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Faculty and Staff Perspectives of a Behavior Assessment Team: A Case Study Evaluation

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FACULTY AND STAFF PERSPECTIVES OF A BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT TEAM: A CASE STUDY EVALUATION

by

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(Under the Direction of Daniel Calhoun)

ABSTRACT

Following the shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 2007, colleges began formally implementing threat assessment teams to help identify threats and prevent violence from occurring. On many campuses those teams have developed into Behavior Assessment Teams (BATs) that evaluate threats as well as support students by identifying concerning behavior and strategically implementing interventions to reduce the risk of violence. Many of those teams are now well established and need some method for evaluating their effectiveness.

The purpose of this study was to understand faculty and staff perceptions of a campus BAT and evaluate a team's effectiveness as defined by the team's impact on campus culture, specifically as it relates to campus safety. Four specific aspects (the reporting process, the team's response to a report, the observed changes in behavior following an intervention, and the impact on campus safety) were identified for review. Each of these areas came from literature regarding best practices for a BAT, and, collectively, were used to evaluate the team's effectiveness.

Using a case study approach the researcher interviewed 13 faculty and staff members from the campus that had previously submitted a report to the BAT. The researcher believed that community members who had previously worked with the team were in a better position to discuss their experiences and provide feedback about the team's handling of cases than team

members themselves. Additionally, this study included an analysis of team documents including the institution's BAT policy and procedure manual, BAT website, reporting form, and selected case notes.

The results indicated that the faculty and staff on this campus have a positive perception of the BAT and the work that it does. While there were acknowledgements of areas in which the team could improve, overall, the community felt like the team was effective. Responses indicated that people understood the reporting process, and that the team followed up quickly on reports that it received, providing students with resources as needed. Most importantly, the community members saw the BAT as playing an important role in regard to campus safety, whether for record-keeping purposes or to help intervene and prevent violence from occurring. Finally, the implications based upon these findings are included, along with recommendations for future research.

INDEX WORDS: Behavior assessment, Behavior intervention, Threat assessment, Campus safety

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DEDICATION

To my wife, my best friend, and my biggest supporter – Robyn. I also dedicate this to my beautiful little girl, Shayna. You two are my everything, and now I can focus on you again.

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There are many people I wish to thank for the guidance and support throughout this process. First, I would like to thank my parents for instilling in me the value of education and encouraging me to always strive for my dreams. I would not be the person I am today if not for you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, and strengthened by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the leaders at institutions of higher education started to become more sensitive to the threats to campus safety. However, it was not until the mass shootings that took place at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech) in 2007 that college and university administrators began to reevaluate their campus security plans and make safety one of their top priorities. In 2008 there was another campus shooting at Northern Illinois University, and a variety of other acts of violence at both the secondary school level and on college campuses since then have kept campus safety at the forefront. As recently as May 2014 there were shootings near the University of California, Santa Barbara, and with each act of violence that occurs, the impact has been felt on campuses across the country. Considering the perceived increase in frequency of terrorist attacks, bomb threats, natural disasters and mass shootings that have occurred across the country since Columbine, and even since Virginia Tech, administrators are even more concerned about keeping their students and their campuses safe (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill and Savage, 2008; Higher Education Mental Health Alliance, 2012).

Although it was the cumulative effect of these incidents that made administrators more concerned about campus safety, Graney (2011) identified the Virginia Tech shootings as the significant event that impacted campuses. It was after the Virginia Tech shootings that many campuses began to place a greater emphasis on preventing violence,

rather than focusing on responding to incidents that had already occurred (Graney, 2011). Using the recommendations from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Secret Service, leaders at institutions of higher education began creating and implementing multidisciplinary teams of professionals from across the campuses drawn from student affairs administrators, counselors, campus security officers and others, known as threat assessment or behavioral intervention teams (O'Toole, 2000; Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). These teams were designed to monitor and evaluate threats of violence or concerning behavior (such as changes in appearance, changes in behavior, incivility, and continued absences) among campus community members and then provide interventions that would help alleviate the threat or concern before the behaviors escalated to an act of violence (Cornell, 2010; Scalora, Simons & VanSlyke, 2010; Sokolow & Hughes, 2007; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009; Sokolow, Lewis, Wolf, Van Brunt, & Byrnes, 2009).

In the years since the attack at Virginia Tech, behavior assessment teams have been implemented on many college campuses. The scope of these teams' work has expanded in that many now do detailed violence and threat assessments on not only students, but also on faculty and staff. Many teams also now utilize more sophisticated databases for recordkeeping and data management (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009) as opposed to the paper files or spreadsheets of the past. There has also been a growing body of research on how the teams develop, who serves on the teams, and the threat assessment protocols being utilized (Graney, 2011; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009). These studies provided useful information to those forming and coordinating the teams, but they failed to discuss how successful the teams are at preventing violence. Although Dewey Cornell (2010),

professor of Education at the University of Virginia; author of over 200 publications on school safety, bullying, and threat assessment; and principal developer of the Virginia Threat Assessment Guidelines, claimed that college campuses are generally perceived to be safe havens for learning, the studies mentioned above do little to alleviate the fear of violence that has arisen in recent years. For faculty, staff, students, parents, and other community members to continue to feel safe on college campuses, it is necessary to begin to evaluate the effectiveness of these teams, because simply having a team in place does not ensure a safer campus (Higher Education Mental Health Alliance, 2012). To truly have a safer campus, the team must be functioning well and be able to successfully intervene when students, or others, exhibit any of the warning signs along the path towards violence (Borum, Fein, Vossekuil, & Berglund, 1999).

Background

Violence on College Campuses

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (20 U.S.C.§1092 (f)), more commonly referred to as the Clery Act, which was originally passed in 1990, required colleges and universities to report crimes that occurred on or near the campus. The data gathered from the reports submitted by institutions of higher education helped provide a clearer picture of the types of crime and violence that are actually occurring on campuses across the country. With more accurate reporting of violence on campuses, there has been a documented increase in campus violence over the past few decades, particularly mass shootings and targeted violence, or incidents of violence in which an attacker selects a particular target prior to the violent act (Vossekuil et al., 2002). Drysdale, Modzeleski and Simons (2010) sought to better

understand these acts of targeted violence on college campuses, and identified 272 such incidents that occurred from 1900-2008. Reviewing these cases, Drysdale et al. (2010) found that nearly 60% of the incidents took place in the past 20 years. While they reported on the attackers' ages, genders, affiliations with the institutions, and weapons used, the most telling information for campus administrators was the research on incident locations. Most of the situations, nearly 80%, occurred in residence halls, administrative or classroom buildings or on the campus grounds (Drysdale et al., 2010). Over a four year period, from 2005-2008, there was a total of 235,599 crimes reported (Drysdale et al., 2010). The vast majority of these crimes were burglaries and motor vehicle thefts. The second smallest percentage of crimes included negligent and non-negligent manslaughter, at less than 1 percent (Drysdale et al., 2010).

While Drysdale et al. (2010) showed that violence on college campuses has increased since the 1990s, crime data has shown that the rate of violence on college campuses is significantly lower than the national average (Cornell, 2010). The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that the rate of serious violent crime on college campuses with more than 2,500 students was 62 per 100,000 students in 2004 (Cornell, 2010). The national rate for 2004 was 466 violent crimes per 100,000 people, making college students approximately seven times less likely to experience violent crime than their peers not attending college. The Bureau of Justice Statistics also reported that the rate of violent crime on college campuses of that size decreased 9 percent over the ten year period from 1994-2004.

Cornell (2010) also reported specifically on crime data stating that from 1997-2007, college campuses across the country experienced a combined average of 25.5

murders per year. The national data for this same time frame is approximately 16,500 murders per year. Using the figure of 9,000 college campuses that were reporting data in 2008 and the average of 25.5 murders per year, Cornell (2010) further calculated that the average college campus "could expect an on-campus murder approximately every 353 years" (p. 11).

Although these figures suggested that violence on college campuses is extremely rare, the public concern regarding campus safety remains high. Addington (2003) showed that students' perceived risk increased immediately following the shooting at Columbine High School causing an increase in fear of victimization. While those initial fears may not always last long, the perceived risk would likely be heightened with each shooting, or act of targeted violence that takes place. Since these types of violent acts continue to occur on a regular basis, both on campus and off campus, it can be assumed that the public perception of risk, and fear of victimization remains at a high level. Even before these acts began occurring more frequently, Watson (1995) recognized that "a plan for crisis response follow-up for faculty and students, including debriefing and counseling" was a necessary aspect of any safety plan because when acts of violence occur, the entire campus community is impacted.

Threat Assessment

After the deadly shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the U.S. Secret Service both embarked on major studies of school violence to help society better understand how and why the shootings took place. More importantly, they wanted to help determine how future incidents could be prevented (Vossekuil et al., 2002). The FBI, in conjunction with the National Center for

the Analysis of Violent Crime, led a symposium of 160 educators, school administrators, mental health professionals, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors through an in-depth review of 18 specific incidents of school shootings, and later reported on those findings (O'Toole, 2000). The U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education identified 37 incidents of targeted violence since 1974 and reported on their findings (Vossekuil et al., 2002). Both reports recommended that schools implement a threat assessment approach to prevent future violence from occurring. Vossekuil et al. (2002) summarized 10 key findings:

- incidents of targeted violence are rarely sudden, impulsive, acts;
- prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea or plan to attack;
- most attackers did not directly threaten their targets;
- there is no accurate or useful profile of students who engaged in targeted violence;
- most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or that indicated a need for help;
- most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures and had considered, or attempted, suicide;
- most attackers felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack;
- most attackers had access to, and had used, weapons prior to the attack;
- in many cases, other students were involved in some capacity; and

- despite prompt law enforcement responses, most shooting incidents were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention (p. 31).

Based on these findings, Vossekuil et al. (2002) concluded that there were warning signs prior to the violent attacks and that if someone had mentioned their concerns to an authority figure or school administrator, the administrator may have been able to provide an intervention that could have prevented the shootings. O'Toole (2000) explained the FBI threat assessment procedures and suggested a way that they could work within a school setting. She described the types of threats, factors to consider in threat assessment, levels of threatening behavior, and the four-pronged threat assessment model that considers everything known about the student. To effectively implement this threat assessment model, O'Toole (2000) recommended that schools keep students and parents informed of school policies, identify a threat assessment coordinator, and consider utilizing multidisciplinary teams to review reported threats. While most students will never act on their threats, O'Toole (2000) and Vossekuil et al. (2002) suggested that the early recognition and reporting of concerning behavior would allow a well-trained threat assessment team to intervene and prevent future acts of targeted violence.

Following the Virginia Tech shooting, case study reviews of violence on college campuses, similar to those done by the FBI and Secret Service after Columbine were completed with comparable results. It was again recommended that the right approach was for colleges and universities to create threat assessment teams (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). Most of the reports on campus safety following the Virginia Tech shooting suggested that colleges and universities review the K-12 school threat

assessment models and adapt them to fit the needs of their campuses. (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 3).

Early Implementations

As institutions of higher education have implemented this recommendation over the past several years, it has led to significant growth and development in the field of threat assessment on college campuses. Randazzo and Plummer (2009) discussed in detail the implementation process at Virginia Tech, and listed a number of "critical questions" that Virginia Tech faced along the way. Randazzo and Plummer (2009) also shared the decisions that were made by Virginia Tech throughout the implementation and explained the reasons behind each choice. The questions Randazzo and Plummer (2009) addressed included such challenges as what to call the team, who should be on the team, who should lead the team, and how much time serving on the team would demand of team members. Also discussed was the importance of creating a mission statement, establishing policies and procedures, record-keeping, training team members, and marketing the team to gain buy-in from the campus community. Many of these were the same issues addressed by Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill and Savage (2008) in their *Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams.* Deisinger et al. (2008) also addressed how many members a team should have, how often the team should meet, what threat assessment instruments a team should use, and what kinds of information should be reported to the team. Other issues added by Randazzo and Plummer (2009) included questions like "should an institution establish separate threat assessment teams for student cases and for faculty/staff cases – or one threat assessment team to handle all cases" (p. 20). Both Deisinger et al. (2008) and Randazzo and

Plummer (2009) noted that every college and university is unique and therefore every team should answer these questions and challenges based on what is best for their campus. Even though one campus may then be very different from another with how it applied the threat assessment approach, the implementation itself now needs to be evaluated.

As campuses started to implement these teams, the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management, a law and consulting firm dedicated to creating safer campuses through prevention and proactive risk management, introduced a comprehensive behavioral intervention and threat assessment model (Sokolow & Hughes, 2007). This model was designed to address the variety of recommendations that followed the Virginia Tech shootings and explained how campuses could implement the recommendations. Where Deisinger et al. (2008) and Randazzo and Plummer (2009) raised the questions, Sokolow and Hughes (2007) attempted to provide answers. They discussed specific administrators who should be on the threat assessment team, how to create protocols for the team to follow, the crisis and behavioral intervention trainings that should take place for both the team and other campus community members, and even the databases and methods of recordkeeping teams should use. The National Behavior Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) Threat Assessment Tool, introduced in 2009, provided even more clarity on how teams should be using threat assessment on their campuses (Sokolow et al., 2009). Also in 2009, Sokolow and Lewis reviewed some of the best practices being utilized by teams across the country and identified twelve key elements that set these teams apart. These included formalized protocols, the use of risk

rubrics, a culture of reporting within the institution, campus trainings, and comprehensive databases for longitudinal tracking of students, among others (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009).

Current Research on Implementations

While there is obvious agreement on the importance of the threat assessment approach, and even some similarities among the protocols and rubrics being used, there is little knowledge about the ways in which institutions answered Randazzo and Plummer's (2009) critical questions (what to call the team, who should be on the team, and who should lead the team) on their individual campuses and how the teams look and function on a regular basis. Over the past few years, a number of studies (DeLaTorre, 2011; Gamm, Mardis & Sullivan, 2011; Graney, 2011; and VanBrunt, Sokolow, Lewis & Schuster, 2012) surfaced, trying to provide the threat assessment community with some clarity.

DeLaTorre (2011) studied the implementation of threat assessment teams at public universities and community colleges in Texas, while Graney (2011) studied the implementation of teams at flagship institutions in New England. DeLaTorre (2001) found that there was a significant difference between the implementation of threat assessment teams at public universities and community colleges. Only one of the 21 community colleges studied (less than five percent) had a threat assessment team, while over 80 percent of the public universities had one (DeLaTorre, 2011). Graney's (2011) research looked specifically at the team composition, practices and responsibilities. Each of the six flagship institutions had different names for their team, reflecting institutional values. However, each team was housed in the division of student affairs and most reported to the vice president of student affairs. While the teams ranged in size from five

to 10 members, they each had representation from housing and residence life, dean of students, and counseling (or a mental health consultant). A variety of other positions were represented including police/campus safety and student conduct, yet there was no representation from the faculty at any of the institutions (Graney, 2011). Graney (2011) also found that while there were differences in team composition, many of the practices and responsibilities of the six teams were similar. This study also found a positive correlation between the level of training team members received and their confidence in using the threat assessment tools (Graney, 2011), meaning the more training the team received on using the protocols, the more comfortable they were in administering it when necessary.

Larger studies have also looked at the variety among teams in terms of names and team composition. The Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (2012) reported on a number of other studies in creating a guide for campus teams. The report cited two studies that together found at least a dozen different names for the teams. One study surveyed 175 teams and a variety of names were found, the most common of which was Behavioral Intervention Team (Gamm, Mardis & Sullivan, 2011). Gamm, Mardis and Sullivan (2011) also reviewed team members and found that the most frequently mentioned representatives included Deans of Students, Counseling Center Directors, Directors of Public Safety, Housing Directors, Student Conduct Officers, Health Services Directors, and Faculty representatives. Other representatives, ranging from Financial Aid to Athletics and Registrar to International Studies, were also mentioned (Gamm et al., 2011).

In an even larger study, during the summer of 2012, NaBITA surveyed over 800 community colleges and four-year institutions regarding their campus teams. This study showed that over 90% of the institutions surveyed had some form of behavioral intervention team on campus (VanBrunt, Sokolow, Lewis & Schuster, 2012). Similar to the other studies mentioned, the most common team members included Counseling, Public Safety, Dean of Students and Housing/Residence Life, with a number of other constituents represented, including students, at two percent of the institutions. Like Graney (2011), the NaBITA survey found that the Dean of Students or Vice President of Student Affairs was most often the team leader. Most teams (38%) reported meeting weekly or twice monthly (24%) (VanBrunt et al., 2012). The survey also reported on a number of other topics important to understanding how institutions have followed the recommendations such as recordkeeping practices, trainings, and threat assessment tools used (VanBrunt et al., 2012).

With each of these studies, the higher education community continues to learn more about how colleges and universities have implemented the recommendations for threat assessment teams. Administrators have a clearer idea of who should be on the team, how often it should meet, the protocols that should be used, the recordkeeping methods and the importance of training both team members and the rest of the campus community. However, recent studies do not indicate how well a team is functioning once it is established. The research has not provided any means of assessing the effect behavioral intervention teams have had on campus culture, specifically with regards to safety.

Problem Statement

Following the incident at Virginia Tech, leaders of institutions of higher education sought to increase safety measures and prevent future incidents of campus violence. While a number of techniques have been suggested, the most common recommendation was to create a multidisciplinary threat assessment team. Since the shootings in 2007, not only have institutional leaders followed these recommendations, but the scope of the team's work has expanded to address more than just threatening behaviors. As a result, the number of behavioral intervention teams has significantly increased, a national association was created, and a trend developed in researching how the teams were implemented.

The majority of the studies on Behavior Assessment Teams (BATs) have focused on issues surrounding team composition, team leadership, training, and team practices and protocols. Researchers gathered this information through surveys of team members being asked to report on their own teams. In rare instances, researchers interviewed team members as well. The research on behavioral intervention teams has not addressed the impact of these teams on campus culture and how campus communities perceive the effectiveness of these teams. It is important for those responsible for the administration of the teams to understand more than just how to create a team, especially since most institutions already have the team in place. Administrators now want to know if the team is serving a valuable and needed function for the institution. The answer, on many campuses, will be determined by community members' perceptions of the team's effectiveness. Perceptions of effectiveness for a Behavior Assessment Team (BAT) will rely on how the team addresses concerns regarding campus safety and how it provides interventions to help students become more successful. In addition, a BAT should meet at

least some of the key criteria for what Sokolow and Lewis (2009) describe as second generation teams. These criteria include an easy and convenient reporting process for those submitting reports to the team, a quick and helpful response from the team, interventions that help aid in positive changes in the student reported or a resolution to the situation, and to be a contributing part of the overall campus safety plan.

Purpose of Study

In order to know if a BAT is being perceived by its campus community as effective, it is important to first identify those who are aware of the team and have used it for reporting a student who has displayed threatening or concerning behavior. These individuals are in the best position to evaluate the team and how it handled the situation, as they have first-hand knowledge of the team's functioning. As Graney (2011) noted, research must now focus on the impact these teams have on campus culture and perceptions of campus safety. The impact a team has on its campus is difficult to identify. However it can be determined by how well it meets the criteria established by Sokolow and Lewis (2009) as well as if it is perceived by the community as doing a good job in addressing concerns and providing interventions for students. The purpose of this study was to understand faculty and staff perceptions of a campus BAT and evaluate the team's effectiveness as defined by the team's impact on campus culture, specifically as it relates to campus safety.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

Overarching Question: How do members of a campus community perceive the effectiveness of the campus Behavioral Intervention Team? To answer this question, the following sub-questions were asked:

1. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the reporting process?
2. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the team's response to the incident that was reported?
3. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the changes in the student or the outcome of the situation?
4. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the behavior assessment team's contribution to campus safety?

In addition, members of the BAT were asked about the criteria they think are important in evaluating a team and their perceptions of how the team meets those criteria, creating a fifth research question:

5. What criteria should be included in the evaluation of a behavior assessment team?

Significance of the Study

As most institutions now have some form of behavioral assessment team in place, it is important to move beyond the basic understandings of how to create a team and set it up to be successful. Those responsible for the teams are now interested in determining

ways to assess the effectiveness of their teams. This study sought to evaluate a campus behavioral intervention team. The findings will provide the team with information regarding what community members perceive they do well and where there is room for improvement. More importantly, the research procedures can easily be replicated on other campuses, providing a new framework for evaluating the effectiveness of a BAT. The results from this study will provide behavioral intervention team chairs, vice presidents of student affairs, presidents and other decision-makers an opportunity to consider the perceptions community members have of their institution's ability to respond to potential threats of violence and to keep their campus safe. This study will also advance the growing field of research on behavioral intervention teams, as well as fill the void in the current research by helping teams assess if they are making a difference, keeping their campuses safe, and, ultimately, helping students become more successful.

