now poses a threat" (Meloy et al., 2011, p. 256).

According to the director of the National Behavior Intervention Team Association (NABITA), an estimated 1,600 Threat Assessment Teams are in operation at U.S. colleges, schools, and workplaces; of these, the majority have been established since 2007. Early identification and proactive intervention are main functions of TAT's and essential to student success and campus safety (Van Brunt, 2012). Following the tragic campus shooting at Virginia Tech, Threat Assessment Teams were formed to prevent future acts of targeted violence at

institutions of higher education. Teams work to cultivate university cultures where reporting and referrals are standard. Teams may intervene early with individuals struggling with various issues, from depression to homelessness to thoughts of violence. When concerns were identified early, teams can proactively engage with the individuals to provide the support resources needed to better navigate and overcome their challenges. The goal of intervention was to identify, de-escalate and increase the chances of a student success. Even when team efforts result in the removal of students from campus, doing so often increases the likelihood that others may then continue their studies in a safer environment, and many times also provides a plan to help the removed students transition out of the institution safely (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009; Sokolow et al., 2014a; and Van Brunt, 2012).

Table 3 shows the 12 principles that describe some characteristics of a successful Threat Assessment Team (Graney, 2012).

Table 3

12 principles of Threat Assessment Team Members

Principle	Description
1	Certain acts of violence can be prevented. The identification of pre-attack behavior can assist with preventing violence.
2	Violence can be a dynamic event, team members need to understand that the several factors may lead to a situation, not a static event.
3	Violence that is targeted involves interaction from an individual of concern, a triggering action, and a setting. These three factors impact if an actual event takes place.
4	Sharing of information is vital for a successful threat assessment and action plan to resolve it.
5	Focus on the behavior, not the profile of the situation or person involved.

- 6 Working with various offices and agencies can assist with a positive resolution. Information needs to be readily communicated for an effective response and outcome.
 - 7 Ask the question “does the person pose a threat?” Posing a threat may indicate potential future acts of violence.
 - 8 The safety and welfare of the victim(s) needs to be priority.
 - 9 Early identification of behaviors could impact a timelier intervention.
 - 10 Utilizing multiple reporting structures can assist with timely notification of issues. Campuses should provide a process for anyone in their community to share information.
 - 11 Responses should be multifaceted and include the following items. Interventions to de-escalate a situation, referral to area resources, and reduce access to potential victim.
 - 12 Safety is priority #1 for Threat Assessment Teams.
-

An essential training tool used for Threat Assessment Teams was the STEP model introduced by Deisinger, Randazzo and Nolan (2014). The model looked at both assessment and strategies for resolving issues presented to a Threat Assessment Team. The S component viewed the Subject of concern: what types of behaviors, history, or characteristics present themselves to be evaluated by such a team. T represented the Target that may have been identified in the situation. The E represented the Environment; teams were challenged with assessing what dynamic issues impacted the situation at hand. Lastly, P represented the Precipitating events that may cause an event to take place.

Nolan and Moncure (2012) looked at the legal indications of threat assessment and case management. The focus was on what mental health professionals need to know about possible legal implications when managing cases referred by Threat Assessment Teams. Different laws

must be considered such as, privacy law, disability law and standards of care. When forming a team and considering how to develop that team, legal restrictions must be considered to establish the most effective team possible. Eells and Rockland-Miller (2011), like Nolan and Moncure (2012) look at the legal issues relevant to Threat Assessment Teams on college campuses and what is needed to keep the individual safe as well as the rest of the college community. The article addresses the challenges of forming these teams, models for structuring them, names, documentation, and group dynamics. When teams are formed, they should be given the authority to follow processes and procedures that will aid in the identification of possible threats on campus. They must be able to investigate, evaluate and then manage behaviors of concern. Threat Assessment Teams should have an established mission statement that is clear and understood by the college community. The scope must be clear and the authority to evaluate both students and employees displaying concerning behavior should remain clear. These of teams should adopt standard processes that are well documented (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011). The team should outline the how identification will be made, information gathered, the assessment process, and the implementation of case management required to reduce possible threat (Randazzo & Cameron 2012; Reddy et al., 2001).

Mental health professionals can play a critical role on a Threat Assessment Team. Their expertise on mental health issues and mental health disorders are invaluable for a team particularly during the case management part of the team process (Harwood, 2011). Client confidentiality may be a concern when counselors serve on a Threat Assessment Team. Still, the need is there for counselors to provide the team with a general understanding of the mental health issue and the resources that may be available in the community (Futo, 2011). According to Sokolow et al., (2009), a counselor can measure mental health related risk with the use of a

“D” scale. The “D” scale progressively escalates from “Distress”, emotionally troubled, depressed, or unstable and may be having trouble adapting and coping to stressors. The next level is “Disturbance”, which indicates that disruptive behavior increases or possible substance abuse. The following level is “Dysregulation” which means suicidal thoughts, risk-taking, hostile, and aggressive behavior. The final level is “Medical Disability” meaning profound disturbance, detached from reality or psychotic breaks.

A clear example of the outcry of many school shooters was Cho, the Virginia Tech shooter (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008). The authors of this article describe Cho as being diagnosed with depression and selective mutism. He was in and out of psychiatric care and referred to the University’s Counseling Center based on his behavior. He demonstrated social isolation and alienation. He never formed social relationships and, on several occasions, exhibited suicidal ideation (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008).

School shootings and campus violence are crises that are often met with college and local law enforcement, but they also become mental health emergencies (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008). Counseling personnel immediately begin work with friends, fellow housing residents and the general college community following a campus shooting. Mental Health professionals meet with family and are often available when death notices are given to family members. It is a comprehensive response to a massive tragedy (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008).

Cornell (2010) describes the four basic steps of threat assessment; identify threats, evaluate seriousness, intervene, and monitor safety plan. This article covers both the Secret Service model covered by Randazzo and Cameron (2012) and the FBI model for establishing Threat Assessment Teams. The author delves deeper into what is needed for successful team development, administrative support, campus-wide education, and cross-disciplinary teamwork.

Profiling was one of the first structured attempts to build a composite of a violent person. The way a person looked, and how they behaved might indicate violent behavior. The way a person thought or even his or her background was included in a profile composite. Profiling and analyzing a violent person could then lead to potentially identifying other violent people more easily. If identification took place, then there could be intervention, and future violence could be prevented. Profiling attempted to resolve a complex situation with a simple method (Hollister, et al., 2014; O'Toole, 2000). Clinical judgments by school counselors that assess students at risk are often seen. Still, this type of assessment lacks the specialized training explicitly geared toward threat assessment and is often ineffective (Cornell, 2010). The U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education have agreed that there is no set profile of a school shooter (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012). The National Center for Higher Education Risk Management (NCHERM) levels of risks are outlined by five levels.

Mild risk included disruptive behavior but no threat being present and no immediate sign of distress in the student. Moderate risk includes more repeated disruptions, possible dangers, but it is vague and indirect. Threats lack realism and information is inconsistent. Seriously disruptive incidents note elevated risk; the threat is vague and indirect but is repeated. The threat is repeated with variations and content suggests it is likely to not be carried out. Severe risk means advancing threat is present and threat is vague but is direct and specific. Threat is repeated with consistency. Extreme risk means a student is unstable and threat is present. The threat is concrete and specific and likely to be repeated and consistent. There may be reference to weapons and student seems detached (Sokolow et al., 2009).

Kanan (2010) stresses the importance of a trained team and the need for a process to be in place. There must be a plan to follow, and that process needs to be followed for all incidences.

Training needs to take place across the different departments with a set procedure serving as an integral part of the training. Processes for evaluating the information brought to the team are necessary. The need to protect the student exhibiting the concerning behavior is just as important as protecting the college community.

Futo (2011) looks at the importance of communication within all the departments that make up a Threat Assessment Team. The importance of training across the different areas and the need for a process to be established is prevalent throughout this article. Futo (2011), Cornell (2010) and Kanan (2010) all stress these same points. There is a consensus that these types of teams need to be trained effectively and communication is important for effectiveness and efficiency.

Hoover (2008) discusses what took place after violent incidences such as Virginia Tech and what was done to help secure all college campuses. The focus was discussing the best ways to establish a Threat Assessment Team. Along the same path as Cornell (2010), Futo (2011), Hoover (2008) and Kanan (2010) stresses the need to communicate and share information about students in crisis to best manage their needs.

Schwartz's (2012) article reviews the book; *This is not a fire drill: Crisis intervention and prevention on college campuses* by R. Meyer, R. James and P. Moulton looks at crisis post-intervention. The discussion of tabletop exercises is greatly beneficial especially for mental health professionals. There must be constant communication between administration, faculty, and staff across the college community. Those with daily student contact are of particular importance, to be able to share pertinent information. In many cases of campus violence, events were foreshadowed by an escalation in threatening behavior. For example, James Holmes withdrew from his Ph.D. program at the University of Colorado and killed 12 people in a theater

a month later. He had told the university psychiatrist that he fantasized about killing people. Another example was Amy Bishop, a professor who shot three fellow faculty members after being denied tenure. In her case a Dean and a University Provost had already requested police protection (Maher, 2014). Both law enforcement and mental health professionals play a vital role in the identification and case management of potential crises.

Campus Safety

The Virginia Tech shootings in 2007 pushed campus safety to the top of colleges' agendas, prompting administrators at hundreds of colleges to create Threat Assessment Teams to serve as task forces aimed at mitigating threat. Among other factors in that tragedy, which claimed 33 lives, was a system that did not share student information: Concerns about the shooter from counseling staff, faculty, and the police were kept in silos (Hoisington, 2017). This incident helped encourage colleges to become proactive and build teams to facilitate a safer college campus and positively impact campus climate.

The National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment, known as NABITA, was established in 2009 to support the creation of threat-assessment teams by providing guidance and training. The organization is comprised of over 900 college and university members. Threat Assessment Teams include representatives from campus counseling centers, police departments, and student-services divisions (Sokolow et al., 2014a). Research shows that most mass shootings end in suicide, supporting the idea that mental-health crises can sometimes spiral into acts of violence against others. Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, Swinton, and Van Brunt, (2014a) stress that for each of these cases, the challenge is to avoid be reactive, but to continue to be sensitive, supportive, and not make the school feel responsible for the attacks. It is

imperative to look at these attacks to try and understand what it is that can be done differently at colleges and universities to get out in front of these problems.

According to a study by Deisinger, Randazzo & Nolan (2014), the need for a safe and secure campus is instrumental to providing an effective learning environment. “Many institutions of higher education recognized after the April 2007 tragedy at Virginia Tech that having a threat assessment and management team is a best practice, and many have recently created teams or enhanced the operations of existing teams” (Deisinger et al., 2014, p. 105). There exists a set of directives for how IHEs should operationalize institutional responses to threats. A series of guiding principles has been established for student affairs professionals. One of the key recommendations was an assertion that formalizing threat-assessment teams on a college campus was essential. While many campuses have long had in place an informal network of colleagues who work together to identify and address troubling situations involving students, the time to rely on informal systems has passed. Colleges and universities should implement formal Threat Assessment Teams to identify and address concerns in which students’ behavior indicates they may be having trouble in functioning or may be a threat to self or others (Jablonski et al., 2008). Despite this growing consensus, institutional practices are not uniform. Gregory Eells and Harry Rockland-Miller, (2011) note that although many state laws have been passed requiring IHEs to establish threat-assessment teams, “there continues to be considerable variability in the models used and a lack of understanding about the role and function of these teams” (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011, p. 9).

