A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY EXPLORING MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS' TRAINING AND RESOURCES AT TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

By

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A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY EXPLORING

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ASSESSMENT TEAMS' TRAINING AND RESOURCES

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Abstract: Incorporating a qualitative approach, the purpose of this multiple case study dissertation was: 1) to explore the perceptions of threat assessment teams on campus safety; 2) to study the challenges and barriers two-year colleges experience in relation to the threat assessment team process; and 3) to describe how the teams' perceptions of risk may influence decisions and team process as analyzed by the Group – Grid model of Cultural Theory. The participants of this study included professional staff and administrators from two different two-year colleges who have developed a threat assessment team on campus, referred to in the study as Brownsville State College and Redwood State College. Data collection methods included interviews and document and artifact analysis.

The findings suggest that team members perceive the threat assessment team as not only a safety initiative, but also an opportunity to "help, not hinder" students in need of resources. Additionally, findings imply two-year colleges experience different challenges and barriers than their four-year counterparts because of a lack of resources for manpower, counseling resources, and group training. Through this study, the Cultural Theory's Group-Grid lens was used to analyze the threat assessment teams at both institutions as Egalitarian Cultures (high group, low grid). This culture operates under a shared mission or purpose, self-intrinsic motives, individual job roles and ownership in team decisions. Recommendations for future research and implications for practice of threat assessment teams on two-year campuses are presented.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Campus safety continues to be a critical issue facing higher education administrators as violent events heighten fears of campus communities, parents, and outside stakeholders. Safety and security is a complex matter that includes a wide array of issues from violent events to less threatening concerns. These issues can range from campus shootings, sexual assaults, riots, stalking, suicide, burglary, disruptions in the classroom, drug/alcohol violations, hazing activities or students experiencing mental health issues just to name a few. Finding methods to address these diverse safety issues remains a challenge for college officials and stakeholders of the university. The university setting is unique as it is a large, spacious, open society both physically and symbolically. Many campuses sprawl over several miles spanning numerous multi-floor buildings, open spaces, athletic facilities, parking lots, residence halls, and other structures that make up the institution. In the event of a campus emergency, securing these spaces and notifying the community proves to be challenging. In relation to the commuter campus, it is not enough to notify only campus constituents. Notification of those en route to campus is also critical to warn of impending danger.

Violent events on campus resulting in large loss of life, such as those that occurred at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) and Northern Illinois University, highlight the need for more preventative measures to be employed by higher education to ensure the safety of campus constituents. One preventative measure that is being

implemented on college campuses nationwide as a best practice is the formation of threat assessment teams (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008; Sokolow, Lewis, Manzo, Schuster, Byrnes, & Van Brunt, 2011, & Van Brunt, 2012). Threat assessment team (TAT) is defined as "a multidisciplinary team that is responsible for the careful and contextual identification and evaluation of behaviors that raise concern and that may precede violent activity on campus" (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008, p. 5). These teams consist of a variety of names such as: behavior intervention team, behavior assessment team, students of concern, college concern team, threat assessment behavior intervention team, campus assessment team, or campus assessment response team. The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Secret Service jointly recommend that colleges and universities implement threat assessment teams to serve as preventative measures in campus security (O'Toole, 2000; U.S. Secret Service, 2000). Threat assessment teams provide a benefit of a centralized reporting mechanism for the campus (Sokolow et al., 2011). This central information nerve system allows for the compilation of data coming from multiple resources such as faculty, counseling, campus police, student conduct, residential life, academic advising or other campus departments and aids the team to establish a baseline of behavior for the student. By establishing this baseline and communicating to one central team (TAT), the team monitors changes in behavior and accesses resources to aid the student in a more timely fashion (Sokolow et al., 2011).

Although the literature revolving on threat assessment teams is growing, most of the literature centers on the process and best practices of behavior intervention or threat assessment teams on the college campus. A current gap in the literature relates to understanding threat assessment at two-year institutions. Specifically, a gap exists concerning

the best practices that are critical and the challenges or barriers that a two-year college experiences with threat assessment. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of how the threat assessment team contributes to campus safety and the perceived challenges and barriers two-year colleges may experience serving on serving on such teams.

Background of Study

Multiple school shootings in the 1990s led to a focus in the K-12 arena of how to provide safer schools by incorporating a variety of techniques aimed at prevention, deterrence, delay, respond and recover (Fitzgerald, 2013). The Secret Service, in conjunction with the US Department of Education, developed the Safe School Initiative in 2000, originally tasked to determine a school shooter profile. This study identified strategies for schools to implement to increase safety and violence awareness. Although this initiative did not find consistent characteristics for a shooter profile, the report did provide multiple recommendations for school administrators to increase safety and prevention of violence including the formation of threat assessment teams (O'Toole, 2000). The creation of these teams aided institutions to identify threats, assess creditability, and manage these scenarios where applicable (O'Toole, 2000).

Colleges and universities were not immune to violent events that tragically occur over time. Although multiple violent events transpired on campuses throughout history, the events of Virginia Tech in 2007 and shortly afterwards at Northern Illinois University in 2008, sounded the alarm for changes in communication efforts, prevention measures, and collaboration within the campus community to address safety and security on campus. The Virginia Tech incident resulted in large loss of life, with 32 deaths reported. Specifically, the

Virginia Tech incident gave appearances of chaotic school security response, and a lack of coordinated case management of students of concern (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

Each time these violent events transpired, cries for mental health services on campus, oversight to monitor at risk students, and concerns for campus safety became more prevalent (Fischman & Ferrell, 2008; Hermes, 2008; Mangan, 2007). Relying solely on campus counseling centers to direct case management failed to provide a realistic solution for campuses (Gallagher, 2009). Furthermore, some college students declined to self-identify to campus counseling centers about their mental health diagnosis or that they needed help (Vogel, Gentile, & Kaplan, 2008; Vogel, Wade, & Hackler, 2008).

Threat assessment is a deductive process focused on identifying, researching, evaluating, and managing threatening or troubling behaviors in persons of concern (Sokolow et al., 2011; O'Toole, 2000; U.S. Secret Service, 2000; Van Brunt, 2012). This provides a preventative strategy to possibly mitigate violent activity on campus. Threat assessment operates under the assumption that it will break down silos on campus and increase communication about students or persons of concern. Additionally, the inclusion of professionals from various areas across campus provides a more complete picture to managing a student of concern. By incorporating a central reporting structure, an overall picture of the student may emerge when inquiring about a specific issue.

Virginia Tech found that many on campus had experienced disturbing events concerning Seung Hui Cho. Beginning when he first arrived on campus years earlier, Cho's behavior caused alarm for numerous individuals. His mental state deteriorated during his time at Virginia Tech. Cho demonstrated multiple warning signs of his downward spiral,

however many were missed by campus professionals. According to Deisinger et al. (2008), "the information was scattered throughout different departments and personnel on campus. No one person or entity at the Virginia Tech campus knew all the available pieces of information (p. 16).

The purpose of threat assessment teams is to aid the campus community in identifying, investigating, evaluating and managing behaviors of concern (Deisinger et al., 2008; Randazzo & Cameron, 2011; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). By incorporating the use of these teams, a person capable of conducting a violent scenario may be confronted at a lower level on the continuum of violence, possibly saving lives and providing the needed help to the student of concern.

Second Generation Threat Assessment Teams

Sokolow and Lewis (2009) found common threads in threat assessment teams established Pre-Virginia Tech. They found these teams operated as informal groups within a narrow scope. Specifically, these teams only focused on the immediate problem failing to consider or communicate with other campus entities to obtain a complete picture of the student. The authors suggested these first generation teams solved the current issue and then moved attention to the next problem or crisis. These early teams failed to utilize tracking mechanisms of incidents and students. This allowed little opportunity for finding trends in behavior either individually or within the collective student body. Threat assessment teams adapted to better address the intricacies of student violence and mental health by changing the identifying methods of the reporting structure. Consequently, second generation threat

assessment team evolved to include identifiable characteristics. Sokolow and Lewis (2009) suggested these characteristics include the following:

- Use of formalized protocols of explicit engagement techniques and strategies
- Recognize role is to address threat and primarily to support and provide resources to students
- Utilize mandated psychological assessment
- Have the authority to invoke involuntary medical/psychological withdrawal policies
- Undergirded by sophisticated threat assessment capacity, beyond law enforcement and psychological assessment tools
- Use of rubrics to classify threats
- Foster a comprehensive reporting culture within the institution
- Train and educate the community on what to report and how
- Technologically advanced and supported by comprehensive databases that allow the team to have a longitudinal view of a student's behavior patterns and trends
- Focus not only student-based risks, but on faculty and staff as well
- Intentionally integrate with campus risk management programs and risk mitigation strategies
- Have a mechanism for "minding the gap" (Sokolow and Lewis, 2009, p. 4)

These characteristics represented a significant difference between first and second generation threat assessment teams. As threat assessment teams are incorporated on campuses across the United States, the abovementioned criteria continued to be included in best practice processes.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Theory of Risk, known as Cultural Theory (CT), serves as the theoretical framework for analyzing data. Douglas and Wildavasky's (1982) CT concentrates on risk perception and interpretation to address how societal groups assess risk assignment to various cultural issues. CT operates with the assumption that the "culture is a system that holds one another mutually accountable" (Douglas, 1992, p. 31). Douglas and Wildavsky suggest that people, groups, or systems choose what to fear in relation to their cultural biases (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). Furthermore, CT functions with the understanding that shared values and beliefs bind individuals together within culture and groups (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Wildavsky, 1987). CT attempts to answer two foundational questions: Who am I and what shall I do? These questions aid individuals in determining to which groups they belong. These cultural biases are identified in Cultural Theory as hierarchal, egalitarian, individualist, or fatalist. These four viewpoints will be discussed further below.

Additionally, CT argues that no one person can pinpoint risk accurately. Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) maintain that risk is subjective due to the following factors: 1) disagreements about the problem, 2) inconsistencies in identifying problems and 3) contradictions between knowledge of the problem and actual action plans to address and mitigate the risk. All four cultural biases emerge when attempting to solve problems. When consideration of all four viewpoints occurs, a solution to the problem will materialize. Specifically, Douglas' Group-Grid Model provides a visual of how organizations push individuals to conform to the culture of the institution either by choice or circumstance (Douglas, 2006).

Group-Grid Model

Within the Group-Grid Model, the group segment on the horizontal access provides the external boundary for members of the community. This axis signifies the loyalty and commitment required to be a part of the group. The grid on the vertical axis represents the regulation the group accepts within the organization. This measurement of structure ranges from no control to a strong, hierarchal organization (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). The Group-Grid Model divides into four quadrants representing cultural bias: hierarchical, egalitarian, individualists, and fatalists. People or organizations encompass all four biases primarily operating in one area (See Figure 1). However, all quadrants compete with the other naturally.

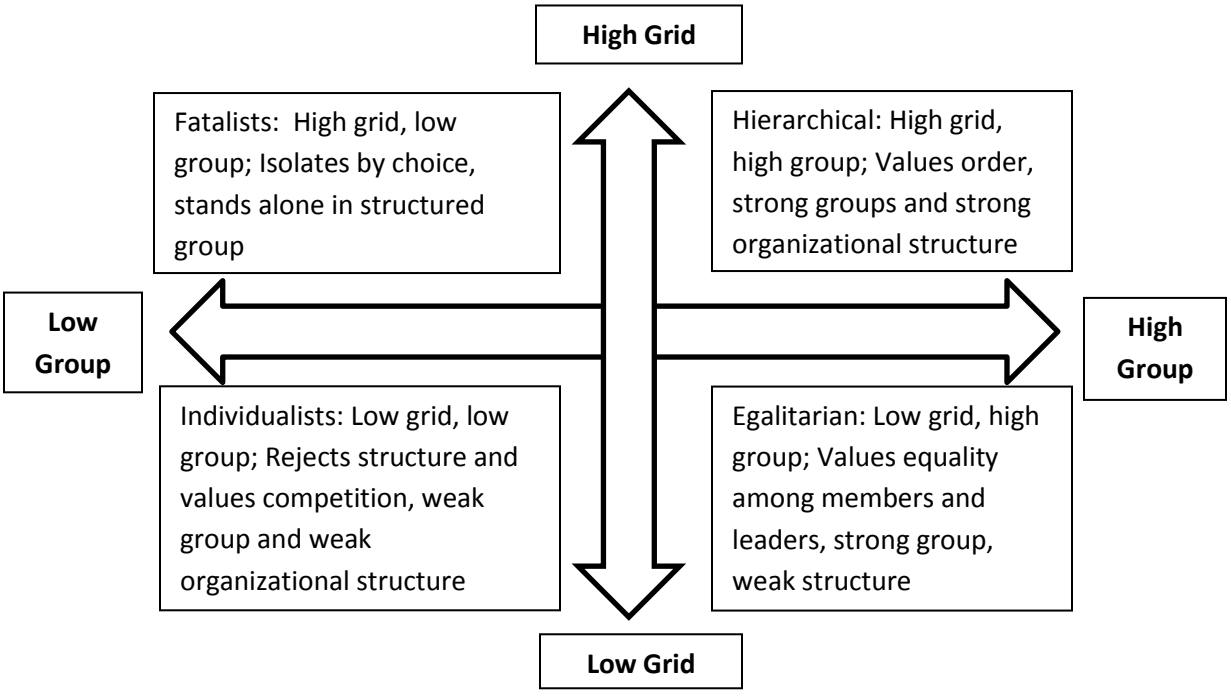


Figure 1. Mary Douglas Group-Grid Cultural Map (1982)

The four cultural biases, or views about how the world should operate, support and uphold individual mindset for how problems should be solved and what relationships should be valued. The four viewpoints remain in constant struggle for dominance (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Ney & Verweijr, 2014). Hierarchical cultures value tradition, order, and structure. This worldview esteems expert opinions in decision-making and problem-solving scenarios. Hierarchists value strong groups with complex structures over individual needs. They face social problems by focusing on policy, procedures, expert opinions, and establishing authority (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Ney & Verweijr, 2014). Hierarchical cultural bias functions in the high group, high grid quadrant of the group-grid model.

Consequently, individualist culture devalues tradition and holds competition in high regard. Individualist cultures have weak structures and weak groups. This viewpoint believes a leadership position is earned by ability or skill. Individualists prefer to focus on social problems by employing market based solutions that highlight competition instead of concentrating on experts and governing rules as the hierarchists. Individualists hold personal liberty in the highest regard (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Ney & Verweijr, 2014). Individualist cultures operate in the low group, low grid quadrant in the group-grid model.