Procedures

To better understand the impact a BAT is having on its campus, the researcher conducted a qualitative study using case study methods. According to Patton (2002), "in new fields of study where little work has been done, few definitive hypotheses exist and little is known about the nature of the phenomenon, qualitative inquiry is a reasonable beginning point of research" (p. 193). Since BATs are still a relatively new phenomenon and little is known about their impact on campus culture, a qualitative design is especially appropriate for this study. Stake (1995) stated that case studies are "effective ways of studying educational programs, particularly adaptable to program evaluation," (p. xii). Since this research intended on providing an in-depth evaluation of a BAT, a single-site,

evaluative case study was used. A case study was completed by reviewing and analyzing team documents (policy and procedure manual, incident reports, case notes, etc.) and conducting interviews with campus community members.

To fully evaluate a campus BAT, the researcher identified a four-year, state institution in the southeastern United States to review. The characteristics of this institution's BAT are comparable to many others in terms of when the BAT was created, the types of training conducted for team members, meeting frequency, and a number of other factors associated with the implementation of Behavior Assessment Teams, as reported by the 2012 NaBITA Team Survey. It is also similar in that it uses one of the common databases used by teams to receive and record reports from campus community members regarding concerning behavior among students. Additional information about the criteria used in the selection of the institution will be shared in Chapter Three.

The researcher began the evaluation by reviewing various records and documents associated with the team. The documents included a policy and procedure manual, training materials, and the incident reporting form. These data were analyzed to help the researcher understand the procedures of the BAT and how it is supposed to function. The records included actual incident reports submitted to the team, case notes and other information available through the team database, which provided the necessary background information on the types of behaviors reported to the team, as well as the typical interventions and actions taken by the team. This document review was also useful in helping to identify the faculty and staff who have reported concerns and who would be appropriate for participation in the interviews.

The interview protocol questions (available in Appendix A and B) were created for the purpose of this study and focused on the case or cases the participants reported, the faculty and staff member perceptions of the reporting process, how the team handled the reported cases, any changes in the student's behavior following the report, their perceptions of campus safety and the team's role with regard to campus safety. Data gathered through the interviews were reviewed for patterns to develop themes, categories and sub-categories. Additional information about the methodological procedures is covered in Chapter Three.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations for this study. Although the researcher has attempted to capture feedback about the cases handled by the BAT, there are likely a number of incidents that took place that went unreported. As such, the researcher has not gathered all of the information about potential cases on the campus, only those that have been formally reported to the BAT. In addition, there were likely a number of cases discussed at BAT meetings and in the database that were brought by team members and only a few team members were interviewed in the study.

As a qualitative study, the researcher's bias must also be considered as his inherent assumptions impact his interpretations throughout the study, especially during the data analysis phase of the research. The researcher is a member of the BAT at his own campus, and therefore has a bias towards the importance of having a BAT on campus. He assumes that they are valuable and providing a necessary service to the campus community. As such, the interview protocol questions, which were developed specifically for this study, were written with that perspective in mind. Once developed, they were

vetted by experts in the field of research who were familiar with the functions of a BAT, but do not serve on a team, helping limit the researcher's bias.

Delimitations

This study is delimited primarily by its qualitative research design. As a result, the findings are limited only to the institution being studied. While they are not generalizable, the findings will still be of value to other institutions. Some BATs handle cases of threatening behavior among faculty and staff, as well as students, but this study only looked at cases regarding students. The researcher has also made the choice to review this BAT specifically from the perspective of those who have reported incidents. In doing so, a number of other perspectives are not being considered, such as other campus community members including students, parents, alumni, faculty and staff who have not reported incidents to the team and even local community members. Each of these has a valuable perspective that could have been studied as well. There are also a number of ways in which one could define a BAT's effectiveness. The researcher chose to focus on the reporting process, the team's response, changes in behavior following an intervention, and the role with regard to campus safety, rather than repeating an assessment in areas that have already been covered by the literature such as an evaluation of the team's functioning, training, preparedness, and the campus' awareness of the team and its purpose, among others.

Key Definitions

There are key terms that require definition in order to understand their relation to the study.

Behavior assessment team. For the purposes of this research, this term is used to refer to any campus team made up of professionals from various offices with the intent of identifying disturbing, threatening, or concerning behavior in an attempt to provide interventions and prevent violent acts from occurring. Randazzo and Plummer (2009) discussed the naming of teams and acknowledged that different institutions chose different names for their team to reflect the scope of their work and communicate to the campus the purpose of the team. Therefore, behavior assessment team (BAT) is also meant to refer to teams with other names such as Behavior Intervention Team, as well as those that focus specifically on Threat Assessment. All of these terms that may be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

Targeted violence. This term is defined as "any incident of violence where a known or knowable attacker selects a particular target prior to their violent act" (Vossekuil et al., 2002, p. 4).

Incidents. Anything reported to the campus BAT, including acts of violence (towards self or others), threats (verbal, written, or perceived) and concerning behavior.

Concerning Behavior. Any behaviors such as changes in appearance, changes in behavior, incivility, continued absences, etc. that are displayed by one community member and recognized by another community member as concerning, or out-of-the-ordinary.

Reporter. A campus community member, often a faculty or staff member, who has submitted information (an incident or concerning behavior) to the Behavior Assessment Team.

Organization of the Study

Chapter One has provided an introduction to Behavior Assessment Teams as well as the statement of the problem, research questions, the significance of the study, definitions for key terms and limitations/delimitations of the study. Chapter Two will provide a more in-depth review of the literature and previous research related to the topic being investigated. The methodology and specific procedures used to gather data for the study will be presented in Chapter Three. The results of the analyses and findings that emerge from the study will be shared in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will contain a summary of the study and findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, a discussion, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past two decades there have been a number of shootings and violent attacks that have occurred in high schools and on America's college campuses. While many may think this is a new trend, research (O'Toole, 2000; Vossekuil et al., 2002) shows that this type of violence has been taking place for years. Due to the perception that these attacks are occurring more often, schools have been implementing a variety of safety initiatives in an effort to keep their schools safe, from increasing the number of police and safety officers, to mass email notifications (Hughes, White, & Hertz, 2008), to profiling, zero tolerance policies and mental health assessments (Reddy, Borum, Berglund, Vossekuil, Fein, & Modzeleski, 2001; Randazzo, Borum, Vossekuil, Fein, Modzeleski, & Pollack, 2005). Some of these efforts have been required by law, such as the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (20 U.S.C.§1092 (f)). Other efforts have been shared in the profession as a best practice, such as better lighting and emergency call boxes, while others have come from recommendations by the FBI (O'Toole, 2000), the U.S. Secret Service and Department of Education (Vossekuil et al., 2002) and other experts in law enforcement, politics and education. All of the efforts are helpful in dealing with campus violence, however the recommendation to implement Threat Assessment teams is believed to be the most effective at identifying a risk prior to an attack and preventing it from occurring (Reddy et al., 2001; Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage, 2008; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). The threat assessment approach has been used by Secret Service for years to protect the President and other foreign dignitaries from threats of violence. Following the

1999 shooting at Columbine High School, and the resulting findings of the FBI report and the *Safe School Initiative,* high schools across the country began to implement threat assessment teams (O'Toole, 2000; Vossekuil et al., 2002). Similarly, following the 2007 shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech), colleges and universities expanded their safety efforts by incorporating threat assessment as part of their campus safety and emergency management plans (Deisinger et al., 2008; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). Now, six years after the attack at Virginia Tech, these teams have grown and expanded on college campuses and are being utilized in ways beyond just threat assessment (DeLa Torre, 2011; Geiger, 2010; Graney, 2011; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009; Van Brunt et al., 2012). This paper will review the findings of the *Safe School Initiative* and violent attacks in schools and on college campuses, as well as the ways in which schools have implemented the recommended safety initiatives. Primarily, this study will explore the recommendation to implement threat assessment teams and how that implementation has taken place on college campuses to determine if these teams are a valuable part of campus safety plans.

Literature Search

The research for this literature review was found primarily by searching the online system for electronic databases through the Georgia Southern University library. The university library provided access to the following databases: Education Full Text, Educational Research Information Clearinghouse (ERIC), JSTOR and PsychInfo, databases for the humanities and social sciences, and in the field of psychology, and others. In addition, searches were completed through EbscoHost and for Dissertations and Theses with Full Text through ProQuest. All of these searches used key words and

phrases such as “Threat assessment,” “Behavior assessment,” “Behavior assessment teams,” “Campus violence,” “Campus safety,” and “Violence prevention.”

These searches provided a number of sources, many of which were published in peer-reviewed educational journals. Other sources included books, government publications, and doctoral dissertations. The researcher then compared the references of the three dissertations and found a number of overlapping sources, which were then sought for use as well.

Finally, a number of sources were collected by the researcher through the National Behavior Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) website, materials shared at NaBITA national conferences, and through other trainings and workshops on campus threat assessment, violence prevention and related topics.

Conceptual Framework

The following literature review is grounded in the literature on violence in the secondary school setting. It focuses on violence itself and school attempts at mitigating, or preventing violence. Most importantly, it culminates with the literature on the threat assessment approach and the studies that support that approach as the most effective method for preventing violence at the secondary school level. The review then follows the same process for the higher education environment by reviewing the literature on campus violence and the means used to prevent violence on college campuses. The violence prevention techniques at the college level culminate with the literature on behavioral assessment teams. These aspects can be viewed as the inputs, as they lead to the concept of Behavior Assessment (see figure 1). Next, the framework shifts to the outputs of the team and the impact a team has on its campus safety. It also recognized

safety as a key component of campus culture and focuses on the impact on campus culture. Since there is limited research on the impact of behavioral assessment teams and their effectiveness at preventing violence on college campuses, by evaluating one team, we may determine the type of impact BATs are having and their effectiveness as an approach to preventing violence.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

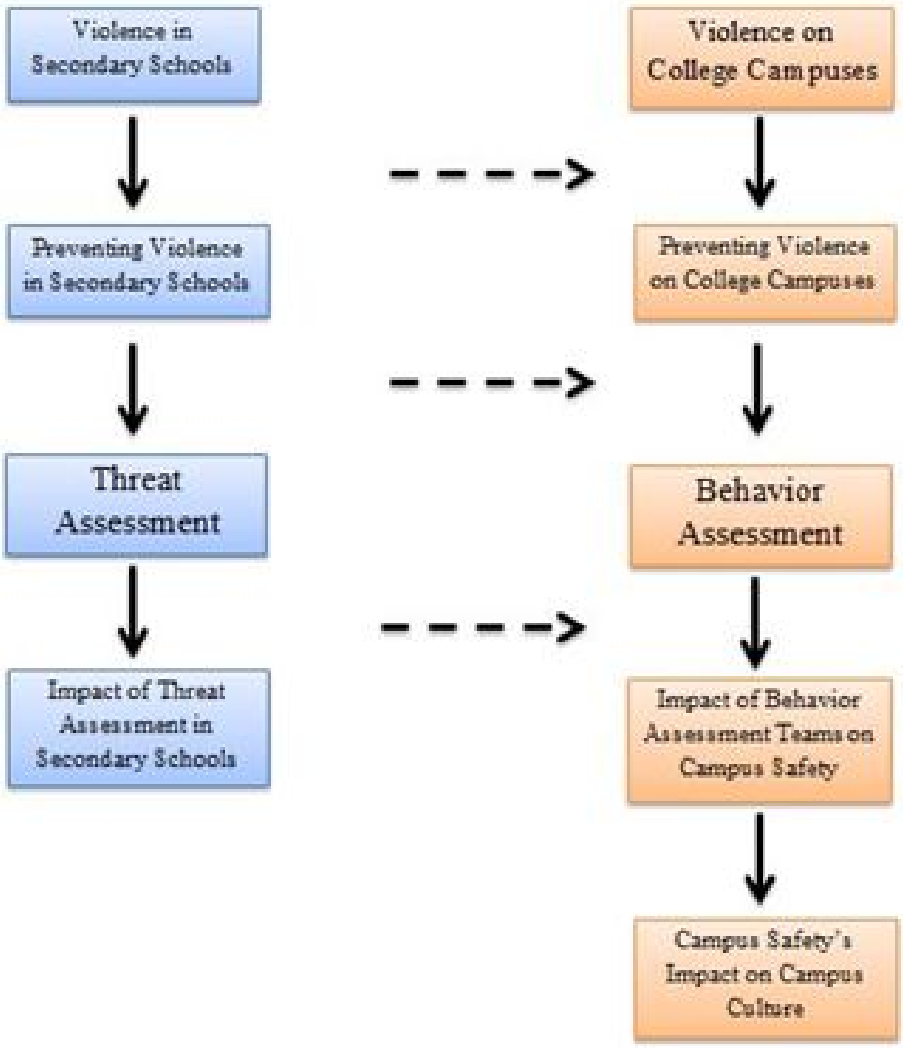

Figure 1. Graphical representation of the link between violence in secondary schools and the impact of behavior assessment teams on safety and campus culture. Solid lines represent a direct path between concepts. Dotted lines represent the similarities and correlations between secondary schools and college campuses.

Organization of the Literature Review

The following sections will provide the foundation for the basis of this study. As mentioned previously, the concerns regarding school violence and campus safety began at the secondary school level with Columbine High School, and progressed to institutions of higher education following Virginia Tech. The review of literature will begin with an examination of school violence at secondary schools, followed by a review of the methods used at that level to prevent violence, and conclude with threat assessment and the success of that approach. It will then progress to violence at the post-secondary level, the methods used on college campuses to prevent violence, and the implementation of threat assessment in higher education. Finally, it will conclude with an examination of the factors that influence organizational culture, making a link between the perceptions of a BAT and how that can impact perceptions of campus safety, and the overall culture of a campus.

School Violence

The fatal shootings at Columbine High School in 1999 greatly impacted the way people think about school violence. After the attack, people no longer viewed schools as the safe havens they once were (O'Toole, 2000; Vossekuil et al., 2002; Randazzo, et al., 2005; Allen, Cornell, Lorek & Sheras, 2008; Cornell, Sheras, Gregory & Fan, 2009; Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski & Jimerson, 2010). Media coverage of the attacks helped add to the fears of students and parents everywhere, especially in the months immediately following the incident (Addington, 2003). Research on school violence has shown, however, that these perceptions are misguided and that schools continue to be a safe place for students to learn, grow, and develop.

Following the Columbine shootings, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the U.S. Secret Service both initiated in-depth studies on school violence. These studies became the foundation for understanding these types of violent acts. Both reports found that school violence, and in particular school shootings or acts of targeted violence, are extremely rare.

Vossekuil et al. (2002) identified only 37 incidents of targeted violence in schools over a 25-year period from 1974-2000. While this is still more than anyone would want, when compared to other types of violence students face both in and out of school, the numbers are miniscule. According to the U.S. Department of Education there were approximately 53 million students in over 119,000 schools in the U.S. in 2000 (Randazzo et al., 2005). Taking these two numbers together it is unlikely that students will ever face an act of school violence. Cornell (2007) identified 103 cases of student-perpetrated homicides over the 12 school years from 1992-1993 to 2003-2004. He further calculated that to be an average of 8.58 incidents a year, and then divided that by the 119,000 schools to show that the average school could expect a homicide once every 13,870 years (Cornell, 2007). Similarly, Vossekuil et al. (2002) calculated that from 1993 to 1997 the odds of a high school student being threatened or injured was around seven or eight percent, the odds of getting into a fight at school were around 15 percent, but the odds a student would die from a homicide or suicide were closer to one in one million. Borum et al. (2010) looked at student homicides over a 10-year period, from 1996 to 2006, and found an average of 21 deaths per year. Using an updated calculation of 125,000 schools, they estimated a school could expect a homicide once every 6,000 years. While this is less than the figure calculated by Cornell three years earlier, it is still extremely rare.

To further put these numbers into perspective, each of these studies compared their findings of school violence to violence in society at large. For example, Borum et al.'s (2010) average of 21 homicides per year represented less than 1% of the annual homicides of youths aged 5 to 18 over that same 10-year period. Studies also looked at these numbers for individual school years. During the first half of the 1997-1998 school year there were more than 2,500 school-aged children murdered or who committed suicide, and less than 1% of those occurred at school (Reddy, Borum, Berglund, Vossekuil, Fein, & Modzeleski, 2001). According to Vossekuil et al. (2002), in 1998 there were 60 school-associated violent deaths among students in grades 9-12. This same population, however, was subject to 1.6 million thefts and 1.2 million other violent crimes. The next year, in 1999, the same year as the Columbine shooting, 17 students were killed at school (Cornell, 2007; Borum et al., 2010). However, that same year there were 2,500 murders and over 9,700 deaths by accident of school-aged children outside of school. While these figures show that acts of school violence, particularly targeted violence or school shootings, are extremely rare, when they do occur they can have a "tremendous and lasting effect on the school in which it occurred, the surrounding community and the nation as a whole" (Vossekuil et al., 2002).

Recently, the FBI concluded a study of all active shooter incidents between 2000 and 2013. The study identified 160 incidents, 39 of which took place in an educational environment (Blair & Schweit, 2014). While this may not seem to be too significant, Blair and Schweit (2014) pointed out that "incidents in educational facilities account for some of the higher casualty counts" (p. 15). The overall figure of 39 incidents also includes those that took place at institutions of higher education. Since 2000, 27 incidents

occurred in elementary and secondary schools, an average of just under two per year. The research also found that during the first half of the study, from 2000-2006, there was a total average of 6.4 incidents per year. In the last seven years that number increased significantly to 16.4 incidents, showing that perceptions of increased violence in society are accurate.

Preventing School Violence

As the fears related to school violence grew throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s schools began implementing a variety of initiatives designed to prevent future incidents. Cornell (2006) outlines a number of effective programs such as conflict resolution, peer mediation, mentoring, and parent education. He also discusses programs like "Scared Straight," correctional boot camps, and even the use of school uniforms and explains why those programs are largely ineffective. While many of these types of programs have been created, some effective and some not, most violence prevention efforts have focused on zero tolerance policies, profiling, mental health assessments, and even risk assessments.

Zero tolerance policies. A "zero tolerance" policy is one in which the violation of a rule or policy results in an automatic punishment without regard to specific situations or special circumstances (Cornell, 2006). Zero tolerance can be used to deal with a number of school problems, but has been used by many schools as a means for dealing with weapons and general threats of violence. In 1994, the Gun-Free Schools Act was passed as a way to keep guns off school property, and thereby prevent future shootings. The act required states to enact laws that would expel any student who brought a firearm to school for a minimum of one year (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010).

According to Borum et al. (2010) many consider the passing of the Gun-Free Schools Act to be the beginning of zero tolerance in schools. After it was implemented, proponents of zero tolerance began reporting their number of expulsions. However, as Cornell (2006) points out, schools with a higher number of expulsions began to claim that they had cracked down on school violence by removing dangerous students from school, while schools with lower numbers claimed the policy was effective because it deterred students from bringing weapons to school in the first place. Thus, Cornell (2006) explains the methodological problems with any of the empirical studies and data supporting zero tolerance as not using valid indicators or a randomized assignment. Cornell (2006) and Borum et al. (2010) also explain that zero tolerance policies have faced legal challenges with regard to free speech, due process, and access to public education. The policies have also been opposed by the American Bar Association and civil rights groups as being discriminatory, with a large proportion of violations being against minority students (Cornell, 2006). While zero tolerance seemed to be very appealing to both politicians and school administrators initially, many have seen the problems that it presents and do not consider it to be an effective method of violence prevention.

Profiling and warning signs. Profiling was initially used as a technique by the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit, which gathered information from crime scenes to create "a set of hypotheses about the characteristics – physical, demographic, personality, and others – of the person most likely to have committed the crime" (Reddy et al., 2001; Randazzo et al., 2005). Reddy et al. (2001) explain that this technique is retrospective and works backwards from a behavior to guess who may have committed the crime. While there is both empirical and anecdotal support for this technique, the use of profiling for

school violence would not follow the same technique. Reddy et al. (2001), Randazzo et al. (2005), and Cornell (2006) suggest that profiling for school violence would be prospective in that it would begin with a specific person in mind and compare their characteristics to the characteristics of those who previously committed acts of school violence. Although profiling has shown to be useful for law enforcement, particularly in retrospective situations, in the case of school shooters it has faced much scrutiny and skepticism. The research of profiling to find the next school shooter has identified several major concerns, the most notable of which is that due to the fact that school shootings are so rare, it would be difficult to make any generalizations based on so few cases (Reddy et al., 2001). Therefore, profiling based on known characteristics from a handful of cases runs the risk of both over-identifying and under-identifying students who may become violent (Borum et al., 2010; Randazzo et al. 2005; Reddy et al., 2001). In addition, profiling does not take into account the likelihood of whether or not someone who meets a profile will actually carry out a violent attack.