Miller, (2014) states a Congressional Research Service report “estimates that 547 people have died in public mass shootings over the past 30 years, 19,766 died from gun-related suicides in 2011 alone” (p. 64). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (2017) and the

University of Texas there has been a spike in the rate of mass shootings between 2007 and 2013 from 16.4 shootings compared to 6.4 shootings during the years 2000–2006 (Blair & Schweit, 2014). Gun violence and gun control issues have become serious public health problems. A study by (Lewis et al., 2016) gathered the opinions of 419 college students from a Midwestern University. Those participating in the study were asked about purchasing assault weapons, beliefs about bringing handguns to college campuses and beliefs about contributing factors that lead to gun violence. Surveys were completed online, where findings showed that overall, 54 % of respondents believed that military assault weapons should be banned and 53 % agree that teachers should be allowed to carry a registered handgun on campus. There were statistically significant differences between males and females on these issues. Females believed military assault weapons and high-capacity magazines should be banned more than male students. On the other hand, female students were more likely to think that schoolteachers should carry registered handguns on school campuses than their male counterparts. The top four contributing factors that students believed led to gun violence were decline in parenting and family values (17 %), gang involvement (14 %), bullying (13.8 %) and guns being easy to obtain (13.8 %).

Kaminski et al. (2010) suggested that media coverage of mass shooting incidents, such as those on the Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University campuses, may have significantly increased student fear of crime and fear of becoming a victim. The research suggested that the incidence of fatal campus shootings has been trending upwards over the last two decades. Given these findings, it is conceivable that media coverage of any future mass shootings could contribute to a climate of fear among students and university officials (Lee, 2015; Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011).

Lee (2015) addressed college student's perception of gun violence on campus. There was a significant indication that college students perceived supporting students' mental health as a strong need associated with college gun violence. The findings showed that one third of college campus counseling centers nationwide hired new staff and allowed for an average of a 15% increase in their budget following the Virginia Tech shooting tragedy (Lee, 2015; Lewis et al., 2016).

In Birnbaum (2013), the author addresses the general idea that colleges and universities have become increasingly dangerous. The perception among the college community is divided into two main concepts. One is that campus violence could be prevented by increasing the number of armed individuals legally allowed on campus; the other is the belief that campus violence would be controlled by a complete ban on weapons allowed on campus. Gun-rights advocates argue that limiting gun restrictions could increase security on campus and keep violence from happening. On the other hand, most college administrators, and law enforcement stand behind the premise that allowing concealed weapons on campus will increased risks, will not stop future attacks, and lead to confusion during emergency situations (Birnbaum, 2013).

As the study by Cornell, (2020) indicated, there are potential benefits to threat assessment beyond violence prevention, such as reductions in the use of school exclusion through suspension, expulsion, or transfer. The finding that schools can administer disciplinary consequences to students without generating racial/ethnic disparities. Importantly, the study's responses to school climate surveys reveal some benefits in greater feelings of safety by teachers and reduced bullying reported by students in secondary schools. Threat assessment is a promising approach that merits broader adoption in our nation's schools.

Helping college communities heal during violent incidents can be aided when communities feel that there is a process that can help. A place to report and provide resources for the victims of tragedy and those that may need support. Often, the threats that may have been mitigated go without exposure, the referrals and resources provided before the break down occurs is often the goal and in turn the quiet success (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012).

Summary

This literature review provided an overview of Threat Assessment Teams on College and University campuses. The study provided an insight into the historical perspective of campus violence, and the formation and development of Threat Assessment Teams. Since the study investigated the formation and perceptions of Threat Assessment Team (TAT) members and how they manage college students, the development of these students is a solid foundation. The theoretical framework helped to provide the researcher with a clear foundation for the study. Student Development Theory such as Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Change Theory was the basis for this study. According to the Schlossberg's Transition Theory, how a student handles a significant change, loss or event is a transition (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). These transitions may contribute to a student being reported and assessed as "concerning". Teams such as these are established to address campus safety and often the current campus climate which is showing increases in various measures of fear throughout campuses (Hoisington, 2017; Kaminski, 2010), while formation of these teams have shown improvements in perceptions of campus climate (Cornell, 2020).

This theory supported the study as it addresses the way these Threat Assessment Teams assess, intervene, and support those students with behavioral issues that may affect the safety of the college. The understanding of these student developmental theories, such a Schlossberg's

Transition Theory and Change Theory, can help guide this support process. The theoretical framework in this study considers the development of students being reported as exhibiting concerning behavior and does not consider the reported behavior of employees or visitors to the campus.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In response to the rise of violence on college and university campuses this study used a qualitative collective case study to understand the perspectives of the Threat Assessment Team and group members representing two state universities in Texas. This research explored the perceived impact that the implementation of Threat Assessment Teams has had on college safety.

The methodology chapter served as the blueprint moving forward in this research initiative and supplied a detailed description of the research sites, participants, and information gathered for inclusion in the findings and analysis. The researcher described the research design used for this study, stated the research questions, described the site and participant selection, the data collection procedures, and data analysis methods.

Research Design

The research design for this study was a qualitative collective case Study (Creswell, 2015; Gay et al., 2012). The two case studies examined in this research were two large state universities, University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter. One location chosen had experienced a violent incident in the past and one location had not experienced a major violent incident on campus. According to Gay et al. (2012), qualitative research should include detailed descriptions of the experiences and perspectives of the participants studied. A case study design is used to understand the situation and meaning for those involved. A case study is a process of investigation (Creswell, 2015). Creswell (2015) posits that a case study

examines a system, such as an activity or process. This is accomplished by collecting extensive data (Creswell, 2015). This type of study was selected because it allows for the selected participants to express their perspectives concerning the effect Threat Assessment Teams have had on campus safety and climate (Gay et al., 2012). There shall be a small number of participants, with data collected over a period involving many hours of research (Gay et al., 2012).

The utilization of this design described the Threat Assessment Teams at each IHE. When establishing and implementing these teams each institution considered the needs of the college community and each member contributed an essential function for team success. The significance of each team and the impact they made on maintaining the safety of the college. This research explored the experiences and perspectives of Threat Assessment Team members and stakeholder participants. These stakeholder participants included students and faculty and staff not serving on Threat Assessment Teams, so that perspectives can be examined from both TAT members and non-TAT members. Non-TAT members were chosen from Student Government Association, Staff Council and Faculty Council. The study addressed the impact that the implementations of Threat Assessment Teams had on college safety on both state universities. We understood the factors considered by each institution of higher education when forming these teams and the significance these team members play in maintaining the safety of these institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the researcher in this study:

1. What are selected university stakeholder perceptions of the Threat Assessment Teams on their campuses?

2. How do members of the Threat Assessment Teams at two selected universities perceive their role with respect to campus safety?
3. How do selected university stakeholders perceive the Threat Assessment Team's impact on campus safety?
4. How do stakeholder perceptions of the impact that Threat Assessment Teams have on campus safety differ from one location that has experienced a major violent incident compared to the other site where a major violent incident has not occurred?

Site and Participant Selection

The setting of the study included two large state universities in Texas. Data was collected and analyzed from these two universities, named University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter. One location chosen had experienced a violent incident in the past and one location had not experienced a major violent incident on campus. Sampling was purposive and criterion sampling (Creswell, 2015). The study included selecting organizing stakeholder participants consisting of members of both university Threat Assessment Teams and stakeholders representing Faculty Council, Staff Council and Student Government Association. This was part of the purposive and criterion sampling process (Creswell, 2015; Mills & Gay, 2016). The researcher interviewed stakeholders from both University settings.

University policies and procedures were considered when obtaining clearance to conduct the study. Data collection began following the approval by the Institutional Review Board (Gay et al., 2012). Written consent forms were signed by all parties involved. Questions, comprised from the literature review and theoretical framework, were used to gain information about students, faculty, and staff perceptions about their TAT's. Participants are members of both IHE TAT's and selected participants from outside TAT membership. The data was collected and

analyzed using a case study approach. Common themes were derived from perceptions of the participants interviewed and were noted from the analyzed transcriptions.

Instrumentation

The researcher was considered the primary collection instrument (Gay et al., 2012). Group and individual interviews were used to gain information about students', staff, and faculty's perceptions about their TATs. Interviews of selected stakeholder members were used as a method of collecting data (Creswell, 2015). Stakeholder interviews were conducted individually except for the Student Government interview from University I-Active Shooter, two members of this stakeholder group participated together. Interviews were held individually and via zoom instead of as a focus group to comply with Covid-19 safety protocols. Team members and other stakeholder participants were interviewed, and questions were constructed to gain a solid understanding of the members' perspectives, experiences and the factors that led to the formation of the Threat Assessment Team. Questions, which are included in the appendix, were formulated around the impact these Threat Assessment Teams have had on the safety of the college community. Sampling was purposive and criterion sampling (Creswell, 2015). The interviews provided data about the composition and purpose of each campus's team. This instrument helped the researcher understand the college community's perceptions about their respective TAT's, their impact on college safety and campus climate. Group and individual interviews with each group took place, interview questions and answers were documented (Gay et al., 2012).

Interviews were purposeful interactions where one gains information from another. Information can be obtained about past events and the person's feelings and experiences (Gay et al., 2012). Questions were structured and open ended, with detailed responses, including probing

questions. The questions were the same across all focus groups and allowed for additional questions based on the group's direction (Gay et al., 2012). Interviews with TAT members were conducted by concentrating on these topic areas: a) perceptions of their role on the university Threat Assessment Team as it pertains to college community safety, b) their experiences while serving on the Threat Assessment Team, c) perception of the presence of the Threat Assessment Team on campus safety. Interview questions for student and faculty group members included topic areas such as a) familiarity with the university Threat Assessment Team and their reporting processes, b) impact of the TAT on perceptions of campus safety, c) perceived impact of TAT on campus climate.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began following the approval by the Institutional Review Boards of all participating IHE's. Participants were selected from TAT members, students, faculty and staff. Stakeholder interviews were conducted individually except for the Student Government interview from University I-Active Shooter, two members of this stakeholder group participated together. Interviews were held individually and via zoom instead of as a focus group to comply with Covid-19 safety protocols. Group and individual interviews were used to gain information about students, faculty, and staff's perceptions about their TATs (Creswell, 2015). Threat Assessment Team members and stakeholder participants were interviewed, and questions were constructed to gain a solid understanding of the members' perspectives, experiences, and the factors that led to the formation of Threat Assessment Team and the impact these teams have had on college safety (Creswell, 2015).

Interviews were audio, video recorded and transcribed for accurate record (Gay et al., 2012). The record of interviews contained descriptive notes such as what the researcher sees and

hears and reflective notes such as thoughts, personal reactions, and experiences (Gay et al., 2012).

The data collected using the processes described and common themes and perceptions of the participants interviewed were noted. The transcriptions of the interviews were shared with participants to conduct a member-check to confirm the transcriptions are accurate, valid, and authentic (Creswell, 2015; Mills & Gay, 2016). After the participants have verified the transcribed interview data, it was be analyzed for themes and common language (Creswell, 2015). These reoccurring statements, themes and descriptions were noted after hand coding by the researcher and utilizing NVivo. This software program facilitated the coding of qualitative data for interpretation and organization (Creswell, 2015). This coding process and the researcher's hand coding processes assisted the researcher in the analysis of the data and facilitated the naming of themes (Creswell, 2015).