Douglas identifies the third cultural bias identified as the egalitarian culture. Egalitarians hold high group values but are weak in structure. The equality of members holds the utmost importance for this cultural bias. Egalitarians attain this primary goal by imposing a strong sense of rules for the group. They revere equality of all in society higher than order or personal liberty. Equality of the group allows for order but not for status or function (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Ney & Verweijr, 2014; Wildavsky & Drake, 1990).

Egalitarian cultural bias operates in the high group, low grid quadrant of the group-grid model.

Douglas notes the last cultural bias noted as the fatalist viewpoint. This culture does not choose to assimilate to any group or structure. They rarely include themselves in groups and lack any action to collaborate with other groups. Fatalists perceive themselves as having little power; therefore they accept the answer provided by others. They choose isolation without anticipation or expectation to either lead or follow (Douglas, 2006). Fatalists provide no solutions to group problems due to the lack of contribution or collaborative efforts with other members as they believe fate is in control (Ney & Verweijr, 2014). The fatalist cultural bias performs in the low group, high grid quadrant of the group-grid model.

Various policy studies utilized Cultural Theory (CT) within studies of risk perception from environmental pollution to threats connected to nuclear factories (Douglas, 1982). Recently, studies utilized Cultural Theory to address risk perception in collaboration of advocacy groups, affordable housing in Los Angeles, Supreme Court gender cases, childhood vaccination, and the perceptions of experts and political framing (Lachapelle, Montpetit, & Gauvin, 2014; Ney & Werweijr, 2014; Robinson, 2014; Song, Silva, & Jenkins-Smith, 2014; Weare, Lichterman, & Esparaza, 2014). Weare, Lichterman, and Esparaza (2014) studied the role of cultural bias in a case study of collaborative network agencies brought together in Los Angeles to address the affordable housing problem. This study observed a 145 organizational member network over a period of two years. Over time, the coalition began to fracture because of difference about how to developing and implementing plans to solve the problem. Weare, Lichterman, and Esparaza (2014) found that cultural bias embedded in group structures caused tension to arise due to these

competing worldviews. Furthermore, this study found that these biases contributed to member recruitment, retention as well as hindered alliances even when the coalition has the same end goal (Weare, Lichterman, & Esparaza, 2014). The study supported CT's posit that the four worldviews or cultural biases compete with each other for dominance. Wildavsky further explained, "The cultural hypothesis is that individuals exert control over each other by institutionalizing the moral judgments justifying their impersonal relationships so they can be acted upon and accounted for" (Wildavsky, 1987, p.8). The Weare study supported CT's theory that the four worldviews or cultural biases compete with each other for dominance (Weare, Lichterman, & Esparaza, 2014).

Likewise, Song, Silva and Jenkins-Smith (2014) studied childhood immunization and vaccination policies in the United States to inquire if CT worldviews held true to this subject. There were 1,213 subjects who agreed to participate in this study. The survey included over 100 questions focusing on vaccination practices, benefits of vaccination, and preferences of government regulations. This study found that preferences concerning vaccination are "significantly impacted" by cultural bias (Song, Silva, & Jenkins-Smith, 2014, p. 542). Moreover, the study concluded that the vaccine debate is less about disease eradication and more about the dissension of worldviews, values, and beliefs colliding. As individuals received new knowledge, they decoded the data through the lens tied to their cultural bias for making decisions and analysis (Song, Silva, & Jenkins-Smith, 2014).

Lachapelle, Montpetit, and Gauvin (2014) added to the discussion with their study of public perceptions of expert creditability. Specifically, the researchers observed how the function of cultural bias and message framing should be informed decision-making. The authors found that expert credentials are not the sole source of trust and creditability in

perception of risk. Instead, an individual's worldview informed the decisions in conjunction with the expert creditability (Lachapelle, Montpetit, & Gauvin, 2014).

Wildavsky suggested that risk perception and risk aversion coincide with the level of trust each organization or person has in an institution (Wildavsky, 1987). Likewise, CT stated that perception of risk is tied to political choice, but individuals or groups shunned dangers that appear to be forced upon them (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). Several studies of elitist populations on topics such as safety of nuclear power plants, public policy, and political alliances found that highly educated individuals are divided on perception of risk, regardless of communicated danger by experts (Bloomgarden, 1983; Kalt & Zupan, 1984; Rothman & Lichter, 1985; Sussman, 1986). These perceptions can be explained by the cultural viewpoints previously discussed in CT. Individuals who value structure and order appeared to minimize risk associated with technological advances. However, when the issue of concern encompassed autonomy or equality in the workplace, individualist and egalitarians were more sensitive, rating these items higher in risk perception (Bloomington, 1983; Wildavsky, 1987; Wildavsky & Drake, 1990).

By looking at the data through this lens, it highlighted how institutional leadership and team members assigned risk to issues of concern. This theory may also be beneficial to understanding how institutional culture addressed issues of risk management, resource management, leadership, communication and conflict resolution. Additionally, this framework enabled me to explore characteristics of the aforementioned biases assigned to the group-grid model to categorize the quadrant that best represent team organizational bias.

Problem Statement

Higher education continues to investigate preventative strategies to implement on campus with hopes of decreasing incidents of violence. Administrators, regents, trustees, and legislators utilize the recommendations by the U.S. Secret Service and the FBI to incorporate threat assessment teams into campus emergency plans (Vossekuil et al., 2002; O'Toole, 2000). As threat assessment is embraced by institutions, various organizations promote best practices for creation of these teams. Established best practices for campus threat assessment teams identifies that the inclusion of specific campus professionals, written policy, and team training are critical for an effective and multi-disciplinary approach in identifying, investigating, evaluating, and managing a person of concern on college campuses (Cornell, 2010; Deisinger et al., 2008; Randazzo & Cameron, 2011; Sokolow et al., 2011; Van Brunt, 2012). Effective teams include representatives from student conduct, campus security, mental health counseling, and the dean of students or student affairs. Other campus professionals are also included, although the previously mentioned members represent core membership of threat assessment teams (Sokolow et al., 2011; Van Brunt, 2012). Likewise, written policy and training team members allows for members to have the appropriate resources to increase the knowledge base to conduct campus threat assessment effectively. Consequently, two-year colleges may not include critical membership components, written policies and processes, or member training in threat assessment team development as recommended by best practices for successful team operation (Cornell, 2010; Randazzo & Cameron, 2011; Sokolow et al., 2011; Van Brunt, 2012). Limited resources at two-year colleges hinder institutions in sufficiently staffing and training threat assessment team members appropriately.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of threat assessment teams' impact on the current state of campus safety on two-year college campuses?
2. How do threat assessment team members at two-year colleges describe perceived challenges or barriers for the threat assessment process?
3. How does the threat assessment team member's perception of risk shape the threat assessment process at the institution?

Significance

Campus safety remains a concern for higher education operations. As violent events continue to occur on college campuses across the nation, higher education continues to look for ways to implement prevention methods against these types of incidents. Although information is available concerning TAT best practices and processes, the literature provides little qualitative or empirical data on the topic. Additionally, most research addresses higher education at the four-year level and does not focus on the two-year school perspective. This research may be important because the two-year campus brings different challenges from the four-year selective admission counterparts. Most two-year institutions engage in an open admission process providing an opportunity for a wider berth of the general population to attend college. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 12.4 million students seeking both credit and non-credit programs attend two-year institutions (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015). This figure represents 46 percent of all college students in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015). Most students enter the college setting with various challenges regardless of

college choice. However, students attending two-year institutions differ in socioeconomic status, race, age, family background, and work status.

In 2013-2014, the American Association of Community Colleges reported that 33 percent of all students at two-year colleges received Pell grants and 21 percent received Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015). The two-year college student, with average age of 28, entered college with added life stressors and smaller or non-existent support systems. Issues such as family pressure, financial struggles, balancing time between work and school requirements all served as sources of emotional unrest and some two-year students do not know where to turn to find resources (Eisenberg et al., 2016). These life stressors, combined with the added pressure of college classes, increase the risks for students to be unsuccessful in their quest of becoming college graduates. The resources available at two-year colleges fail to meet the diverse needs of the student body.

This study is significant because it will provide more data to the growing literature of threat assessment, specifically data about threat assessment at the two-year college. This study explored the perceptions of threat assessment teams on campus safety, as well as challenges and barriers two-year colleges experience. Likewise, the data were analyzed according to the Cultural Theory lens to further study how a teams' perception of risk may influence decisions and team processes. Because of the underlying importance of the threat assessment strategy to campus safety, this study may be beneficial to understanding the teams' perceptions of how the process works at the two-year campus and if there are any gaps in operating according to best practice.

Overview of Methodology

Different research design strategies helped me to explore, examine, or discover possible answers to inquiries. The study design incorporated my worldview of knowledge into all aspects of the research process. I viewed knowledge from a constructivist worldview, therefore design choices for this study aligned with this viewpoint. Crotty (1998) stated that the constructivist epistemology operates under the assumption that knowledge or reality is constructed by the individual. I considered the participants' understandings of the topic of utmost importance. Therefore, multiple meanings and understandings can be applied to a single event. To best complement this view of knowledge, the qualitative methodology was incorporated to aid me in exploring multiple meanings and understandings of the subjects and their realities (Crotty, 1998). These preferences applied to the methodology, theoretical frameworks, design, research problem, research question, purpose, and methods of the research process.

Qualitative research provided multiple design methodologies to best attain the data needed to conduct the study. Yin (2009) stated the case study is best used when researching a current phenomenon within a present time period. He advised the use of the case study design when asking questions of 'how' or 'why' (Yin, 2009). Likewise, the case study data collection methods utilized a more natural approach to collecting data in the field with the use of interviews, artifact analysis, and observations. This study employed a multiple case study design to address the research problem, questions and collect the appropriate data for analysis.

This study involved two separate two-year college campuses in a Midwestern state. All two-year college campus members of the state's higher education system were notified of the study, however only two institutions were selected. Patton (2020) noted that qualitative research focuses on depth, not breadth of the study. The selected institutions were studied extensively to provide rich, detailed information for analysis. Each participating institution identified the designated administrator assigned to threat assessment and two members for the member interviews. This provided the study a total of six possible participants for interviews.

Methods to collect data reflected the qualitative methodology in this study, specifically the constructivist epistemology. Data collection primarily utilized personal interviews and I served as the primary research tool. Interview guides were used to assure consistency in the type of questions asked to participants. Follow-up interviews were conducted as needed to clarify or continue data collection with participants. Furthermore, the document and artifact analysis were also incorporated into this study. This data stream allowed analysis for congruency in word, both spoken and written, and action by the institution. Documents and artifacts collected included webpage screen shots, written institutional policy, campus safety and security reports, and relevant newspaper clippings. Combining all the data collected from the various data sources served to triangulate the information. This helped to address the trustworthiness and validity of the data for this qualitative study. Likewise, all transcripts were checked for accuracy by submitting transcription to participants for member checks. This further aided to address the validity of the data.

I utilized multiple techniques for data analysis to provide opportunities for categories and themes to emerge from the collected data. I evaluated and coded all the transcribed interviews by common themes across data streams. Initial open coding helped to identify common words, topics, and themes as entered into MaxQDA12. Deeper analysis exercises were applied by incorporating Emerson's Members Meaning techniques (2011). These techniques are discussed further in the methodology chapter of this study. Likewise, all transcripts were examined to determine if critical incidents served as a catalyst in threat assessment team formation on campus. Furthermore, the Culture of Risk theory served as the theoretical framework to inform data analysis as to how these threat assessment groups work over a variety of functions. A complete description of the methodology utilized for this study can be found in Chapter III.

Delimitations and Definitions

This study was conducted during the fall 2015 semester when enrollment is typically higher than the spring or summer semesters. The fall semester also assured that full team membership was available, as some faculty membership may not be present on campus during the summer months. The participants included administrators and threat assessment team members from two-year higher education institutions in a Midwestern state. The threat assessment team members were comprised of a variety of key higher education positions across campus critical to the threat assessment team process. In the instance an institution did not have a threat assessment team or in the process of beginning a threat assessment team, they were ineligible for inclusion in the study.

As this study was qualitative in nature, findings were not to be considered for generalizability to the population. Therefore, a large sample size was not the priority in this study design. Because depth is the goal for qualitative data, collecting rich, descriptive data was favored. Therefore, a smaller sample was selected for this study to focus on gathering multiple layers of data for analysis. Two institutions were selected for inclusion in this case study and multiple interviews conducted at the site to provide the depth needed to satisfy qualitative inquiry. Participants included the delegated administrators and four team members for a possible total of six participants in the study.

Definition of Terms

Threat assessment – behavior-based, deductive process comprised of a) learning of a person posing a threat; b) gathering information about the person from multiple sources; c) evaluating if that person poses a threat of violence towards others; and d) developing and implementing an individualized plan to reduce the threat (Deisinger, et al., 2008).

Profiling – comparing an individual to a profile or composite of previous attackers (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012)

Threat assessment teams (TAT) – a multidisciplinary team that is responsible for the careful and contextual identification and evaluation of behaviors that raise concern and that may precede violent activity of campus (Deisinger et al., 2008) May also be referred to as CARE teams, Behavior Intervention Teams (BIT), Behavior Care Team (BCT), Campus Behavior Assessment Team, (BCAT), Risk Assessment Team (RAT), or other synonyms developed by individual institutions

Violence – behavior that is by intent, action, and/or outcome harmful to another person

(Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger, 2010)

Active shooter – an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area (Blair & Schweit, 2014, p. 5)

Student of concern – a student who may pose a threat of violence (Sokolow, et al, 2011; Van Brunt, 2013; Vossekuil et al., 2002)

Resources – fiscal monies, employee assignment, trainings, software or other resources provided to TAT by the institution

Risk – a probability or threat of damage, injury, liability, loss, or any other negative occurrence that is caused by external or internal vulnerabilities (Black Law Dictionary, 2004, p.1353)

Summary

This chapter served to introduce the research problem and questions foundational to this study. Furthermore, a brief background of the problem provided a contextual frame for the research problem as to the type of events that led to threat assessment teams being recommended to higher education as a preventative strategy for violence on campus. The theoretical framework that is central to this study was also introduced. This chapter also served to define common terms that are important to this study for clarification purposes. Likewise, a brief overview of the research methodology that was used in this inquiry has been documented. The next chapter provides a literature review encompassing several literature streams important to the threat assessment discussion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this case study is to explore the perceptions of what TAT's contribute to campus safety; and to study the perceived training and resources provided to TAT's. Therefore, the literature review addresses campus violence in general, lessons learned from the K-12 arena, public policy implications, overview of university counseling, and finally best practices and legal considerations of threat assessment teams for higher education institutions.