Similar to profiling is the use of warning signs or checklists that identify students displaying characteristics of potentially violent behavior. Warning sign checklists are also similar to profiling in that they can often over-identify students. Cornell (2006) argued that many of the items on warning sign checklists, such as alcohol and drug use, history of discipline problems, and feelings of rejection, are known to correlate well with violence and are behaviors worthy of intervention. However, there were concerns that school administrators could unnecessarily punish students on the basis of warning signs alone, especially if administrators acted on the basis of stereotypes or overreacted to any single warning sign (Cornell, 2006).

Mental health assessments. Another popular method for mitigating school violence is the use of mental health assessments. These assessments may also be referred to as guided professional judgments or structured clinical assessments. This method allows a mental health professional to interview a student or other individual who has raised concerns and evaluate his or her risk for violent behavior (Reddy et al., 2001). To do so, the mental health professional may use proven clinical instruments or checklists to help guide the conversation, collect data, and analyze the student of concern. While this method could be useful in determining a student's risk for general violence, Randazzo et al. (2005) point out that most mental health professionals do not have formal training in violence risk assessment, a major concern in using these assessments, especially in relation to assessing threats of targeted violence. Other concerns posed by both Reddy et al. (2001) and Randazzo et al. (2005) include a lack of empirical research on the use of mental health assessments in determining risk for targeted school violence, the difficulty in creating a baseline of violence due to the low incidence of violent attacks, and the use of standard psychological instruments for the purposes of risk assessment.

Other Options for Mitigation. A number of other methods for mitigating violence have been used by schools as well. These include a variety of security features such as metal detectors, security cameras, police officers within the schools, locker searches and locked doors (Borum et al., 2010). Some schools also require students and staff to wear ID badges and have all visitors sign in upon entrance (Borum et al., 2010). Reddy et al. (2001) also discussed the use of automated decision making where computer calculations, based on expert knowledge about an issue, are made to determine solutions for how to address risks of violence. Borum et al. (2010) state that these security features

are being used by many schools, in some cases in over 90%, but that there is little empirical evidence to support their effectiveness at preventing school violence.

FBI Report and the Safe School Initiative

Following the Columbine shootings, in June 1999, the U. S. Department of Education and the U.S. Secret Service came together to review incidents of school shootings in an attempt to help everyone better understand how and why the shootings took place, and more importantly, how they might be prevented in the future (Vossekuil, et al., 2002). As stated earlier, they identified 37 cases of targeted violence over a 25 year period. This review has come to be known as the *Safe School Initiative.* The shootings also added urgency to the efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime and their study of school shootings. In July 1999 the FBI jointly led a symposium of 160 people where 18 specific cases of school shootings were reviewed in-depth. These participants included educators, school administrators, mental health professionals, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors, all of who had valuable information to share with reference to the 18 cases (O'Toole, 2000).

While there have been a number of other methods implemented by schools to prevent violence from occurring, the recommendations from both the FBI and U.S. Secret Service to implement a threat assessment approach in schools is believed to be the most effective. Both organizations led in-depth case studies of campus violence. The FBI report came from the study of 18 school shooters while the Safe School Initiative reviewed 37 cases of targeted school violence. The findings of the two reports were quite similar and together they form the foundation for the use of threat assessment in schools. The 10 key findings from Vossekuil et al. (2002), outlined such ideas as incidents of targeted

violence are rarely sudden, impulsive acts; prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea or plan to attack; there is no accurate or useful profile of students who engaged in targeted violence; and most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that causes others concern or that indicated a need for help (p. 31).

As mentioned previously, these findings led to the conclusion that warning signs were available and, had someone mentioned their concerns to an authority, an intervention could have been implemented that might have prevented the shootings. O'Toole (2000) took these findings one step further and suggested that to effectively implement this threat assessment model, schools should implement a multidisciplinary team. Although both O'Toole (2000) and Vossekuil et al. (2002) recognized that most students will never act on their threats, they both believed that the early recognition and reporting of any concerning behaviors would provide an opportunity for a threat assessment team to intervene and prevent future acts of targeted violence.

Threat Assessment in Schools

Based on the recommendations from the FBI and Secret Service reports, many schools began to implement threat assessment teams. As these teams were being implemented researchers began to compare the teams to the other methods of violence prevention being used in the schools. Most researchers agreed that a threat assessment approach is the most effective one (Allen, Cornell, Lorek & Sheras, 2008; Borum et al., 2010; Cornell, 2003; Cornell, 2006; Cornell et al., 2009; Cornell, Sheras, Kaplan, McConville, Douglass, Elkon, McKnight, Branson, & Cole, 2004; Randazzo et al., 2005; Reddy et al., 2001). In their review of the various approaches to evaluating a student's risk for targeted violence, Reddy et al. (2001) suggested that the deductive, fact-based

approach in threat assessment was superior to the inductive methods of the past. They concluded, however, that there needed to be empirical research to support their views and the use of threat assessment in schools.

Cornell (2003) also analyzed the prior methods of violence prevention, but went a step further and began testing the threat assessment guidelines that were created to bridge the gap between the principles set forth by the FBI and U.S. Secret Service and the practice within schools. The results of Cornell's field test at two Virginia high schools supported the belief that threat assessment was an effective means of preventing violence. After being trained in the threat assessment guidelines, administrators at the two schools kept track of all threats of violence during the course of an entire school year (Cornell et al., 2004). In follow-up interviews at the end of the school year, the principals reported the number of threats, the types and levels of threats, and the disciplinary consequences faced by the students who made the threats. These principals reported that most of the students who were reported had improved their behavior throughout the school year, and that none of the threats had been carried out (Cornell et al., 2004).

Cornell et al. (2009) recognized that the findings from the field test should be viewed with caution as there was no comparison group in the study and they therefore conducted another study which compared schools using the threat assessment guidelines to schools using an alternate model of threat assessment and to schools not using any model. They compared the schools along three scales including student victimization, willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence and perceptions of school climate. Their findings suggested that schools using the threat assessment model had less victimization, students who were more likely to seek help, and a better school climate

(Cornell et al., 2009). Although these studies lacked empirical evidence and strong research methodology they indicated that threat assessment was an effective means of mitigating the risk of a violent attack in schools.

Campus Violence

Where Columbine impacted the way people think about school violence, the fatal shootings at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech) on April 16, 2007, changed the way people think about violence on the college campus. Prior to Virginia Tech, college campuses were generally viewed as safe places to learn. However, as shootings and other violent attacks continue to occur on college campuses across the country, that perception is no longer the case. Campuses are not always seen as safe havens and this perception has become a major challenge for campus administrators to overcome.

Similar to the data for violence in the elementary and secondary school settings, statistics related to crime on college campuses is lower than the national crime rate (Cornell, 2010). "According to a 2008 report of the U. S. Bureau of Justice Statistics the rate of serious violent crime in 2004 was 62 violent crimes per 100,000 students on campuses with 2,500 or more students" (Cornell, 2010, p. 11). When you compare that to the national rate of 466 per 100,000, college campuses are seven times less likely to experience violent crime. In addition, the rate of violent crime on college campuses of that size over the ten year period from 1994-2004 decreased by 9 percent (Cornell, 2010).

When looking specifically at homicide data, Cornell (2010) reported that from 1997-2007, college campuses across the country experienced a combined average of 25.5 murders per year. The national data for this same time frame is approximately 16,500 murders per year. Cornell (2010) further calculated that the average college campus,

based on a figure of 9,000 college campuses that were reporting data in 2008, and the average 25.5 murders on campuses per year, "could expect an on-campus murder approximately every 353 years" (p. 11). Although the public concern regarding campus safety is high, these figures show that violence on college campuses, like in schools, is extremely rare.

Mitigating Campus Violence

The Clery Act. While the shooting at Virginia Tech brought more attention to concerns regarding campus safety, colleges and universities had been dealing with the issue for some time. For many campuses, the passing of the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (20 U.S.C.§1092 (f)), or the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act in 1990 was the beginning of an era focusing on campus safety concerns. More commonly known today as the Clery Act, the act was passed in order to require colleges to report incidents of campus crime. It has since been amended multiple times, expanding the requirements each time, but today, it has three main purposes: 1) to provide crime information to prospective students, parents, and employees; 2) to educate students about campus crimes so that they may better protect themselves; and 3) to reduce crime (Janosik & Gregory, 2009).

Early studies (Beeler, 1991; Santucci & Gable, 1993) on the impact of the Clery Act focused on campus safety from the perspective of students living in on-campus housing. Their findings showed that women were more fearful than men, that campuses were not doing enough to keep students safe, and that safety brochures and safety education programs were helpful and highly recommended. Later studies (Gregory & Janosik, 2006) found that Residence Life and Housing administrators believed that the

Clery Act helped to both reduce crime and to improve campus crime reporting. In another study on the impact of the Clery Act, Janosik and Gregory (2009), found that senior student affairs officers, victim advocates, law enforcement, and judicial officers all agreed that the reporting requirements did help in reducing campus crime. In this study, Janosik and Gregory (2009), concluded that the "energy and emphasis devoted to the crime reporting requirements of the Act are ineffective and misplaced" (p. 224). Instead, they recommended that "college administrators would be better served by focusing their attention on the development of services and programs that seem to make some difference" (Janosik & Gregory, 2009, p. 224).

Other means of mitigation. The recommendation by Janosik and Gregory (2009) encouraged campuses to focus on other means of mitigating campus violence. Some of these included warning systems, well-lit campuses, escort services, emergency telephones on campus, and safety awareness programming (Cornell, 2010; Santucci & Gable, 1993). In a series of studies, Bryden and Fletcher (2007a; 2007b) examined the personal safety practices, beliefs and attitudes of faculty and staff on a small university campus. They found that female faculty members were significantly more likely to take personal safety precautions and that male faculty members were more satisfied with campus safety (Bryden & Fletcher, 2007a). The male staff members were also more satisfied with campus safety than their female counterparts (Byrden & Fletcher, 2007b). In a follow-up study, Fletcher and Bryden (2009) examined only the female faculty and staff in more detail where they found that the majority, over 85 percent, were aware of the campus services related to safety, but rarely utilized them.

Knowing that faculty, staff, and students, do not always take advantage of the services available, campuses continued to come up with new ways try to improve their safety and security measures. These included increases to campus police, lighting, and emergency telephone systems; improved campus training methods; stricter rules; consistent educational programs; self-defense classes; utilization of technology for mass e-mail and text message notification; web-based incident reporting; and criminal background checks on employees and in some cases, even students (Dobbs, Waid & Shelley, 2009; Fletcher & Bryden, 2009; Hughes, White & Hertz, 2008). Some campuses also began to put security plans and crisis intervention teams in place (Flannery & Quinn-Leering, 2000). While these efforts were helpful in creating a safer campus, many of them were reactive in nature, and dealt with an institution's response to an incident after it occurred. The problem with this approach became evident to colleges and universities across the country on April 16, 2007 when the shooting at Virginia Tech occurred.

Threat/Behavioral Assessment. After the shooting at Columbine in 1999, both the FBI and the U. S. Secret Service did extensive reviews of both that attack and school violence in general, resulting in the recommendation that elementary and secondary schools implement threat assessment procedures (O'Toole, 2000; Vossekuil et al., 2002). Following the Virginia Tech shooting, similar reviews were done at the higher education level and, once again, threat assessment appeared to be the right approach (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). Experts in campus safety agreed that "nearly all of the major reports on campus safety issued after the shootings at Virginia Tech advocated for colleges and universities to adapt a version of the K-12 school threat assessment model" (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 3). As institutions of higher education implemented this

recommendation over the past six years, it led to significant growth and development in the field of threat assessment on college campuses.

In *Implementing behavioral threat assessment on campus: A Virginia Tech demonstration project,* Randazzo and Plummer (2009) discussed the details of the implementation process at Virginia Tech. They listed a number of "critical questions" that arose throughout the process, as well as the explaining why Virginia Tech made the decisions that it made. The questions focused on issues such as the number of teams an institution should have, team names, team members, and the responsibilities of team members (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). Randazzo and Plummer (2009) also discussed the importance of having clear mission statements, and policy and procedure manuals specific to the team. They discussed record-keeping procedures, how to train team members, and the importance of marketing the team to the campus community. Deisinger et al. (2008) discussed many of the same issues in their *Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams.* However, Deisinger et al. (2008) also included questions regarding the number of team members, frequency of meetings, threat assessment protocols, and the types of information that should be reported to the team.

As both Deisinger et al. (2008) and Randazzo and Plummer (2009) noted, every college and university is unique. The specific way in which threat assessment teams have been implemented may be different from one institution to another depending on the institution's culture and how its teams choose to answer these questions. While there is obvious agreement on the importance of the threat assessment approach, there is little knowledge about the ways in which institutions answered these critical questions on their

individual campuses and how the teams look and function on a regular basis. Current research is attempting to answer many of those questions.

Current Research

In the years since the shootings at Virginia Tech, most institutions have developed some form of a behavior or threat assessment team (Graney, 2011). As a result, there is now a growing body of research on how teams develop, who serves on the teams, and the threat assessment protocols being utilized (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009). Sokolow and Lewis (2009) also identified twelve key points that define current BATs, or what they referred to as the second generation models. Included in those twelve aspects was that teams foster a reporting culture and train the community on what and how to report. From these, it is obvious that the reporting process is an important part of the BAT functioning and worth being studied further. Another aspect mentioned in this report was that the primary role of the team is to support and provide resources to students. This was similar to Borum's (1999) suggestion that teams should be able to successfully intervene when students exhibit any of the warning signs along the path towards violence. Therefore, how a team responds to both reporters, and the student involved in the situation, matters. Even more importantly, changes observed in the student's behavior following an intervention can help determine if a team is meeting this important function. One more aspect of a second generation team, as described by Sokolow and Lewis (2009), is that BAT protocols should integrate with existing campus risk management strategies. In this sense, it is clear that the BAT should have some role in the overall campus safety plan. Although the other aspects of second generation teams are also important, these are the

ones that get at the heart of what teams do – obtain information, provide interventions, and prevent violence.

In 2011 NaBITA, the National Behavior Intervention Team Association, published the *Book on BIT* (Behavior Intervention Teams) that discussed best practices for forming and implementing a BAT on a college campus. In 2012 NaBITA conducted a survey of its membership assessing team leadership, the frequency of meetings, and training methods used by teams. DeLaTorre (2011) and Graney (2011) evaluated teams more specifically by reviewing how institutions implemented these teams on various campuses in Texas and New England, respectively. Greenstein (2012) calculated the awareness of the BAT among students, and began the research on perceptions of the BAT's impact on campus safety. This study was also the first to look at perceptions of the team by those not affiliated with the team. Reese (2013) evaluated a campus BAT looking more specifically at the perceptions of faculty, staff, and students and the impact of the BAT on campus climate. However, Reese (2013) found that most people (faculty, staff and students) did not know much about the BAT. Although the participants in his study agreed that a BAT was a good idea, his results were limited in that the only people who knew about the team were those who had submitted reports.

Research Next Steps

The literature provided so far creates a framework for future studies regarding Behavior Assessment Teams. At the annual NaBITA conference, BAT research, and, more specifically, the assessment of teams, has become a topic of high priority, as there currently are only a few studies that have begun to look at the effectiveness of BATs. As evidenced by both Greenstein (2012) and Reese (2013), most community members do

not know much about the BAT, making it difficult to accurately assess how a BAT is doing, and its impact on the campus culture. However, Reese (2013) showed that those who had previously submitted reports to the BAT were more familiar with the team, its purpose, and how it functioned. Therefore, to close the gap in the literature regarding a BAT's effectiveness, this study will address the BAT process from reporting through follow-up and referrals based on the perceptions of those most aware of the team – reporters. This study will also attempt to use the perceptions of reporters to determine the impact the BAT has had on the campus culture.

Campus Culture

An effective BAT will impact its campus in many ways. While a team will hope to impact the safety of the campus, that is only a part of the second generation team role. Today's teams hope to have a greater impact, not only helping people feel safer, but also by creating a caring atmosphere where community members in need are provided the necessary support and resources to help them be successful. When community members perceive their campus in this way it goes beyond campus safety and impacts the overall culture of the campus. To better understand the importance of impacting the campus culture and how a BAT can accomplish that, the following sections define culture, the various aspects that make up a campus culture, and how to assess that culture.

Defining Culture

There are various ways in which researchers have attempted to define what culture is and where it comes from. Sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, business leaders, and more, have all weighed in adding different aspects of what defines an organization's culture. Johnson (2012) said that the concept of culture comes from

anthropology and describes how organizations create shared meanings and that culture binds the organization together, influencing behaviors. In perhaps the most simplified definition, Deal and Kennedy (1982, p. 4), with a business perspective, said culture is "the way we do things around here." Schein (2004, p. 17) said that culture is "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." In their book, *Reframing Organizations,* Bolman and Deal (2008, p. 269) combined the definitions to say that "culture is both a product and a process. As a product, it embodies wisdom accumulated from experience. As a process, it is renewed and re-created as newcomers learn the old ways and eventually become teachers themselves." Bolman and Deal's (2008) theory established four frames of reference in describing organizations. These frames included the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. The structural frame refers to the way in which a company, or in this case a college campus, is organized. It refers to the rules, policies, procedures, systems, and hierarchies that describe the organization and how it functions. The human resources frame focuses on the people that make up an organization and how their thoughts, feelings, and emotions impact the organization. This frame recognizes that individuals make up the organization. The third frame, the political, addresses how those individuals compete for power and resources, and accounts for how difficult decisions get made within the organization. Finally, the symbolic frame emphasizes the importance of symbols, spirit, and culture to organizational success. Strange (2003) had a similar theory related specifically to the college campus. He defines four components of the campus

environment – the physical, the human aggregate, the organizational, and the constructed. The constructed component is based on the perceptions of the people in the environment, or on a campus. These perceptions describe the social climate, or culture, on campus. Bolman and Deal (2008) admit that there is debate about the link between culture and results but recommend three sources that provide longitudinal evidence that links culture to an organization's success.

Aspects of Culture

If culture is so important to an organization's success, it is important to understand the aspects that make up an organization's culture. Simplicio (2012) says that a University culture comes from the institution's history and traditions. In a more general sense, an organization's culture is made up of its rituals, language, stories, values, and beliefs (Taylor & von Destinon, 2000). Johnson (2012) said members of an organization develop common beliefs, values, and assumptions. He further explains that there are both formal and informal components that make up a culture. The formal components include core value, mission statements, codes of ethics, structure, reward and evaluation systems, reporting and communication systems and ethics officers. Informal components consist of language, norms, rituals and stories. These formal and informal components are similar to the external adaptations and internal integrations mentioned in Schein's (2004) definition of culture. In speaking about the symbolic frame of reference, Bolman and Deal (2008) echo many of the same aspects, such as rituals, ceremonies, and stories. While there are many aspects agreed upon by different sources, stories are a component that is consistent throughout. Stories are narratives that provide meaning, define an organization's values, and describe appropriate behavior (Johnson, 2012). Stories "grant

comfort, reassurance, direction, and hope to people of all ages" (Bolman and Deal, 2008, p. 259). Additionally, stories help establish and reinforce traditions, as well as convey the organization's values. Strange's (2003) constructed component of a campus environment connects stories to an institution's culture. Within that culture, he describes four different levels – artifacts, values, assumptions, and perspectives. He describes perspectives as "socially shared rules and norms" that "determine what is 'acceptable behavior' for students, faculty, staff" and other campus community members (Strange, 2003, p. 309). These perspectives create perceptions, which, "in turn, exert a directional influence and affect how individuals are likely to react to particular environments (Strange, 2003, p. 306)." Put more simply, people behave according to their perceptions of how they are supposed to behave. He also explains that "perceptions of an environment constitute its reality" (Strange, 2003, p. 306), meaning that what people believe, is truth.

Assessing culture

Upcraft and Schuh (2000) define assessment as "any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence that describes institutional, divisional, or agency, effectiveness" (p. 250). They explain that there are many types of assessment including the assessment of student and other clientele needs, student and other clientele satisfaction, and campus environments and student cultures. An assessment of the needs would help determine what services and programs are needed, based on student and staff perceptions and institutional expectations. Assessing satisfaction is important because it provides valuable information about how to improve services and programs. This piece is particularly relevant to the work of Behavior Assessment Teams and motivating the community to report concerning behavior because, as Upcraft and Schuh (2000) explain, "client

satisfaction is important because if they are not satisfied, they won't use what we offer again, and they will not recommend them to friends and colleagues," (p. 256). While needs and satisfaction are important, the perceptions of campus environments and student cultures help describe the overall quality of life on campus.

In his explanation of the need to assess the campus environment, Strange (2003) discussed a hierarchy of learning that begins with safety and inclusion, advances to involvement, and ends with a full community and claimed that educational institutions must first provide a safe environment for students where they can learn without fear, threats, or anxiety. Safety and security needs are also addressed in Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, as the second level of human needs. As Hoy and Miskel (2008) explain, people desire to live and work in a peaceful, stable society. In a campus setting, it is difficult to focus on teaching or learning if there is a fear of being hurt, or worse, killed, by an act of violence. Schein (2004) suggested that attempting to study an entire culture is both impractical and inappropriate. Instead, he recommends only studying the parts of a culture that are relevant. On a college campus, where the hierarchy of learning and the hierarchy of needs are both relevant, something such as safety, which is a critical element of both hierarchies, seems necessary.