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis process considered the study's theoretical framework. Since the study investigates the formation and perceptions of Threat Assessment Team (TAT) members and how they manage college students, the development of these students is a solid foundation. An example of a Student Development Theory is Schlossberg's Transition Theory. According to this theory, how a student handles a significant change, loss or event is a transition (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). The formation of these teams and their process to manage and support the students' developmental needs, especially in time of crisis, impacts the safety of the college community. Some of the variables or constructs that this study addressed included TAT formation, team training, team management, students of concern, disruptive behavior, college

stressors, mental health, isolation, assessment, case management, support, counseling, discipline, separation, campus climate.

Common themes and perceptions of the members interviewed were noted. The data collected using the processes described in the previous subsection of this study was analyzed using a case study approach, which was selected for this study. This was chosen to fully understand the experiences and perceptions of the participants in the study regarding being members of Threat Assessment Teams. Interviews, with TAT members and stakeholder participants, were recorded and transcribed. Coding was conducted by hand coding or with NVivo software.

The data was analyzed, and the trustworthiness and credibility of the study was verified by using the triangulation method (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). This was the process of strengthening the findings obtained from a qualitative inquiry by cross-checking information. A researcher who argues that his or her findings are derived from many kinds of people across many different situations will be more convincing than another researcher whose conclusions are based on observations of one person in one setting (Patton, 2002).

According to Patton (2002), methods triangulation was the use of multiple research methods. An example of such a method was interviewing team members. Credibility for this study can be verified by using member checking; once the data is transcribed participants reviewed the document and verified the correct information was collected (Guba & Lincoln, 1991). Websites for both universities were reviewed for access to the reporting process discussed by stakeholders.

Summary

This chapter provided a clear affirmation of the methodology used in this study. The choice of a collective case study provided a clear insight into the experiences and perspectives of Threat Assessment Team and stakeholder participants with respect to the perceived impact these teams have had on college safety. Research questions and methods of collecting and analyzing data were communicated clearly and effectively.

The setting of the study included two large state universities in Texas. Data was collected and analyzed from these two universities, named University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter. Sampling was purposive and criterion sampling (Creswell, 2015). The study included selecting stakeholder participants consisting of both universities' Threat Assessment Teams and stakeholders representing Faculty Council, Staff Council and Student Government Association.

The researcher was considered the primary collection instrument (Gay et al., 2012). Group and individual interviews were used to gain information about TAT members' perceptions and selected stakeholders' perceptions about their TAT's.

Data collection was achieved by interviewing TAT members and stakeholder participants, and questions were constructed to gain a solid understanding of the members' perspectives, experiences and the factors that led to the formation of the Threat Assessment Team and the perceived impact these teams have had on college safety

Data was analyzed using a case study approach, which was selected for this study. This was chosen to fully understand the participants experiences and perceptions in the research regarding the perceived impact of Threat Assessment Teams on campus safety. Interviews, with TAT members and stakeholder participants, were recorded and transcribed. Coding was

conducted by hand coding and with NVivo software. Common themes and perceptions of the members interviewed were noted.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This study focused on the perspective of selected university stakeholders on Threat Assessment Teams and their perceived impact on campus safety at two state universities in Texas. One of them has experienced a violent incident and one that has not. Threat Assessment Team members and selected stakeholders were interviewed to understand better how the formation and function of Threat Assessment Teams have impacted campus safety.

The study looked at the perceived impact these teams have had on campus since the formation of these teams. Research has found that school TATs have been able to resolve thousands of student threats with no serious acts of violence, permitting most students to return to school (Cornell et al., 2018; Randazzo & Cameron, 2012; Sokolow et al., 2014b).

The study utilized a semi-structured interview format that allowed participants to elaborate and speak openly, allowing the researcher to follow up with questions to probe deeper into areas of interest (Creswell, 2015). Each participant fell into the category of university stakeholder, as members of the university Threat Assessment Team, member of the University Faculty Council, member of the university Staff Council and member of the university Student Government Association.

This chapter presents the findings from data collected to describe in detail the perceptions of these university stakeholders about the university Threat Assessment Team and its perceived impact on campus safety.

The Methodology chapter provided details concerning the research methodology design for this study. The methodology chapter served as the blueprint moving forward in this research initiative and supplied a detailed description of the research sites, participants, and information gathered for inclusion in the findings and analysis. This study design represented a multiple case study approach; therefore, it was appropriate to explain results from the individual institutions and incorporate the cross-case findings to search for patterns (Creswell, 2015). Yin (2014) stated when a pattern from one case is replicated by data from another case, the findings are more robust. This chapter presents the findings from both cases to prepare for the discussion in Chapter V.

As Chapter III explained, two universities were selected to be included in this study. Data collection consisted of interviews of participants at each site. The research questions sought to understand the perceptions of the impact of Threat Assessment Teams on campus safety on each of the universities.

The interviews functioned as the primary basis for data collection. The findings presented below represented the participants' comments throughout the interview process and their perceptions of the practice and impact of threat assessment on campus safety. This study focused on the perceptions of university stakeholders representing the Threat Assessment Team, staff council, faculty council and student government at two Texas state universities.

Interviews were conducted with the following stakeholders from University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter: two members of each Threat Assessment Team, one member of each Faculty Council, two members of each Staff Council, and three members of each Student Government Association. A total of 16 stakeholders were interviewed.

Members of the university Threat Assessment Teams have been members ranging from 3 to 5 years and members of staff and faculty council ranged in membership from 2 to 3 years. Student Government members were active members for 1 to 2 years.

Stakeholder interviews from both universities were conducted with recordings of these interviews conducted in several manners to triangulate the data and build upon the thick description (Gay et al., 2012). Due to Covid-19 restrictions, interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom with the consent of the participants. Zoom allowed for video and audio recording along with a transcription of the audio recording. Two additional recording forms took place using Otter software and Google Meet, and both included transcriptions of these recordings. Finally, an audio recording of the interviews took place using Voice Memo software. Copies of each transcribed interview were provided to and approved for accuracy by each participant for member check purposes (Creswell, 2015; Mills & Gay, 2016). There were some limitations to conducting interviews virtually and not in person. Building a rapport with the participants was not easy, and cues from eye contact and body movements were more challenging to read. The functionality of audio and visual recording, as well as internet connectivity was also at times a concern.

In Appendix B, participant interview questions were created to best gain information to answer the research questions the study was built upon. The guiding research questions were as follows.

1. What are selected university stakeholders' perceptions of Threat Assessment Teams on their campuses?
2. How do members of the Threat Assessment Team at two selected universities perceive their role with respect to campus safety?

3. How do selected university stakeholders perceive the Threat Assessment Team's impact on campus safety?
4. How do stakeholder perceptions of their Threat Assessment Teams' impact on campus safety differ at the two selected universities?

Copies of each transcribed interview were provided and approved for accuracy by each participant for member check purposes (Creswell, 2015; Mills & Gay, 2016). Transcriptions were then reviewed, and coding was assigned both manually and using NVivo software. Emerging themes were apparent with both universities and across varying stakeholders. Emerging themes were the same across both universities, therefore, confirming a pattern, as stated in the research by Yin (2014), which stated when data from another case replicate a pattern from one case, the finding is more robust. The table below identifies emerging themes and sub-topics for each theme. The emerging themes noted in Table 4 were summary narratives and critical statements made by the participants; the research questions have guided interview questions. The distinction is made by stakeholder category with some specific quotes if warranted. The possible difference in perceptions of TAT at both these universities, one that has experienced an active shooter incident and one that has not, was considered. Data gathered from all stakeholders, TAT members and non-TAT members showed responses from stakeholders were similar.

Stakeholders' Perceptions

The following themes were extracted from the information gathered from selected stakeholders representing University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter. Stakeholders included participants serving as members of the Threat Assessment Team at both universities. A Threat Assessment Team is a multidisciplinary team that interacts and operates on a regular basis and as needed for crisis situations (Deisinger et al., 2008). The team evaluates

reports of threats or other behaviors of concern by any student or employee of a college or university, including people who are not affiliated with the institution but who may directly impact the safety of the campus community and develops management and response strategies that are meant to be both rapid and effective (Deisinger et al., 2008). An intricate part of a successful TAT is the leadership (Van Brunt, 2012). Graney’s (2012) adheres to the practice of TAT leaders ranging from vice president of student affairs to the director of disability services.

Stakeholders also included members of the university’s Faculty and Staff Councils and Student Government Associations from University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter. Members from these organizations are representatives elected from their respective groups, serving yearly terms.

As detailed in Table 4, the following themes and subthemes continually recurred throughout the durations of all interviews. The narrative data produced patterns that were analyzed for themes and common language (Creswell, 2015).

Table 4

Emergent Themes and Subthemes

Theme Categories

Theme 1: Role and Impact of the Threat Assessment Team

Subthemes:

- Formation of the Threat Assessment Team
- Promote Teams’ existence and role
- Promote access and training to report concerning behavior
- Assessment of incidents and crisis reports
- Intervention and case management

Theme 2: Perceptions of Safety

Subthemes:

- Formation of the Threat Assessment Team
- Promote Teams' existence and role
- Promote access and training to report concerning behavior
- Assessment of incidents and crisis reports
- Intervention and case management

Theme 3: Collaboration, Resources, and Funding Support

Subthemes:

- Alignment of administration and Team recommendations for student actions
- Budget allowances for Team promotion, training, and staffing
- Training opportunities for all university stakeholders

Theme 1: Role and Impact of the Threat Assessment Team

Threat Assessment Team representatives from both Universities interviewed were clear about the role and impact their respective teams play on their campuses. Teams have been trained and nationally certified to mitigate threat and therefore contribute to the safety and security of the University. Team membership consists of cross-disciplinary team from across campus that meets on a regular basis and provides crisis prevention. The team assesses, provides intervention and case management for those with exhibiting behavioral concerns. Some subthemes that support the TAT role and impact theme is the formation process of the TAT, the

way the team is promoted, the access to training and reporting processes, and the crisis assessment, intervention, and case management protocols.

University II-Non-Active Shooter TAT participant spoke about one of the most important roles of the TAT was the evaluation and assessment done when a threatening behavior is reported.

I think people who are on the committee take it seriously, because when we have an issue that comes forward, and we have to go out on a call people make time, you know readjust their schedules to get to that meeting so it's obvious that it has that level of importance to the people on the team, what I can say is that. Especially in the area of threat evaluation, we get relied on quite a bit even PD will come and ask us, you know basically to look at the incident and provide the assessment and required intervention. We have been trained to provide assessment on situations in various platforms, on video as well as violence risk assessment of the written word, even assessing and establishing a plan of action for threats on social media.

Formation of the Threat Assessment Team

The perception TAT Members have about the role and impact of the TAT on each campus was an emerging theme. Maher (2014) focuses on the increase of violence on college campuses. According to Maher (2014) this increase of violence has forced colleges and universities to establish legal processes to keep the college communities safe. The implementation of Threat Assessment Teams has been one way that colleges have taken steps towards safer campuses. Both University teams stated the teams are appointed by administration and are a cross functional team made up of core representatives from the following areas, Dean of Students, Counseling, University Police, Disability Services, Student Health Services, Student

Conduct and Legal Services. Both also stated the Team will bring in other representatives as needed on a case-by-case basis, such as Veteran Services, Title IX, or faculty. Because of this best practice, there is no feeling from either team, that specific members are missing from the team. When information is being gathered and assessments are being made people with vital information are brought in as needed. A TAT member from University I-Active Shooter stated, “We can invite them or get more information from them; it just depends on the case itself”.

Threat Assessment Team members from both sites stated that as cases are assessed and managed there are times that consultations occur with varying representatives from the university. These departments help by providing resources for the person reported but do not necessarily serve as a core member of the TAT. University I-Active Shooter TAT stakeholder provided some clarification about the composition of their team.