Campus security continues to be a critical issue for all internal and external stakeholders of colleges and universities, including parents of current and future students. Campus safety and security involves a wide-range of issues such as marginal student conduct issues, hazing, sexual assault, student suicide and mass shootings (Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger, 2010). Serious security issues on campus result in media scrutiny by the public, leading outsiders to question or criticize administrative decisions made under duress (Hartle, 2011; Hoover & Lipka, 2007; Moxley, 2012). However, there are lessons to be learned from past mistakes. Each campus tragedy brings reflection, inspection, and evaluation of campus safety policies and procedures. Furthermore, since the massacre at Virginia Tech, where Seung-Hui Cho (Cho) stormed the university killing 32 individuals and himself, campuses across the nation continue to develop

policies and practices for threat assessment teams. Prevention and intervention remains the goal of threat assessment teams in relation to persons of concern.

Higher education history included many examples of guiding, shepherding, and disciplining students on the college campus. Initially, the *in loco parentis* philosophy ruled the college campus for centuries. The *In loco parentis* tenet originated out of English law giving faculty the ability to stand in the absence of parental supervision (Bickle & Lake, 1999). This principle placed the university in direct authority over the student upon enrollment. Additionally, it served the university by providing a strict, draconian disciplinary code to keep order. The *in loco parentis* paradigm came to a halt over several legal cases challenging the legality of higher education's control over the student on campus. In *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education* (1960), a landmark case, the courts awarded students a right to due process before an institution could dismiss students from the university (Bickle & Lake, 1999; Kaplin & Lee, 2007). The courts viewpoint continued to change as it ruled over different cases. These court rulings moved the pendulum of responsibility from institution to student. More recent court rulings favored a shared responsibility between students and the institution. Colleges and universities implemented threat assessment teams to serve as a preventive safety measure and to mitigate portions of this shared responsibility.

This literature review began by examining the well-publicized examples of violence and threats on college campuses. Secondly, research of public policy concerning campus safety served to survey the policies developed by institutions or legislative bodies to address the issues of security. Likewise, the inclusion of the counseling literature helped to gain further comprehension of trends in university counseling and student

issues when accessing campus counseling services. Additionally, this highlighted the importance of understanding the relevance of the counselor role on threat assessment teams. Finally, literature related to threat assessment explored the relationship of campus security and team formation. Specifically, the included threat assessment literature highlighted the best practices involved in developing campus action teams.

Search Process

Multiple sources were accessed to analyze the current body of literature relevant to this study. The search process for this literature review began with a general scan of the literature through the ERIC, EBSCOE, and JSTOR databases utilizing Boolean search terms. These searches included the following terms: mental health, counseling center, college trends, student conduct, higher education, college, public policy, active school shooter, school safety measures, threats, community college student, perception of safety and threat assessment teams. Additionally, searches of the PROQUEST database provided pertinent dissertations on threat assessment teams and active shooters. Searches of the Lexis Nexis database allowed for relevant legal cases and case law to address legal considerations for threat assessment teams. All sources were read and analyzed for possible significance to the study. Bibliographies for all sources were examined for relevant articles that were appropriate to this study. Applicable articles were further analyzed for use as primary resources. Finally, all articles were studied and integrated into this literature review.

Campus Violence and Threats

For most of society, college brings visions of academic preparation and personal development to prepare individuals to become contributing citizens in the workforce. The college campus functions as a place of learning. It also serves as an environment that includes various safety issues requiring awareness and prevention. Consequently, colleges experience increased media scrutiny as violent acts have plagued a number of campuses throughout the nation.

The deadliest and most horrific incident occurred on April 16, 2007 when Cho shot and killed 32 members of the Virginia Tech campus community (Virginia Tech Panel Review, 2007). Within a year, Steve Kazmierczak violently made Northern Illinois University a part of this evolving history by killing five and injuring eighteen in another campus shooting on February 14, 2008 (Kaminski, Koons-Witt, Thompson, & Weiss, 2010). Although these two deadly events are seared into the minds of many, multiple incidents referenced violence throughout the history of higher education.

Although it is common to recall shootings, violence on campus encompasses many types of incidents in a variety of locations. These places includes parking lots, fraternity and/or sorority houses, residence halls, academic buildings, commons areas, or any other campus space (Carr & Ward, 2005; Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger, 2010). Types of violence on campus may involve homicides, suicides, sexual assaults, hate crimes, hazing, arson, bombings, and non-sexual assaults (Carr, 2005; Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, and Bollinger, 2010; Whitaker & Pollard, 1993). Whenever a campus experiences a violent act, the affected community displays a variety of numerous

emotional responses. These events may also impact the learning environment (Cornell, 2008; Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger, 2010; Whitaker & Pollard, 1993). Victims of violent crimes may experience difficulties integrating back into the classroom or living environments, or may leave school altogether. These incidents impact roommates, friends, or unknown individuals who may relate to the victim by shared interests or characteristics such as religious affiliation, gender, or race. Likewise, the investigations require an increased demand of time and energy and may affect faculty and staff negatively (Whitaker & Pollard, 1993). The ripple effects of campus violence may reach future students and stakeholders.

Understanding how violence affects the campus community aids institutions in developing comprehensive programming for violence prevention initiatives. In order to make accurate planning initiatives, understanding historical violent campus events becomes advantageous. These events categorize to different typologies of violence as motives differ by perpetrator.

By incorporating a broader view of campus violence, institutions can better prepare prevention strategies to avert campus violence. Nicolletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger (2010), relate campus violence to an ever-evolving virus that continues to morph and grow according to the changing circumstance. The authors present four types of violent offenders and maintain understanding the motives and reasoning for each type changes the prevention strategy to counter the techniques employed to commit violence. These four types include predator, avenger, relation-based and group-based violence. These typologies categorize violence by motives such as power, sex, money, righting perceived injustices, or diffused responsibility (Nicolletti et al., 2010).

Universities may assess safety and security situations differently and more accurately by considering the type of threat and end goal of perpetrators. The study of past events provides campuses with the knowledge of warning signs and prevention techniques to best curb violent incidents. However, it is important to note, violence does not always predicate a threat.

Although violent acts on a campus such as campus shootings are the most feared, threats for the college community entail more issues. Nationally, suicide is the "leading cause of death among college and university students … in addition many others have suicidal thoughts and attempt suicide" (Schwartz, 2011, p.353). A student in crisis disrupts the college environment more frequently leading to the threat assessment process being activated to address these concerns. Drug and alcohol abuse by college students affects areas such as residential life and academics. Dating and domestic violence, stalking and sexual assaults provide more frequent safety concerns for colleges and universities as one in five women are victims of sexual violence (Black, Basile, Brieiding, Smith, Walter, Merrick & Stevens, 2011). Normally, sexual assault cases are managed by student conduct; however the aftermath of these situations could include the threat assessment team. Additionally, issues such as disruptions in the classroom interrupt classroom learning and can escalate to threatening situations. Students who struggle with mental health disorders or post-traumatic stress disorder also may provide challenges for colleges and universities. All of these examples are scenarios that can ultimately be reported to threat assessment teams. Threat assessment helps to identify and manage a concern before it meets high levels of violence. However, knowing what could occur and what behaviors to look for aid teams in case management.

Public Policy

School and campus safety issues, specifically incidents of violence, led to public policy discussions on a national level. After the Clery murder at Lehigh University, accurate reporting of campus crimes became the focus of policy dialogue. These policy discussions led to changes in laws to better address the problem. Thus, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1990 (Clery Act), passed by Congress, required annual reporting of campus crime statistics. In the 1990s, as school shootings warranted media attention, Congress passed the GFSZA of 1994 to curb the growing violent trends on school grounds. This act prohibited guns on school grounds and was originally created to deter gang violence by incorporating zero tolerance policies (Gun Free School Zone Act, 1994). This study did not address the issues of violence within the K-12 arena, however this comparison provided another example of how public policy was used to address incidents of violence. After experiencing incidents of violence, Virginia, Northern Illinois and Connecticut required schools and universities to implement threat assessment teams through state legislations (Bennett & Bates, 2015). Birkland and Lawrence (2009) argued that the events such as Virginia Tech had little effect on lasting public policy. For example, following the violent incidents at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois, the public policy conversations commanded center stage. The discussions centered on topics such as mental health, student privacy, campus notification/timely warning, and campus safety. However, Birkland and Lawrence (2009) stated society and the media were more concerned with the causes of violence and not preventing violence. They further argued that strategies

promoted as new, were actually policies and procedures already in place, while the underlying issues of violence was largely ignored.

Higher Education Policy

Higher education continues to witness the impact of campus violence in public policy with the implementation of the Clery Act, formally known as the Campus Security Act. This act addresses the reporting of crimes, both on campus and surrounding areas to the Department of Education. The Clery Act requires institutions that participate in federal student financial aid programs to disclose crime statistics for the last three academic years (Clery Center for Security on Campus, 2012). The origins of this act dates back to the Lehigh University murder of Jeanne Clery.

Clery's parents were outraged to learn campus violence had gone unreported by Lehigh University. The Clery's believed administration feared how crime would impact college recruitment and enrollment over the safety of students. Due to their diligence, higher education institutions were required to report campus safety statistics annually. Colleges and universities were mandated to make these security reports available for parents, students, and the general public to view on websites and through the Department of Education (DOE). Additionally, the Clery Act required campuses to maintain incident logs, provide timely notice of campus crimes, assure rights of victims of sexual assault, provide campus emergency plans, afford protection to whistleblowers, educate students about hate crimes, collect and disseminate fire data annual report, and develop policies to address missing students (Jeanne Clery Act, 2008).

Similar to the tragedy at Columbine, the violent shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University served as a catalyst for action and change in higher education. Multiple task forces met to assess and make recommendations for campus safety in states such as New York, Virginia, Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, and Oklahoma (Fox & Savage, 2009; Governor McDonnell's Taskforce for School and Campus Safety, 2008; Gubernatorial Task Force for University Campus Safety, 2007; North Carolina Department of Justice, 2007; Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2008; Ohio Board of Regents, 2007). These task forces assessed all individual state member institutions for services such as safety and security, mental health, emergency notification, funding, and policies currently in place. Although conducted in multiple states, common recommendations emerged stating the need for increased mental health services, communication within and across departmental units, and more emergency notification systems. The Clery Act served as a post-event reporting mechanism. However, Bolante and Dykeman (2015) stated that the Clery Act proves relevant for threat assessment where crime statistics and threat assessment cases intersect as "an overlap of reported cases within Clery and threat assessment, but not all threat assessment will be Clery" (p. 30).

Implications for FERPA. Interestingly, policy and mental health services dominated the discussion following the Virginia Tech tragedy in task force work group meetings. Under investigation by the DOE, Virginia Tech officials contested the criticism leveled at the institution citing issues with the Family Education Records and Privacy Act (FERPA) as reasons they failed to disclose student information (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2008). A student's rights are guaranteed by FERPA giving them the right to access

their educational records, a process to request an amendment to their record, and ensures privacy of their record unless disclosure permission (Family Education Records and Privacy Act, 1974). Within FERPA, the DOE defined what qualifies as an educational record. Equally, FERPA identified records that are exempted from educational records status. These records included law enforcement records, treatment records, personal notes, or information stored in an individual's mind, and student employment records (Family Education Records and Privacy Act, 1974).

Virginia Tech claimed campus officials were not privy to critical information due to confusion over what student information could be shared with other campus professionals and what student records fell into an exempt status (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Campus safety and security task forces also pointed to misunderstandings of FERPA concerning student privacy (Governor McDonnell's Taskforce for School and Campus Safety, 2008; Gubernatorial Task Force for University Campus Safety, 2007: North Carolina Department of Justice, 2007; Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2008; Ohio Board of Regents, 2007). However, the DOE claimed that FERPA does provide exceptions for sharing student information without consent. These exceptions included school officials with a need to know, other schools that the student seeks to enroll, local, state, or federal officials conducting audits of records, records pertaining to the funding of financial aid, the victim of an alleged sexual assault, health or safety information, parents of dependent students, subpoenas, accrediting bodies, and directory information (Family Education Records and Privacy Act, 1974). The DOE asserted that these exceptions allow for institutions to share information.

With the voiced confusion by college administrators, the DOE issued clarification of the health and safety emergency exception under FERPA (Lipka, 2008). Under this guidance document, colleges are allowed to share private student information under the health and safety emergency exception. This exception must be properly documented and be specific to the particular incident. In these situations, the DOE stated they will not second guess institution decisions to disclose under the health/safety exception (Simon, 2008). Consequently, the parental notification clause of FERPA provided institutions the ability to notify parents of alcohol and drug violations of students under the age of 21. These provisions of FERPA served as a valuable tool for threat assessment teams in managing students of concern. Likewise, the FERPA regulations should be understood by all threat assessment team members. Therefore, FERPA regulations and applications should be included as threat assessment team training components.

Implications for the Clery Act. Virginia Tech officials also argued over their perceived failure to comply with the Clery Act on the day of the shootings. While Virginia Tech did issue a campus notification about the alleged shooter on campus, many criticized the institution for delaying the campus notification for two hours (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). During the investigation, the DOE found Virginia Tech in violation of two compliance issues in relation to the Clery Act: First, they failed to give the campus a timely warning notification of the emergency events transpiring on the morning of April 16, 2007 and second, they failed to follow their own written policy pertaining to notifying students of campus emergencies (Gifford, 2010). In direct response to the Virginia Tech shootings, Congress amended the Clery Act in 2008 with the following provisions added to regulations: colleges and universities are required to

include emergency evacuation procedures with their annual security report and include an immediate notification statement to faculty, staff, and students if a significant threat exists, expansion of the hate crimes statistic criteria, and development of whistleblower protections (Clery Act, 2008). Institutions are required to submit emergency evacuation plans, including emergency notification procedures, in conjunction with the annual security report previously discussed.

Implications for Mental Health and Funding. College task forces across the country identified mental health and funding as critical components to addressing campus violence on campus, as well as addressing students in distress (Governor McDonnell's Taskforce for School and Campus Safety, 2008; Gubernatorial Task Force for University Campus Safety, 2007; North Carolina Department of Justice, 2007; Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2008; Ohio Board of Regents, 2007). For example, the Oklahoma CLASS task force reported only 77 percent of all college campuses employ full-time mental health counselors on campus (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 2008). Moreover, the Florida task force emphasized that mental health disorders alone do not serve as an indicator of campus violence. However, the task force also stressed if mental health disorders are left undiagnosed with no treatment regimen in place, risks increased from a threat perspective (Gubernatorial Task Force for University Campus Safety, 2007). Theses task forces made various recommendations regarding campus safety. Common themes that emerged within these recommendations included increasing emergency notification systems, hiring mental health professionals, increasing communications with law enforcement, removing communication silos on campus, and implementing threat assessment teams.