The question of how to assess a campus culture, or what is the best assessment method to use, still remains. While there are quantitative methods available for assessing culture, such as the College Student Needs Assessment Survey, the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), none of these are focused solely on Behavior Assessment Teams, or even campus safety. In considering that so much of a campus environment and its culture is

extracted from stories, a qualitative approach seems appropriate. Through an in-depth document review, and interviews with campus community members, one may focus on the BAT and understand how the team's work impacts the various aspects of a campus culture, specifically as it relates to safety.

In reviewing more recent incidents of violence, specifically active shooter incidents, Blair and Scweit (2014) showed that there has been an increase in these types of events over the past seven years. They found that there is an average of 16.4 incidents per year since 2007. Additionally, they identified 39 incidents, accounting for 24 percent of the total of active shooter incidents, which took place in educational environments since 2000. Of those, 12 have occurred at institutions of higher education. This accounts for an average of just under one incident per year. Considering there are thousands of institutions of higher education across the country that does not sound like much, However, as Addington (2003) showed, the public perception regarding violence and the fear of being victimized greatly increases immediately after an attack. Therefore, the increased frequency of active shooter incidents, as well as other incidents of violence on college campuses, keeps the perception of violence at a higher level, causing more fear among campus community members concerning their own personal safety.

Summary

This chapter provided the background information that influenced the research to be discussed in the remaining chapters. It began with a discussion of school violence and the methods used to mitigate violence in elementary and secondary schools. Next, it moved to a discussion of threat assessment as the preferred method, and a number of studies that validated the use of that approach. The chapter then shifted its focus towards

institutions of higher education, following the same pattern. It discussed campus violence, and the methods used to mitigate violence on college campus, particularly the use of threat assessment and behavior assessment teams. Then it discussed some recent research on BATs, advocating for more research in the area of team effectiveness. From there, the chapter shifted its focus towards defining culture, and reviewed the aspects that make up a culture. Those aspects led to a discussion of how to assess a culture. Finally, the chapter tied everything together linking safety to culture, and how the assessment of a BAT can inform researchers of the impact the team has on a campus culture. The next chapter will discuss the specific methods used to address these issues and better understand this linkage.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will reintroduce the purpose of the study and provide the questions that guided this research. Next, this chapter will present the research design, sampling technique, and the participants in the study. The chapter will also explain the instrumentation, data collection procedures, and the procedures used to analyze the data. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary highlighting the key points of the methodology design.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand faculty and staff perceptions of a campus BAT and evaluate the team's effectiveness as defined by the team's impact on campus culture, specifically as it relates to campus safety. This research was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of a campus BAT based on the perceptions of the campus community. In particular, the research examined the perceptions of those campus community members who have filed reports with the team. The following research questions guided this study:

Overarching Question: How do members of a campus community perceive the effectiveness of the campus Behavioral Intervention Team? To answer this question, the following sub-questions were asked:

1. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the reporting process?

2. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the team's response to the incident that was reported?
3. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the changes in the student or the outcome of the situation?
4. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the behavior assessment team's contribution to campus safety?

By interviewing those who have filed reports with the team, the researcher hoped to identify the community's perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the reporting process, the team's response to the reported incident, the outcome as it relates to the student who was reported, and the team's contribution to campus safety.

In addition, members of the BAT were asked about the criteria they think are important in evaluating a team and their perceptions of how the team meets those criteria, creating a fifth research question:

5. What criteria should be included in the evaluation of a behavior assessment team?

Research Design

Patton (2002) stated that qualitative research is especially appropriate as a beginning point of research. Since BATs, as they exist today, are still a new concept in higher education, and little research has been done regarding the effectiveness of the teams and their impact on campus culture, a qualitative research design is justified. With

only a limited amount of empirical research regarding the evaluation of BATs, this study was designed to help create a foundation for studying their effectiveness, further justifying a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is also focused on understanding complex issues (Stake, 1995), rather than explaining them, and the higher education community is still seeking to better understand BATs and how they function. To know more about a BAT and how it is functioning within a campus community, it is necessary to speak with campus community members and provide them the opportunity to express their thoughts on the BAT. This study sought to understand campus community member perceptions of the BAT, and interpret that data to describe the teams' impact on campus culture. These goals – understanding, interpreting, and describing – are hallmarks of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013), making them the obvious choice for a research design.

Within a qualitative design, there are many types of methods that may be used, including ethnography, phenomenology, narrative inquiry and action research (Saldana, 2011). However, as this research intended to provide an in-depth evaluation of a BAT, a single-site, evaluative case study was used. A case study, by definition, "focuses on a single unit for analysis," (Saldana, 2011, p. 8). It is also used to study a bounded system, or one "separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries," (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 242) in depth. This research was bounded in two ways. First, it was bounded by the fact that it studied only the one institution. The second factor was that only the perceptions of faculty and staff members who had submitted reports on students were considered. To study this case in depth, the researcher used a variety of research methods to obtain data, including interviews, documents, and past records from

the BAT. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) stated that in case study research the data often include "observations, interviews, documents, past records, and audiovisual materials" (p. 149). Saldana (2011) and Stake (1995) agreed that qualitative research, and, in particular, case studies, are especially common in the field of education. A case study is also appropriate "for learning more about a little known or poorly understood situation" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 149). Stake (1995) believed case studies are effective ways to study educational programs, so to better evaluate the effectiveness of a BAT, a case study should be completed. Rubin and Rubin (1995) stated that evaluation interviews help the researcher learn details about "how those involved view the successes and failures of a program" (p. 6). Since this study evaluated the perceived successes and failures of a BAT, the researcher conducted a series of evaluation interviews. Evaluation research will typically include a systematic assessment of the policies, procedures, and outcomes of the program (Saldana, 2011). To inform and complement the interviews that were conducted, this study also included a systematic evaluation of the policies, procedures, and outcomes of the BAT. The researcher intended to use the findings of the interviews and document analysis to provide the BAT under investigation with feedback regarding strengths and weaknesses of the program and make specific suggestions for improvement. Saldana (2011) said that this is also a critical aspect of evaluation research, further justifying the case study design for this research.

Selection of Site

In qualitative research, the selection of the case is extremely important (Creswell, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Saldana, 2011; and Stake, 1995). For this study, the behavior assessment team (BAT) at a medium-sized public, four-year institution in the

southeastern United States was evaluated. The BAT being evaluated was established, in its current form, in 2009.

Although generalizability is not as important in qualitative research (Saldana, 2011), the transferability of the evaluation to other institutions is strengthened by a more typical case. Saldana (2011) mentions three reasons for choosing a case – deliberatively (for unique characteristics), strategically (to represent a more typical case), and for convenience (for ease of access) – two of which were used in the selection of this institution which ultimately helped in maximizing the understanding of the BAT.

Sampling in qualitative research is often strategic and driven by a specific purpose because researchers focus on the unique aspects of the case (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014). The selection of the institution for this study was both strategic and purposeful for two reasons. First, the institution used the same software database as is used by the researcher at his home institution. This was a key factor in the researcher's familiarity with the database and how to obtain and understand the necessary documents for review. Second, the team being studied had done extensive work on training and educating their campus on the purpose and importance of referring students to the BAT. This was a critical aspect in terms of having a good basis of reports from which the researcher could evaluate the team.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) also state that there are many times in qualitative research in which convenience sampling is used. At the 2012 National Behavior Intervention Team Association annual conference, the researcher and the chairperson of the BAT to be studied discussed a common interest in assessing team effectiveness. These conversations opened the door for the researcher to gain access to

the institution. Not only was this institution convenient in that the researcher was able to gain access, but it was also accessible to the researcher geographically and immediately (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014).

While this institution met some strategic criteria in that it could serve as a typical case with regard to BATs that was not the only reason it was selected. The institution was selected primarily due to its convenience to the researcher. Accessibility and proximity to the researcher were critical factors that made this institution an ideal case for evaluation.

Participants

Although the institution was selected for convenience, the individual participants were selected using more purposeful criteria. The first criterion for the sample was to select community members who had made a referral to the BAT. By working with the BAT chairperson as a gatekeeper, reports submitted to the BAT were identified. Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006) defined gatekeepers as "individuals who know individuals and/or settings that meet the sampling criteria determined by the researcher" (p. 74). The BAT Chairperson's knowledge of the reports that had been submitted to the BAT, the individuals who submitted them, and the campus culture as a whole allowed him to fulfill this role. He also granted the researcher access to the data, contact with the potential participants, and the ability to conduct all interviews. By initiating the contact with participants and helping communicate throughout the process, the gatekeeper also helped prevent any bias in the selection of participants on the part of the researcher. Using the database, the gatekeeper accessed only the cases submitted by faculty and staff members who had referred students to the BAT. Although this particular team also discusses concerns regarding faculty and staff members, many BATs work specifically with

students, so only referrals regarding students were reviewed in this study. Once this population was identified, the chairperson sent an email to potential participants introducing them to the researcher and the research, and inviting them to contact the researcher if they would be willing to participate in the study. Included in this email was a copy of the informed consent so that potential interviewees could review it prior to agreeing to participate in the research. Copies of both the recruitment email and the informed consent are available in Appendices C and D. The gatekeeper used the team database and identified 40 faculty and staff members who had submitted reports of concerning behavior to the BAT. He then contacted them by email with an invitation to participate and directions on how to contact the researcher. Of those, 15 faculty and staff members initially responded to the researcher and self-identified an interest in the study and a willingness to participate. After the researcher followed up to schedule interview dates and times, 13 participants had committed to the study. The researcher then used a maximum variation sampling technique to help identify if additional participants would be needed. Maximum variation sampling is when the researcher identifies criteria in advance that will differentiate the participants and then selecting participants that vary among those criteria (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013) this sampling technique is common in qualitative studies because it "increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives" (p. 157). The researcher had identified two main criteria that would allow for a maximization of perspectives including specific job duties (faculty, staff, or team member), and gender. The individuals who responded to the gatekeeper's email and coordinated interview times met the needed

variation criteria. Based on this information the researcher did not feel the need to ask the gatekeeper to send a second request for participation.

The number of interviews to be conducted was also determined by what was necessary to achieve a saturation of the data. Rubin and Rubin (1995) defined the saturation point as the point at which you are not learning any more new material (p. 73). When the researcher understands the complexity of the case and subsequent interviewees add little to what has already been learned, the researcher can be satisfied that he has completely saturated the data. Creswell (2013) believes that this can occur anywhere between 20 and 60 interviews. However, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) conducted 60 interviews and found that "after analysis of twelve interviews, new themes emerged infrequently" (p. 74) and concluded that "among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals, twelve interviews should suffice" (p. 79). Using Guest et al. (2006) as a guide, the researcher conducted the 13 interviews and determined no additional interviews were needed. Thirteen interviews was also appropriate for this research as faculty and staff within a campus community form a relatively homogeneous group of educated, professional individuals. A more detailed description of the 13 participants will be provided in Chapter Four.

Researcher as Instrument

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher must also be considered. The research questions, as well as the analysis of the data, will be impacted by the researcher's own beliefs and assumptions. As a member of the BAT at his own campus, the researcher strongly believes in the importance of having a BAT on campus. He assumes that the team is valuable and providing a necessary service to its campus

community. There are a variety of factors and criteria that the researcher could have used to determine the effectiveness of a BAT. The specific criteria chosen for this study, while grounded in the research, were based largely on what the researcher would want to know from the reporters on his own campus regarding the effectiveness of his team and the impact that they have on the culture at his institution. The interview protocol questions were developed specifically for this study and designed to provide information about the aspects of team effectiveness being evaluated, with the hope of answering the research questions. The researcher recognized that the interview protocol questions were written with his perspectives in mind, so once the questions were developed, they were vetted by experts in the field to help avoid researcher bias. Additionally, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the data with the belief that the BAT was doing good work and having a positive impact on the campus community.

However, the researcher did his best not to allow this viewpoint to interfere with his ability to hear the perspectives of those he interviewed. He consciously listened for negative statements and perspectives that did not paint the team in a good light. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher will share the findings with the chair of the BAT at the institution studied so that the team can make improvements in their processes and procedures, as well as their handling of cases where necessary. By separating himself from his home institution where he serves on the BAT and has a vested interest in its success, the researcher allowed himself to have a critical eye and better evaluate the BAT. Doing this research on a team other than his own, allowed him to keep an open mind when analyzing the interview transcripts and considering the possibility that there are areas in which the team could do better.

Role of the Researcher

Due to the support of his gatekeeper, the BAT chair, who is a senior level administrator at the institution being studied, the researcher did not expect much difficulty in gaining access to the site, or to participants. The BAT chair had expressed a full commitment to gaining this information and was extremely helpful in getting faculty and staff to agree to interviews. His written introduction of the researcher aided in gaining a level of trust with participants. The researcher was also able to gain the trust of participants by sharing his knowledge of the institution's culture and the institution's BAT which he learned through conversations with the BAT chair and through the BAT documents. He was even able to discuss his own experiences with students of concern on his own campus. Even though he has no connection to the institution studied, the researcher was accepted by the participants and showed a genuine willingness to listen and learn from their experiences. He became familiar with the setting and the vocabulary, and accepted the norms and values of the participants and the institution, all of which helped him gain what Rubin and Rubin (1995) refer to as an "insider status." The initial document review and the assistance of the BAT chairperson helped the researcher in establishing this insider status. As an insider the researcher was able to simply be a sounding board for the campus community. Stake (1995) says that people enjoy being listened to and feeling like their opinions matter. By providing the faculty and staff an opportunity to share their opinions in an open manner to someone they do not work with on a regular basis, the researcher had an easy time gathering data in individual interviews. By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher allowed participants to freely talk about the topics under investigation and give their feedback about the BAT, its processes

and procedures, and their feelings regarding campus safety. The researcher has created an interview protocol for the purposes of this study which is available in Appendix A.

Data Collection

The researcher began by gathering data on the team that was publically accessible on the institution's website. Included in these data were the incident reporting form, their policy and procedure manual, and a presentation designed for training University staff members. These foundational documents provided the initial understanding of this team, how it functions, and the campus climate. Next, the researcher worked closely with the BAT chairperson to gather information from the database regarding student referrals to the BAT. This set of documents provided the necessary background information on the types of behaviors reported to the team, and the interventions and actions typically taken by the team. It also provided the case notes that the team maintains on the students reported. This further clarified the types of situations this BAT handles, as well as how they respond to those situations.

Stake (1995) asserted that while researchers are not always able to observe that which they are studying, important observations may be made by others. In this case, the researcher was unable to observe the students that were reported. The reporters, however, were in ideal situations to continue to observe the student and any changes that may have taken place following the initial referral. For this reason, the researcher chose to interview those reporters to gain an understanding of their descriptions of the student, the situation, and the resolution. It is through their perceptions and understandings of the events that the researcher was able to construct some knowledge regarding the BAT's effectiveness.

The faculty and staff interviews were conducted using an interview protocol with fourteen prepared open-ended questions (see Appendix A). These questions were developed with the conceptual framework in mind. Questions 1-2 were background questions designed to validate information contained in the written report. Questions 3-6 were about the reporting process and were intended to answer research question 1. The next two questions, 7 and 8, were designed to address research question 2. All of these questions were developed to address inputs to the Behavior Assessment Team, or the violence and prevention aspects of the framework. The remaining questions (9-16) addressed the outcomes of behavior assessment teams, or the impact aspects of the conceptual framework. Questions 9 and 10 were asked in order to resolve research question 3 and questions 11-13 satisfied research question 4. Question 14 on the faculty and staff protocols was a wrap-up question to ensure all information about the team had been shared. The team member protocol included an additional three questions (14-16) that addressed research question five (see Appendix B). All of these perceptions combined were ultimately related to the overarching research question. Additional questions for clarification and greater understanding were asked as necessary. The interviews lasted between 12 and 52 minutes depending largely on the number of reports the participant had submitted and how much information they remembered about the cases, with an average interview time of approximately 25 minutes. All interviews were audio taped using a digital recorder. Interview recordings were reviewed and transcribed by a third party professional transcription service after completion. Prior to submitting the audio files to the transcription service, a third party confidentiality agreement was signed.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001) stated that case study researchers "often begin to analyze the data during the data collection process" and that "preliminary conclusions are likely to influence the kind of data that he or she seeks out and collects in later parts of the study" (p. 150). For this reason, the researcher used field notes taken during the interviews as a source of data to better understand the patterns and themes identified during the collection process. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) also mentioned that case study data often include documents, past records, interviews, and observations. All of these types of data were utilized in this study to help generate the in depth understanding of the BAT under investigation.

Data Management

It was extremely important for the researcher to protect the data collected throughout this research, not only for the protection of the participants, but also to protect the students in these cases. The researcher initially worked with the institution's BAT chair to obtain the database files and notes on the identified cases. To protect the students involved in these cases, the researcher signed an agreement with the institution allowing him to obtain protected student records, with the understanding of the appropriate use, protection, maintenance, and destruction of all records.

Protecting the data once it is collected was slightly more challenging. The recorded interviews were transferred to a separate removable drive that is kept in a locked drawer in the researcher's office. After obtaining a signed copy of a vendor confidentiality agreement from GMR Transcription Services, a nationally recognized transcription service, the files were sent to the company for transcription. Once transcribed by GMR Transcription Services, the typed interview documents were also

saved to this removable drive. All notes, interview protocols and other hard copy documents were scanned and turned into electronic format so that they, too, could be saved to the removable drive being stored in the researcher's locked drawer, where it will be kept for five years after the completion of the research project. Once they were saved electronically, all original documents were shredded for additional protection.

The final step in protecting the information gathered during the research process involved the reporting of the data gathered. In any and all reporting of the data, the researcher used pseudonyms. All partners, interviewees, and the names of their colleagues and students, were provided pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

Data Analysis

The researcher began by analyzing the documents to get a better understanding of the team processes and procedures, as well as the types of concerning behavior typically reported to the team and the actions taken by the team. By knowing what should happen according to the BAT policies, the researcher was better prepared to evaluate both the positive and negative perceptions of the participants based upon what team documents said should happen in a given circumstance. This knowledge also helped in the review of the interview transcripts by allowing the researcher to create some preliminary themes based on the research questions, specifically the types of cases reported, types of interventions, and typical resolutions. Using the policy and procedure manuals the researcher was able to identify intended responses. Therefore, during the review of the transcripts, the researcher was able to categorize responses regarding the BAT as either positive or negative. The researcher also utilized Creswell's (2013) data analysis spiral as a guide for coding the data. In the initial review of the transcripts, the researcher

identified the key statements, including the researcher's notes on the interview protocols, to help identify significant statements and additional themes that emerged. In subsequent analyses the researcher continued to narrow the focus and code the participant statements into categories and sub-categories.

Trustworthiness

The researcher primarily used three techniques to increase the trustworthiness of the research. First, the various methods of data collection led to a triangulation of the data. Triangulation involves the process of collecting multiple types of data, or using multiple methods of data collection, to validate the findings from one source to another (Stake, 1995). Through interviews with multiple reporters, the researcher was able to validate the typical actions and follow-through of the team. When used in conjunction with the document analysis, particularly the incident reports and case notes, the researcher was able to compare the written reports with the interviewees' recollections.

The second technique to increase trustworthiness relates to the interview protocols that were used. Prior to conducting the interviews the interview protocols were pilot tested on the researcher's home campus to obtain a level of face validity with the protocol questions. Face validity measures whether the questions have "the look and feel of what it intends to measure" (Sprinthall, 2007, p. 515). By asking reporters on his own campus the interview questions he was able to confirm that the questions were interpreted as they were intended. The pilot test also helped ensure that the interview questions were clear and will lead to answers regarding the concepts being studied. In addition, the researcher worked with a methodologist in creating the protocol questions. This assisted in gathering

stronger qualitative data, by rewording questions as a means to gather participant stories and not just measure their satisfaction, or dissatisfaction with the BAT.

The third and final technique that was used to increase trustworthiness was member checking. Stake (1995) defines member checking as a process by which the interview participant examines a draft of writing where the words of the participant are included. Creswell (2013) describes member checking as a way for the participants to review the analyses and judge the accuracy and credibility of the interpretation. To complete member checking, the researcher sent a rough draft of written materials to the appropriate participants to confirm that the researcher correctly interpreted the intended meaning of specific passages that were quoted in the final draft.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the interviews the researcher submitted the necessary paperwork to the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University and the institution where the study was conducted. Both institutions approved the research and research methods. The researcher also completed the necessary training for research on human subjects. Once approval was granted from both institutions and the researcher was ready to begin collecting data, the gatekeeper contacted the potential interviewees through email to invite them to participate in the research. This allowed participants to opt into the research, as only those who responded became known to the researcher and were later contacted by him. Finally, before being interviewed, each participant signed a letter of informed consent.