I know some universities call it a Behavior Intervention Team or a Care Team. We actually have the student focused, one which is behavioral assessment team and that's the one I co-chair, and then there is TAT, the Threat Assessment Team Committee. That is for the faculty staff concerns as well. There is some of us that sit on both, so I do sit on both to be able to be especially helpful when a situation deals with a student and a staff member or if they have dual roles. Core team members include representation from student affairs, counseling, student discipline and Police department. We meet twice a month and then as needed for immediate crisis situations.

Participants from both University settings indicated that Administration at both universities made the decision to form TAT at their location after the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007. On April 16, 2007, 32 people died after being gunned down on the campus of Virginia Tech by Seung-Hui Cho, a student at the college who later died by suicide (Hoffman, 2017). The

shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007 led to the recognition, in many reviews and task-force reports, that a multidisciplinary on-campus Threat Assessment Team is considered a best practice for preventing, assessing, and managing on-campus violence (U.S. Department Education, 2015).

The stakeholders at both locations were aware of the emphasis on the safety of the college after each active shooter occurrences happening at other schools and colleges. There has been significant research pertaining to Threat Assessment Teams on college and university campuses. Many teams have been formed and developed after tragic incidents such as Virginia Tech and the Columbine shootings (Hoffman, 2017).

One participant from University I-Active Shooter was aware of the Threat Assessment Team being formed after the Virginia Tech active shooter in 2007.

Virginia tech is the kind of catalyst for us to create a team. My understanding is within a year after the Virginia Tech incident, our university had a team up and running, we were one of the first that that did that. Granted it has kind of flowed and evolved during this time, but it has really been a part of campus for a while. I will say that some of the more recent incidents have changed how we look at that and what type of cases come to the table for review. Our case management team was initially doing the threat mitigation with our Police. However, we felt it was more important to bring more to the table with the larger group to get more perspectives. So, at that time, we included assessments threats of self-harm and suicide attempts on the table, because we were looking at these cases like potential threats well. We operate under the belief that if someone can harm themselves, they may harm others a well.

A leader in threat assessment and behavior intervention has been Marissa Randazzo, a former Secret Service agent that now serves as a consultant for those colleges and universities that seek to form Threat Assessment Teams (Randazzo & Cameron 2012). Threat Assessment Teams at both locations were formed, trained, and became members of the NABITA, a national organization that provides training and certifications for behavior intervention (Van Brunt, 2012). Membership in this national organization allows for team training on not only assessment and intervention protocols but also case management and follow up process. Threat Assessment Team members from University I-Active Shooter stated that “students can be lost in the system if there is no checking in and follow up.”

Promote Teams’ Existence and Role

Both sets of University TAT participants believe that the teams need to be better promoted so that the college community can have complete access to their support and resources. Some of the ways both University Teams promote their existence, and their function is through various trainings, such as new student orientation and through various departmental websites. Part of the function and role mentioned by members of the TATs from both locations included promoting the existence of the team and role the team has in respect to providing support and resources to the college community. The TAT members stated that trained teams are appointed by administration and consist of cross functional team. The largest impact that these Teams can have is the awareness they bring about their existence and their contribution to the health and safety of the college. Threat Assessment Teams at both universities spoke to the training provided to the college community. University I-Active Shooter TAT members stated provided insight to the team’s mission.

Our Team has a mission to bring awareness to our community of our existence and what it is we do for the college. Our TAT chair provides training to our student body and our staff and faculty as often as possible. The training focuses on when a report should be filed, how to file a report and most importantly what is done after a report is received. Information is provided so that students understand that it is important to remain vigilant and stay safe.

Threat Assessment Team members from both locations stated that Team was very functional when it was utilized, and it very definitely needs to be promoted. One member states that “Sometimes I feel like it’s a dirty secret”, also stating “I think for those that use it, we are a valuable resource”. Both Universities note the role of these teams was that of support through prevention and resources and rarely using conduct and expulsion. A TAT member from University I-Active Shooter stated, “I think as a whole we are much more focused on prevention and support, and we do utilize conduct when we need to but, for the most part it's, how can we provide resources to this student, to get them off the violence pathway”.

Non-TAT members supported their awareness of the TAT and the role they play on the campus. Both sets of stakeholders noted some clear difference between the two University settings. University I-Active Shooter participants were aware that some severe violent incidences had occurred on campus. While University II-Non-Active Shooter participants stated that there had not been any active shooter incidents on their campus. Participants were aware of one or more major incidents on University I-Active Shooter and some participants were aware of some minor incidences on University II-Non-Active Shooter. Participants from University I-Active Shooter noted a rape and murder on campus in 2007, a murder in 2015 and a stabbing in 2017. University II-Non-Active Shooter participants noted emergency weather situations but no active

shooters. Aggressive students were reported to Threat Assessment Teams when alarming behavior occurred in response to negative information provided about financial aid grades earned. An incident was mentioned about a suspicious package has been reported in a building, evacuation took place and support, and resources were provided by Team for those in the area. One member that filed a report was happy with “the follow up provided and the update with the progress of the report provided”. It has been noted that the general college community often never hears about incidences because they are averted when Team assesses and intervenes prior to an incident.

Trainings provided by the TAT also stress the vital role the team plays in keeping the college community connected and informed. A participant from University II-Non-Active Shooter stressed that the very fact that the TAT consists of members from across all disciplines allows for them to stay informed about varying incidents that are occurring in all areas of the campus.

It is this connection that allow for them to be able to have access to those students displaying alarming behavior and are then able to assess and intervene. Providing resources or referrals is an important part of what the TAT does.

A threat assessment can prevent violence by helping those having issues to resolve problems that are causing their threatening behavior. Even if an individual is not actively planning an attack, addressing the underlying conflict can prevent the situation from escalating. A Threat Assessment Team and the support provided can prevent a violent incident (Cornell, 2020).

Promote Access and Training to Report Concerning Behavior

Teams work to cultivate university cultures where reporting and referrals are common so that teams may intervene early with individuals who may be struggling with a varying of issues, from depression to homelessness to thoughts of violence. Participants from both locations agreed that there is a way to submit a report online or to a hotline. Finding access would happen when the University website was searched. Only some of the participants had attended a TAT training and knew exactly how to report. All felt that the Team and the process to report was acceptable, and the college community was open to using the process if needed.

The entire college community would benefit from detailed training about the Team, its role, and the process to report an incident. It would work well if people knew it existed”.

Training the college community is an important aspect that must be considered.

Emphasizing the importance of identifying a possible threat and the importance of reporting what is considered suspicious or alarming behavior is essential.

Identifying these behaviors and reporting them to Threat Assessment Team members or school officials leads to preventing violence (Blair & Schweit, 2014; Graney, 2012; O’Toole, 2000). The participants that had experienced a need to file a report each felt that the situation warranted a Team assessment and intervention. Both had contact with a student that was irate and was difficult to calm. One member had a student that has written a “dark essay with concerning language” and they felt the student needed an expert assessment. One member did find the form to be lengthy but reported that they would do it again if necessary. A separate member stated that they were impressed with the way the team followed up and provided the person that reported with updates. When the Team handles situations in ways that supports both

the concerning student and the reporting college community then trust and rapport is built. It is this trusts that allows for the community to reach out again if needed.

Assessments of Incidents and Crisis Reports

The process to assess those reported as displaying alarming behavior is based on a risk behavior rubric that stems from NABITA. Threat Assessment Team participants from both universities expresses the importance of assessment process in the role the Team plays on each campus. Team members understand their level of importance especially during crisis situations and in threat assessment and evaluation and then leading to case management and follow up. The basic steps for assessing threat on college campuses are to first identify the threat, evaluate the seriousness, intervene, and then monitor a safety plan (Blair & Schweit, 2014; Cornell, 2010). The case management, administrative support, communication, campus-wide education, and cross-disciplinary teamwork are all necessary for a successful Threat Assessment Team. Having a process in place and a plan of action is essential and a trained team is vital (Kanan, 2010; Toppe, 2017).

Stakeholders each spoke to the perceived impact the teams have on the safety of the entire college community in respect to the teams' contribution to assessing and intervening during possible crisis situations.

Once students of concern are reported then these students are monitored, and action is taken if required. Interventions range from mental health resources to medical or behavioral treatment plans to expulsion, hospitalization, or removal if necessary. Reports of students with a heavy presence of gun possessions shown on social media accounts or dark and disturbing essays that were written and reported by faculty require assessment.

Reports of students showing signs of self-harm after a relationship break-up or familial death are also reports that are case managed and followed up upon.

These types of preventive actions are the key role played by these teams and are part of the crucial element that contributes to the safety of the college campus. These teams serve as task forces aimed at mitigating threat (Hoisington, 2017).

Intervention and Case Management

The Role the TAT plays in support of a safe environment by providing interventions and case management was a vital part of this emerging theme. Interventions range from mental health resources to medical or behavioral treatment plans to expulsion, hospitalization, or removal if necessary. Reports of students with a “heavy presence of gun possessions shown on social media accounts” or “dark and disturbing essays” that were written and reported by faculty. Reports of students showing signs of self-harm after a relationship break-up or familial death are also reports that are assessed, intervention provided, and cases are managed and followed up upon. These types of preventive actions were the key role played by these teams and were part of the crucial element that contributed to the perceived safety of the college campus. The processes the TAT followed to provide support and resources to students in crisis was vital to the perceived safety of the college campus. Crisis management includes assessment of alarming behavior, intervention, and case management. These support process helped in the success of the student.

The National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA) risk rubric is the used for assessing the threat, team members are trained on NABITA scales and processes. Intervention, case management, support, resources and follow up then takes place to keep the student and college community safe (Van Brunt, 2012).

Early identification and proactive intervention and case management are main functions of TAT's and important to student success and campus safety (Van Brunt, 2012). Following the tragic campus shooting at Virginia Tech, Threat Assessment Teams were formed to prevent future acts of targeted violence at institutions of higher education. A TAT member from University I-Active Shooter stated that "the goal is to start at the lower step of the of the steps to a violent act, you know to basically say, if I can intervene at the ideation stage versus that acquisition stage, well then options are available." When concerns are identified early, teams can proactively engage with the individuals to provide the support resources needed to better navigate and overcome their challenges. The goal of intervention is to identify, de-escalate and increase the chances of a student success. Even when team efforts result in the removal of students from campus, doing so often increases the likelihood that others may then continue their studies in a safer environment, and many times also provides a plan to help the removed students transition out of the institution safely (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009; Sokolow et al., 2014a; and Van Brunt, 2012).

Theme 2: Perceptions of Safety

Stakeholder interviews revealed perceptions of safety on their respective campuses as an emergent theme. Those interviewed spoke to various ways that the TAT helped them to feel safe on campus. For Non-TAT members the discussion focused on police presence and access and understanding of the reporting process and how this contributed to their feelings of safety. The stakeholders felt TAT added to their feelings of safety by providing training and by mitigating crisis situations. The team assesses, intervenes, provides case management by assisting with care resources and referrals. Stakeholders from Staff Council stated they feel safe because of the training provided.

I echo the sentiment that training is always out there being offered to us, and when they did the Police Department crisis training, I took that training, and it was good to have that kind of knowledge to know that kind of resources available for everybody. Active Shooter training made us aware of the best things to do to stay safe. Threat Assessment Team provided training about what they offer and how to make a report when students have aggressive behavior.