The lack of funding appeared to be the primary reason task force recommendations failed to be implemented. While many colleges and universities spent funds to incorporate emergency notification systems that text and phone students, paying for these systems during a period of declining budgets remained a challenge (Kanable, 2008). However, funding more expensive recommendations such as incorporating an armed campus police force or establishing mental health counseling centers or increasing staff continued to be passed over or delayed due to a lack of funding (Cornell, 2010; Randazzo & Cameron, 2011).

The implementation of threat assessment teams on campus, that increased communication efforts in alerting appropriate staff about persons of concern, appeared to be on the increase. The National Behavioral Intervention Team Association's (NaBITA) 2014 study of 500 higher education institutions found that 94 percent of all respondents reported a threat assessment team on campus (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Golston, 2014). The importance of campus counseling services cannot be ignored as students admitted to the institution with mental health issues continued to increase, along with the need for counseling services (Gallagher, 2013).

Perception of Safety on College Campuses

Current events that involve violence on college and university campuses led to increased levels of fear for safety by the general public. As previously stated, the amplified media scrutiny of violent events increased the outcry for stronger safety measures even as national crime statistics show decreased levels of violence (U.S.

Department of Education, 2007). Likewise, Vermillion (2006) stated that the general public lacked awareness of national crime rates and believed these rates are on the rise.

Hollis (2010) provided data concerning student perceptions of safety in a Texas State University study. Students reported strong feelings of safety related to the images and messages the college portrays and distributes about itself, along with media reports about the institution. These perceptions outweighed a student's personal experience with violence. Additionally, a series of studies exploring the impact of the Clery Act on community stakeholders' perceptions concerning campus safety found that although institutions provided campus crime statistics many are unaware of these numbers, nor do they play a role in college selection (Janosik, 2001; Janosik & Gehring, 2001). Janosik found that 72 percent of participants from three colleges were unaware of the campus crime statistics. Janosik's follow up study reported similar results with 92 percent of participants stating crime statistics did not influence the decision to attend or not attend a campus (Janosik & Gehring, 2001).

Janosik followed up these studies and surveyed over 900 campus law enforcement officers about the requirements of the Clery Act. Participants believed that campus safety programs improved, with 53 percent stating that the programs were responsible for increased confidence by students in campus police and safety measures (2002). Additionally, Baker and Boland (2011) studied students, faculty and staff perceptions of campus safety at a women's college. The authors study included 158 faculty/staff participants and 460 student participants. Baker and Boland's study supported the Janosik studies as participants also believed the campus to be a safe place. Additionally, Woolfolk (2013) also studied faculty and staff perceptions of safety on campus.

Woolfolk's study found that faculty and staff expressed that the institution provided a safe environment for the campus community.

Brown and Morley (2007) conducted a risk perception study involving attitudes concerning risk estimation of students and alcohol use. This study included 100 participants who successfully completed questionnaires at a British institution. Brown and Morley found that "people understate personal risk perceptions and believe their personal susceptibility to negative events is lesser than the average person" (p. 575).

University Counseling

University counseling services play a pivotal role in prevention strategies for campus safety. High profile, violent events that occur on campus heightens sensitivity to those in mental health crisis. However, many student issues can threaten the safety of the campus community. Therefore, colleges and universities throughout the nation continue to hear the cry to do more for students in need of counseling assistance when faced with a mental health crisis, drug and alcohol abuse, victims of sexual violence, or other concerns that may disrupt the educational environment. Additionally, there is a continuing call to fully staff campus counseling centers with qualified mental health professionals to address the growing mental health needs of students (Benton, Robertso, Tseng, Newton, & Benton, 2003; Kitzrow, 2003; Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2012; Wood, 2012). The International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) recommends "a staffing range of one full-time employee (FTE) professional staff member to every 1000-1500 students" (International Association of Counseling Services, 2010, para. 2). Consequently, the 2014 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors (NSCCD) reports the counselor to

student ratio average at 1 to 2081, well above the recommended ranges (Gallagher, 2014). Moreover, in the same survey, counseling center directors report more students access counseling services with more severe mental health disorders (Gallagher, 2014).

Changing Trends

For over the last thirty years, college and university counseling center directors continue to participate in a national survey conducted by American College and University Counseling Center Directors (ACUCCD) and the International Association of Counseling Services (IASC) to examine the current issues of counseling centers across the country. This survey addresses budget, staffing, programmatic trends, clinical counseling techniques, and ethics (Gallagher, 2012, 2013, 2014). Financing counseling centers continues to be an expensive initiative as staffing practices employ individuals with terminal degrees to treat students in need. Trends in counseling services began changing in the early 1980s. As counseling services progressed over time, career counseling services declined as other mental health counseling issues became more prominent (Gallagher, 2012).

In the 1980s, the counseling trend began to fluctuate away from career counseling, shifting towards emotional and personal counseling. Counselors reported spending 52 percent of their time counseling students on an emotional level. In 2000, this percentage increased to 81 percent and to 88.5 percent in 2006 (Gallagher, 2012; Magoon, 1980). In 2014, the NSCCD counselors stated that personal counseling absorbed 76 percent of counseling appointments with only 7 percent and 5 percent of their time spent on academic and career counseling respectively. As counseling centers emphasized

counseling students in crisis, more students accessed counseling for long-term counseling needs resulting in less open appointment times for the student population.

Various counseling center studies reported counseling center staff believed students enter campus with increased stressors and more severe mental health disorders in comparison to previous generations (Benton, Robertso, Tseng, Newton, & Benton, 2003; Gallagher, 2009; Kandison & DiGeronimo, 2004; Kitzrow, 2003; O'Malley et al., 1990; Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2012). Gallagher (2009, 2013, 2014) found that 93 percent of counseling center directors' voiced concern with the increased numbers of students entering campus counseling centers with serious mental disorders at initial intake. Moreover, students entered campus using prescribed psychotropic drugs by treating physicians to offset symptoms of mental health disorders (Gallagher, 2013). Personal interviews of counseling staff echoed the percentages above, detailing the concern over severity of student disorders, as well as the higher frequency use of psychotropic medications (Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenburg, 2012). Furthermore, the 2014 NSCCD reported the ratio of students to mental health counselors on campus is 2,081 students to every counselor (Gallagher, 2014). The combination of more students with severe psychological problems that need long-term counseling taxed the current system resulting in longer wait times and fewer available appointments for those institutions that provide psychological services (Gallagher, 2014). During this same period, budgets for colleges and universities declined leading to fewer opportunities to hire the necessary staff to meet the suggested recommendations promoted by IACS.

Campus counseling staff studied trends of reported student problems at the cessation of counseling sessions. Over a course of thirteen years, examination of archived

data of student clients identified increases in nineteen areas (relationship, stress/anxiety, family issues, situational, educational, depression, developmental, abuse, medication used, academic skills, physical problems, substance abuse, eating disorders, personality disorders, suicidal, grief, chronic mental disorders, legal, and sexual assault) (Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton & Benton, 2003). Benton et al. (2003) found that counseling staff stated an increase in the reported level of distress in fourteen of the nineteen areas; these students entered into the university counseling system with multifaceted complications. Some of these complications, as expected, included more concerning and complex mental health issues. The more severe problems, such as thoughts of suicide, depression, personality disorders, and sexual assault, reported significant increases (Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton & Benton, 2003). Over thirteen years, students presenting with symptoms of depression doubled, suicidal ideation tripled, and those who were victims of sexual assault quadrupled (Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton & Benton, 2003). These trends required an increased number of visits for treating at an appropriate level as these issues are complex and multi-layered.

Two-Year Colleges and Counseling

Two-year colleges struggle to offer students counseling or psychological services. In 2015, the Wisconsin Hope Lab, in conjunction with the American Association of Community Colleges, conducted a study of 4000 students at two-year community colleges in six states. The authors state that mental health is a larger concern for two-year colleges as students entered with a variety of life stressors and broader health issues than students at four-year institutions (Eisenberg, Goldrick-Rab, Lipson & Broton, 2016). Eisenberg et al. (2106) stated students at two-year colleges experience increased family

pressures, financial struggles, and work/school requirements. Additionally, students lacked access to appropriate resources to help their situation. This study reported less than ten percent of two-year colleges provided psychiatric services (Eisenberg et al., 2016). If counseling was provided, the counselor to student ratios was reported at 1 to 3,000, well outside the recommended ratios of 1 to 1,600 (Eisenberg et al., 2016).

Epstein (2015) concurred that counseling or psychological services were deficient at the two-year college. Epstein stated that this could occur because "there is no mandate for community colleges to provide therapy" (p. 291). Additionally, the author agreed that those institutions who do provide psychological services suffered significant gaps in staffing, especially if those counselors held additional job responsibilities like disability accommodations or academic counseling (Epstein, 2016). Furthermore, Daniel and Davidson (2014) stated that students at two-year colleges reported "higher diagnosed conditions in mental health such as bipolar, schizophrenia, depression and anxiety" (p. 292). Students at these institutions also reported "significantly higher incidence of emotionally and physically abusive relationships, higher levels of suicidal ideation, and rates of suicide" than their four-year counterparts (p.292). Epstein (2016) and Daniel and Davidson (2014) concluded that coupled with reduced levels of funding and stretched or non-existent psychological or counseling resources led to major challenges for the two-year institution.

Finally, the counseling or psychological services in the rural communities lags behind services provided in the urban and suburban settings. The Oklahoma State Mental Health Department reported that data show "the poorest counties generally have the highest rates of drug abuse and mental illness, they also happen to be rural areas …

Additionally, fewer than 20% of all psychiatrists in state live and practice outside metropolitan areas" (Adcock, 2016, para. 6-7). The metropolitan areas benefit from a high number of private and community services than in rural areas. Specified data can be found the participant and site section of Chapter III.

Counseling is a vital component to the threat assessment team process per best practice. Understanding the role of counseling within higher education and specifically, the two-year college is instrumental in addressing the challenges of the two-year student. Additionally, recognizing the differences and added stressors of students who attend the two-year institution experience frames the problems of the student population with inadequate resources to address their emotional and mental health. This becomes even more critical as the institution identifies students as possible threats.

Threat Assessment Teams

Threat Assessment Teams' (TAT) origins launched from the US Secret Service and the FBI. Government entities utilized the TAT model for decades before the general public began to also see the value (Randazzo & Cameron, 2011). Originally utilized by the Secret Service to protect and evaluate threats against the President, TAT's expanded to law enforcement after the Secret Service published implementation procedures in 1990. Because of the popularity of these teams with law enforcement, the Secret Service created the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) in 1998 (Randazzo & Cameron, 2011). Since this time, agencies such as the US Postal Service, K-12 schools, and now higher education began to incorporate TAT's into worksite safety plans (Randazzo & Cameron, 2011). After the shooting incidents witnessed at Virginia Tech and Northern

Illinois University, threat assessment teams became a popular preventative strategy to address threats to campus safety (Cornell, 2010; Desienger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage, 2008; Leavitt, Spellings, & Gonzalez, 2007; National Association of Attorneys General, 2007; Randazzo & Cameron, 2011; Thrower, Healy, & Margolis et al., 2008). The National Behavior Intervention Team Association estimated that after Virginia Tech's tragedy over 1600 universities implemented threat assessment teams (Marklein, 2011). The 2014 NaBITA survey stated that 94 percent of self-reporting institutions included threat assessment teams on campus within prevention efforts (Van Brunt et al., 2014).

Threat assessment teams function as a multi-disciplinary approach, representing a cross-section of departments on campus to identify and manage persons of concern to prevent possible violent incidents. The purpose of these teams is to provide a process to support the campus community in identifying the person or behavior of concern, investigating the incident or situation, evaluating the seriousness of the concern, and managing the threat or plan in place (Randazzo & Cameron, 2011; Deisinger et al., 2008; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). This process does not replace established policies and procedures such as Human Resources or the code of student conduct. Therefore, team members refer cases to proper entities and processes as appropriate.

The increased level of stress that students experience continues to evolve as stressors include more than just academics (Heilbrun, Dvoskin, & Heilbrun, 2009). Deisinger, Randazzo, ONeill, & Savage (2008) state it is likely that students in distress will exhibit behaviors that alarm multiple areas across campus. If the campus community does not communicate these concerns outside their silos, the institution will possess an inaccurate assessment of a possibly threatening situation. One of the largest criticisms of

Virginia Tech's decision-making points to the lack of communication in the management of Cho (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Therefore, best practices recommend that threat assessment teams incorporate a variety of individuals who communicate across various disciplines on campus (Deisinger, Randazzo, O"Neill, & Savage, 2008). These best practices for threat assessment teams allow colleges and universities a more standardized approach for incorporating this preventative strategy into campus risk management initiatives.

Best Practices for Threat Assessment Teams

Colleges utilize threat assessment teams as an integral tool in campus safety and security. In order for these groups to operate effectively, teams need critical members in place and properly trained. Best practices identify the following positions as ideal to serve on the threat assessment team: campus police, student conduct officers, mental health counselors, student affairs staff, legal counsel, residential life staff, and human resources officials (Deisinger, Randazzo, & O'Neill, 2008; Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011). Mental health counselors, crucial to the inner workings and success of the threat assessment team, bring knowledge of disabilities, FERPA, standard treatment protocols and procedures, and mental health referral agencies. Counselors may provide a better understanding of the student population enrolled on campus. The student interactions through the counseling center provide opportunities to build engagement, outreach, and intervention strategies for students of concern and may benefit the threat assessment team with case management (Gallagher, 2010; US Dept of Health & Human Services, 2001). Likewise, recommendations for the campus police chief or other security personnel appointed to the threat assessment team allows for law enforcement and first responder

expertise (Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011). Student conduct officers and Human Resources representatives bring knowledge of institutional policy and prior history of any conduct related issues to the team. Legal counsel provides the team with relevant case law or expertise of current laws such as the American with Disabilities Act, Title IX or Title VII.

Threat assessment is not synonymous with profiling. Understanding the difference between these concepts is key for threat assessment teams to operate effectively (Cornell, 2010; Deisinger et al., 2003). Profiling attempts to predict violence by comparing an individual to characteristics or composite of previous attackers (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012) and remains as a controversial notion in the threat assessment arena. The FBI warns, specifically for campus shooters, that there are no consistent characteristics for profiling a campus shooter (Deisinger et al., 2008; Vossekuil et al., 2002). Conversely, threat assessment is a behavior-based, deductive process comprised of a) learning of a person posing a threat; b) gathering information about the person from multiple sources; c) evaluating if that person poses a threat of violence towards others; and d) developing and implementing an individualized plan to reduce the threat (Deisinger, et al., 2008). Threat assessment teams work from reported behaviors in the forms of communicated threats or behaviors that raise a concern by the campus community (Cornell, 2010). The process operates from a data-driven report based on stated accounts and research gathered about the student.