The researcher's connection to the institution's BAT chairperson also helped with the ethical considerations of the research. The chair was interested in gaining this

information about the effectiveness of the team, and willingly granted the researcher access for this purpose. The BAT chair was consulted on the direction of the research, and supported the researcher's efforts. As part of the invitation email to reporters, the BAT chair encouraged campus community members to participate for the betterment of their BAT. The chairperson also helped in maintaining ethical considerations by providing the researcher a safe, quiet space for the interviews to take place.

Summary

This chapter discussed the purpose of the study and the reasons for using a qualitative, case study research design. It described the sampling techniques used to select the institution and the individual participants, as well as the role of the researcher. Furthermore, it defined how the researcher collected, managed, and analyzed the data. Finally, the methods used to increase the trustworthiness of the study and other ethical considerations were discussed. Chapter three has provided the specific methods that were used to gather the data that has been analyzed and will be discussed in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand faculty and staff perceptions of a campus BAT and to evaluate the team's effectiveness as defined by the team's impact on campus culture, specifically as it relates to campus safety. By understanding the perspectives of campus community members regarding how a team functions in key aspects of the BAT process and overall campus safety, one would be able to evaluate the effectiveness of a BAT. Using a case study approach, in which the researcher interviewed faculty and staff members, interviewed team members, and reviewed the team website, policies and procedures manual, training presentation, and official case notes from the database, the researcher was able to better understand the behavior assessment team on the studied campus concerning their handling of student cases. While this particular team addresses issues involving both students and staff, many campus BATs only respond to concerns about students. For this reason, the researcher chose to only review and discuss student cases. The in-depth review of team documents, such as the policy and procedure manual and the online reporting form, along with the semi-structured interviews with faculty, staff and team members, granted the researcher access to various types of data about the team's structure, protocols, methods, interventions, outcomes, and role on the campus. The findings from the research will be presented in this chapter, with an emphasis on each of the research questions, and summarizing with the findings for the overarching research question. Those questions were:

1. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the reporting process?
2. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the team's response to the incident that was reported?
3. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the changes in the student or the outcome of the situation?
4. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the behavior assessment team's contribution to campus safety?
5. What criteria should be included in the evaluation of a behavior assessment team?

Overarching question: How do members of a campus community perceive the effectiveness of the campus Behavioral Intervention Team?

Before answering the research questions, it will be helpful to understand the individual participants that provided the bulk of the data that frame the answers.

Participants

In total, 13 campus community members were interviewed in this research endeavor. The participants included seven faculty members and six staff members from the campus. Additionally, three of the 13 community members interviewed serve on the BAT and were able to provide a different perspective on the team's work as well as additional information regarding research question five. The faculty members consisted

of four men and three women, while the staff members were split evenly at three. Participants ranged in terms of length of time working in higher education from seven years to 35 years, with approximately half of the participants having worked for at least 20 years. Five of the participants had spent their entire career at the institution studied, generating additional insight into the institutional history. Others, mostly the staff members, were newer to the institution and were able to provide a fresh perspective. The participants, although random due to their self-selecting to be interviewed, offered diversity in terms of their roles on campus, genders, years in the profession, and time spent at the institution being evaluated. This played a significant role in understanding the data they provided regarding the BAT. Information regarding the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Information

Name	Gender	Role	Years in Higher Education	Years at Institution
Scott	Male	Faculty member*	34	15
Allison	Female	Faculty member	9	9
Patrick	Male	Faculty member*	36	12
Brian	Male	Faculty member*	14	5
Chris	Male	Staff member	22	17
Michelle	Female	Staff member	8	5
Jessica	Female	Faculty/Team member	20	20

Continued on next page

Name	Gender	Role	Years in Higher Education	Years at Institution
John	Male	Staff member	9	9
Elise	Female	Staff member	27	3
Carol	Female	Faculty member*	21	21
Mark	Male	Faculty member	10	10
Kathy	Female	Staff/Team member	12	8
Dave	Male	Staff/Team member	7	2

*Denotes Department Chair

Theme Development

The themes discussed in the following sections primarily developed naturally through the answers to the interview protocol questions. After identifying key words, phrases and statements in the interview transcriptions, the researcher grouped those in accordance with the research question that the comments answered. From there, he used Creswell's (2013) data analysis spiral to identify similarities in the comments from different participants and grouped those together. When four or more of the participants discussed a similar idea, those comments were grouped together to form the themes. In some cases, those themes were further divided into logical categories for reporting purposes. The conceptual framework also played a major role in the development of the themes. While reviewing the transcriptions, the researcher paid special attention to comments that related to both the inputs (violence on campus and preventing violence) and outputs (the BAT's impact) of the team. Comments related to threat assessment and violence prevention led to themes for questions one and two. Other comments that referred to the impact the team was having on individual students, campus safety, and the

overall campus culture led to the themes for questions three through five. Each research question, and the themes that emerged from them will now be addressed.

Research Question 1

How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the reporting process?

Discussions regarding the reporting process led to three key themes. These included the reasons to report behavior, or the circumstances that would ultimately generate a report to the BAT, the reasons why community members do not report behaviors to the team, and an evaluation of the online reporting form.

Reasons to report

Many of the reasons community members provided for reporting behaviors to the BAT were related to their specific job functions. This generated three categories, based on the three different roles of people interviewed. Each group, faculty members, staff members, and team members seemed to have their own focus for what to report. The faculty discussed academic progress, the staff members discussed behaviors, and the team focused on reporting anything that is uncomfortable.

Academic progress. Four faculty members stated reasons related to a student's academic standing and progress. Comments such as "affecting academics," (Allison) "class disruption," (Scott) and "missing class" (Patrick) all indicated concerns about a student's academic progress. One participant, Brian, recalled a student he had reported saying:

> There was a student who had kinda dropped out of things, and then nobody could contact her.

Comments like this indicated that the biggest concern for faculty members that would lead them to report cases to the BAT were situations in which a student's academics were suffering or at risk.

Behavior. Staff members, on the other hand, focused on the areas that related to their functional areas on campus. A University police officer discussed suspicious and criminal behavior as items to report, while a staff member from Residence Life talked about disruptions to the living community as determining reporting criteria.

Although many people focused on their specific duties, there were common behaviors or situations that faculty and staff members agreed should be reported. These included threats to self or others, escalating hostility or aggression, trends, and patterns of behavior. In discussing the reporting process, Jessica, a team member addressed how reporting even the smallest of issues allowed the team to recognize when there was an escalation or pattern of concerning behavior. She stated:

> Once he got on the radar with [Dean Johnson], he kept popping on the radar. Every weekend there was another issue with him. Whether you want to say it was escalating, or he was spiraling down. Whatever he was doing, he was becoming more and more in the criminal element. Popping with the police on campus, or popping with the Dean. But at least they're in the system so that we've got them if they pop again. That's been our whole goal.

This showed that reporting a concern, no matter how small, makes a difference. It allowed the team to keep track of the student and make connections between behaviors in one area and behaviors in another. Reporting, and longitudinal tracking of students helped the team recognize when concerning behavior became more significant and required stronger and more intense intervention.

Uncomfortable. The other theme that was consistent among both faculty and staff, and driven by the team members, was the idea of anything that is "uncomfortable." This was expressed in a variety of ways including "a feeling of unease," (Elise) "gives you the heeby jeebies," (Jessica) "uneasiness," and just "uncomfortable" (Michelle). This was a consistent theme, not only in interviews, but also because it was among the list of things to report on both the institution's BAT website, and in their brochure that is handed out to faculty and staff at various trainings across campus. Jessica also mentioned that the team has stressed this during trainings as a way for community members to know what they should report.

Reasons not to report

All of the staff members found it important to report behaviors when they were observed. After discussing what he does report, Dave, a staff member, succinctly answered why he may not report saying "the times where I do not are times where those things are absent." He went on to clarify, saying:

> We know that sometimes, college students struggle to manage their emotions. And they might come at something with a little bit of anger through email or have interactions with my staff where they're actually disrespectful with incivility. Those are times where I have to make a decision about whether to escalate or not. And so there are definite times where I don't escalate it because it's not a pattern. And I can identify a clear stressor for the student, and the reaction is consistent with that level of stressor. If it's what I would consider a normal reaction to a stressful situation, I would not report it.

Faculty, however, discussed a greater hesitation to report. They were more likely to check with others to confirm their concerns first. Then, if their concerns were validated or someone else recommended submitting a report, they would follow through and submit one. Brian, a faculty member, indicated that he was not sure what was appropriate

to report, while Scott said people are hesitant to "rat" on others. These concerns were best summarized by Mark in the following comment:

> I don't want to do something on somebody that somebody thinks would be unnecessary. I don't want to damage anybody's records or anything. I just wanted to be sure before I did something.

The need to confirm with others first, may come from a strong sense of collegiality among faculty members. Three of them referred to having a close-knit community, or a close department, where they all work well together. A female faculty member, Allison, said it is common to use others in her department to validate her concerns:

> We are a close-knit department. We talk in our department about students, so I'll be going 'Hey, Tina – 'Student's' in my class and something's just not right. Are you seeing the same issues and situations in your classroom?'

Four of the faculty members interviewed (Brian, Patrick, Scott, and Carol) have also served as department chairs, and were able to discuss this from the perspective of their faculty members, who have gone to them for advice about what to report. Simply put, they feel that "not all faculty are comfortable reporting."

Reporting Form

The third theme in answering the research question on the reporting process centered on the reporting form. An initial review of the form indicated to the researcher that the form was a fairly standard reporting form. The researcher was familiar with the software company used by the institution, and they used the company's template in a simplified manner with very few required elements. Many comments confirmed that the form was user-friendly, easy to use and very clear. Patrick, a faculty member, appreciated that it gave him some structure and guidance on what to submit, while a staff member,

Michelle, commented on the ability to receive a copy of her submission to keep for her own records:

> Patrick: In the past it was just, send somebody an email, and this gives you some structure, because I can never remember exactly what do I need to send in this. So this gives me some guidance on what's important for the team to look at.
>
> Michelle: It functioned well for me because you can also get a copy for yourself, which I liked. It's nice to have something in front of you in case you ever get called up on it.

The three team members, who were familiar with the inner workings of the system also commented on that aspect of the form. They mentioned that it was "great for workflow," and "allows you to easily go back and track things." Further, they reiterated that the database was beneficial because it aided in the record-keeping which was important in their identification of trends and patterns of behavior.

Others, however, did not find the form as user-friendly, indicating that they would much rather just call someone. The training presentation and team brochure mention that it is appropriate to report concerns simply by calling a team member, and three said they preferred to use that method when reporting something. There was also a perception, primarily among the male faculty members, that the form was "cumbersome," "kind of an overkill," and "complicated." Brian explained:

> I just have a concern about the student. So I think it's not intuitive, and I think that [faculty members] sometimes feel like they're maybe going further than they really wanna go like, a SWAT team's gonna be called in.

After hearing these comments, the researcher reviewed the form again and was able to identify the six questions that may have led to these feelings. The reporting form had six questions specifically asking about the student's threats to self, others, and the community as a whole. Although it was not required for a faculty member to answer the

questions in order to submit the report to the team, these questions indicated to some faculty that appropriate cases to report involved a more serious threat. Whether a threat, or a lower risk concern about a student, once the report is submitted, the important thing is how the team responds, which was addressed in research question two.

Research Question 2

How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the team's response to the incident that was reported?

Discussions with faculty and staff regarding the team's response to the incident generated two distinct themes – the team's response and follow-up with the reporter, and the team's response to the student mentioned in the report. However, it should be noted that there were no specific guidelines set forth in any of the team materials, in particular the Policies and Procedures Manual, for how the team is to respond to reporters or students. The manual explained the procedures by which the team operates and provides options for how to handle individual cases. It states:

> Once a report is received, a preliminary response meeting may be conducted by the [BAT] Chair, dean of students, and the [BAT] member having administrative responsibility for the person of concern. Other appropriate [BAT] members may be consulted and included during this initial evaluation. These team members will conduct an investigation for the submitted report and, if appropriate, convene [BAT] for an Emergency Meeting. Otherwise, these findings will be reported at the regular team meeting, as described above.

The manual also says that investigations may include "interviews to determine the existence of corroborating evidence." At no point does the team's procedures require a follow up with the reporting party. With regard to the student who is reported, the

Actions and Recommendations section of the manual explains that appropriate university personnel may follow up with the subject of the report.

Response to the Reporter

Based on the interviews with faculty and staff, the team responses to the reporter tended to vary based on the situation reported. In three cases, participants expressed that they never heard anything back from the team. They expressed that they never had any feedback and did not know what happened with the case. However, one of the faculty members, Scott, acknowledged that it has been a while since he reported someone and that things may have changed:

> It would be nice to know that a report had been received, but I've never gotten feedback from that. Again, it's been a few years; maybe the system has changed some.

Other responses indicated that the system has changed, even if not formally in the policies and procedures manual. Seven faculty and staff members said that a team member, typically the Dean, got back to them to at least say the report was received and that the team was either looking into it or that the situation was resolved. Some of these community members praised the team's efforts even further saying the team was very responsive, the response was immediate, and that they were very pleased. Many of those who were pleased reiterated the same theme as to why they were so pleased. In different ways, they all talked about how the team made fair, appropriate decisions with everyone's best interest in mind. Carol talked about how the team is sensitive to everyone's perspective:

> The police, student affairs, counseling – I think that they do a really well rounded job. They use a broad approach to take care of things. I think they're even-handed

> which is excellent. They're sensitive to the student's situation as well as the faculty member or the staff member on campus.

Chris appreciated the team members for respecting the issue of confidentiality, but sharing with him what they could to inform him that the team was taking the appropriate steps in handling the situation:

> Sometimes they'll tell me they had the conversation, but particularly if it's a counseling issue, then they're not going to share with me confidential information so I'm not going to know and I don't ask, except to know should we be doing something or can we count on the measures you've already started to be sufficient.

Similarly, John talked about how the team keeps everyone's best interests in mind to make the best decision possible:

> There's a very, very close knit working relationship between our department and the departments who have people serving on the committee. There's a lot of communication between those entities in order to come up with the best resolution. I think they do a good job of maintaining everybody's interests, the University, the students that are being brought forward. They manage to balance that very well. They make good and informed decisions.

This sentiment was echoed by a team member, Kathy, in describing her thoughts about the team's response to various situations:

> We give them adequate feedback about where the case is without oversharing. I feel like we're educational in the way that we respond. I think we're very fair and appropriate.

Although there is no formula set out as to how the team should respond when a report is received, these positive comments indicated that the community's perception was that the team was meeting their expectations. Even more important to note was that the team members' comments and thoughts about how they respond were exactly the same as how most community members responded to the same question.

Response to the Student

The participants shared a similar mix of reactions regarding the team responses to students. Some said they did not know what, if anything was done. Others said there was a quick response from the team in the form of a letter to the student, or checking in on them. Brian, who reported that a student was not showing up to class and that her professors could not get in contact with her, said:

> Police actually went and checked her residence and found her and determined things were okay.

He continued to talk about how students respond when called in for these situations:

> Seems like some students would be comfortable and some are not. I think for the most part, we have a number of students who are open to the idea and they appreciate being reached out to, but I'm sure there are others that don't respond.

Regardless of whether or not students like the BAT reaching out to them, participants believed that students typically respond. Another faculty member, Allison, said "I think they see it as intimidating. And a possible threat to their academic life." Kathy's comments about how the team responds in an educational manner make this point even more relevant. If students were primarily concerned about their ability to stay in school, a response that focuses on providing the student an opportunity to learn from the experience seems appropriate. However, Kathy did also note that "sometimes it has to be punitive." Dave, another team member, talked about this important balance when he said:

> We support students too. We don't just do threat assessment and protect the community. We also support members of our community when they're in difficult or vulnerable situations. And sometimes, that may mean that we eliminate the threat. But then we respond to the members of the community who had been affected by a threat in strategic ways. And that's so key. That's just as important as all the other pieces.

Although the responses were not always known by the reporters, the data indicated that in most of the cases discussed through interviews, the team not only

followed up on the concern, but was responding to the students and the reporters in a fair, appropriate way, and in a very timely manner. The case notes, as pulled from the team database, provided further information about the team's response to situations. All case notes were clearly outlined in the case files, and showed that the team at least initially discussed situations within the two week span of the incident being reported. Case files also shared the recommended action from the team and notes from any follow-up meetings, which also typically took place within a couple weeks of the initial incident report being submitted. Ultimately, this indicated that the team was following the procedures laid out in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

Research Question 3

How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the changes in the student or the outcome of the situation?

This proved to be the most challenging research question to address. The reporters do not have many opportunities, if any, to observe the student after the team's intervention has been implemented. This led to two main themes in recognizing outcomes – limited or no observations, and evidence of maturity. However, a new position within the team, a case manager, was described as a means to help provide some better documentation and follow-up on cases moving into the future. Hence, a third theme, case management, developed through the discussions with the team members who knew about this new position and how it would impact the team's work.

Limited or No Observations

For a variety of reasons, reporters often said they did not have a chance to observe the student that was reported after the situation was resolved by the BAT. Case files verify that in some of the situations discussed with reporters, the students involved were either suspended, withdrew for medical reasons, chose not to return or continue enrollment, transferred institutions, and, in one case, the student was even banned from the campus. An exchange with Melissa discussed one of these scenarios in which she knew what ended up happening with the student, but she did not directly interact with her:

> Yeah. I never saw her and then I asked one of my staff members that were good friends with her. She said "No, she's just gonna take a break." But since then she's doing pretty good, I hear.

Whatever the reason, whether it is academically, socially, psychologically, or emotionally, the participants explained that many of the students discussed by the BAT are not prepared for the academic setting and, in one way or another, found themselves no longer associated with the institution, making it difficult to observe their behaviors. In a number of other cases, the reporter was able to confirm that the student went on to graduate, but that he or she did not have any other issues with the student between the report and his or her graduation.

Evidence of Maturity

There were situations discussed that indicated that some reports initially made to the BAT were not very serious, did not warrant an intervention, and became more informational for future reference than immediately actionable. Those cases included things like theft, academic dishonesty, and other incidents that could be handled by the institution's conduct code and did not warrant suspension or removal. The faculty and

staff members that were interviewed also discussed a number of students that struggled initially, but were able to learn from their situations, mature, and become better students. Carol spoke about one of her students this way:

> I got reports that he had backed off and was behaving much more like a student rather than trying to be a pal to the faculty member.

Speaking of another student she said:

> I will say I was looking at his grades from the last semester and he did fine. He seems to have gotten himself straightened up so whatever [BAT] did changed his behavior, or his situation changed so that he could come to class regularly and on time and do all the things that he was supposed to do in class.

Brian talked about a situation in which the student came back to meet with him and stated:

> Actually, he was a great kid. Just came by to say he really needed to get his act together and that he appreciated us thinking about him.

Some other comments were related to not seeing the same issues arise again and not being sure if the intervention by the BAT was the difference, or if the student just moved on. Whatever the reason, they were reporting that the students "seem to be pleasant again" or that they have "matured." Dave spoke about a student's maturity and her ability to now utilize the necessary resources to help her to be successful. He explained:

> I think she has matured in some ways and maybe gotten the support, and the environment, where she needs to get it, which is the Counseling Center. So she's not seeking for [attention] in highly visibly, disturbing ways.

Dave knew that this student was meeting regularly with staff members and that she was getting the help she needed to be successful. This type of support and on-going contact is similar to what students might receive in a case management model.

Case Management

Two of the team members were able to speak at length about the recent addition of a part-time case manager to the team. One of the existing team members had her responsibilities shifted in order to allow her to serve in this role. This was especially important for the team being studied because the Policies and Procedures Manual already called for a case management meeting:

> Every two weeks opposite the Regular Team Meeting, case managers will meet to review progress on the persons of concern and consider recommendations. All recommendations should be placed on the agenda for the full Team's review and consideration.

Those meetings were taking place, but a handful of the team members were taking on the responsibility for meeting with any student who needed case management. Dave explained the role of the case manager for their team:

> That's where the student needs handholding. We now have a place to put them. So if a student needs to be checked on regularly, and we don't want them to drop off the radar, then we know that she's going to follow up with them and that they have a home. I always talk about where is the student's home moving forward. And so that's comforting to know that she's doing that because I don't have time to do it. Dean Johnson doesn't have time to do it. And to have somebody designated that is getting paid, that this is part of their job, and that's what they do, and we're acknowledging the value of that is so important.

The other team member, Jessica, spoke about case management this way:

> It's very much like probation. We want to set you up for success, so I'm going to keep you under supervision for this semester, or for the school year, to make sure everything goes smoothly.