Police Presence

Participants interviewed noted that they feel safe on their campus and believe that the University is prepared to face a potential act of violence. They made two things clear when they spoke to campus safety. They felt that the police presence all around campus added to the feeling of safety for most individuals. Though the student input did note that “not all students, especially students of color did not always feel safer with increased police presence”. They spoke to the police patrolling the building and parking areas regularly, security cameras and emergency call boxes, providing police escorts if requested when leaving campus buildings late in the evening, PD live app that provides an avenue for reporting crime. Police members of the TAT contribute to the police presence. They also provide Active Shooter and Crisis training for employees. Additional strategies that make the stakeholders “feel more secure are police patrolling presence, emergency phone stations throughout campus and the Police Department phone app that is available for emergency reporting”.

Being on campus I do have that confidence, where, if there is something that I feel is not going right, I can approach that student and ask them what is happening. I have got the Police Department App on my on my phone. I will tell you this, that APP is highly effective.

There were some stakeholders that were not frontline worker and had minimal student contact did report knowing “vaguely about a Team existing but not being completely familiar with the reporting process or even the complete role of the team”. Some student stakeholders did mention that “at times students do not consider too much police presence to me a method of making them feel safe but rather a concern to some students”. Non -TAT stakeholders perceived TAT’s impact on campus safety in a variety of ways. These perceptions enforce the theme of ways the college community feel safe. The participants from university settings agreed that they feel safe at their universities. Both also acknowledge, that though things are different this year with most “working and learning from home, when they are on campus, they feel safe and are aware of some of the processes in place that make them feel secure”. Those with student contact and are in positions of working frontline with students have been “trained and are aware of processes that will aid them”. For example, buzzers under desks or counters that are connected to college police. These are to be used if employees feel that they are dealing with irate students or staff and that police are needed. Some participants spoke to departmental safety plans that are in effect and annual training that takes place with safety department.

Teams’ 24-Hour Access to Reporting Process

The Threat Assessment Team aids in campus safety by providing a 24-7 reporting hotline for concerning behavior as well as an online reporting form. Some challenges mentioned include the fact that not everyone knows the Team and their services exists. “There should be more training for reporting and for emergency procedures”. There are many locations and buildings to cover and “the scale that has to be covered is great”. Students felt that more training should take place for “Student Government and within student clubs”. Communication is essential among all represented areas that make up a Threat Assessment Team (Futo, 2011). An important

component is the need for training amount the varying department represented on the Team as well as the need to establish and follow a specific process with all cases reported (Cornell, 2010; Futo, 2011; Kanan, 2010). There is a consensus that these types of teams need to be trained effectively and then in turn, the training of the college community must be just as effective. Communication is important for effectiveness and efficiency.

Students, as well as some other stakeholders are also aware of the reporting process for the Threat Assessment Teams. This reporting process is available through a 24-hour hotline, as well as an online reporting form that can be completed anonymously. In search of ways to ensure the safety of the college (Sokolow, 2009) and to address the climate of fear across the college community (Kaminski, 2010) many IHE's have formed Threat Assessment Teams (TAT). The Teams hold trainings for employees and students to make sure reporting processes are clear.

The 24-hour phone line and online reporting process is available to all students and employees. Participants also spoke to "word of mouth" and "administration referrals" as ways for the team being promoted and utilized. The team's make up consists of members from across the University and this is also a way to make sure the Teams' existence is noted and its' role is understood and utilized. The campus-wide education and cross-disciplinary teamwork are all necessary for a successful Threat Assessment Team. Having a process in place and a plan of action is essential and a trained team is vital (Kanan, 2010; Toppe, 2017).

Both teams follow up with reports submitted through an online reporting form, or a 24-hour phone line, emails to Team members or direct phone calls and office visits are also ways in which reports are taken. Core Team members, "which always includes University Police", assess report and rank the level of threat presented.

There is a positive impact made by these Teams by providing an open reporting process, assessment, intervention, and case management. The TAT at both locations understands the importance of the role they play and have the support of their University Administration. Both Teams also state they are nationally certified as Behavior Intervention Teams by NABITA.

Appropriate Team Personnel Provides Specialty Support

Those interviewed stated that the TAT from both universities function by providing support to those experiencing crisis situations, these resources and referrals are essential ways to keep the campus safe.

Licensed counselors and mental health support personnel are members of both University Threat Assessment Teams and are trained to handle students in crisis situations. College Police, as members of Threat Assessment Teams, are also first responders trained in basic mental health assessment protocols.

All Non-TAT participants from both universities expressed a belief that the Team has a positive impact on college safety. Participants noted that they believe the Team is a vital part of keeping the college environment safe. Stakeholders also stated that even though some have not used the Team and the reporting process, they can see how the Team function contributes to the safety of the college campus. “There are times that people do not know the team exists or the amount of people they have helped and that is because of how great the team is at its’ job”. The feeling is that many members of the college community may have never heard of the Team or the role it plays because they are meeting their goal of providing support and resources and are working to keep violent incidents from happening. Members spoke to the “great collaboration of the team and the round the clock work done by the team”. “These people to me are amazing in what they do and how they do it, and I feel our students are safer with them”.

Those interviewed from both universities stress the positive impact that the Team has experienced as the Team changes and membership evolves and grows. Relationships with each other and the rest of the college community have been established and “trust comes with time and effort invested”. As the Team leadership encouraged engagement and participation and meetings are not cancelled and stay well attended then the Team effectiveness grows. “The importance and emphasis on the Team has increased over time and that has been a good and positive thing”. The point is also made that some negative impacts that have come from changes has been the use of the Team as “mental health diagnosticians or student conduct avenues”. A Threat Assessment Team can prevent violence by helping those having issues to resolve problems that are causing their threatening behavior. Even if an individual is not actively planning an attack, addressing the underlying conflict can prevent the situation from escalating. A Threat Assessment Team and the support provided can prevent a violent incident (Cornell, 2020).

Intervention Support System

Threat Assessment Team members at both locations state that these teams have a perceived positive impact on the security of the college. They each site the reporting process of alarming behavior and the intervention and case management of these reports as essential contributions to the safety of the college. All participants were aware that some sort of team existed designed at providing support and resources to students of concern and the college community. Most were also aware that the reporting process was online. Not all those interviewed were aware of the name of Teams that provide this service or even the exact roles these teams play. All were clear that the Team provided intervention, support, and resources for students with mental health issues and that may be exhibiting behavioral problems that may be of

concern for themselves or even others. Some members interviewed, including students, had reported behavioral issues in the past, while others were not completely sure the process to report. The Teams are made up of “counselors, mental health workers and support people from student affairs” and the main function is to provide “resources for students in need and to help protect the college”. Those that had attended training in the past were aware that teams followed up on students reported and assessed levels of danger, provided resources, provided case management, and then followed up when necessary. The most effective way to ensure the safety of the college from possible threats is to form a team that is trained and efficient (Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012). Threat Assessment Teams help mitigate threat and provide resources and referrals that often curtail the increased number of violent incidents on college campuses. The goal of these multi-disciplinary teams is to identify, assess and provide intervention and case management (Deisinger et al., 2008).

Stakeholders from both locations agreed that the Team strength includes the fact that the core unit has built trust in one another and are secure in relying on each other. “A strength is that everyone on the team understands the importance of the role they play in impacting the college safety”. “Team discussions are built around problem solving and are for the most part constructive”. Another strength is that team members are “uninhibited in their contributions”. The Teams touched upon the weaknesses in terms of membership turnaround and continuous need for training, as well as at times not all members participate at the same level. “Remaining silent is also a weakness”, understanding that not all members are comfortable talking with students and not all members hold positions where they work and communicate with students. Adhering to student privacy is also at times a deterrent for the team, when case management mandates counseling but student attendance for those counseling sessions is a private issue then

this at times creates a challenge for the Team. Mental health professionals can play a critical role on a Threat Assessment Team. Their expertise on mental health issues and mental health disorders are invaluable for a team particularly during the case management part of the team process (Harwood, 2011). Client confidentiality may be a concern when counselors serve on a Threat Assessment Team, but the need is there for counselors to provide the team with a general understanding of the mental health issue and the resources that may be available in the community (Futo, 2011).

Theme 3: Collaboration, Resources, and Funding Support

Another emergent themes that was evident throughout the narrative was the support that was necessary for the TAT to function effectively and at the best interest of the college community. Collaboration with not only team members, but also with the college community and most importantly with the University Administration. Budgetary resources and funding support from Administration allows for the TAT to function at its' fullest potential. Threat Assessment participants from University II-Non-Active Shooter spoke about several areas where support is needed for the Team. The need for team members to engage and collaborate when working on behavioral assessments and the support from Administration when addressing budgets.

The Team would benefit from a higher degree of participation from other members when dealing with cases reported. We have effective case managers but collaboration from other departments represented on the team would make the Team more effective. Taking care of the students would be easier. Members of our Team have responsibilities outside of the Threat Assessment Team and funding for a full-time position to lead the Team would be beneficial.

Alignment of Administration and Team Recommendations

Threat Assessment Team members from both universities touched upon the support the team needs to provide the essential service to the college community. Administration needs to affirm the Team when difficult decisions are made concerning student expulsion or suspensions. The fact that both TATs were formed after a mass shooting is attributed to the support the University Administration provides to the Team and its function. Both universities were formed and supported TATs after the Virginia Tech shooting, this action by the University Administration contributed to the TAT's credibility. Administration supporting specialized training and certification from NABITA is also evident that these universities have the support they need. Kanan (2010) stresses the importance of a trained team and the need for a process to be in place. There must be a plan to follow, and that process needs to be followed for all incidences. Training needs to take place across the different departments with a set procedure serving as an integral part of the training. Processes for evaluating the information brought to the team is necessary and the need to protect the student exhibiting the concerning behavior is just as important as protecting the college community. Cornell (2010), Futo (2011), and Kanan (2010) all stress these same points. There is a consensus that these types of teams need to be trained effectively and communication is important for effectiveness and efficiency. Threat Assessment Team member from University II-Non-Active Shooter states that "they have really started taking charge on trying to get behavioral intervention teams trained and supported".

Budget Allowances for Team Promotion, Training, and Staffing

Both University TAT members informed that their teams are members of and practice by the training provided by NABITA. The Institutions of Higher Education have sent the core members of the team for national training and certification. The core members are then

responsible for returning and training the remaining team members. The feeling is that this training “builds legitimacy” for the team and its’ ability to function. The training not only legitimizes the Team it also teaches processes and patterns that make the actions of the Team “defensible and increases credibility and provides a built-in level of stability and legitimacy that helps to cover institutional liability”. This last year, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the national training was virtual and therefore more affordable, and all members were allowed to attend and not just the Core membership. During prior years only Core members were given the resources to travel and attend the national training. One difference noted between the University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter was that the Team at University I-Active Shooter was allotted their own budget and the Team at University II-Non-Active Shooter was dependent on departmental budgets and therefore often limited. One way in which the Team at University I-Active Shooter took advantage of their own budget was bringing the training to the Institution and therefore being able to open training to many more participants. Kanan (2010) stresses the importance of a trained team and the need for a process to be in place. There must be a plan to follow, and that process needs to be followed for all incidences. Training needs to take place across the different departments with a set procedure serving as an integral part of the training. Processes for evaluating the information brought to the team is necessary and the need to protect the student exhibiting the concerning behavior is just as important as protecting the college community. Budget allowances were also needed for promoting the Team and the process for reporting alarming behavior. Resources were needed to promote the team, its functions, reporting processes and case management training.