As previously stated, the process of identifying the concern, collecting data, analyzing the scenario, and evaluating the plan of action by threat assessment teams are important key practices (Deisinger et al., 2003; Keller, Hughes & Hertz, 2011). Keller,

Hughes, and Herts (2011) highlight the importance of properly educating the team on issues that are relevant to the nature of their work. Additionally, best practice identifies proper training for the threat assessment team as critical. NaBita recommends team members be well-versed in a variety of relevant topics. These trainings include topics such as acts of violence, FERPA, the American Disabilities Act, Clery Act, Title IX, issues of gender violence in the LGBT community, suicidal ideation, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, diversity, reducing liability, and table-top exercises to increase skill level of the team members. A strong understanding of the Family Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) benefits team members. Equally, the team should also be aware of the requirements of the Clery Act, institutional policy, and the student code of conduct. NaBita offers training to address how to function as a threat assessment team such as communication skills, interviewing techniques, risk assessment tools, proper documentation, and promoting the team. Furthermore, the practice of interviewing and investigating methods prepares team members for effective data collection (Keller, Hughes, & Herts, 2011). Finally, TAT's should utilize a developed electronic filing documentation system to serve as a secure, centralized location to store confidential data. Developing and completing a yearly training schedule gives teams the opportunities to learn relevant information regarding institutional policy, federal and state law, and legal case law to aid the team in proper threat assessment decision-making. Furthermore, recommendations to market and promote the threat assessment team, as well as the process, encourage campus safety and utilization of established reporting procedures (Cornell, 2010). As there are few research studies or models available for threat

assessment, these best practices strongly encourage formation of campus threat assessment teams regardless of institution type.

If threat assessment teams possess knowledge of a dangerous safety situation with the ability to intervene, liability could be assessed (Hoffman, 2013). The FERPA health and safety emergency exception allows a threat assessment team the ability to intervene without penalty of violating student privacy. FERPA also permits internal sharing of student information as long as there is a "need to know that is a substantial and articulable emergency" (FERPA, 34 CFR § 99.36 (a)(10). Legal counsel assists in determining appropriate legal ramifications of team decisions.

American Disabilities Act. Another consideration for legal implications with threat assessment includes students with disabilities. The American Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states,

> No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance . . . .(p. 1).

Federal law states that it is illegal for an institution to discriminate against a student based on disability. The ADA covers mental health disorders under this umbrella of law. Therefore, college students cannot deny admission because of a disability, nor can they be removed from an institution based on disability (McBain, 2008). However, this does not absolve a student from abiding by the student code of conduct. Dunkle, Silverstein,

and Warner (208) state that threat assessment teams will be confronted with difficult situations that include disability law. These situation include,

> violations of student conduct codes by students with mental health disabilities, violence or violence committed by students with mental health disabilities, assessment of students whose behavior presents a significant risk of harm to health or safety of the student to others and mandatory assessment, involuntary withdrawal and conditioned readmission of students with mental impairments (p. 607).

However, the Office of Civil Rights indicates that it will not question disciplinary action if the institution is basing decisions on violations of the Code of Student Conduct, not the mental health disability (Jackson, 2003). In May, 2011, the Department of Justice publicized updated revisions to Title II of the ADA (Section 35.139) addressing direct threats. These revisions stated institutions are no longer allowed to dismiss or remove a student from campus based on an individual being a danger to themselves. The threshold for removing a student as a danger must meet the "significant risk to the health or safety of others" requirement (American with Disabilities Act Title II Regulations, 2010, p. 35.139). Western Michigan was investigated in 2013 after an honors student filed a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) for being involuntarily withdrawn from the institution after making suicidal threats. The OCR ruled that the institution could not dismiss a student because he or she threatens to harm themselves (Gignac, 2013). To better negotiate difficult issues, it is important for team members to have a strong understanding concerning the ADA, specifically Title II, and what threat assessment interventions are allowed.

The true challenge for institutions remains to balance the rights and civil liberties of an individual with the safety of the campus community (Hoffman, 2013). Legal counsel can help by providing case law and legal implications concerning TAT decisions. Courts will expect the university to proceed with caution concerning the legal implications.

Summary

Campus violence continued to command the attention of not only the campus community, but media and society. This literature review included violence and the different issues that can be threats on campus. Additionally, the roles of violence and threats in relation to public policy were provided, specifically policies related to higher education. Because mental health continued to be a topic of discussion as these traumatic events happen in communities across the nation, this literature review included trends in mental health counseling on college campuses and provided specific information about counseling at two-year colleges. Finally, the literature on threat assessment included documentation of best practices and reasons why this philosophy is different from profiling. Because there is a gap in the literature regarding threat assessment on the two-year college, more research is needed to further explore campus officials' and team members' understanding of threat assessment as a prevention mechanism to deter campus violence.

The next chapter discusses the methodology used in this study. The methodology includes the theoretical framework, study parameters, and participant demographics. Additionally, Chapter III identifies data collection methods and data analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The overall research plan for the study is included in Chapter III. Explanations for all components of the methodology design, data collection, and data analysis procedures utilized in the study are explained. Specifically, this chapter addressed the constructivist epistemology and qualitative methodology that served to advise how I perceived knowledge. Likewise, the reasoning for the selection of the case study design is explained. An overview of the research study, participants, interviews, documents and artifacts collected for data analysis is described. Finally, the specific ways that data were analyzed are discussed in this chapter. This study focused on the human interaction, meanings, and the understandings that participants assigned to the realities on the topic studied. Therefore, the qualitative methodology was the appropriate research design.

General Perspective

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the threat assessment team's impact on campus safety, as well as perceptions of barriers or challenges for the campus threat assessment teams. This study assumed a constructivist epistemology by adhering to the position that knowledge was constructed by an individual.

Crotty (1998) described this worldview as,

> A view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interactions between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essential social context (p.42).

The constructivist viewpoint considers meaning or reality as constructed, or interpreted, by individuals in the world, providing the foundational basis of this study. Therefore, this paradigm encourages meaning making by exploring reality on multiple fronts, not focusing on one individual or answer (Creswell, 2009). Patton (2002) stresses that qualitative research collects an individual's perceived facts pertaining to a phenomenon by "capturing what actually takes place and what people actually say" (p. 28). Because the qualitative methodology best matches the constructivist epistemology, this study utilizes appropriate strategies within the qualitative study design.

Qualitative inquiry allows for emerging categories and themes in the data collection and analysis process to be identified. This methodology also provides for various study designs appropriate to this research inquiry. Yin (2009), states that case study design is appropriate when "research questions ask how or why, the researcher has little to no influence over the phenomenon, or the focus is on a current issue" (p. 2). The topic of campus violence and the use of threat assessment teams as a safety strategy meet the current issue criteria that Yin describes.

Moreover, this study incorporated how or why research questions and the participant responses were the motivation for the collected data. The research design

employed qualitative methods by using a multiple case study of threat assessment teams at two-year colleges to further explore member understandings, meanings, and roles concerning threat assessment teams in relation to campus safety, challenges and barriers for the team. The two-year colleges included in the study operate as open admission entities, allowing for a wide-berth of diverse students within the student body.

As discussed earlier, these students enter the institution with various challenges with limited support systems and this may increase their need for support services. Consequently, two-year college budgets may not afford the same employment and training opportunities for student support activities such as mental health counseling. Therefore, emphasizing the viewpoints of the two-year college may be beneficial. This multiple case study applies a phenomenological approach to further discern the perceptions of culture, norms, and values of the institution and how these integrate into resource allocation decisions for threat assessment teams.

Yin (2009) recognized different types of case study research including single or multiple case designs. Yin provided rationale for selecting the appropriate case study design for the research inquiry. Specifically, this study integrated the multiple case study design. Multiple case studies are warranted as "the evidence from a multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as more robust … Likewise, this model allows for possible replication of the data. " (Yin, R., 2009, p. 46-47). This research design provided the ability to incorporate holistic approaches to collecting data such as utilizing interviews, surveys, and artifact collection during the research process. Recently, Chinn (2013) and Childress (2014) both incorporated the case study design into their respective dissertations on threat assessment.

Chinn studied the perceptions of student affairs and academic affairs with collaborative efforts of threat assessment team. Childress chose to study how student affairs professionals perceive students with mental health needs and how they promote threat assessment to the campus community (Childress, 2014). Both of the authors of these studies incorporated the case study design to either study a complex phenomenon or to include multiple meanings from diverse perspectives. The case study design was an appropriate choice for this research design as threat assessment remained a current issue with various perspectives from stakeholders and the research questions asked how or why. For these reasons, the multiple case study was an appropriate choice for this inquiry.

Research Context

To satisfy the multiple case study approach, two different two-year colleges in a Midwestern state in the United States were selected for inclusion in this study. These institutions were two of the ten two-year colleges that are represented in the state's higher education system. These two-year institutions varied in student population from 3,000 to 17,000 students, residential/non-residential campuses, and presence/absence of on-campus counseling services. The institutions selected contained both residents and commuter student body populations and accepted federal aid dollars; therefore they submitted the annual Safety and Security Report as required by the Clery Act to the Department of Education by October 1st each year. Additionally, the Clery Act required each institution to also submit emergency management plans with the annual report. Both of these documents were assessed to determine if any violent activity occurred on these campuses, as well as to ascertain if a threat assessment team was included in the

emergency plans submitted to the Department of Education. This study was initiated during the fall semester of the 2015 academic year.

Research participants

Participants for this study included higher education administrators and threat assessment team members from the two institutions selected for inclusion. Two administrators and four team members were recruited to participate to provide data from both administration and staff perspectives for the study. These figures allowed for a total of six participants. An administrator was defined as the campus president, provost, vice president of student affairs, vice president of academic affairs, and vice president of finance or an equivalent administrative officer that oversaw threat assessment teams on campus. A team member was defined as a non-administrator who served on the threat assessment team as assigned. Team members included campus counselors, student conduct officers, campus security, human resources professionals, vice president of student services and academic affairs, and dean of students or other team members assigned to the threat assessment team.

Sampling strategy

Because qualitative research primarily focuses on depth of the data, smaller sample sizes were expected (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling methods aided in choosing information-rich cases to best address the rationale for the study. Specific numbers for participation purposes were not required for this sampling method as qualitative research is not primarily utilized for generalizability to the population (Patton, 2002). Emerging data were discovered by focusing the sample on a low number of

institutions, paying careful attention to detail of processes, applied meanings, and cultural nuances. This sampling strategy allowed for a direct and focused group of participants, while still granting the flexibility for exploration of personal perceptions these subjects assign to threat assessment.

Research Sites and Participants

A general description about each institution and each of the participants is included in this section. Additionally, demographic information about the student population is provided. To protect identity, I masked the names of institutions and individual participants.

Brownsville State College. Brownsville State College (BSC), established in the 1970s to serve the northeastern and southeastern metro area in the state, exists as an open-admission institution to provide lower division courses. BSC receives accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission to grant associate degrees in over sixty degree programs in arts, science, or applied science. Admission requirements, defined in the course catalog, reference an open admission policy of "graduation from an accredited high school or any non-graduate whose high school class has graduated" (Brownsville State College Course Catalog, 2015, p.5). Currently, enrollment exceeds approximately 13,000 students each year, with a 39 percent full time enrollment and 61 percent part-time enrollment (National Center of Education Statistics, 2016). According to BSC's website, the average age of the student population is 27 (Fast Facts, Brownsville State College, 2016). The campus consists of twenty-five buildings across 120 acres. Currently, BSC offers student housing for 180 residents.

Table 3.1 provides information regarding the student population and general information about the institution.

Table 3.1 Brownsville State College Profile

Type	Two-year, public
Setting	Urban
Full-time	39%
Part-time	61%
Male	40%
Female	60%
White	57%
African-American	16%
American Indian/Alaskan	5%
Latino	5%
Asian	2%
Faculty to student ratio	19 to 1

National Center for Education Statistics, 2016

The Student Center houses all offices for the interviewees and serves as the hub for student services including recruitment, admissions, enrollment, student services, dean of students, career services, veterans services, and student support services. Marketing displays on the first floor for students and visitors to the campus include the fall schedule, course catalog, student newspaper, and brochures to student academic services such as tutoring, disability services, and counseling. The first floor of the Student Center houses many of the student support services such as the Veteran's Student Services Office, Student Academic Support Services, and the Office of Student Disabilities.

Participants. Three members of BSC were interviewed as participants for the study. Interviews were conducted on a fall Friday afternoon in September, 2015 and lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour with each interviewee. These individuals

served as campus staff and administrators at the institution. All participants received the approved IRB recruitment email and I scheduled interview appointments. Interviews took place in the individual offices of the subjects. Subjects received consent forms explaining the study, participants' rights, and contact information of the researcher. This consent form also included the confidentiality statement, as well as the request for each interview to be audio recorded with the understanding that these recordings would be destroyed once transcription occurred.

Mike Smith. Mike Smith served as the Dean of Students on campus, as well as the chair for Brownsville State College's Threat Assessment and Behavior Intervention Team (TABIT). He was employed at the institution for three years, previously serving as the Student Conduct Officer. Mr. Smith promoted to the Dean of Students the previous summer when the campus decided to offer student housing beginning in the fall 2015 semester. The Dean of Students, a new position on campus, reported to Vice President of Student Affairs and Marketing. His responsibilities included the student conduct adjudication, as well as supervision within the student services and outreach office and residential life. Mr. Smith lived in the residence hall for the current academic year while the campus transitioned in the inaugural year of providing housing for students. This afforded a 24/7 presence by the Dean of Students at BSC.

Mike Smith's office was located on the second floor of the Student Center building, in the center of campus. His office housed one secretary and one student worker. He shared his office suite with the Vice President of Student Affairs during the Vice President's office suite remodel. The office provided a space to meet with students or other campus community members. The back wall behind his desk contained windows

with a view of the campus quad and the new residence halls that he supervised. His credenza reflected awards, pictures of students, and his bachelors, masters, and juris doctorate diplomas. His desk contained many stacks of papers and keyboard with monitor. A file folder opened on his desk showcased the work demanding his current attention. As I entered, Mr. Smith collected the papers and placed them back inside the folder. The interview took place over at the meeting area where the square table and two chairs were located. Mr. Smith appeared relaxed and open throughout the interview process. He seemed eager to share information about his institution and interested in the outcome of the study.