There was also discussion about more informal case management that was taking place, whether it was through the Counseling Center or with the Dean of Students. Faculty and staff alike knew that a portion of the students that had been reported were

having regular meetings with staff on campus, and that the regular follow ups were a good thing. Again, Dave spoke of a student who was referred to Counseling:

> I wasn't concerned with following up, necessarily, to make sure she was engaging in the treatment because I knew that Counseling Center. If she did not follow up, and they had ongoing concerns, she's signed a release, so they would let me know. So I assume, at this point, she's connected and that she's in good shape.

In speaking of another student the team had discussed, Dave shared:

> I don't know what all Dean Johnson does, but I know he meets with [the student] and works with her. So there's this ongoing contact.

The idea that there was some constant, or regular, contact with the Counseling Center, the Dean of Students, other team members, and now the case manager was comforting to those who were aware of the process. The part-time position and the bi-weekly meeting dedicated to this type of work, indicated, as Dave said, the value the institution was placing on it. They seemed to feel that this was an important and necessary part of the process, especially in terms of the team's actions and recommendations.

Research Question 4

How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the behavior assessment team's contribution to campus safety?

In talking to the campus community members about campus safety and the role of the BAT, it was obvious that everyone felt like this was a very safe campus. Although each of the 13 participants indicated that they felt safe, many were also able to talk about incidents that have occurred that make them realize violence could happen on their campus. From the data, three main themes emerged. The first two focused on the

perceived safe and unsafe aspects of campus. The theme of campus safety could be broken down into two categories. One, mentioned by both faculty and staff, was the University Police, and the other, mentioned primarily by faculty, was the idea that it will not happen here. Within the theme of unsafe comments, there was a definite category with regards to nighttime and darkness. The third theme that was evident involved the role of the team on campus, and two specific categories emerged from this theme – recordkeeping and intervention/prevention.

Safe Aspects

As mentioned before, all 13 participants said that they felt safe on campus. Answers to the question "How safe do you feel on campus?" were consistently along the lines of "completely safe," "100 percent safe," and "perfectly safe". While some focused on the campus safety measures, such as emergency phones, security cameras and better lighting, Scott took a more personal approach:

> When we went through our SACs recertification last time, that was 2005, I think, I was on one of the committees that assessed the overall University, and we had had two rapes on campus at that time, but my daughter went here, and I never felt insecure with her in dorms or on campus or anything.

Although their reasons for feeling safe on campus varied, both faculty and staff agreed the University Police were a big part of the safe aspects of campus.

University Police. The participants agreed about the high quality of the police force on campus. They were known for having a regular presence on campus through their patrolling efforts. People mentioned that they saw them all over campus and knew that they could get in touch with them any time they needed through the emergency call boxes or just by calling them. The participants were confident in the police's ability to

respond to situations and keep the campus safe. Carol, a faculty member talked about one specific situation:

> A few years ago a gentleman sent in several bomb threats and he, the Police Department did a stake out, found out who it was and he arrived on campus with several weapons in his vehicle. I felt that the police and everyone on campus did a really good job of handling that.

Dave, on the other hand, spoke in more general terms:

> I have a lot of confidence in our University Police. A lot. A lot of respect for them and a lot of confidence in their training. Although I know, ultimately, if somebody tried to do something, they're only going to be able to get there so quick. But they tend to catch things early on. They monitor social media. They're very cognizant of when we do have situations, with investigating them with full due diligence. And they often will curtail things early on. And so I think that's a positive thing that I have a lot of comfort and trust in them and their response. And people take them seriously. Students take them seriously, faculty take them seriously, staff.

Another staff member, Kathy, summarized the feelings about the police department when she said that the police department is top-of-the-line.

It will not happen here. The other category that developed from this theme was the idea that nothing bad was going to happen on their campus. The four participants who commented on this aspect were all faculty members, and all had been at the institution for at least 10 years. For them, this created a level of comfort and safety while on campus. These faculty members all shared the belief that they were safe because nothing bad had happened to them before. Scott said:

> I feel secure because nothing ever bad has ever happened to me. I feel as safe here as I am in most parts of [the city].

When asked why he felt perfectly safe here Patrick responded:

> Because I've been around here a lot. I know my way around. I know what to expect. I kind of know how to take care of myself.

This feeling was not only for male faculty members either. Jessica, the longest tenured participant, shared these feelings about being on campus:

> I was a student here before I was faculty, so I've actually been here 30 years, and always felt safe on this campus. [The police] all recognize me. They all know me, but I'm also, I'm known around campus because I've been here so long. I've never had to be concerned about my safety.

Alternatively, Dave, who was the participant with the shortest tenure, both working in higher education, and at the institution, seemed to understand that others on campus, especially those who had been around for a while, may feel that way. He acknowledged the following:

> I feel safe, but I do, sometimes in the back of my mind, I know that there's some potential, and it's hard to know how much. Somebody could come and harm us. And that could happen in my office. And so I feel safe, yet, I know that there's always potential for someone to – who is angry with us or dissatisfied with a decision we made or who is troubled to take it to that level. And I think we have to be careful not to become complacent.

Dave's comment recognized that if staff get too comfortable in the environment it could lead to a complacency that allows concerning behavior and possible threats to campus safety to go unrecognized, unreported, and unaddressed.

Unsafe aspects

Although the participants generally felt safe on campus, many of them were able to discuss some unsafe situations or circumstances that indicated there is the potential for violence to occur. When asked about campus safety, participants mentioned previous incidents including theft, robbery, physical assaults, sexual assaults, bomb threats and even a recent shooting. One faculty member, who teaches at a secondary campus in the city's downtown area, referred to the homeless population downtown, suggesting there

was a potential for violence from them as well. He also spoke about there being a higher rate of crime downtown that people needed to be aware of. Others suggested that these things are possible, but that individuals need to take care of themselves. Taking care of oneself meant that a person needed to be aware of his or her surroundings and make good decisions to keep him- or herself safe.

Nighttime/Darkness. The participants overwhelmingly commented on taking care of themselves at night and when it was dark out. Consistently, both faculty and staff members interviewed, shared thoughts about their safety on campus during the day as compared to being on campus at night or when it was dark outside. Some of the comments were simple and straight to the point:

> I'm not here late at night. (Julie)
>
> I don't walk around in dark alleys or anything. (Brian)
>
> I would not want to be walking around at 10:00 at night by myself. (Carol)
>
> I'm not up here at the dead of night. (Mark)

Allison, however, provided some better understanding of the contrast between daytime and nighttime on campus and how she would keep herself safe:

> I don't teach night classes anymore, but when I used to teach night classes there was some uncertainty because we are an open campus. And all campuses are really open campuses, unless they're like the private schools. Daytime, because there's more traffic around and you see more of the officers who are patrolling. In the evening when I was teaching night classes, there wasn't as much patrolling. We didn't see as much patrolling going on at night time. And actually students, we would all get together and students would walk, guys would walk us to our cars.

The uneasiness walking to cars at night was shared by a male faculty member, Patrick, as well. He spoke about a student who was unhappy with him and other faculty in the

department about a decision that was made regarding the student's grades. Even though the student had withdrawn from school and was no longer around, Patrick explained:

> There are times I walk out at night, knowing that he was in the Army, thinking he count be out there waiting for me, because I often leave really late at night.

One of the BAT members interviewed, Kathy, referenced student perspectives on this issue and the efforts staff members were making to encourage the students to make good decisions for their own safety. She surmised:

> If you asked certain populations of students, some may say, "well, it's dark over here at night," but I think we do as much as we can and we are starting with the orientation, letting students and parents know that even though we're a college campus, you still have to be safe. You still have to use judgment and not walk out at 2:00 a.m. around campus.

The faculty members, especially those that had been at the institution for a while, were no longer teaching at night to avoid putting themselves in bad situations.

BAT Role

There were a number of perspectives shared about the role of the BAT on campus. Many of the participants recognized that the team has multiple roles and were able to address those in speaking about how the BAT fits into campus safety plans. Two of those roles in particular were mentioned consistently. These included the team's role as record keepers and to provide interventions to help prevent bad situations from occurring. Although these categories were more prominent, additional other roles were mentioned as well. A faculty member, Allison, saw the team as being a group who is responsible for creating and carrying out policies and procedures on campus. Another faculty member, Carol, mentioned that the team served an important function in being able to broadly analyze data about a student and make decisions from a higher level.

Similarly, Michelle, a staff member, talked about the team's ability to validate concerns, noting that they would let her know if she was being irrational. Michelle also said that the BAT gives her a voice. It was somewhere she could turn to, and know she would be taken seriously. Allison echoed this thought when talking about faculty and staff awareness of the team saying "they know it's there, and if they need it they know where to go." Elise, another staff member, referred to both students' safety and students' wellbeing. Knowing the team's intentions, Dave was able to elaborate on this point tying it into retention:

> We have a role to make sure our students have the support they need. And so retention, I mean, we retain, we support students, too. We don't just do threat assessment and protect the community. We also support members of our community when they're in difficult situations.

While retention is important to the well-being of the institution, the well-being of the individual members of the community is a primary concern and role of the BAT.

Record keeping. Both faculty and staff members seemed to recognize the BAT as a body designed to keep records about students and concerning situations that took place on campus. They saw it as a place to keep all of the documentation in one place so that the team could put all the pieces together to better understand students and their circumstances when situations arose. Dave called the BAT an "information clearinghouse" for concerning behavior. Carol referred to it as a "central place where concerns can be brought." While others also spoke about the team having this role, Chris felt strongly that the BAT was meant to store the data. He recognized that the BAT, with a recordkeeping purpose, could connect information from different areas of campus that otherwise would not be connected:

> It's just to bring things together so there's a central repository for information so that things that are heard – if some faculty member in a classroom says this student is doing this or that, and then in residence life, if some RA reports something – well, what do you know, it's the same student. So [BAT] just links together those reports which would not be connected normally on a campus. It just puts all the information together so we can see the correlations and correspondences, particularly for the individual, or maybe there's some pattern of behavior.

The recordkeeping role was clearly recognized on this campus, and served as an important first step in the BAT process. Many of the participants also acknowledged that the BAT had a secondary responsibility regarding what they do with all of those records.

Prevention/Intervention. The data revealed that having the data stored in a central place allowed the team to broadly analyze the data, and make decisions with the student's, reporter's and the institution's best interests in mind, all of which has been mentioned previously. Faculty, especially, saw the BAT as having a role in preventing bad things from happening through early intervention after reports of concerning behavior. Patrick clearly stated the role for intervening when he commented:

> They're a vehicle for intervening when needed.

Mark pointed out that they are not just intervening, but intervening with a purpose. He believed that the BAT was trying to intervene early on so that situations did not escalate into something more serious. Speaking about the role of the BAT he said:

> To prevent potential disastrous situations from occurring. Try to nip things in the bud. Stop things before they happen. To keep them from developing or growing into situations that would threaten others.

John expanded on the idea that the BAT's role was to prevent bad situations:

> And that's their job, is to prevent those situations [like Virginia Tech] from happening. To prevent someone from information and not taking action on it, and then we have a bad day. So from my world, my perception of what they do is they help us prevent those bad days.

After commenting that the team was in place to protect the institution legally if something bad were to happen, Brian acknowledged that the team took their job seriously and did a good job of stepping in to intervene in potentially bad situations. Brian noted:

> The people that are involved in it take it very seriously, though, that it's not just another mandate, that they feel as though they can step in and diffuse some tense situations. And I think they probably have. I know they've been helpful to us.

As a team member, Jessica knew a little more about the role of the team as it relates to campus safety and talked about the role of protecting the campus:

> It is to protect all students, faculty, staff, and visitors who come to our campus. Their protection, their safety is paramount. It's all about the safety.

Taken together, the different responses regarding the role of the BAT summarized the majority of the actual mission of the team. According to the BAT website and the Policies and Procedures Manual the official mission of the team states:

> The BAT is dedicated to a proactive, coordinated and planned approach to the identification, prevention, assessment, management, and reduction of interpersonal and behavioral threats to the safety and wellbeing of [institution's] students, faculty, staff and visitors.

The faculty and staff members identified many of these aspects when discussing the role of the team. Their comments regarding the team's role accounted for the proactive and coordinated parts of the mission, as well as the identification, prevention, and reduction of threats sections. They talked about wellbeing, and Jessica pointed out that it was designed to serve the entire campus community, including visitors. Although the faculty and staff members were not directly quoting the mission, their comments indicated they had a good understanding of the role and purpose of the team.

Research Question 5

What criteria should be included in the evaluation of a behavior assessment team?

This question appeared only on the protocol for participants who served as members of the BAT. As they were familiar with the inner workings of the team, and how the team should be functioning, their assessment of what is important in evaluating their work could be very telling. Those without this understanding would not have been able to provide as much insight on this question, therefore the other participants who have not served on the team were not asked this question. Although there were several criteria mentioned by the team members as something they would evaluate, three specific areas were discussed by all three team members, leading to the themes. These themes included the team composition, the level of commitment among team members, and the ability to remain fair and consistent with their decisions.

Team Composition

The makeup of a team has been part of the BAT literature from the beginning, talking about important team members and specific functional roles that should be represented on a team. All three team members that were interviewed addressed the idea of the team membership. Jessica spoke about the importance of all team members being able to work well together. Kathy provided more specifics about which functional areas were important and should be included based on their specialized knowledge:

> I would make sure that you have people from different roles, from different areas of expertise. I really like the way ours is set up. I think some schools don't have their University Police on there. And I think they don't have their Health or their Counseling. I think if I were to look at that, that would be who sits on it.

Dave spelled it out even more, mentioning most of the team members and, like Jessica, the way in which those team members work together. He explained:

> Do we have the key membership on the committee that needs to be there? And I would argue that we always need someone from Counseling. We always need someone from Housing if there is housing on the campus. Of course, the Dean of Students or whatever role that may be, Vice President of Students Affairs depending on the size of the school. University Police. Disability Services often is a good contributor. Human Resources because we're going to deal with faculty and staff issues. And the Health Services. I think all of those absolutely have to be represented. And then I would evaluate based on the positions on the team. I would also evaluate based on the level of collaboration.

Based on their responses, the team members at this campus felt that the membership on the BAT is a significant factor. It was important to them to have the right people at the table, and that those people were working well together. To them, that helped create an effective BAT.

Team Member Commitment

All three members of the BAT also talked about team members' commitment to the team and the safety and prevention work that they do. They talked about this in various ways, but commitment and a willingness to work was a factor that was important to each of them. Kathy noted that by talking through situations at meetings she would sometimes change her mind about how a case should be handled. By focusing on the goals, she said it was important to have an open mind:

> It really needs to be a working team with a different set of mindsets. And I feel like you have to walk in open-minded.

By being open minded it shows that she is willing to work with the team to achieve the goals of the group and focus on what is best for all involved.

Dave said he would ask team members a few questions:

> Are people showing up consistently? Are people taking it seriously, the members of the team? Are they a willing member of the team?

He believed the answers to these questions were an indication of how effective a BAT might be. Jessica answered those questions about their team and talked more about the level of commitment that their team members show, saying:

> Everyone takes it seriously. Nobody's on it just for a committee to be on. Our people are active in BAT conversations.

These responses indicated even further that the team members are open minded, willing to work, and truly want to help their campus.

Fairness/Consistency

The last theme addressed by all three team members was the idea that a team needed to be fair and consistent. This applied to both the decisions they make, and to the way in which they handled cases. Dave said he would ask a BAT he was evaluating to:

> Demonstrate to me what the situation was, how the discussion went, and what was the follow-through. And I'd want to see clear follow through and that the ball is not being dropped or people aren't falling under the radar.

He added that consistency is huge.

While Kathy talked about fairness and making sure that the team makes fair, but appropriate decisions with each case, Jessica really expanded on this idea. With a background working in the criminal justice system, Jessica believed that a BAT needed to make consistent decisions no matter what. She talked about this in terms of precedents, but also talked about how they handle cases, once again answering Dave's questions:

> Where precedent is set, we follow precedent. Like I said [Dean Johnson] does everything by the book, so he follows the procedures exactly, and so far, I mean it seems to work, and he's making sure the due process is put in there. That's when I say following everything by the letter, by the book, it's the due process is the key, it's making sure they have that. I reiterate constantly in the meeting because now

> that we have cases, we've got precedence. I'll throw precedent back out there and say "you've got to be consistent across the board, so if you did this with this one student, you're gonna have to do the same thing over here."

Fairness, consistency and following precedent indicated how well the cases were handled by the team. In evaluating a BAT, the team members felt like this was another important criteria that would help determine the effectiveness of the team.

Overarching Research Question

The themes from the research questions above helped provide some framework for determining the answer to the overarching research question - how do members of a campus community perceive the effectiveness of the campus Behavioral Intervention Team? The participants responses indicated that no matter how well the BAT was working on their campus improvements could be made. They suggested that there was always room for improvement, and the community members were able to articulate ways in which the team and their efforts could be better. In response to most of the situations, the campus community members interviewed had good things to say about the team and its work. Each of the participants shared positive comments about the team, its members, and the contribution to the campus community, showing an overall satisfaction with the team. However, the community members that either served on the team, or work for an office that has representation on the team, appeared to feel even stronger about the effectiveness of this team. Unlike the general faculty or staff member, those who were a little more aware of the team recognized their institution as a national leader.

Potential Improvements

As mentioned previously, there was always room for improvement, and the BAT at the institution studied was no different. Through conversations with faculty and staff

on the campus, the researcher heard comments about critical areas that could be made better. The reporting form itself was the first area of concern for some of the community members. Although this was only mentioned by male faculty members, they referenced other faculty members in their departments having similar concerns, and it was likely that some staff members, perhaps just not those involved in this study, felt the same way. The questions on the form specifically about threats confused them and made them feel like BAT reports about concerns not regarding threats were inappropriate for the team. As this goes directly against the team's role as a record keeper, the form and reporting process associated with it could be amended to aid the BAT in meeting its mission.

The mission also discusses keeping campus community members safe. Although this may not be within the scope of the BAT, issues around campus safety and the possibility of violence and other threats will always exist. Participants talked about a number of potential threats to students, faculty, staff and visitors' safety and well-being. They talked about crime, particularly near the secondary campus downtown, incidents involving guns, violent tendencies among students and some of their guests, and parts of campus that are not well lit.

A final area for potential improvement is the team's follow up with faculty and staff regarding incidents that have been reported. In many cases, the faculty and staff interviewed suggested that the team did get back in touch with them after reporting a concern. However, there were a few times when the faculty or staff member did not recall ever hearing back from the BAT or any of its members regarding a submitted report. While the BAT will sometimes end up with information that cannot be shared with others to protect the privacy of the student, reporters indicated that, at the very least, they want

to know that the team has received the report and is looking into it. In two specific cases the participant indicated that may not have happened.

Satisfied

For the most part, the campus community members that participated in this study felt strongly that the BAT was doing a good job. They were satisfied with all aspects of the team, from the reporting process, to the team responses, to the outcomes, and ultimately, the role they played in helping to keep the campus safe. The team had done a good job communicating with the campus regarding the purpose of the team and encouraging people to report concerning behavior. They felt positively about the way the team had handled previous cases and would continue to refer students if they had concerns that they believed should be reported. People saw the team as serving an important purpose on campus and were glad the institution had such a team in place.

Most of the participants, in some way or another, also praised the members of the team and their staffs. The confidence faculty and staff had in the University Police department spoke a great deal about campus safety. However the praise did not stop at the Police. Three of the faculty and staff members who were interviewed were complimentary about the campus Counseling services, particularly the Counseling Director who sits on the team. The Director of Housing, the Case Manager, and the Associate Dean of Students were all mentioned at some point and were spoken about highly by the participants. Many of the participants also commented on how approachable the Dean of Students was and their appreciation for the work he does. The Dean and other members of the BAT, both individually, and as a group, have gained a lot

of trust and respect within their community, and this went a long way in the team being viewed as effective.

National Leader

While most participants saw the team as doing a good job, those associated with the team had a better understanding of the BAT as it compares to others across the country. When comparing their team to others, they believed that they were way ahead. They saw themselves as a national leader. Most of this perception came from conversations with colleagues at conferences, through professional listservs and other means of communication. Through these communications they learned that they are already doing what other institutions are just now beginning to implement. They mentioned that other campus teams do not have good working relationships with counseling or the police, and in some cases, do not even have those offices represented on their team. The team members spoke about Dean Johnson being active in the National Behavior Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) and how he has really led them to where they are as a team. When asked to evaluate their own team, the team members interviewed said they were professional, efficient in their operations, and could serve as a model to other institutions because of the great work they were doing.

While there are improvements that can be made, overall, the campus community members felt that the team was effective, doing a good job, and serving a needed purpose on the campus. The BAT was achieving its mission and, most importantly, faculty and staff perceive the BAT as having a role in preventing violence and keeping the campus safe.