Training Opportunities for all University Stakeholders

The training provided to the TAT and the college community was also a contributing part of the support provided to the Team. The Participants from both locations were clear that they do feel safe, and each feel that to increase the level of security they feel there should be awareness and training for whole college community. Training needs to happen at two levels, one the Team needs to be trained and prepared to assess students of concern. All Team members should be trained, budget and financial resources for this training should be available. Second comes the training and awareness for the entire college community about the Team and the role it plays in keeping the college safe. The manner to report students of concern and the understanding of what is done for these students once a report is submitted. Resources and support are provided to students exhibiting concerning behavior so that they can deal with things that are affecting their stability. Students can be provided counseling, anger management training, financial aid support, housing support, relationship support or if necessary, can be removed from the college until they are stable enough to return. According to a study by Deisinger, Randazzo & Nolan (2014), the need for a safe and secure campus is instrumental to providing an effective learning environment. “Many institutions of higher education recognized after the April 2007 tragedy at Virginia Tech that having a threat assessment and management team is a best practice, and many have recently created teams or enhanced the operations of existing teams” (Deisinger et al., 2014, p. 105).

Summary

This chapter presented the findings, guided by the research questions, and presented by theme, from the study based on interviews conducted with participants from two University settings. The participants consisted of university stakeholders from the University Threat

Assessment Teams, Faculty Council, Staff Council and Student Government Association. Stakeholder perceptions of the impact that Threat Assessment Teams have on campus safety.

Following is summary of the most significant findings this study gave rise to, which clearly address the research questions that laid the foundation for the study. Emergent themes included the role and impact of Threat Assessment Teams, with subthemes including formation of these Teams, promotions of the Team's existence and role, promoting access to training of reporting process, assessment, intervention, and case management of those reported for threatening behavior. Threat Assessment Team members clearly believe that a multidisciplinary on-campus Threat Assessment Team is considered a best practice for preventing, assessing, and managing on-campus violence. The positive impact these teams have is supported by TAT members on both university campuses. All non-TAT participants were aware that some sort of team existed designed at providing support and resources to students of concern and the college community. Most stakeholders were aware of the online reporting process.

A subsequent recurring theme was the stakeholders' perception of safety and strategies that supported that perception. Subthemes included the police presence and the programs of support provided by the police department and the TAT. The TAT contributes the feeling of safety by providing access to the 24-hour online reporting system, by making available trained professional staff to support those with mental health issues and by having a Team that mitigates threat by assessing those reported, intervening, and providing case management and follow up. The role of the Threat Assessment Team is seen by TAT members at both sites as very functional when it is utilized, and it is evident that it is a valuable resource when used and both universities note the role of these teams is that of support through prevention and resources. Non-TAT members were clear that the TAT provided support and resources for students with mental

health issues. Some members interviewed, including students, had reported behavioral issues in the past, while others were not completely sure the process to report and noted that the TAT and the process to report needs to be promoted.

The final emergent theme was the collaboration and resources and funding support required by the Team to function at a level needed by the college campus. Teams are expected to work collaboratively, and each engage and contribute to the process. Subthemes include administration support with student recommendations and sanctions. Budget line items for program promotions, TAT trainings and additional staffing if required.

Both TAT members and non-TAT members were aware of some high-profile crisis incidents that occurred on their respective campuses and both sites stated that the TAT when utilized was a positive impact on campus safety. There was no difference in those interviewed between the site where a major violent incident occurred and the site where only minor incidents occurred. Participants at both sites were clear that they do feel safe, and each feel that to increase the level of security they feel there should be awareness and training for whole college community.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter included a review of the purpose statement, research questions, summary of the findings. Included in the conclusions and interpretation of the research findings is the connection to the study's theoretical framework along with the findings' relation to relevant research studies. The chapter also expanded on the findings to include recommendations for improved practice and recommendations for future research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to investigate selected university stakeholders' perceptions of the Threat Assessment Teams (TAT) on two large state universities, University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter, and the perceived impact these teams have on campus safety. The study examined the perceptions of the team members, pertaining to their role and the significance of that role for the perceived safety and security of the college community.

Violence on university campuses across the country has been on the rise, since the tragic shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007 (Hauser, 2007; Schwartz, 2012). In search of ways to ensure the safety of the college (Sokolow, 2009) and to address the climate of fear across the college community (Kaminski, 2010) many IHE's have formed Threat Assessment Teams (TAT). The most effective way to ensure the safety of the college from possible threats is to form a team that is trained and efficient (Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012). Threat Assessment Teams help mitigate

threat and have become an essential tool due to the increased number of violent incidents on college campuses. The goal of these multi-disciplinary teams is to identify, assess and provide intervention and case management (Deisinger et al., 2008). The mission of these teams is to identify and respond to behaviors categorized as disruptive, dangerous, disturbing, distressed, dysregulated, or due to a medical disability (Eells, Rockland-Miller, 2011; Golston, 2015; Sokolow, Lewis, Wolf, Van Brunt, & Byrnes, 2009).

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the researcher in the study:

1. What are selected university stakeholder perceptions of the Threat Assessment Teams on their campuses?
2. How do members of the Threat Assessment Teams at two selected universities perceive their role with respect to campus safety?
3. How do selected university stakeholders perceive the Threat Assessment Team's impact on campus safety?
4. How do stakeholder perceptions of the impact that Threat Assessment Teams have on campus safety differ from one location that has experienced a major violent incident compared to the other site where a major violent incident has not occurred?

Theoretical Framework Summary

Student Development Theory such as Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009) was the basis from which this study stemmed. The study investigated the perceptions university stakeholders have about their Threat Assessment Teams and their perceived impact on the safety of the campus, therefore, the process they use to assess, intervene, and manage these students of concern is crucial.

This Student Development Theory, such as Schlossberg's Transition Theory, provided an understanding of how these college students develop, adapt, and adjust to college life. It is this adjustment and at times maladjustment to the stressors of college that cause students to exhibit alarming behavior and then require the TAT to intervene. It is the development of these students, and therefore Transition Theory, that provide the solid foundation for this study. According to the Schlossberg's Transition Theory the way a student handles a significant change, loss or event is a transition (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). These transitions may contribute to a student being reported and assessed as "concerning". Theories of Student Development profess that the college years are ripe with growth and changes, both psychosocial and developmental. And within the developmental realm, there are issues of personal development as well as moral development. The Student Development Theories of Chickering and Boyer all address developmental stages that focus on college students and their experiences and growth (Coye, 1997; Hall & Chickering, 1982; Higbee, 2002).

According to Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn (2009), Schlossberg's Transition Theory was developed to better understand and support those going through a time of transition. The research shows that better understanding students as they transition into college will help them adjust successfully. As a Threat Assessment Team understanding the transition these students are facing can make the difference needed to provide the resources the student needs. Students that are often referred to the team for assessment and case management are displaying concerning behavior, many times struggle with a time of transition, a loss, a failure, or even mental health issues.

The stakeholders serving as members of both Universities were clear as they shared their perceptions of their role as Team members. The assessment, intervention, and support that these

teams provide students that have been reported as exhibiting “concerning” behavior are each assessed by risk behavior. Their process to manage and support the students’ developmental needs contributes to the safety of the college community. Part of the Teams’ function is to case manage students of concern. Most disruptive behavior coming from college stressors, mental health issues, or isolation. Teams provide assessment, case management, support, counseling, discipline, or even if needed separation to secure the safety of the campus.

Gale and Parker, (2014) focused on student development theory that was based in psychology and was later applied to counseling, which allowed for a useful theory-to-practice framework. What is considered a “transition” forms the basis of the first parallel between transition theory and student development. For example, transition theory states that any event or non-event perceived by the individual as a significant event, change, or loss that alters the individual’s assumptions, roles, or view of self can be a transition.

Threat Assessment Teams and the possible impact they may have on changing campus security lies first with supporting and impacting the student development of the students that can most benefit from intervention. The studies show that a main function of a TAT is to help provide that support (Deisinger, Randazzo, O’Neill, & Savage, 2008). This theory supported the study as it addressed the way these Threat Assessment Teams assess, intervene, and support those students with behavioral issues that may affect the safety of the college. The understanding of these student developmental theories can help guide this support process. The theoretical framework in this study considers the development of students being reported and does not consider the reported behavior of employees or visitors to the campus.

Findings Summary

The Qualitative Collective Case Study (Creswell, 2015; Gay et al., 2012) design of this research facilitated the study findings. The study examined the perceived impact that Threat Assessment Teams had on campus safety. This was achieved by interviewing Threat Assessment Team members as well as selected stakeholders to better understand how the formation and function of Threat Assessment Teams impacted campus safety.

Stakeholders at both institutions agreed to the definition of threat assessment as a deductive, comprehensive approach to identify, gather, and evaluate data, and the management of an individualized plan to mitigate the concern (Deisinger, et al., 2008). Members of both teams stressed the critical component that threat assessment provided to campus security. Participants from the Threat Assessment Teams at both Universities did credit the change in national attitude pertaining to college safety after the incident at Virginia Tech for the development and implementation of their processes.

Emerging themes were apparent with both universities and across varying stakeholders. Themes were the same across both universities therefore confirming a pattern, as stated in the research by Yin (2014) which stated when a pattern from one case is replicated by data from another case, the finding is stronger. The findings produced four emerging themes for this study.

The first theme that was prevalent was the Role and the Impact of the Threat Assessment Team. Threat Assessment Team representatives from both Universities interviewed were clear about the role and impact their respective teams play on their campuses. The purpose of these Teams is to assure the safety and security of the college campus mitigating the threat present when concerning behavior is reported. Teams are formed with representation from areas across the University, focusing on areas with greater student contact. The Team meets on a regular basis

and provides crisis prevention. The team assesses, provide intervention and case management for those with exhibiting behavioral concerns. Some subthemes that support the TAT role and impact theme is the formation process of the TAT, the way the team is promoted, the access to training and reporting processes, and the crisis assessment, intervention, and case management protocols. The Team promoting its existence and the process for reporting is an important impact on the safety of the college. The way the Team functions and trains to assess and manage cases is also a key impact according to those Team members interviewed. Participants each spoke to the impact the teams have on the safety of the entire college community in respect to the teams' contribution to assessing and intervening during possible crisis situations.

These teams served as task forces, whose goal is to prevent threat and crisis situations (Hoisington, 2017). Both Universities note the role of these teams is that of support through prevention and resources and rarely using conduct and expulsion. Members of both Threat Assessment Team recognize the value their skill set affords especially during crisis situations. Their expertise when assessing cases, intervening when necessary and providing case management and follow up contributes to the safety and security of the college campus. The basic steps for assessing threat on college campuses are to first identify the threat, evaluate the seriousness, intervene, and then monitor a safety plan (Blair & Schweit, 2014; Cornell, 2010). The case management, administrative support, communication, campus-wide education, and cross-disciplinary teamwork are all necessary for a successful Threat Assessment Team. Having a process in place and a plan of action is essential and a trained team is vital (Kanan, 2010; Toppe, 2017). University TAT participants at both locations vehemently expresses their firm belief that their respective Teams need to be better advertised to the college community. This will facilitate the use of their services and resources. Strategies used to promote their existence

and their function, include various trainings, such as new student orientation and through various departmental websites.