Susan Mayes. Susan Mayes served as the Director of Student Support and Outreach. She also acted as the primary licensed counselor for all students at Brownsville State College. Ms. Mayes provided a long history for the institution as she has been employed for twenty years at the institution. Her employment history included service in a variety of positions across campus. Ms. Mayes current responsibilities encompassed counseling, disability services, academic support, and the women's leadership program for BSC. Ms. Mayes functioned as a member of the Threat Assessment and Behavior Intervention Team (TABIT) and brought the counseling perspective to the team.

Ms. Mayes's office was located on the first floor of the Student Center. This afforded students the opportunity to know where to go for support services either academic or non-academic. Her office suite housed a secretary, as well as a student worker. The office incorporated soft lighting and warm furniture and color schemes. Ms. Mayes used the natural light that exuded through the shaded window treatments in her office, along with the soft subtle illumination from a corner lamp to offer an inviting and

calming space. Two wingback chairs faced a long couch and coffee table with various materials to support students. The tranquil sound of running water falling from a corner water feature provided a distraction from the quietness that overtakes the room. The soft fragrance of lavender welcomed individuals as the seats were filled for sessions aimed to destress. Her office environment provided a welcoming space for students to come and visit with her to address their needs. Ms. Mayes's interview took place in the seating area in front of her desk. She settled in one of the wingback chairs and I sat across from her on the leather couch.

Brian Green. Brian Green served as the Coordinator of Safety, Security and Risk Management. He stated he was employed in this role for eighteen months and was hired for this position at Brownsville State College. Mr. Green supervised the institution security officers, the contract security officers, and the safety and risk management personnel. Previously, Mr. Green worked in an occupational health and safety position in a corporate landscape. Mr. Green stated he possessed no previous experience with threat assessment other than his current position. He served as a co-chair to the TABIT.

Mr. Green's office was located in the Student Center, but on the opposite side of the building from the Dean of Students and the Director of Student Support Services. The student worker escorted me to Mr. Green's office for the interview. She stepped outside a side door and across an atrium to enter into the Safety and Security Office suite. Upon arriving, Mr. Green was not in his office, however his administrative assistant texted him of his next appointment. The interview took place in his office, the third office in a hall of offices. Mr. Green's workspace revealed a small office as there was barely enough room for his desk and chairs. No windows were observed in this office space. His desk

displayed a cluttered workspace with manuals, notebooks, and reports. Before the interview, Mr. Green placed his radio on top of the desk and turned down the volume chatter. He explained that while he couldn't turn it off, however he "would turn down the distraction" as the interview took place (Green, M., Personal Interview, 2015).

Documents, artifacts, and webpage. Several different documents and artifacts collected served as data for this study. Specifically, documents or webpages that referenced threat assessment, safety and security, or policy concerning these aforementioned topics were accessed and reviewed for relevant data. Internal policy documents collected from the participants provided additional data for inclusion in the study.

Policy and procedures manual. BSC Policy and Procedures manual provided all policies and procedures in an internal document for faculty and staff. This document served as the operational document for employees to understand the governance and organizational structure, policy and procedures and any resolutions passed by the governing Board of Regents. Likewise, the Policy and Procedures Manual provided committee purposes and assignments for the campus. This document was reviewed annually for updates and corrections with distribution at the start of the fiscal year in July. Although this was an internal document, it was accessed on the webpage in pdf format. A participant provided direction to the relevant policy section during the interview and also pointed to the location on BSC's webpage. This document was found by typing in policy and procedures into the search bar on the college site.

Student handbook. The student handbook was also accessed through the BSC website. Specifically, the student handbook was found by clicking on the current student tab and scrolling down mid-page to the student handbook button. This document provided students all general information regarding the college, student life and student organizations, athletics, the code of student conduct, information about the threat assessment and behavior intervention team, safety and security, and enrollment information. It served as the official notification of policies and procedures regarding students.

Annual Security Report. The Annual Security Report is filed with the Department of Education by October 1 of each year as required by the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act or Clery Act. This document supplied crime statistics for the last three years over Clery reportable offenses within the reportable mileage area for the campus. These Clery reportable offenses included: murder, manslaughter, aggravated assault, sex offenses, robbery, burglary, motor vehicle theft, arson, hate crimes, and drugs and liquor violations. The Annual Security Report remained available on BSC's website allowing for access by faculty, staff, students, and the community to view crime records and can be downloaded from the safety and security portion of the institution's website.

NaBita risk assessment tool. The NaBita Risk Assessment, designed by the National Behavior Intervention Team Association (NaBita), operated as an assessment instrument promoted to aid threat assessment teams by "providing a rubric for behavioral and risk evaluation and helps create a common language for behavioral intervention" (Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, Swinton, & Van Brunt, 2014, p.2). The TABIT team utilized

this assessment piece at BSC to assess students of concern in relation to harm to self and harm to others. This tool also provided strategies to implement to address behaviors of concern and corresponded with a white paper to detail how the tool should be used for threat assessment teams.

The instrument is divided into three columns titled Harm to Self: Mental and Behavioral Health, "The D-Scale, Overall and Generalized Risk Rubric, and Harm to Self: Nine Levels of Hostility and Violence (NCHERM, 2014). This rubric is included in the appendix (See appendix D). Each of these columns served a purpose in determining the level of threat. The overall risk (middle column) gave a visual of the risk associated with the student of concern. These data were helpful to the discussion of the threat level process.

News8.com. This website supplied local, state and national news stories in an online format. A variety of news topics were covered on this media outlet. An article documented a shooting occurring on the BSC campus provided information concerning the campus response to this shooting. Access to this article was found by searching for BSC and campus safety. The article review aided to determine if this event fell under the purview of the threat assessment and behavior intervention team.

Webpage. BSC's webpage offered valuable information regarding the campus. The webpage contained general campus information and history, student admission and enrollment information, requirements for financial aid, academic programs, career services, student life, student conduct, resident life, community development, and faculty/staff information. Multiple pages provided information relevant to this study.

About Us. The About Us page of BSC's website served as the landing spot for general college information for the community. The purpose of this section operated for recruitment of new students to the institution, but also offered useful information for the general public. Several important links housed on this page led to more specific information. Specifically, clicking on the Our College tab linked to college history, the president's welcome, human resources, fast facts, statistics, policies and procedures, board of regents, academic catalog, and consumer information (About Us, Brownsville State College, 2016). These pages provided access to the Policy and Procedures manual and the Annual Security Report that held the written policy for the college's threat assessment and behavior intervention team.

Campus security. The campus security page, also accessed through the About Us page by clicking on the Our Campus tab, offered several different links such as important campus numbers, residence life, emergency procedures and safety and security. Clicking on the safety and security link supplied information on emergency procedures and general information about campus safety and security. This included the partnerships with the local police department and the campus security authorities contact information.

Redwood State College. Redwood State College (RSC), established in 1907 as one of six agricultural schools, confers two-year associate degrees in a rural eastern area of the state. The Higher Learning Commission reports a ten year accreditation for RSC beginning in 2010-2011 for ten years (Higher Learning Commission, 2016). RSC offers twenty associate degrees and certificates and enrolls a student population of 2700 annually (National Center of Education Statistics, 2016). RSC contains two campuses, the main campus in Redwood and a satellite campus in nearby Morgantown. The main

campus houses nineteen buildings, farm and ranch for agricultural programs, and athletic fields. The satellite campus encompasses two academic buildings (About Us, Redwood State College).

RSC operates as an open admission institution that accepts students who graduated from an accredited high school. The campus reports the average age of the student population at 25, with the main campus enrolling a higher number of traditional age students and the satellite campus registering a higher rate of the non-traditional student population (Campus Profile, Redwood State College). RSC provides housing on the main campus and has 363 students living on campus (Campus Profile, Redwood State College).

As a rural institution, access to mental health services is limited in the area. The State Mental Health Department reports that the home county where RSC is located as one of the ten counties with the "highest rates of reporting mental distress and lowest number of providers in the county at twelve psychiatrist and six counselor psychologists" (Adcock, 2016, para 7). Additionally, they state the population within the county who report mental distress at 15 percent (Adcock, para 6).

Table 3.2 provides information regarding the student population and general information about the institution.

Table 3.2 Redwood State College

Type	Two-year, public
Setting	Rural
Full-time	62%
Part-time	38%
Male	33%
Female	67%
White	51%
African-American	7%
American Indian/Alaskan	33%
Latino	3%
Asian	<0%
Faculty to student ratio	22 to 1

National Center for Education Statistics, 2016

Heritage Hall houses the majority of the campus resource offices and functions of recruitment, admissions, enrollment, financial aid, student support services, cashier, assessment and learning, technology support, human resources, and academic services. This building sits in the center of campus separated from the academic buildings by the main road of campus. Heritage Hall's primary purpose functions as a one-stop shop for enrollment and academic services for future and current students (Redwood State College Catalog, 2015). The first floor layout contains the majority of the aforementioned student services offices. The main lobby holds an information desk that displays marketing information for enrollment, recruitment, veteran's services, and academic tutoring. The environment is very bright with natural light from the cascading windows serving to aid in the fresh, openness of the building. A large staircase leads to the second floor administration offices and conference rooms. Scheduled interviews take place in a conference room on the second floor to ensure privacy for participants.

Participants. Participant interviews for the study consisted of three members of RSC. Interviews were conducted on a fall morning in October and lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour with each interviewee. These individuals served as campus staff and administrators at the institution. All participants received the IRB approved recruitment email and interview appointments were scheduled by the Student Services administrative assistant with all interviews to take place on the same day in a predetermined conference room. Consent forms were provided to all subjects explaining the study, participant's rights, and contact information of the researcher. This consent form also expressed the confidentiality statement, as well as the request for each interview to be audio recorded with the understanding that these recordings would be destroyed once transcription occurred.

Bob Jones. Bob Jones served as the chief officer of security on campus. He was employed at the institution for three years, two years as the Chief Officer. Prior to the chief position, Mr. Jones acted as a campus officer and his previous work experience included twenty years in law enforcement. He was dressed in a law enforcement uniform and appeared to be in his late fifties. Mr. Jones's office was located at the campus police station next door to the campus residence halls. However, his interview took place in the conference room in Heritage Hall. The conference room design exhibited a longer rectangular shape with a large conference table and five or six black leather chairs on each side. The back wall included a credenza cabinet behind the conference table with a coffee pot and cups located on the counter. A clock hung above the credenza on the wall for time keeping, as well as a flat screen monitor on the east wall for presentations.

Dr. Quincy Smith. Dr. Smith represented the administration on the threat assessment team as the Vice President of Student Services and Academics. Dr. Smith worked at RSC for over twenty years in a variety of positions. Originally hired as a faculty member, Dr. Smith served as the Director of Distance Education, Dean of Student Enrollment, and Vice President of Student Services. He held a unique knowledge of the university as he was also an alumna of RSC. Dr. Smith received his associate's degree in agriculture before pursuing further education for his bachelors, masters and Ph.D.

Dean Manning. Dean Manning was assigned to the threat assessment team at RSC representing student services. Mr. Manning served as the Dean of Students and supervised residence life, student conduct, athletics, student life, and all leadership programs. He worked at RSC for the last two years and his prior employment included work for the state's department of human services as the director of child protective services for the local county. The dean of students' office was located in the Student Center along with the campus cafeteria, student lounge, and café.

Documents and Artifacts. Documents and artifacts were collected as data to be analyzed for this study. Specifically, items referencing threat assessment teams, safety and security, or campus policy included in these topics warranted collection. These items were reviewed for significance to this study. The threat assessment team members provided internal policy documents.

Policy. Mr. Jones supplied me with RSC's threat assessment policy. This document defined the purpose of the campus threat assessment team, membership, and levels of threat. It also described the process the threat assessment team utilized as they

met to discuss student concerns. This policy remained as an internal document and was not located on the website or in the student handbook.

Annual Security Report. The annual security report was located for download on RSC's Safety and Security website. This report offered a snapshot view of crime statistics for the campus over the last three years. The Clery Act required each campus who received federal funds in the form of financial aid to submit this report by October 1 each year. This report was located by clicking on the administration tab and then campus safety and security. Crime statistics on the top black bar opened the page to the annual report pdf.

Website. The RSC webpage provided a wealth of information about the campus and also functioned as a resource tool for students, faculty and staff. The website held general information about the campus, admissions, recruitment, enrollment, student conduct, student support services, and academics. Several pages were accessed for data relevant to the institution.

About us. The About Us page supplied a one-stop location for information the general public may obtain while doing research about the institution. This tab provided a gateway to campus information such as: campus history, student life, strategic plan, consumer information, and the campus profile.

Redwood: Through the years. This page provided a historical overview of RSC from the beginning years to the current era. This synopsis gave original purpose and mission of the institution and showed the natural expansion and growth of the college. Primarily, campus visitors who are not familiar with campus accessed this information.

Consumer information. The consumer information served as a valuable resource for those individuals who acquired data about the campus such as admission requirements, financial aid, diversity of the student body, privacy information, safety and security, vaccination policies, retention and graduation rates. Consumer information was located through the About Us tab on the webpage. Though this data can also be found as individual webpages through the RSC site, the consumer information page acted as a landing page linking all of these areas from one place.

Campus safety and security. The safety and security webpage gave the campus community safety information campus. This site encompassed general safety information and direction on how to report criminal activity or concerns. The online threat assessment reporting form was located underneath the forms section. The form served as the official referral for persons of concern, as well as communicated how to report emergencies. The online threat assessment form provided vital information in the reporting process for the threat assessment team.

Data Instruments

In order to collect data from administrators and team members, I served as the primary research instrument by conducting personal interviews. An interview guide was used to assure consistency and relevant data were collected, but still granted the flexibility to pursue follow up questions of the participants. Institutional artifacts and documents, including policy documents, institutional documents, annual security reports, websites, newspaper articles or any other appropriate documentation were analyzed for triangulation of data sources. Furthermore, field notes were created to document non-

verbal cues during interviews and record any follow-up questions or relevant thoughts following the personal interviews of subjects. These strategies allowed for both verbal and non-verbal data to be collected and analyzed.

Patton (2002) stressed the importance of understanding and disclosing how the researcher's experience and/or background affects how information is viewed and understood. For this study, my experience included membership on an institutional threat assessment team at a two-year college as well as participation on a threat assessment team with missing membership components due to budgetary constraints on a smaller two-year campus. I also attended training for threat assessment in the college setting and acquired knowledge of student conduct policies and processes that many times were interwoven into threat assessment.