Summary

This chapter provided the data that was gathered through interviews with faculty and staff on the campus of the BAT being evaluated. It described the various themes that developed through the interviews and how they related to the overall evaluation of the BAT. The next chapter will return to these findings and give some further interpretation as to the meaning of these findings for higher education professionals. The interpretations will lead to some recommendations regarding future opportunities for researching the effectiveness of BATs.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Previous chapters have introduced the topic of the research, the background literature related to the research, the methodology for conducting the research and the research findings. This chapter will provide a summary of the study, some conclusions about what the research findings presented in Chapter 4 mean, and the implications for higher education administrators and those interested in studying this topic further. The research questions that this study answered will be discussed in detail. Those questions included:

1. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the reporting process?
2. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the team's response to the incident that was reported?
3. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the changes in the student or the outcome of the situation?
4. How do members of a campus community who have filed reports with the behavior assessment team describe the behavior assessment team's contribution to campus safety?
5. What criteria should be included in the evaluation of a behavior assessment team?

Overarching question: How do members of a campus community perceive the effectiveness of the campus Behavioral Intervention Team?

Summary

Following the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, high schools across the country began to look for ways to prevent similar tragedies from occurring at their schools. Schools began implementing a variety of tactics to prevent violence and keep schools safe. After some time passed and various methods had been tested, it was believed that a multidisciplinary threat assessment team was the best approach. After the shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007, institutions of higher education began looking for ways to prevent violence and other tragedies from occurring on their campuses. The higher education community looked at many of the same reports that high schools looked at after Columbine, and ended up implementing their own versions of threat assessment teams. As the number of teams on college campuses began to grow, they developed into more sophisticated teams known as Behavior Assessment Teams. For many campuses the Behavior Assessment Team has been in place for a number of years now, but the evaluation and assessment of the work of the teams has been limited. The limited research in this area has focused on the feedback from team members and those who are responsible for the team. This study was designed to provide those interested in assessing their teams with a new method using the feedback from campus community members not affiliated with the team, but who were familiar with the work of the BAT. Ultimately, the purpose of this study was to understand faculty and staff perceptions of a campus BAT and evaluate the team's effectiveness as defined by the team's impact on campus culture, specifically as it relates to campus safety.

In order to evaluate a BAT's effectiveness, the researcher conducted a qualitative case study. After identifying an institution appropriate for the study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen faculty and staff members who had reported incidents to the BAT, including three members of the team. This group was a mix of faculty and staff, some of whom had been at the institution for a long time, and others who had only worked there for a few years. They came from various academic departments as well and different functional areas within student affairs or student services, providing a good representation of the faculty and staff of the institution. The data gathered from these interviews were analyzed and the results were detailed in chapter four.

Summary of Findings

Much of the previous research on Behavior Assessment Teams (DeLaTorre, 2011; Gamm, Mardis & Sullivan, 2011, Graney, 2011) focused on team members, particularly chairpersons, and the administrator on campus who the team reports to. While this provided useful information about the inner workings of the team and how teams perceived themselves it failed to ask anyone not associated with the team for feedback. By speaking with campus community members who had reported concerns to the BAT, the researcher gained an understanding of exactly how well a team was doing, as viewed by those who used the team as a resource. To do this, the researcher identified key aspects of the team as defined by Borum (1999) and Sokolow and Lewis (2009). After speaking with faculty and staff about the team on their campus, the researcher was able to understand how the team was perceived with regards to the reporting process, its

response when a report is received, the outcome of their decision based upon changes in the student's behavior, and its role in terms of overall campus safety.

Discussion

The findings will now be discussed with an individual focus on each research question followed by a discussion of the results based on the participant demographics. Based on the data collected during interviews and the information shared in chapter two regarding BATs, the team evaluated in this study could be considered a leader in BAT work. They are following many of the best practices recommended by the national association as well as those individuals who have studied threat assessment teams at both the secondary school and college levels. The BAT at the institution studied uses a sophisticated database to help record and track data longitudinally, team members are trained in threat assessment protocols, the team advertises themselves to the campus community informing faculty and staff what behaviors should be reported, they follow formal protocols and utilize risk rubrics to identify threats, they have the right people at the table and have begun to focus more on case management techniques (Deisinger et. al., 2008; HEMHA, 2012; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009). By comparing the findings from the team policy and procedures manual with the case notes, the interviews with faculty and staff members, and the interviews with BAT members the researcher was able to verify through multiple data sets that the team is meeting the recommendations for these BAT best practices.

Research Question One

The first research question helped establish an understanding for the threshold for reporting on this campus. It answered the aspects of the conceptual framework related to

violence and prevention, or the inputs to the BAT. Through the interviews, the researcher learned what behaviors would lead to reports and what behaviors faculty and staff would try to handle on their own. The Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (2012) guide for campus teams discussed the issue of thresholds for action and intervention and suggested that teams should be prepared to distinguish between immediate threats and lower levels of concern. Similarly, in the *Campus Threat Assessment and Management Team Handbook,* it was recommended that teams should "define its threshold with regards to the level of behavior or concern that should trigger a notice to the team" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 82). Sokolow and Lewis (2009) suggest that it is a best practice for 2nd generation teams to "foster a comprehensive reporting culture within the institution, and train and educate the community on what to report and how" (p. 4). The materials put out by the team on their website, in its brochure, in the Policy and Procedure Manual, as well as in the training presentations all clearly set forth what behaviors are appropriate for referral to the team, and what should be immediately referred to Counseling or University Police. Since it is important for a BAT to determine the threshold for reporting on its campus, it should also be necessary to determine if the campus community members with a responsibility for reporting are aware of the threshold and follow through accordingly. The interviews showed that a person's role on campus ultimately defined his or her perceptions of what behaviors were worthy of a report to the BAT. The findings also indicated that there was some hesitancy among community members to report behaviors to the team. Mark's comment summarized that feeling of hesitancy.

> I don't want to do something on somebody that somebody thinks would be unnecessary. I don't want to damage anybody's records or anything. I just wanted to be sure before I did something.

The hesitancy may also be due, in part, to the seriousness of the questions on the reporting form that relate to threatening behavior. Although they were not required, the questions related to threats indicated to community members that BAT reports had to be to that level of concern to be reported, even though that was not the intention. Based on the responses from the campus community members, it does seem that overall, the community is aware of the team, its purpose and would report serious concerns. The interviews showed that community members reported everything from class disruptions and students missing class to threats to self or others and escalating hostility or aggression allowing the team to respond to all types of situations.

Research Question Two

Research question two dealt primarily with the follow-up that the team did after receiving a report of concerning behavior. The responses from the interviews discussed how the team responded to both the student and the reporter following a report. Multiple reports (Cornell, 2010; Higher Education Mental Health Alliance, 2012; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009) discussed the need for teams to have clearly established protocols. While these reports did not specifically discuss that the procedures should include a means of following up with the reporter, other aspects of these reports indicated that it should be a necessary part of the process. Randazzo and Plummer (2009) mentioned that the team needs to gain the confidence and trust of the community. Although they related that to the team name, confidence and trust could also be built through the team outputs, ensuring that there is an established procedure for following up

with the reporter to let them know the report had been received and that the team was addressing the concern. This follow up, and the resulting trust, can play a major role in the perception of the team's impact on reported situations. John's comment indicated that this team is extremely successful in gaining the community's support with how well they balance the multiple perspectives involved:

> There's a lot of communication between those entities in order to come up with the best resolution. I think they do a good job of maintaining everybody's interests, the University, the students that are being brought forward. They manage to balance that very well. They make good and informed decisions.

Cornell (2010) also explained that threat assessment teams should begin by gathering as much information as possible. This often requires interviews, or conversations with key witnesses, meaning the person who reported the incident. Clearly, if a team is doing a good job of investigating the seriousness of the threat, they would be following up with the reporter shortly after the report is received. Where Sokolow and Lewis (2009) discuss creating a culture of reporting, HEMHA (2012) recommended promoting a culture of caring. They explained that reporters can be a valuable asset because a "faculty member or other individual is in the best position to observe future behavioral changes (or lack thereof)." They continued, "to promote transparency and confidence in the team, it is also appropriate for campus teams to explain how they operate" (Higher Education Mental Health Alliance, 2012, p. 29). Thus, following up with the reporter is an important aspect for any BAT to be effective.

It was mentioned by the faculty and staff on this campus that the team being studied generally follows up quickly to let the reporter know that they are handling the case. While there were some situations in which the reporter was unaware of any response

from the team, the majority of people interviewed acknowledged that the response was quick, fair and appropriate. Additionally, all of the case notes indicated that there was a follow up from the team within two weeks, matching the guidelines set forth in their procedures manual that says the team meets every two weeks to discuss cases.

Research Question Three

The HEMHA recommendation also led to research question three in which the observations of future behaviors were discussed. Student behaviors following the report and resulting intervention could definitely be viewed as an output of the team, and therefore related to the impact aspects of the conceptual framework. Some students who were reported were deemed not to be a threat and continued through school and successfully graduated. Others, who were deemed threats were suspended or otherwise left the institution. A third group of students were referred to case management, another aspect of BATs that are necessary for a successful team. Both Deisinger, et. al. (2008) and Randazzo and Plummer (2009) talk about the importance of managing the case load, and effectively following up on the cases brought to the team. Although they were referring specifically to threat assessment teams, Deisinger et. al. (2008) also discussed the need for additional resources for case management, particularly helpful in dealing with a "care-type" team. The "care-type" team that referred to was similar to what Sokolow and Lewis (2009) describe as the 2nd generation BIT. They consider it to be a best practice for teams to be primarily focused on supporting students and providing them with necessary resources. Dave clearly spoke about one student who was receiving the needed resources from the Counseling Center:

> I think she has matured in some ways and maybe gotten the support, and the environment, where she needs to get it, which is the Counseling Center. So she's not seeking for [attention] in highly visibly, disturbing ways.

Sokolow and Lewis (2009) also said "more often, the team will be engaged in the early intervention and support that prevents a behavioral concern from rising to the level of a threat or crisis" (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009, p. 5). Graney (2011) also recommended that university leaders consider expanding the follow-up done on reports and overall case management resources. The team studied in this research not only had a specific case management meeting to follow up on student concerns, as evidenced by the policy and procedure manual, but two of the team members also spoke about recently receiving extra support in order to create a part-time case manager position. While this did not necessarily give them all the resources they may need, it was certainly a step in the right direction. Again, Dave helped explain why this was so important:

> We now have a place to put them. So if a student needs to be checked on regularly, and we don't want them to drop off the radar, then we know that she's going to follow up with them and that they have a home. I always talk about where is the student's home moving forward. And so that's comforting to know that she's doing that because I don't have time to do it. Dean Johnson doesn't have time to do it. And to have somebody designated that is getting paid, that this is part of their job, and that's what they do, and we're acknowledging the value of that is so important.

Ultimately, the student outcomes vary, as some students were not observed after the report was submitted – "I never saw her again" (Elise), while others were suspended – "sometimes we need to remove the threat" (Dave). Other students transferred or were able to successfully move on and graduate. There were also a couple reports of students that learned from their experiences and matured over time – "she has matured in some ways," (Dave) and "he seems to have gotten himself straightened up" (Carol). Another

group of students are now receiving on-going support and guidance through their case management process, in an attempt to help keep them and the campus safe.

Research Question Four

Faculty and staff on campus perceived the role of the BAT to be two-fold, specifically as it relates to campus safety. First, faculty and staff understood that the BAT serves a major role as the record-keepers for the campus. As Carol indicated, the BAT is a "central place where concerns can be brought." This record-keeping role is in line with the reports (Deisinger, et. al., 2008; Graney, 2011; Higher Education Mental Health Alliance, 2012; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009; and Sokolow & Lewis, 2009) that talked about the important aspects of the team and the necessities for effective BAT functioning. Randazzo and Plummer (2009) explain that the role of the team as a record-keeper allows it to maintain and preserve the evidence a team receives. It helps them cross-reference files and keep them for later use in the event a name comes up again at some point in the future. Sokolow and Lewis (2009) stated that "comprehensive databases allow the team to have a longitudinal view of a student's behavior patterns and trends" (p. 9). Dave even referred to this team as an "information clearinghouse" closely matching these best practice recommendations.

The second function was to provide interventions that helped reduce risk and prevent violence from occurring. After explaining the escalation of attack-related behaviors, Randazzo and Plummer (2009) stated "by proactively identifying the behaviors that precede the escalation of targeted violence, the [BAT] can attempt to stop the forward progression down that pathway" (p. 27). The faculty and staff on this campus were able to clearly articulate that intervening to prevent violence is an important role of

the BAT. Patrick said "they're a vehicle for intervening when needed," while Mark added they try to "stop things before they happen." Even though they acknowledged these roles as helping to prevent violence, some of the faculty and staff recognized that no matter what the team did, it would not necessarily stop a violent act from occurring. Dave said this best when he said "I know there's some potential. . .somebody could come and harm us." This is in line with Watson (1995) who said "there is no panacea that will guarantee violence will not strike a school. But that should not deter us from taking precautions to minimize the danger" (p. 59). Speaking specifically about the role of interventions, Cornell (2010) said, "although violence often cannot be predicted in individual cases, a college campus that strives to help troubled individuals and intervene in threatening situations" (p. 14) can help prevent violence. The campus studied in this research was definitely doing what they could to meet these roles and prevent violence. However, as with any campus, some unsafe aspects such as poor lighting and previous crimes and acts of violence, were identified indicating a definite potential for violence. Overall, though, everyone interviewed felt that the campus was a safe place, and the BAT has multiple roles associated with helping to keep the community safe.

Research Question Five

The team members interviewed in this study were also asked to think about the criteria they felt was important in evaluating a BAT. They focused on three areas, all of which were supported by the literature. Two in particular were key aspects of a variety of studies on BATs (Deisinger et al., 2008; Graney, 2011; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009) – the composition of the team, and consistency. As was mentioned early on, most of the BAT literature up to this point has focused on creating teams, which included in-depth

discussions of the campus community members who serve on the team. Many researchers (Deisinger et. al., 2008; DeLaTorre, 2011; Graney; Higher Education Mental Health Alliance, 2012; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009; and Sokolow & Hughes, 2007) have described the functional areas that should be represented on teams. The team website lists the team members for the institution studied and it includes many of these key areas on their own team. Hence, members of the BAT closely matched these studies in describing who they thought were important members. The same studies also reference the need for established protocols and procedures, as well as the use of standardized risk rubrics to help determine both the level of risk presented and the appropriate intervention to be applied. By using these rubrics and following protocols, teams are sure to stay fair and consistent, which the members of this team stated were extremely important to them. Jessica highlighted this fact when she discussed the need for the team to follow precedent. After talking about the importance of providing due process she stated:

> You've got to be consistent across the board, so if you did this with this one student, you're gonna have to do the same thing over here.

Although there are many things that could be considered, the team members from this campus recognized the specific people on the team, their commitment to the team, and their ability to stay fair and consistent as important factors for evaluating their success, and the general effectiveness of a BAT.

Overarching Research Question

Taking all of the data into consideration, the researcher was able to make a determination about the perceptions campus community members have about the effectiveness of this BAT. In many respects this team has taken the recommendations of

the handbooks and guides and followed what is understood as the best practices in the field for both threat assessment and behavioral intervention. Although the team could make some small improvements, community members seemed to feel strongly that the team was a valuable part of the campus community. They believe it serves an important role in being a central place to report concerns, and as a result, are able to enact interventions that help support students and prevent violence. As a whole, this helps create a positive campus culture as it relates to safety. Based on the perceptions of campus community members and the literature on BAT best practices, the BAT studied has done a good job in serving its campus community and in some ways, may even be considered a national leader in regard to the work of the BAT.

Participant Demographics

Chapter four reported on the findings based on the research questions. However, some interesting distinctions could be made in the perceptions of different groups of participants. The participants were partly selected based on their variations in role and gender. Additionally, some participants had long tenures at the institution studied while others were fairly new to the community. In some areas, each of these distinctions played a role in the perceptions shared.

Role. In many cases both the faculty and staff members shared similar experiences and perspectives regarding the BAT. However, as noted previously, a person's role on campus defined their perception of what types of behaviors warranted a report to the BAT. Staff members were more concerned about overall behavior, while faculty members were focused on how it impacted their classroom and the student's grades. The other big distinction between faculty and staff responses was in reference to

campus safety. The faculty, much more so than the staff, talked about the concerns regarding being on campus at night. Five of the faculty members discussed teaching at night, saying they either recognize it as a concern or try to avoid doing it at all. Like Allison said:

> I don't teach night classes anymore, but when I used to teach night classes there was some uncertainty because we are an open campus.

The staff members did not seem to discuss this as a major concern. This difference is likely due to the fact that student affairs professionals, who made up the majority of the staff members interviewed, understand that it is part of their role to be on campus at night with students. Unlike the faculty members who could choose not to teach at night, staff members have responsibilities that require their presence on campus after normal business hours.

When asking participants about their role on campus, the researcher also recognized that four of the faculty members interviewed happened to serve as department chairs. Unlike other faculty members who could only speak on their own experiences, the department chairs were able to relate some of the experiences the faculty members in their department had as well. This was most notable when they spoke about the hesitancy people felt in reporting concerns to the BAT. Although the team has made a number of efforts to educate the community about what is appropriate to report, the department chairs indicated that many faculty members were unsure and came to them for advice before submitting anything and to verify that a report was justified.

Gender. A participant's gender did not have a great influence in their perceptions regarding the BAT. There was, however, an obvious difference between male and female

responses to questions about the campus safety. Women, like the faculty members, were much more likely to mention concerns about the dark areas of campus at night. All but one female interviewed made some reference to nighttime concerns. Only two men talked about nighttime concerns, and one of those was in reference to his wife's concerns about him being on campus at night. The men, though, were the only ones to really indicate any negative comments about the reporting form. The three remarks about the form being "cumbersome" all came from male participants like Brian, who said:

> I just have a concern about the student. So I think it's not intuitive, and I think that [faculty members] sometimes feel like they're maybe going further than they really wanna go like, a SWAT team's gonna be called in.

This comment indicated that the male participants were probably more inclined to try to resolve the issues themselves, rather than submit a report, ask for help, and admit that they could not handle a situation on their own. Therefore, when they did report something, they wanted it to be as quick and easy as possible. Extra questions on the form, especially those that were not intuitive or required would likely lead to this thinking.

Tenure at institution. A person's tenure in higher education and at the institution studied did not have a significant impact on the perceptions regarding the BAT. However, those participants who had been there five years or less were able to express their perceptions of the BAT and the institution by making comparisons to their previous places of employment. Clearly, this gave them a very different perspective from other participants who had been at the institution for at least 10 years. When it came to issues of campus safety, those with longer tenures were more likely to base their perceptions of

safety on the fact that they had been there a while without experiencing violence. Jessica, who had the longest tenure at the institution, summarized this feeling stating:

> I was a student here before I was faculty, so I've actually been here 30 years, and always felt safe on this campus. [The police] all recognize me. They all know me, but I'm also, I'm known around campus because I've been here so long. I've never had to be concerned about my safety.

Similarly, Scott, who had been at the institution for 15 years explained:

> I feel secure because nothing ever bad has ever happened to me. I feel as safe here as I am in most parts of [the city].

While all of the participants expressed feeling safe on campus, those who had been there for years seemed to feel even safer than those who were newer to the community. The researcher also found it interesting that five of the participants had spent their entire careers working for this institution. This seems to indicate that they all feel safe and comfortable in the community, and have a positive view of the campus culture.

Implications

With little research in the field evaluating the effectiveness of BATs, this study provides a number of implications that can aide student affairs practitioners and BAT team members, particularly BAT chairs in successfully evaluating and ultimately improving their BATs. It also provides some implications for those responsible for BATs with regard to the resources and support that should be provided to teams for them to be able to effectively carry out their mission. Since this study was focused on evaluating one team in particular, there are obvious implications for that team that result from the findings.

Implications for the Institution Studied

This research provided a good evaluation of the BAT at the institution studied, based on the perceptions of faculty and staff who have reported students displaying concerning behaviors to the team. First, it verifies that there are positive perceptions of the team on campus. Community members believe they are doing a good job and should continue the work that they are doing. They should continue to follow the trends and best practices with regard to threat and behavioral assessment and implement those practices where necessary. To help with the hesitancy to report, the team can further expand its training opportunities for faculty and staff. This will be especially important for those who are new to the institution and need to learn the culture of the new place. It will also be necessary to train those that have been there for a while to help prevent situations from occurring in which they may feel too comfortable due to their past experiences. The statements from department chairs that their faculty were sometimes unsure of what to report, indicates that the team needs to continue training efforts for faculty as well. In addition, it may help to make some small changes to the reporting form, so that it is clear that the questions regarding threats are optional. This will prevent people from thinking that the concerning behavior they want to report is not appropriate for the team because it is not serious enough. It would also be helpful for this team to add to their procedures some specific protocols for following up on reports after they are received. These steps may be clear to the Dean, but not to others. Clearly explained procedures will help faculty and staff know exactly when and what they may hear back from the team. Most importantly, the team should add a way to communicate with reporters that reports have been received to its process and provide a timeline for when that case may be reviewed, if it is not an immediate threat. Although this team is moving in the right direction by

creating a part-time case manager, it appears as though the team receives enough reports to justify a full-time position. This will allow for greater follow up and better care for the students who need the support. The campus community should continue to see the benefits of the case manager, and provide additional resources to the team. As these changes and improvements are implemented, the perceptions of campus community members regarding the team's effectiveness should continue to increase as well, ultimately improving the institution's culture as it relates to campus safety.