The second theme that emerged was the perception of safety, the varying programs and processes in place that contribute to the perception of safety presented by those interviewed. The Non-TAT members interviewed stated that police presence and programs they provide such as ride shares, Police reporting Apps, emergency phones, and patrolling contributed to their feelings of security. Areas with frontline contact with students are equipped with buzzers under desks with direct connection with the Police Department in case of a crisis. Members from both institutions voiced safety as the primary purpose for threat assessment on campus. The Threat Assessment Team with 24-hour access to reporting people of concern, trained personnel to provide support, care resources and referrals when needed and case management and welfare follow-ups when needed also contributed to feelings of security. Some participants spoke to departmental safety plans that are in effect and annual training that takes place with safety department. Students, as well as some other stakeholders are also aware of the reporting process for the Threat Assessment Teams. This reporting process is available through a 24-hour hotline and an online reporting form that can be completed. In search of ways to ensure the safety of the college (Sokolow, 2009) and to address the climate of fear across the college community (Kaminski, 2010) many IHE's have formed Threat Assessment Teams (TAT). The Teams hold trainings for employees and students to make sure reporting processes are clear. Active Shooter training is also held for employees. Additional strategies that make the stakeholders feel more secure are police presence, emergency phone stations throughout campus and the Police Department phone app that is available for emergency reporting. A threat assessment can prevent violence by helping those having issues to resolve problems that are causing their threatening

behavior. Even if an individual is not actively planning an attack, addressing the underlying conflict can prevent the situation from escalating. A Threat Assessment Team and the support provided can prevent a violent incident (Cornell, 2020). The most effective way to ensure the safety of the college from possible threats is to form a team that is trained and efficient (Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012). Threat Assessment Teams help mitigate threat and have become an essential tool due to the increased number of violent incidents on college campuses. The goal of these multi-disciplinary teams is to identify, assess and provide intervention and case management (Deisinger et al., 2008). All participants expressed a belief that the Team has a positive impact on college safety. Participants noted that they believe the Team is a vital part of keeping the college environment safe. Stakeholders also stated that even though some have not used the Team and the reporting process, they can see how the Team function contributes to the safety of the college campus. “There are times that people do not know the team exists or the amount of people they have helped and that is because of how great the team is at its’ job”. The feeling is that many members of the college community may have never heard of the Team or the role it plays because they are meeting their goal of providing support and resources and are working to keep violent incidents from happening. Members spoke to the “great collaboration of the team and the round the clock work done by the team”. “These people to me are amazing in what they do and how they do it, and I feel our students are safer with them”.

A third theme found to recur in the interview narrative was collaboration, resources, and funding support need by the TAT to be able to function successfully provide the best services to the college community. Administration support of Team recommendations is essential. At times, the team assesses and determines that the best thing for the Institution and the student is removal from the University and even restrictions placed on the student. Participants at both sites felt

strongly that support from Administration lends credibility to the team. Resources and budget allowances for Team is also important. Support for travel and training is needed so that Team remains informed and trained on the latest methods for assessing intervening and managing those in need. The non-TAT participants were clear that they do feel safe, and each feel that to increase the level of security they feel there should be awareness and training for whole college community. Training needs to happen at two levels, one the Team needs to be trained and prepared to assess students of concern. All Team members should be trained, budget and financial resources for this training should be available. Second comes the training and awareness for the entire college community about the Team and the role it plays in keeping the college safe. Both University TAT members informed that their teams are members of and practice by the training provided by NABITA. The Institutions of Higher Education have sent the core members of the team for national training and certification. The core members are then responsible for returning and training the remaining team members. The feeling is that this training “builds legitimacy” for the team and its’ ability to function. The training not only legitimizes the Team it also teaches processes and patterns that make the actions of the Team “defensible and increases credibility and provides a built-in level of stability and legitimacy that helps to cover institutional liability”. One difference noted between the University I-Active Shooter and University II-Non-Active Shooter is that the Team at University I-Active Shooter was allotted their own budget and the Team at University II-Non-Active Shooter was dependent on departmental budgets and therefore often limited. One way in which the Team at University I-Active Shooter took advantage of their own budget is bringing the training to the Institution and therefore being able to open training to many more participants. Kanan (2010) stresses the importance of a trained team and the need for a process to be in place. There must be a plan to

follow, and that process needs to be followed for all incidences. Training needs to take place across the different departments with a set procedure serving as an integral part of the training. Processes for evaluating the information brought to the team is necessary and the need to protect the student exhibiting the concerning behavior is just as important as protecting the college community. Threat Assessment Team participants from both IHE believe that the teams need to be better promoted so that the college community can fully utilize their support and resources. Budget allowances for this type of promotion should be increased. Some of the ways both University Teams promote their existence, and their function is through various trainings, such as new student orientation and through various departmental websites. The campus-wide education and cross-disciplinary teamwork are all necessary for a successful Threat Assessment Team. Having a process in place and a plan of action is essential and a trained team is vital (Kanan, 2010; Toppe, 2017). Those interviewed stated “there should be more training for reporting and for emergency procedures”. There are many locations and buildings to cover and “the scale that has to be covered is great”. Students felt that more training should take place for “Student Government and within student clubs”. Futo (2011) addressed the need for communication within the Team. The Team must establish and follow a process for assessing and managing cases. Once all processes are in place, a comprehensive training must be put in place connecting all Team members across the different areas. Cornell (2010), Futo (2011), and Kanan (2010) support these key points. Teams need to be trained effectively around the processes and the training of the college community should include the role of the team, what is considered alarming behavior and how to file a report. Keeping the flow of communication open leads to a strong Team.

Conclusions

This Student Development Theory, such as Schlossberg's Transition Theory, provided an understanding of how these college students develop, adapt, and adjust to college life. It is this adjustment and at times maladjustment to the stressors of college that cause students to exhibit alarming behavior and then require the Threat Assessment Teams intervene. The most effective way to ensure the safety of the college from possible threats is to form a team that is trained and efficient (Randazzo, & Cameron, 2012). Threat Assessment Teams help mitigate threat and have become an essential tool due to the increased number of violent incidents on college campuses. The goal of these multi-disciplinary teams is to identify, assess and provide intervention and case management (Deisinger et al., 2008). When providing training it is necessary to provide an understanding to the college community that it is important to identify a possible threat and also vital to report what is considered suspicious behavior. Identifying these behaviors and reporting them to Threat Assessment Team members often leads to preventing violence (Blair & Schweit, 2014; Graney, 2012; O'Toole, 2000).

The findings have supported the research by reinforcing the need for these Teams to enhance the safety and security of the college community. The emerging themes clarified the perception that these Teams have a positive impact on campus safety, including the support and resources provided to students in need. The Team members stated that the Team not only aids in campus safety they also support students through referrals for needed resources. Budget allowances and administration support is also an emerging theme noted that supports the relevant research. Resources for Team training and support from university administration provides the team with needed credibility.

Student Development Theory served as the theory this study is derived from. The study investigates the perceptions university stakeholders have about their Threat Assessment Teams and their perceived impact on the safety of the campus, therefore, the process they use to assess, intervene, and manage these students of concern is crucial. Understanding the development of these students is a solid foundation towards assessing, managing students in need. When considering Student Development Theory, we can look at Schlossberg's Transition Theory which addressed the way a student handles a significant change, loss or event is a transition (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). These transitions may contribute to a student being reported and assessed as "concerning". Theories of Student Development profess that the college years are ripe with growth and changes, both psychosocial and developmental. And within the developmental realm, there are issues of personal development as well as moral development.

As a Threat Assessment Team understanding the transition these students are facing can make the difference needed to provide the resources the student needs. Students that are often referred to the team for assessment and case management are displaying concerning behavior, many times struggle with a time of transition, a loss, a failure, or even mental health issues. The recommendations for an effective team, starts first with building teams that are represented by areas from all over the campus. The areas or departments represented should have repeated student contact, this allows them to be able to readily observe and then report any alarming behavior. The purpose of a Threat Assessment Team is to deal with students in crisis situations, which may include disturbing behavior, or medical or psychiatric situations (Graney, 2012). The study supports the research by mirroring the TAT membership to include a cross-disciplinary team with ties to student services.

Members across both institutions voiced safety as the primary purpose for threat assessment on campus. Members of the Teams interviewed from both sites state that the biggest advantage of working together as a team is building a core unit that trusts and relies on one another, as well as building trust with the college community. When addressing the possible difference in perceptions of TAT at both these universities, one which has experienced an active shooter and one that has not. Data gathered from all stakeholders, TAT members and non-TAT members showed responses from stakeholders were similar.

The stakeholders serving as members of both Universities were clear as they shared their perceptions of their role as Team members. The assessment, intervention, and support that these teams provide students that have been reported as exhibiting “concerning” behavior are each assessed by risk behavior. Their process to manage and support the students’ developmental needs contributes to the safety of the college community. Part of the Teams’ function is to case manage students of concern. Most disruptive behavior coming from college stressors, mental health issues, or isolation. Teams provide assessment, case management, support, counseling, discipline, or even if needed separation to secure the safety of the campus.

The most impactful conclusion was best stated by the TAT stakeholder from University I: These Teams have a huge power to change the lives of members of their community. With that power comes the responsibility to work diligently and with great conscious. To provide mental health support when needed and to recognize when resources are enough and when more punitive measures are warranted to diligently contribute to the safety of the college.

Implications and Recommendations for IHE

The research study highlighted the importance of the role these teams play on campus and the expectation that all institutions of higher education have a team. The study showed several implications which could improve the University Threat Assessment Team and their function for impacting the perceived safety and security of the college community. One of the key recommendations was an assertion that formalizing Threat Assessment Teams on a college campus was essential.

The creation and implementation of a Threat Assessment Team Policy and Procedures manual was noted as critical for Team members to be aware of and have available for referencing. Once policy and processes are formalized and become formal procedure, they are supported by both the TAT and university administration. The importance of a regular meeting schedule for the Team and required meeting attendance is stressed. The research shows that best practices identify key personnel as crucial for threat assessment to be conducted appropriately including mental health counseling, student conduct, security, legal counsel, residential life, and student affairs (Deisinger, Randazzo, & O'Neill, 2008). Teams at both locations were adequately represented and met the suggested membership.

The study showed a need for more attention to be directed towards skill training and professional development of Team member. Local training for each Team member was found essential as well as national training provided by NABITA for certification as a Behavior Intervention Team member. Resources and budget allowances were also named as challenges by Team members at both locations. Training for all Team members yearly and not just the Team leader. The national conference is held by the National Association for Behavior Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA) certifies participants and provides them with the tools needed

to assess and case manage students exhibiting concerning behavior. In a time of decreasing higher education budgets and resources, this study provides support for teams having proper resources to be able to effectively assess and manage threat. Establishing a budget aimed at supporting Threat Assessment Teams and allowing resources to be used for travel and training needs as well as support for awareness and promotional activities. This may also allow for a paid position to Chair the Threat Assessment Team and aid in the multiple roles held by many Team members. Team members agreed that there is a struggle for members juggling multiple roles and time constraints is also a challenge. Some best practices to meet the resources demands for travel and training is to build departmental buy in by getting them to pay for travel and national training for their employees that serve on the Threat Assessment Teams. This relieves some of the responsibility from the Team budget and allows for more training. The training should also include tabletop exercises that would allow for examples of crisis incidents and allow teams to role play ways to handle crisis situations.

Training for the campus community was also noted as essential. Options must be considered aimed at making it easier for all stakeholders to feel like they are a part of contributing to the safety of the campus and thus getting involved. Administrators could work Team members to encourage instruction for students regarding reporting incidents. Class discussions on emergency response can be held in introductory courses or during New Student Orientation. Student leaders may contribute by holding trainings during Student Government or student club meetings or at tabletop exercises. Educating the campus community through discussion and practice is essential in avoiding panic.