Data Collection

To collect data, an email was sent to the members of the state's two year colleges. This data was obtained from the state's higher education regent's office. The email served to introduce the study and allowed for general discussion about the topic of threat assessment. Specifically, it aimed to recruit two-year institutions with established threat assessment teams to participate. The institutions selected to participate were provided with a consent form that presented an overview of the study and participant rights, including the ability to discontinue participation in the study at any time.

Planned interviews with the campus administrator were conducted first to allow for explanation of mission, purpose, and authority of the threat assessment team from the administrative viewpoint. Interview guides were utilized to ensure all subjects of the team

were asked questions consistently. However, allowing flexibility in the interviews was critical to permit appropriate follow up on any emerging information provided by the subjects. Questions addressed the culture, values and norms of the executive administration and the institution as a whole. This inquiry also addressed committee development, institutional policy, and resource allocation concerning threat assessment (See interview guide, Appendix A). Upon concluding the interview, I asked the administrator to send the provided email correspondence to team members explaining the study, as well as informing them that they would be contacted to inquire about participation. This email was not intended to identify members as these individuals were selected for committee assignment, but to lend the site administrator's credibility and awareness of research being conducted on campus to the team members.

Secondly, team members were interviewed to collect data about team processes and to allow for member perceptions and meanings related to these processes to emerge. These questions incorporated questions about institutional policy, team leadership, communication, training, resource allocation and conflict resolution. Follow-up interviews were conducted as appropriate to address any gaps in the data, or to seek further clarification or review on statements made by team members. These follow-up interviews were conducted in person or by telephone as appropriate. Once all the interview data was collected and transcribed, the data was sent to the participant for member checking.

Finally, to allow for triangulation of data and to provide a more complete picture of the institutional landscape, campus documents and artifacts were collected. Analyzing multiple data sources aided in addressing validity and trustworthiness of the data

collection. These documents included institutional webpages, written policy, newspaper or campus newspaper clippings addressing campus violence, the annual safety report provided to the U.S. Department of Education and any appropriate committee meeting minutes that were available. These records were found by researching current public information, requesting internal documents from the institution, and referring to submitted reports to the DOE. Incorporating these data pieces into the collection allowed for conversational questions during interviews, as well as provided references to protocols and policies during data analysis.

Several techniques used in the data collection process helped to address the trustworthiness of the research. Triangulating data sources with interviews and document artifact collection aided to verify the data. Member checking the transcripts with research participants helped to assure interpretations of the transcripts were correct. Employing reflexive journals and peer debriefing in the form of journal memos and formal or informal discussion with a peer provided an avenue for emerging themes in the data to be analyzed as well as track decisions. All of these techniques were beneficial to the analysis of the data.

Data Analysis

Culture Theory served as a theoretical framework as discussed in Chapter One. This theoretical lens looked closely at risk assessment in threat assessment teams. First, all interviews were transcribed and shared with the subject for accuracy in the transcription. This technique, called member checking, was used to establish trustworthiness in qualitative data. Before the theoretical framework was incorporated as

a final analysis, all data sources were analyzed to search for the common categories and themes that emerged through open coding. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) described a variety of techniques to aid in analysis for deeper understanding of member meanings that was beneficial in analysis. The authors explained these techniques as:

> A number of distinct moments in group life highlight how members express, orient to, and create local meaning. Ethnographers begin to construct members' meanings by looking closely at *what members say and do* during such moments, paying particular attention to the words, phrases, and categories that members use in their everyday interactions (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 134).

These strategies allowed for exploration of possible cultural notions and norms that were common in the environment by utilizing categories such as member's meanings, member terms, everyday questions and answers, member descriptions, member stories, member contexts and contrasts, and member explanation and theories (Emerson et al, 2011).

Emerson et al. (2011) stressed that categorizing comments into these criterions was not the focus of practicing the exercises, moreover, the importance was considering "sensitively representing in written texts what local people consider meaningful and important" (p. 130). By paying attention to members' terms in addressing members, one better understood the formality or informality and social relations of the group. Likewise, considering how subjects asked everyday questions and how these questions were answered provided understanding of the underlying workings of a group. By asking open-ended questions, individuals were able to answer in ways that were natural in the setting for that group. Another strategy encouraged by Emerson included paying close

attention to members' descriptions of events, activities, or groups (2011). Incorporating this technique allowed the subject's voice to be the focus; therefore assumed understanding or predetermined meanings were lessened. Member invoked contexts and contrasts allowed subjects to describe the importance of events and explain why these events were important in their own words. Considering contrasting events in the same manner offered an opportunity to better understand group or personal changes over time as perceived by the subject.

Critical incidents cited by the participants were also analyzed. A critical incident is defined as an activity or event perceived by an individual to enact some change in behavior or action (Emerson et al., 2011). These incidents happened in a variety of scenarios and provided multiple responses. By exploring the data for critical incidents, it allowed for deeper understanding of allocation of resources and strengths and weaknesses in the threat assessment team process.

Cultural Theory sought to understand societal conflict in assigning risk to cultural issues. This theory incorporated risk assessment and assignment, group culture and conflict. As stated above, this theoretical framework was a foundational analysis component to this study. Yin (2011) discussed the importance creating an analysis strategy incorporating open coding and allowing the themes and categories to emerge from the data before applying any "theoretical prepositions" of the framework (p.111). This strategy provided a safeguard from applying an apriori theory. Therefore, all data were analyzed as a final strategy to determine the applicability of Cultural Theory. The Cultural Theory lens was applied after the initial coding and Emerson's techniques were

completed to determine how or if the emerging categories and themes aligned within the framework.

Summary

The primary purpose of this chapter was to outline the methodology and methods utilized in this study. The constructivist epistemology set the foundation and guided this study with the worldview that knowledge encompasses multiple meanings based on individual perceptions. Likewise, the multiple case study design afforded the appropriate approach to conduct the study. The sampling methods, participations sites and subjects were presented, along with data collection methods. Finally, the data analysis exercises used to aid in the discovery of merging categories and themes were given.

The next chapter will present the findings for this study. The structure of this chapter will categorize data by institution, then by the cases together. The findings will set up the discussion and analysis of the data for Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter III provided details concerning the research methodology design for this study. The methodology chapter served as the blueprint moving forward in this research initiative and supplied a detailed description of the research sites, participants, and documents gathered for inclusion in the findings and analysis. This study design represented a multiple case study approach, therefore it was appropriate to explain results from not only the individual institutions, but also to incorporate the cross-case findings to search for patterns. Yin (2014) stated when a pattern from one case is replicated by data from another case, the finding is stronger. This chapter presents the findings from all cases to prepare for the discussion in Chapter V.

As Chapter III explained, two institutions offering two-year associate degrees were selected to be included in this study. Data collection consisted of documents, artifacts, and personal interviews of participants at each site. The research questions sought to understand the perceptions of the impact of threat assessment teams on campus on the two-year campus.

The interviews functioned as the primary basis for data collection, along with written documents and artifacts. The findings presented below represented the participants' comments throughout the interview process and their perceptions of the

practice of threat assessment on campus safety. This study focused on the perceptions of threat assessment team members at two-year colleges, specifically Brownsville State College (BSC) and Redwood State College (RSC). The findings presented below include each case individually, and the cross-case findings taken together.

Brownsville State College

As described in Chapter III, Brownsville State College served an urban area of the state as an open-admission, two-year institution. I visited Brownsville State College on two adjacent weekday afternoons to conduct three interviews of the threat assessment team and behavior intervention team (TABIT) members. The findings presented in this section emerged from the interview transcripts and documents gathered for this study. This section provided the findings for participants' perceptions of threat assessment teams on campus safety and the challenges faced by TAT's at two-year colleges. The BSC TABIT traditionally managed seven to ten cases per year through the threat assessment team process. The types of concerns that the TABIT heard included students experiencing mental health issues, veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol or drug issues, suicidal ideation, and disruptions in the classroom.

Perceptions of TATs on Campus Safety

Transparency. Each participant was asked a series of questions during the interview process using an interview guide as a question prompt. These questions revolved around members' interpretations or perceptions of threat assessment teams and the impact on campus safety. All subjects at BSC voiced the importance of transparency

from the inception of the team. A critical component to the transparency included providing buy-in from the campus community early in the planning stages:

> When we had the first group of people involved we made it clear to this campus that we wanted people to know about threat assessment. That we did not have a package we were unfolding, but we were building this as we were moving forward. We asked for the campus to be patient as we were in the beginning stages. There were people from every academic division involved and we encouraged them to go back and speak with people in their areas (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015).

Similar views expressed the importance of transparency on the perception of the campus threat assessment and behavior intervention team. One member commented "the openness from the beginning led to buy-in as members were recruited based off of skills or expertise regardless of status" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015). Another member expressed the significance of inclusion of campus employee stakeholders not only for involvement, but to lend credibility to the team's work. He summarized the perception of this campus initiative saying,

> This happened so the campus would have ownership in this. It was done out in the open for people to see. You know we don't want this to come off and appear as a committee that is sitting around and making decisions on student fate in the dark. We operate in the open (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015).

Likewise, another participated stated,

> Faculty embraced this concept as they viewed it as another way to help students. We reached out to all units on campus: administration, academic departments, faculty, staff …we provided communication to everyone during the start of this team. It helped us to get buy-in from the start of TABIT (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015.)

However, while the transparency was commended by the participants, they recognized that the initial committee was too large and arduous for timely meetings, "discovering fifteen people was too big … we shrunk it down to five to eight people and we strived to make sure every area of the college was represented" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015).

Likewise, the role the administration played in the team transparency element remained critical. This transparency was described as the openness of the administration to present the concept to important campus stakeholders aided in providing a smooth transition to team formation. Administration placed importance for the campus community to be informed appropriately about the TABIT and allowed opportunities for the campus to ask questions regarding the team's purpose. From the early days to the present, participants commented that administration offered support "by promoting the team at bi-annual faculty in-services" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015) or "promoting the team at bi-annual faculty in-service" (Mayes, S. personal communication, September 11, 2015) provided examples of how administration supported the group. Both older and newer participants found representation in these statements reporting that administration not only supports the work the group does, but acts to give credibility and legitimacy to campus stakeholders.

Campus Safety. Perceptions of the impact of the TABIT on campus safety at BSC were positive to the different stakeholders of the institution according to the interviewees. The mission of the TABIT team states:

> The mission of the TABIT team is to balance the individual needs of the student and those of the great campus community, provide a structured positive method for addressing student behaviors that impact the campus community and may involve mental health and/or safety issues, manage each case individually, initiate appropriate intervention without immediately resorting to punitive measures, and to eliminate fragmented care (Brownsville State College Threat Assessment Policy, p. 1).

Comments such as "faculty sees this process as an avenue, a vehicle to get students anonymity and confidentiality to a place that they can report concerns and get students the help they need instead of trouble in conduct" (Smith, M, personal communication, September 11, 2015) or that "faculty viewpoints changed when they realized they won't be laughed at or look like an idiot if they report" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015) provided insight into the excitement for this process by the team. Likewise, these statements spoke to their reporting process for the campus community as it allowed for both confidential and anonymous reporting of concerns Participants stated movement towards collaborative threat assessment happened when the culture of the institution began to change with new administration.

Team members stated this change allowed deans and faculty a place to "voice legitimate concerns" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) and "an

opportunity to guide and mentor students at risk" (Mayes, S., September 11, 2015). The team claimed that faculty saw the benefits of this group the most as this provided a direct referral to manage student concerns. Evidence continued to be reported throughout the interviews that the TABIT provided a place to report the "what ifs or the I am not sures" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015) to the appropriate institutional personnel. Participants stated that this group "connects those who are struggling with resources" (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015) and "aids in creating a campus of safety" (Green, B. personal communication, September 11, 2015) was also voiced frequently about the TABIT.

While participants recognized the positive perceptions of faculty who "are aware" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) insight that there "are still campus faculty and staff that are not sure of the purpose" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) or "concerned that this only leads to trouble for the student" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015) continued to worry the team. Likewise, the uneasiness regarding the awareness of the student body remained a problem as evidenced by this statement, "we have to do more than just put it in the handbook and call it good. Our students don't read that unless they are looking for a specific issue" (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015). All members questioned how cognizant students are of the process or the importance of the threat assessment team to campus safety.

Annual Security Report. The Annual Security Report for BSC, located on the college website, supported findings of the President's statements about campus security and TABIT's role in the safety protocols. Specifically, the President highlighted the

different strategies the campus conducts to aid personnel in keeping the community safe in the Annual Security Report. She featured the work of the TABIT team saying, “the TABIT is on campus to analyze reports of campus members in crisis or exhibiting concerning or dangerous behavior” (BSC Annual Security Report, 2014, p.2). Likewise, the report itself referenced the importance of the TABIT to campus safety by detailing the team under the security awareness and preventative measures section of the document.

President's Response to Security Event and Faculty Senate Minutes.

Recently, a shooting on the campus of BSC occurred in the early morning hours before classes began. Although this incident did not involve a current student of BSC, the subject/victim ran onto campus with local police units in pursuit. Emergency notification from the institution provided instructions through the webpage and media outlets about safety and security while the incident was in progress. However, the emergency notification system utilizing the text and email function was not activated for this situation. Following the event, the president released a statement to address the shooting to the campus community and the general public.

The statement explained that a police foot chase resulted when the subject attempted to hide his location near a building on campus. The individual opened fire on the police officer who returned fire and gained control of the situation. Officers from the local police arrived on campus within two minutes and the incident concluded within five minutes. Furthermore, the report stressed the importance of student safety and thanked the local authorities and the contracted security force for their quick response.

According to the monthly faculty senate minutes, the senate discussed this event in their monthly meeting. The minutes reflected expressions of concern about whether the campus was notified appropriately when the shooting occurred as many were left "unaware" and there was a "communication breakdown" by not using the emergency notification system (BSC Faculty Senate Minutes, September, 2015). As a result of these comments, the voting body recommended information for all safety and security processes or programs, including TABIT, be added to the spring convocation for all campus constituents to be aware of the safety systems in place.

Student Handbook. The student handbook served as the primary publication to students about campus policies, procedures and resources. This document addressed campus safety, although the student handbook did not provide quotes about the perception of the campus community concerning TABIT. The TABIT was described as "dedicated and qualified staff" that looks "to balance individual needs of the students and those of the greater campus community" (RSC Student Handbook, 2015, p. 16). Likewise, the handbook portrayed the team as engaging in "appropriate interventions instead of punitive measures and fragmented care" (BSC Student Handbook, 2015, P.16). The motto, "If you see something, say something" was introduced to the student in this publication and encourages reporting of concerning behavior (BSC Student Handbook, 2015, p. 16).