Implications for Institutional Leaders

Those in charge of institutional resources should note the benefits associated with having an effective BAT on their campus. However, to be effective, the BAT needs the support of the institution's top leadership. Their support, both verbally and financially can make all the difference for a campus. Without the support of those individuals the team will not be able to function as well. Through conversations, the researcher noted that the top leadership at the institution studied fully supported the BAT efforts since its inception. Other institutions would need similar support in order to provide the same type of positive results indicated by the members of this community. Institutional leaders should openly talk about the BAT and help encourage faculty and staff to report. They should have the trust in the team to know that the team is making the best decisions to help keep the community safe. Perhaps more important is the financial support necessary to help the team do its job. This would include support for team members to attend national conferences and trainings to stay current with the latest trends in threat assessment and behavioral intervention, to purchase or maintain a sophisticated database for record-keeping, to provide materials to the campus community so that they remember

what and how to report, and on campuses with a larger case load the staff to properly manage those cases.

Additionally, the findings reinforce what many campus safety studies have shown before (Bryden and Fletcher, 2007a; Bryden and Fletcher, 2007b; Cornell, 2010; Fletcher and Bryden, 2009; Santucci & Gable, 1993), in that continual efforts to improve campus safety need to be taken. This includes having a police presence on campus, particularly at night; increasing and improving campus lighting; and making a more secure campus for female members of the campus community.

It is also important to note that institutional leaders should recognize the importance role of the BAT chair and/or the face of the team to the institution. It was very clear that the community members interviewed trusted the BAT chair and respected him and his role on campus. Without this level of confidence in the chair, the community's confidence in the team's ability to handle situations and intervene appropriately may be at risk, causing a greater concern for campus safety. Therefore, leaders need to be aware of staffing changes and how that might impact the team. While a change in any position that sits on the team may have an effect on the team's dynamic and ability to work well together, the chair's role is critical. He or she likely has a unique level of institutional knowledge and history as well as the trust and confidence of other campus community members. Without these characteristics, a chair, and ultimately a BAT, will be less effective, further justifying the need for leaders to support the team and ensure that multiple members of the team are trained and well-educated on the issues and best practices for BATs. Institutional leaders do not want to create a situation where one

team member, who has all the knowledge and training, could potentially leave the institution, taking all of that with them.

Implications for Student Affairs/BAT Members

There are two main implications for those who work in student affairs, or serve on BATs, particularly for the chairperson of the BAT. While many teams include members that are not part of student affairs, the majority of team members, particularly chairpersons, are from student affairs, making the implications for these groups very similar. First, research to this point has told BAT members what concerning behaviors their community members should report. This research provides information about what faculty and staff actually report versus what they do not. Although the findings closely matched what the literature recommends, it provides BAT members a deeper understanding of what may actually occur on our campuses. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the research provides student affairs practitioners with a simple method for evaluating their own team. By talking with campus community members who have reported concerns to the team, those interested in evaluating their BAT now have a method by which they can gather feedback. The procedures and protocols used in this research can easily be adapted to any other institution with a BAT. From there, someone could garner additional information about the team and how the campus community perceives the job it is doing.

Recommendations for Future Research

Before addressing the researcher's recommendations for future research, he acknowledges that the National Behavior Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) is already taking the lead on efforts to research BATs. In the future, NaBITA will likely

continue to do its survey regarding basic BAT functioning such as team names, team members, and how often a team meets. This research is important for a general understanding of teams and should continue to be done. However, for those teams that are already in existence, methods for adequately evaluating the team are becoming necessary. In response, NaBITA has been working on the Core-Q10 Checklist. The general concepts of this instrument were introduced in a session at the 2013 Annual Conference, and should be finalized before the end of 2014. When this instrument is made available to institutions, it should set the foundation for evaluating BATs, which should begin with every team evaluating their own work. This researcher recommends that from there, those interested in studying the effectiveness of BATs further could cross reference results from one institution to another, as well as make comparisons along a number of criteria. Researchers could compare institutions geographically, based on enrollment, type of institution, and more. Any of these would continue to provide information regarding the effectiveness of BATs on college campuses today.

The team members interviewed in this research also indicated that an important criterion for evaluating a BAT is the level of collaboration among team members. A BAT in some respects is no different than any other team. Therefore, research from theories of leadership on team functioning could also be used to help evaluate the inner workings of a team. Any leadership assessment such as the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory or the Leadership Practices Inventory could be used to help determine if the team is performing well as a team. However, this researcher is partial to StrengthsQuest, and would suggest using team member themes of talent to understand how the team functions and if the individual members of the team are working effectively together.

Finally, as mentioned previously, this research provides a foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of a BAT. While a simple replication of this research on any other campus would provide useful data, the procedures used in this study could be expanded to provide an even greater data set. Gaining access to an actual BAT meeting to observe the team in action would be ideal for anyone looking to evaluate a BAT. It would also be extremely telling to be able to follow up with the students who were reported, and hear their perspectives on the team. Understandably, both of these would create additional concerns with regard to student privacy when using an evaluator from outside the institution. However, if those issues were properly accounted for, an evaluator would generate much stronger data for analysis. In an effort to gain more data, a mixed methods approach to data collection may also be useful. If a researcher were to combine the qualitative data gathered in this study with quantitative data regarding the number of cases received by the team, the threat/risk levels assigned to cases, the student grade point averages, the retention and graduation rates, and the types of cases being reported, one could learn a lot about the effectiveness of a BAT.

Reflections

Throughout the research process, the researcher learned many things, some of which will help improve his own BAT. One of the most surprising aspects of findings came from the team member discussions about the need for team members to be committed to the team and its work. While this should seem obvious, when team members are there because of their position on campus, and not because they truly believe in the mission of the BAT it can hurt the team's effectiveness. Speaking with the BAT members and hearing them talk about the level of commitment from their members

made this point even more pertinent. The researcher also learned how important it is for the team to quickly follow up with community members after a report is submitted. The follow up can go a long way in terms of the trust and confidence the community has in the team. Perhaps most importantly the researcher recognized the need to consider all perspectives of a situation. The ability to evaluate a situation from a variety of perspectives (faculty, staff, students, the BAT, the institution) and think through decisions from each of those lenses is a valuable lesson that applies not only in handling BAT cases, but in all aspects of leadership.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a BAT and determine whether or not it was perceived by its campus community as being effective. After reviewing team documents and case notes, as well as speaking with faculty and staff at the institution under investigation, the researcher is confident that he has met this objective. Based on the data gathered in this study, this team is perceived by its campus community as being effective, particularly as it relates to supporting students and the overall safety of the campus. Those interviewed felt good about the work of the BAT and valued its contribution to the campus. This team was very effective in terms of gathering data, analyzing the data, and providing necessary interventions to keep the campus safe. As Dave said:

> I just think we do an amazing job. We're not perfect. And I'm sure that if a consultant came in, there's always going to be recommendations. But I would argue that we're definitely a best practice institution that others should compare to if they're trying to do better.

The researcher's intention in evaluating this BAT was to create a framework for others to be able to evaluate their own BATs. The procedures described and implemented in this research provide a useful model for those interested in assessing a BAT to follow when assessing their own teams. With assessment becoming more and more necessary for any entity within higher education, this type of evaluation process for a BAT can be extremely useful. The researchers hope is that campuses can now better evaluate the work they do and justify the value and importance of having behavior assessment teams on college campuses. Additionally, teams can use these evaluations to help them improve upon the good work they are already doing. Then, as teams improve, they can do an even better job of identifying threats, intervening, supporting students and keeping their campuses safe. Those efforts would not go unnoticed and campus community members who recognize these improvements will perceive their campuses to be even safer, improving the rituals, values, beliefs and stories that make up the campus culture.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Faculty Staff Interview Protocol

Project: A Case Study Evaluation of a Behavior Assessment Team: Faculty and Staff Perspectives

Date:

Time:

Interviewer: Kerry Greenstein

Participant:

Participant Title:

Years in Profession:

Years at Institution:

I will reintroduce myself to the participant and explain that the purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of the BAT process from faculty and staff perspectives. I will then share with participants the informed consent forms and ask them to read and sign the paperwork. Once signed, I will begin the audio recording. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Although the researcher plans to follow the format below, the specific questions may change based upon the responses from each participant.

1) Please tell me about the case, or cases, for which you have submitted reports to the BAT and why you felt it necessary to report them.

2) When were these reports?
3) What was it that caused you to submit a report in this case/these cases?

The reporting process

4) Please describe the method you used to report the case to the BAT
5) What is your overall perception of the reporting process? (easy/complicated, convenient/time consuming, stressful/not stressful, concerning/not concerning)
6) Can you tell me about a time in which you did not submit a report?

The teams response

7) What are your thoughts about how the team responded to you throughout the process?
8) What are your thoughts about how the team responded to the student throughout the process?

Observed Changes in the student(s)

9) Can you tell me about any opportunities you have had to observe the student since submitting the report to the BAT?
10) Please describe what you have observed in the student's behavior following your submitting the report to the BAT.

Contribution to campus safety

11) How safe do you feel on campus?
12) Can you tell me about some circumstances that have affected your perceptions of safety? (Ask for positive and negative)
13) What is your understanding of the role of the BAT in the overall campus safety plan?

Overall Comments

14) Is there anything else you would like to share about the BAT that would be helpful for me to know that I have not covered?

I will then turn off the audio recording and remind the participant of my steps to protect his or her confidentiality. Finally, I will thank them for their participation in this research project.

Appendix B

Team Member Interview Protocol

Project: A Case Study Evaluation of a Behavior Assessment Team: Faculty and Staff Perspectives

Date:

Time:

Interviewer: Kerry Greenstein

Participant:

Participant Title:

Years in Profession:

Years at Institution:

I will reintroduce myself to the participant and explain that the purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of the BAT process from faculty and staff perspectives. I will then share with participants the informed consent forms and ask them to read and sign the paperwork. Once signed, I will begin the audio recording. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Although the researcher plans to follow the format below, the specific questions may change based upon the responses from each participant.

1) Please tell me about the case, or cases, for which you have submitted reports to the BAT and why you felt it necessary to report them.
2) When were these reports?
3) What was it that caused you to submit a report in this case/these cases?

The reporting process

4) Please describe the method you used to report the case to the BAT
5) What is your overall perception of the reporting process? (easy/complicated, convenient/time consuming, stressful/not stressful, concerning/not concerning)
6) Can you tell me about a time in which you did not submit a report?

The teams response

7) What are your thoughts about how the team responded to you throughout the process?
8) What are your thoughts about how the team responded to the student throughout the process?

Observed Changes in the student(s)

9) Can you tell me about any opportunities you have had to observe the student since submitting the report to the BAT?
10) Please describe what you have observed in the student's behavior following your submitting the report to the BAT.

Contribution to campus safety

11) How safe do you feel on campus?
12) Can you tell me about some circumstances that have affected your perceptions of safety? (Ask for positive and negative)
13) What is your understanding of the role of the BAT in the overall campus safety plan?

For BAT Members

14) What do you see as your role on the BAT?
15) Can you tell me about the criteria that are important to you in evaluating the BAT?
16) How do you feel your team does in meeting those criteria?

Overall Comments

17) Is there anything else you would like to share about the BAT that would be helpful for me to know that I have not covered?

I will then turn off the audio recording and remind the participant of my steps to protect his or her confidentiality. Finally, I will thank them for their participation in this research project.

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

I am contacting you today requesting your participation in a research project. Mr. Kerry Greenstein, Associate Dean of Students with Georgia Southern University is a doctoral student with Georgia Southern University and entering the data collection phase of his dissertation. I have known Mr. Greenstein for several years and can attest to his professionalism and sincerity with the approach to his work.

Mr. Greenstein has been approved by [institution's] Institutional Review Board to conduct his research on our campus which is titled, *A Case Study Evaluation of a Behavior Assessment Team*. Much of his research will involve interviews of faculty and staff who have submitted a report to our [Behavior Assessment Team]. He will be asking questions regarding the reporting process, BAT's follow up on your case, and your overall perceptions of campus safety.

Although Mr. Greenstein will have a hard copy of the informed consent for you to sign when conducting the interviews, I have attached a copy for you to review in advance. If you are interested in participating in this research, and providing valuable feedback that will help our BAT process, please contact Kerry Greenstein, Associate Dean of Students at Georgia Southern University at kgreenstein@georgiasouthern.edu.

Please consider assisting Mr. Greenstein with his research; he is a doctoral candidate worthy of your time.

Thank you in advance,

Dean Johnson

Appendix D

Informed Consent

A Case Study Evaluation of a Behavior Assessment Team

1. Researcher: Kerry Greenstein, Associate Dean of Students at Georgia Southern University, and Student in Georgia Southern University's Educational Leadership Doctoral program.
   This research is being conducted to complete the requirements for the Education Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership.

2. The purpose of this research is to assess the effectiveness of a Behavior Assessment Team using the perceptions of campus community members that have referred students to the team for intervention and support.

3. Participation in this research project will include the completion of a semi-structured interview or participation in a small focus group.

4. Participating in this research may cause some psychological discomfort to subjects, as they will be asked to recall situations that may have been violent, threatening, and/or dangerous. If completing this interview causes any discomfort, the Counseling Center and Human Resources are both available for support at (xxx) xxx-xxxx and (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Additionally, both offices would be able to provide contact information and referrals for off campus resources. If you prefer to speak with someone not associated with [institution], you may contact the [County] Department of Public Health at (xxx) xxx-xxxx, or the [private local mental health facility] at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

   "I understand that medical care is available in the event of injury resulting from research but that neither financial compensation nor free medical treatment is provided. I also understand that I am not waiving any rights that I may have against the University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or investigators."

5. The results of this research will assist the Dean of Students Office in improving the behavior assessment team and its response to student crisis situations from the perspective of the initial reporter.

   The results may also provide useful information to college administrators in general, and may lead to more effective teams at campuses throughout the country.

6. Each interview will last approximately one hour. The focus group will last approximately one and a half hours.

7. No personal or identifiable information will be used in this study. The information collected will be stored electronically on an encrypted removable drive that will be stored in a locked drawer in the researcher's office for three years following the study. All paper documentation (field notes, redacted incident reports, etc.) will be shredded once transferred to an electronic format. If a third party is to be used for transcribing interview recordings, the third party will sign a confidentiality agreement prior to receiving any records from the interviewer.

8. Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843.

9. Participants must be 18 years or older to participate in the study.

10. No compensation will be provided for participating in this research.

11. Subjects do not have to participate in this research. They may end their participation at any time by telling the researcher. They also do not have to answer any questions they do not want to answer.

12. There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in this study. Participants may decide at any time they don't want to participate further and may withdraw without penalty or retribution

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been reviewed and approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board under tracking number H14362.

Title of Project: A Case Study Evaluation of a Behavior Assessment Team
Principal Investigator: Kerry Greenstein, PO Box 8070, (912) 478-3326, kgreenstein@georgiasouthern.edu
Faculty Advisor: Daniel Calhoun, PO Box 8131, (912) 478-1428, dwcalhoun@georgiasouthern.edu

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____ _____

Investigator Signature Date

Appendix E

Incident Reporting Form

Incident Reporting Form

Background Information

Your full name:

Your position/title:

Your phone number:

Your email address: Email me a copy of this report

Your physical address:

* Nature of this report:

Urgency of this report:

* Date of incident: *must be formatted **YYYY-MM-DD***

Time of incident:

:

* Location of incident:

Please select a location ...

Specific location:

Reason(s) for Report

Please indicate which categories pertain to the incident.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

- ☐ Academic Integrity

GENERAL BEHAVIOR

- ☐ Aggressive Behavior
- ☐ Concern with Statements Made
- ☐ Concern with Written Material
- ☐ Criminal Trespass
- ☐ CSU Creed Violation
- ☐ Disorderly Assembly
- ☐ Disorderly Conduct
- ☐ Drastic Change in Behavior
- ☐ Suspicious Behavior
- ☐ Uneasy feeling

HEALTH & SAFETY

- ☐ Fire Safety
- ☐ General Wellness Concern
- ☐ Harassment
- ☐ Medical Withdrawal
- ☐ Sexual Misconduct

NON-ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

- ☐ Alcoholic Beverages
- ☐ Assault/ Fighting
- ☐ Computer Violations
- ☐ Drugs/Paraphenalia
- ☐ Failure to complete judicial sanctions
- ☐ Falsification of University Records or Giving False Statements

- ☐ Hazing
- ☐ Property (Damage or Theft) a.
- ☐ Property (Damage or Theft) b.
- ☐ Traffic Violation
- ☐ Use of University Facilities
- ☐ Weapons and Firearms Policy

RESIDENCE LIFE

- ☐ Furniture
- ☐ Noise
- ☐ Parking
- ☐ Parties
- ☐ Pets
- ☐ Quiet Hours
- ☐ Residence Life Violation
- ☐ Visitation

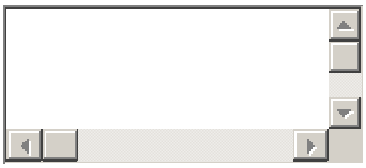
Involved Parties

Please list the individuals involved (excluding yourself), including as many of the listed fields as you can provide. For non-students, please list an SSN or Drivers License number in the block labeled SID if available.

Description / Narrative

Please provide a detailed description of the incident/concern using **specific** concise, objective language.

Check Spelling & Preview



Additional Questions

How did you become aware of the incident?	☐ Personal Observation ☐ Police Report ☐ A Student Told Me ☐ I Am a Resident Assistant ☐ A Faculty Member Told Me ☐ A Staff Member Told Me
Were you personally threatened?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Did you feel threatened at the time?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you currently feel threatened?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Did you see others threatened?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you currently feel uncomfortable due to the incident?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you think others are uncomfortable due to the incident?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know
How was the incident terminated?	☐ Incident diffused itself ☐ Police were notified and took control ☐ Individual left on their own ☐ Faculty/Staff diffused situation

Supporting Documentation

Photos, video, email, and other supporting documents may be attached below.
Maximum 12 megabytes per file
Attachments require time to upload, so please be patient after you click to submit this report.

Appendix F

Incident Reporting Form

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

IRB PROTOCOL # H14362

Confidentiality/Nondisclosure Agreement
Data Analysis (vendor), Transcription and/or Translation Services

I, Vanessa Almodovar, analyst, transcriptionist and/or translator, individually and on behalf of GMR Transcription [name of business or entity if applicable] , do hereby agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes, videotapes, data files and oral or written documentation received from Kerry Greenstein [researcher's name] related to his/her research study titled A Case Study Evaluation of a BAT (IRB tracking #: H14362). Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped or live oral interviews, or in any associated data files or documents;
2. To not disclose any information received for profit, gain, or otherwise;
3. To not make copies of any audiotapes, videotapes, data sets or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, or other materials unless specifically requested to do so by Kerry Greenstein [researcher's name];
4. To not make copies of any audiotapes, videotapes, or data/computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, or other materials unless specifically requested to do so by Kerry Greenstein [researcher's name];
5. To store all study-related audiotapes, videotapes and other materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
6. To return all audiotapes, videotapes, data and study-related documents to Kerry Greenstein [researcher's name] in a complete and timely manner.
7. To fully delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

Please provide the following contact information for the researcher and the data analyst, transcriber and/or translator:

For Transcriber/Translator/Vendor:	For Researcher:
Address: 2552 Walnut Ave. Suite 110	Address: PO Box 8070
Tustin, CA. 92780	Statesboro, GA 30458
Telephone: 1800 731-7412	Telephone: 302-388-8348

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes, videotapes, data files and/or paper files to which I will have access. I am further aware and I expressly agree that this Agreement is governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Georgia and jurisdiction and venue for any actions with respect to this Agreement shall only be had in a tribunal of competent jurisdiction in Bulloch County, State of Georgia, United States of America. I hereby agree to indemnify, release and hold harmless Georgia Southern University, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, the Georgia Southern University Research and Service Foundation, Inc., and all of their employees, officers, members, agents, volunteers, and contractors from any and all claims, suits or other legal actions arising out of this Agreement.

Data Analyst, Transcriber/Translator's name: Vanessa Almodovar