The research emphasized the need to inform the campus community about the Threat Assessment Teams in terms of their role and reporting process. Threat Assessment Teams might

consider adopting use of social media in their planning. Higher education administrators must establish credibility by sharing emergency planning with students, staff, and faculty on a regular basis for notification procedures to be effective. These same processes and promotional activities should include all locations to provide more inclusion for branch campus locations, thus assuring the same services for all students. Ways in which to meet the challenge of promoting the role and existence of the Threat Assessment Teams is to increase awareness by promoting them in the Student Handbook and providing training within the University at New Student Orientations, New Employees Originations, Student Government Meetings, Student Club meetings, Staff Council and Faculty Council meetings. Training should include the role of these Teams, the process to report unstable behavior and the benefit these Teams are for the Universities. Informing the college community that the function of the Team is to provide resources and increase the safety of the college and is not meant to be punitive for those reported. Threat Assessment Team members were clear that the challenges that their team faced were often getting students to report other students that were exhibiting concerning or threatening behavior. They stated that the reasons are often because the reporting process was not always clear. With both sites having multiple locations, it is sometimes difficult to get the process out to the student population. Team members from both sites interviewed stated that reports submitted were more often from employees about concerning students rather than from students reporting other students. Participants referenced minimal promotional efforts were made to the entire institution and admitted that current marketing efforts focused mostly on faculty and staff. Student input is important, and students may supply a unique voice or perspective as a fellow peer. If the student body is not aware of the Threat Assessment Team process and how to report concerns,

opportunities to intervene early could be missed. A comprehensive awareness plan to encompass promotion to students with yearlong campaign activities was needed.

The subject of campus violence continues to grow as does the need for further research. This researcher has contributed to the need for exploration into University Threat Assessment Teams by giving voice to the perspectives of these stakeholders on the impact these teams have on campus safety. The researcher has contributed to the literature that supports that college and universities are being proactive towards making their campuses safe, by confirming the existence of Threat Assessment Teams and calling attention to their role assessing, intervening, and managing potential violent behavior.

Recommendations for Future Research

As in any study as the research progresses the need for future research becomes evident. A future study on the impact of the work done by the Threat Assessment Team on the institution's retention rate would be beneficial to any IHE and would lend to the TAT's credibility. More quantitative data is needed to understand the extent to which teams are contributing to student completion and success. The research shows the mission of these teams is to identify and respond to behaviors categorized as disruptive. Threat Assessment Teams were designed to prevent campus violence and address concerns through information gathering, analysis, and intervention. While it may never be known how these teams have prevented many acts of violence, suicides, or other student issues, the study by Self allowed for a better understanding of team functioning, team member experiences, and the value of having these teams on college campuses. The research may be used by teams, administrators, and other decision-makers to maximize student success, safety, and retention (Self, 2017).

An additional possible study on these Teams could be the best practices for branch campuses of large multiple campus universities and what those implications may be.

Another beneficial study that would be of great interest to determine if there is a difference between Threat Assessment Teams at a state system public university and a small two-year college. Is there a greater likelihood of someone noticing a concern before it is acted upon at a small college?

Limitations of the Study

As in any study limitations become clear as the study goes forward. The study included four members of TAT interviewed and six Faculty and Staff Council participants along with six Student Government participants. The inclusion of a larger sample of TAT and non-TAT participants would allow for more perceptions from participants that were completely familiar with the Team's existence.

Secondly is the fact that as a study that focused on one type of institution, public universities that are members of a state system, the ability to transfer the results to other institutions may be limited. This was limited to two public four-year IHE and other participating institutions could include two-year colleges, technical colleges, and private universities.

An additional limitation of this study was the need to conduct all interviews via zoom because of COVID-19 protocols. Being restricted from face-to-face interviews limited the ability for the researcher to note physical movements including hand gestures and even facial expressions are not as notable virtually.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to investigate selected university stakeholders' perceptions of the Threat Assessment Teams on two large state universities and the

perceived impact these teams have on campus safety. This chapter included a brief overview of the study's problem statement along with a list of the research questions that guided this study. Relevant research that has been conducted in threat assessment has been noted as well as the theoretical framework the study is built upon. The summary of findings provided the emerging themes that were apparent after the transcriptions were coded. Discussion and interpretation of the findings were drawn from conducting the interviews. Aimed at providing valuable information to IHE, implications and recommendations for improved practice were suggested by the researcher. Additionally, the study limitations and the recommendations for future research was included

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: SELECTED TEXAS UNIVERSITY STAKEHOLDER'S PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CAMPUS SAFETY

Consent Name: _____

Principal Investigator:

Elizabeth Silva

Telephone: (956) 454-3028

Emergency Contact:

Name: Elizabeth Silva

Telephone: (956) 454-3028

Key points you should know

- We are inviting you to be in a research study we are conducting. Your participation is voluntary. This means it is up to you and only you to decide if you want to be in the study. Even if you decide to join the study, you are free to leave at any time if you change your mind.
- Take your time and ask to have any words or information that you do not understand explained to you.
- We are doing this study because we want to learn about the perceptions of university stakeholders about their Threat Assessment Teams and their impact on campus safety.
- Why are you being asked to be in this study?
 - As a member of the university threat assessment team or as a non-member of the threat assessment team your perception on the teams' impact on college safety is essential to this study.
- What will you do if you agree to be in the study?
 - You will be asked to participate in a focus group where you will be asked to share your perception about the university threat assessment team and the impact the team has had on college safety.
 - As a participant you will be asked to take part in a Zoom video lasting about one hour and may be asked to participate in a follow up interview to verify information also lasting about one hour.
 - Participation in this study requires video and audio taping of the interviews. The tapes will be transcribed and printed and shared

with group members in order to confirm the transcriptions are correct, by signing this consent form you are giving me permission to make and use these recordings.

- We would like to video and audio tape using Zoom Software and Google Meet software.
- Please initial one of the following:
 - ___ Yes, I give permission
 - ___ No, I do not give permission

- Can you be harmed by being in this study?
 - Being in this study involves no greater risk than what you ordinarily encounter in daily life.
 - Risks to your personal privacy and confidentiality: Your participation in this research will be held strictly confidential and only a code number will be used to identify your stored data. However, because there will be a link between the code and your identity, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
 - If we learn something new and important while doing this study that would likely affect whether you would want to be in the study, we will contact you to let you know what we have learned.

- What are the costs of being in the study?
 - There is no cost associated with being in this study.

- Will you get anything for being in this study?
 - You will not receive any payments for taking part in this study.

- What other choices do you have if you decide not to be in the study?
 - You may choose to not participate in this study.

- Could you be taken out of the study?
 - You may choose to end participation in this study.

Can the information we collect be used for other studies?

Information that could identify you will be removed and the information you gave us may be used for future research by us or other researchers; we will not contact you to sign another consent form if we decide to do this.

What happens if I say no or change my mind?

- You can say you do not want to be in the study now or if you change your mind later, you can stop participating at any time.
- No one will treat you differently. You will not be penalized.

How will my privacy be protected?

- We will share your information with only the researcher.
- Your information will be stored with a code instead of identifiers (such as name, date of birth, email address, etc.).
- Even though we will make efforts to keep your information private, we cannot guarantee confidentiality because it is always possible that someone could figure out a way to find out what you do on a computer.
- No published scientific reports will identify you directly.
- If it is possible that your participation in this study might reveal behavior that must be reported according to state law (e.g., abuse, intent to harm self or others); disclosure of such information will be reported to the extent required by law.

Who to contact for research related questions?

For questions about this study or to report any problems you experience as a result of being in this study contact Elizabeth Silva 956-454-3028 elizabeth.silva03@utrgv.edu

Who to contact regarding your rights as a participant?

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protections (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or irb@utrgv.edu.

Signatures

By signing below, you indicate that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study and that the procedures involved have been described to your satisfaction. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your own reference. To participate, you must be at least 18 years of age. If you are under 18, please inform the researcher.

Participant's Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B

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Research Questions

1. What are selected university stakeholders' perceptions of Threat Assessment Teams on their campuses?
2. How do members of the Threat Assessment Teams at two selected universities perceive their role with respect to campus safety?
3. How do selected university stakeholders perceive the threat assessment team's impact on campus safety?
4. How do stakeholder perceptions of their Threat Assessment Teams' impact on campus safety differ at the two selected universities?

Interview Questions

Threat Assessment Team Members:

1. What campus positions make up the TAT and how are threat assessment team members chosen? Do you feel any campus positions are missing from the TAT?
2. How did your campus go about developing a Threat Assessment Team (TAT) on campus? Was this the result of a crisis, and if so, what was the crisis?
3. What is your perception of the role of the university's TAT? Talk about some of the things the team does?
4. What part does the TAT, and its' members play in securing the safety of the college campus? From your perspectives, describe the extent to which the TAT impacts campus safety? Can you provide examples?
5. How is the team's existence and team's function promoted to the college community?
6. How does the team address the threat of a violent incident? What is the process used to assess, intervene, and support students of concern?
7. What does your TAT do well (strengths)? What challenges does your TAT struggle with (weaknesses)?
8. What resources or trainings were provided to your team to help identify students in crisis? Was this training appropriate for you to feel properly trained and informed?

9. What changes within the TAT have you seen since the team was first created? Why did these changes occur? Did they have a positive or negative impact on crisis management?
10. Can you think of any other information about the TAT that you would like to share?

Non-Threat Assessment Team Members

1. What are some safety measures in place at your university? Do you feel safe at your institution? Explain why?
2. Describe what you know about the university threat assessment team? What is the role of the university threat assessment team?
3. Describe any major violent incident that have occurred on your campus?
4. When concerned for the safety of the campus what is the procedure or process for reporting a possible threat? How do you perceive this process has been received by the campus community?
5. Have you ever reported a student of concern to the TAT? Describe your thought process.
6. What are your perceptions concerning the TAT and their impact on college safety?
7. How has your institution changed the way that it responds to the threat of campus violence over time? What has prompted the changes?
8. How prepared do you think your campus currently is to prevent an incident of campus violence?
 - a. Why do you feel this way?
 - b. What specific things have happened to make you feel this way about your institution's level of preparedness?
 - c. What are the challenges your college faces in regard to assessing and responding to situations that might pose a threat to campus?
9. What would it take for you to be more confident in the extent to which your campus is prepared to identify, assess, and respond to a threat of campus violence?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add about the impact the university TAT has on campus safety

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Education has played a vital role in this author's entire life. Elizabeth received her BA in Psychology from Pan American University in 1984. While working for Pan American University she obtained her M.Ed. in Counseling from Pan American University in 1987. She served the students at Texas State Technical College as a Counselor and Student Services Administrator for 30 years. Elizabeth received her terminal degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in July of 2021. The journey towards her doctoral degree was the most soul searching of her educational experiences. Through her coursework, she was able to recognize the source of her power and her love of education. Most importantly, she identified the power and influence her home and her culture had on her success. It is this pedagogy of home that is vital to her very existence. In her everyday life and even in crucial moments it is what she was taught by her family and her culture that resonated from within. Elizabeth is the youngest of seven children born to Deciderio and Susana Solis Silva. All their children understood the power of education and the responsibility that goes with it. She proudly joined her brother and sister with a Doctorate in Education. As they often discussed they could not have succeeded without what was learned at home. She knows that her family and her cultural identity gives her strength. She has learned from positive role models and strives to be the same type of example for her nieces and nephew. She aspires to succeed not only for herself but also for her family, her family of the past, the present and the future. It is this that gives her a deep sense of purpose.

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