Campus Challenges for Threat Assessment Team

Many Roles. Interview participants at BSC appeared to be enthusiastic members of the TABIT team. Each person represented a critical function for the purpose of threat

assessment on campus. However, finding emerged concerning challenges the group faced as they continued to move forward into a stronger team. One of the most noted challenges cited included the many roles committee members played on campus. The "day-to-day responsibilities of the job" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015) and the "pulls from different stakeholders" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) pushed scheduled meetings as a lesser priority if there was not a specific student concern to discuss. The chair of the committee recognized that training meetings became difficult to maintain at the end of the spring semester resulting in an abbreviated training schedule.

Membership. Many two-year institutions operated with lean departmental staffing with individuals responsible for multiple roles on campus. As the titles of the interviewees suggested, BSC TABIT members performed critical roles on campus. The Dean of Students served as the student conduct officer, Title IX Coordinator, Residence Life Director, and TABIT chair. Likewise, the Coordinator of Safety, Security and Risk Management job responsibilities encompassed parts of TABIT, but the safety aspect of his job was much more than just this process. The occupational safety requirements for the institution fell under this position, as well as security staff and contracts. The Director of Student Outreach job responsibilities included student counseling, disabilities services, women leadership programs, domestic abuse programs, TABIT, and student academic support. One participant stated, "Even though priorities change for the administration, the removal of former priorities rarely occurs" (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015).

Members at BSC reported the ideal membership on the TABIT team was challenging at the community college because the candidates for the membership pool was limited. This presented a concern as evidenced by the following statement, "the pool is so small on this campus there is no one that I would select in some areas and have confidence that information would be kept confidential" (Green, B., personal communication, September 10, 2015). Member selection targeted those individuals who brought area expertise or represented a critical position in relation to the TABIT purpose.

> Everyone who has been picked on this team is on because of their position, but then also their specific background or expertise … it wasn't just decided by throwing names in a hat. We actually looked at the individual and said 'what is their background' (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015)?

Therefore, participants stated some roles may go unfilled or unrepresented on TABIT because of people wearing "many hats" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) "unqualified departmental personnel" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015) or "not having that position" (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015) on campus.

Consistent meetings. One of the identified best practices from NaBita was for teams to meet on a pre-determined, consistent basis (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009; Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Golston, 2014). For some colleges, this occurred every week, for others bi-monthly or monthly. Participants from BSC stated they met monthly for the behavior intervention process and met as needed for the threat assessment protocol. For this team, the behavior intervention process incorporated the case management function and the threat assessment protocol included the Dean of Students,

Safety and Security Coordinator, and the Mental Health Counselor who was responsible for deciding if the entire group needed to be called together or the concern transferred over to the police. The group recognized that as the business of the semester transpired, meetings were sometimes cancelled or postponed. These actions made it difficult for the team to then find another time to meet as a group.

Confidentiality. All members at BSC referenced the importance of confidentiality for those students who were brought forward to the TABIT. For the campus counselor, confidentiality remained critical to her "role on campus" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015) and the TABIT cannot "compromise the information shared in a counselor-client relationship" (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015). The team reported they experienced times when they "realize this person cannot speak up" and therefore "is very careful not to ask questions to put this person in a difficult position" in order to comply with regulations of the counseling profession (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015). Participants cited this as a challenge because "the campus only has one and a half counselor positions available to the entire student body" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015).

Awareness of team. The promotion of the TABIT team focused on communication to faculty, staff and administration. Participants stated the primary tool used to communicate and publicize the TABIT included "faculty in-services" (Green, B., Mayes, S., & Smith, M., personal communication, September 10-11, 2015). The main objective of these presentations focused on "awareness to notify faculty how to connect" to the TABIT (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015). Likewise, the

team stated that information "blasted out in an email at the beginning of the semester" needed to be revisited later in the semester and throughout the academic year to keep faculty from forgetting about the resource (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015).

The team stated the promoting the message to the students about TABIT's purpose and how to report issues was a concern. The primary mode of promotion to the student body about TABIT occurred through the student handbook. Statements such as "the need for reoccurring marketing" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) and the need for "sustained marketing of the team purpose" (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015) showed that promotion to students lacked a comprehensive awareness and education strategy or plan.

Training and budget. Although training and budget can be viewed as two different challenges, these two issues seemed intertwined in the comments of the members. Findings of how training transpired for the BSC team appeared mixed, as the group determined training needs annually. Interviews revealed that training needs were identified at the beginning of the academic year and topics were mutually agreed upon by the group. The majority of training occurred through other job responsibilities,

> I go to professional development with counseling dealing with all kinds of situations and that helps me, but I bring that to the group. But having something for all of us would be beneficial. I've perceived it to be just little pockets of this and pulling it all together to see how all the units work together with a different

goal in mind would be beneficial (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2017).

Participants stated they preferred "training all together versus as a small bit by bit training individually" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015). Additionally, another member supported this thought by reporting group training "helps to see the big picture and hear different perspectives" in working through a concern (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015).

Another member also agrees that group training would be beneficial for the team, however "the high cost" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) of national training and "the absence of key personnel" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015) in the same time period proved to be a roadblock for the professional development initiative. Participants expressed that during a period of waning state appropriations and budgets, "campus safety is not sexy" and may be "placed on the back burner" when up against other campus initiatives (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015). Findings indicated the participants "attended local conferences at a neighboring university for basic threat assessment" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 11, 2015) or utilized "low or no-cost webinars" to address education for the team (Green, B., personal communication, September 10, 2015).

Brownsville State College Summary

Each of the TABIT team members interviewed at BSC stated that the threat assessment team process contributed to campus safety. All participants agreed that the transparency during development of the team and campus inclusion in the process

benefited team credibility. They also expressed multiple challenges for the threat assessment team on campus including various roles played by single individuals, confidentiality issues, as well as funding and training. Other challenges included the need for successful awareness and education campaigns for the campus community about the team and maintaining meetings throughout the semester. Although participants stated that the team was viewed in a positive light, faculty senate addressed the need for more communication to the campus community.

Redwood State College

Redwood State College (RSC), located in a rural area of the state, conferred two-year associate degrees with agricultural purposes as the primary focus. The campus visit to RSC occurred on a fall day during the semester. The campus bustled with students rushing to find a parking space and hurrying off to class. Not familiar with the campus, I asked a friendly student to point the way to Heritage Hall. This destination served as the location of participant interviews for the day. Like the previous institution, three interviews were conducted at this site to collect data about the threat assessment team on campus. The findings presented in this section were produced from the data obtained through the interviews and collected documents and artifacts. The findings encompassed team members' perceptions of the threat assessment team on campus safety and the challenges involved with the threat assessment team.

Perceptions of Threat Assessment Team

From the beginning of the interviews, participants from RSC expressed how the campus was different from many other colleges and universities throughout the state.

Because of the rural location, participants described BSC as "isolated" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015) and "a different duck" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2017). Most employees at the institution consisted of locals who have resided in the surrounding county for years, if not their entire lives. Furthermore, "outsiders do not stay here long because we are set in our ways" (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015). The following quote communicated this further,

> We do things different here. Our processes and programs don't always look like the big universities, but it works. It may look redneck to outsiders, but it works for our students and people (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

Sentiments such as "our people do their best" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015) and "work hard with the resources we have" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015), indicated the process may look very different from others. Participants revealed they only see a few cases a year and these cases include issues such as disruptive students, students with mental health issues or post-traumatic stress disorder, or drug/alcohol issues. Crime statistics from the Annual Security Report revealed violations of drug/alcohol, burglary, vehicle theft, and two reports of rape in the residence hall.

Help, Not Hinder. Participants highlighted the purpose of the campus threat assessment team was an "obvious safety initiative" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015), however they also described the threat assessment process as an

opportunity to “help, not hinder” a student in crisis (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015). Furthermore, members reported that a person of concern always “has a redeeming moment or opportunity to make a change before a conduct approach is considered” (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015). The finding of threat assessment as “help, not hinder” provided a shared vision (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015). Members stated the opportunity to help those struggling students gave campus professionals a chance to intervene early and possibly reduce losing students to suspension,

> I think it is wrong to pile conduct charges on during a difficult time. And so my part is that I want it to be as fair as it possibly could be ... And recognize that sometimes people are depressed and do some of these concerning behaviors… it’s just a page in their life and we need to help them get through that (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

Members revealed the history of how threat assessment began as a campus safety initiative on campus. Like many institutions, Virginia Tech was cited as the critical incident for team formation,

> There wasn’t a specific violent incident that occurred on our campus prompting the start of our threat assessment team. It was more an answer to what was being observed across the nation with campus violence at places like Virginia Tech. We knew that we needed to learn the lessons observed from that tragic event and look for ways to identify and help students in crisis before tragedy (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

The group believed the threat assessment team improved campus safety as it provided an avenue for discussion of issues. The threat assessment team became "a mirror for us to hold up" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015) and an "opportunity to see the holes in the fence" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015) to create awareness of the issues students were experiencing during their time at RSC. The participants did not indicate if the discussion of these issues provided topics for future training or if they were only concerned with visualizing where there were gaps in their current resources or security measures.

Another reference of the "help" finding that the threat assessment team provided persons of concerns included statements heard from the school personnel. Participants claimed statements from the campus community about the threat assessment team included comments such as "a help line" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015) or "second chances" (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015) and "provides a different path" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015) instead of student conduct or possible criminal probes. As one member stated, "it's needed for a campus our size to keep a pulse on the problems of our student body" (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

Annual Security Report. The annual security report provided a snapshot statistical view of crime on campus and was completed each year according to the Clery Act regulations. At the beginning of the report, one of the interviewees provided an introduction to the document and also stated the importance of safety and security at RSC. Crime statistics disclosed the types of violations at RSC included liquor and drug

law violations, vehicle theft, dating violence, rape, and aggravated assault over a period of three years as required by the Clery Act (Clery Act, 1990).

News articles on website. Several web articles promoted the concept of campus safety and what actions administration was taking to keep the student body, faculty, and staff protected while they attend class or work duties. One particular article promoted the education and training of participants that aided him in his job function of safety and security for the campus. This article also notified the campus that this individual served on the threat assessment team, and was identified as the law enforcement expert. Additionally, the article referenced the threat assessment team was seen as a safety initiative and attempts to stay up to date with current trends, equipment, and training including updating certifications, software, vehicles, etc., "Redwood State College makes campus security a priority through educating our staff and by offering them the most up-to-date information, techniques and equipment" (Redwood State College, Ret. 10/15).

Additionally, RSC utilized the institutional website to promote various safety initiatives across campus. Recently, the campus completed a campus security audit to make the campus as safe as possible. These items included increased lighting and security cameras around various areas of campus. Also, promotion of the campus emergency notification system was highlighted, as well as the threat assessment team initiative.

Challenges for the Threat Assessment Team

Consistent Meetings. One challenge that was identified by participants at RSC involved inconsistent meeting times for the threat assessment team. RSC conducted meetings as needed per threat assessment members. There was not dedicated time set

aside during the week or month for the threat assessment team to meet. The primary reason given for the lack of consistent meetings was the busy schedules of the group. Likewise, member referenced the fact that there was a lack of issues that came to the threat assessment team and "they are handled a different way" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015). One member voiced a concern that not meeting frequently caused members not to be "fresh on the process" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015) and "perhaps glaze over details that should be raising a flag" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

All members stated they should be meeting monthly regardless if there was a case to discuss or not. Although they reported they do not see the same number or type of concerns as the "big campuses" (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015), all members recognized they may not be "catching issues" at the lowest possible level (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015). Participants stated the threat assessment team does not receive many reports from the campus community and they only manage a few cases a year for issues such as disruptive students, students with mental health issues or post-traumatic stress disorder, or drug/alcohol issues. One person indicated most of the issues were managed by different processes such as student conduct or the criminal process. RSC's threat assessment policy did not include a mission statement for the threat assessment team. Additionally, the policy stated

> members will meet monthly, or as needed to address all cases that have occurred during the previous 30 days … Additional meetings may be held to assess, intervene and monitor student/employee concerns brought to the attention of the TAT" (Redwood State College Threat Assessment Policy, p. 1).

Many Roles. Like many two-year institutions throughout the area, RSC operated with a small number of employees in relation to enrollment. At RSC, faculty absorbed a large number of employees leaving staff to service students with lower numbers in the employee count. Therefore, this required staff at RSC to take on many different job responsibilities under one office. Dr. Smith provided an example, "on a four-year campus there is an office for student life, student conduct, and athletics. However, on the RSC campus all these job operations become the responsibility of one person" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

This finding was reported in other interviews as the challenges of many job responsibilities continued to be described by this statement "so many wear so many different hats here that sometimes being able to focus on one task and doing it well suffers" (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015). Another articulated concern that one person on campus could hold a tremendous amount of power if they were responsible for multiple functions on campus stating,

> If someone holds the job responsibility of Title IX Coordinator, student conduct officer, residential hall director and student life, how are they supposed to do all of these jobs at a high level and keep on top of all the new practices? It's impossible! That's what we live with here (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

Counseling. RSC did not employ counselors on campus for students. The campus did not provide a counseling center to address student issues or crisis. This led to all participants reporting this as the biggest challenge facing not only the threat assessment

team, but the campus as a whole. An explanation shared "if a student is in need of counseling services, a referral is made to an outside agency in the county at the student's expense" (Manning, D. personal communication, October 28, 2015). He commented further that the availability of funds to assist students with this service limited paid referrals. Funds designated for referrals continued to be earmarked for athletes on campus. Members concur that counseling is "a dire need" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015) and "valued for the team process" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015), however all recognized that "this will not be addressed in the near future due to the difficult budget period facing higher education" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015). Members expressed that the team acquired individual training to address some of the issues students reported such as mental health first aid, recognizing signs and symptoms of drug/alcohol abuse, and suicide prevention through the QPR Institute (Question, Persuade, Refer). However, none of the team members were licensed counselors. One member stated this point became a "fine line" to stay within the scope of employment for liability purposes (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

Awareness. The RSC team stated awareness of the team and purpose was a challenge moving forward. Statements such as "the tremendous amount of work to increase awareness" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015) and "proper advertisement could change perspectives of some who do not understand how the group functions" (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015) highlighted the groups' belief of the need for more deliberate comprehensive awareness campaign. Likewise, the group expressed that better marketing could increase the use of the threat

assessment team to address student concerns at a lower level perhaps reaching students before they entered a full crisis stage.

The team stated student notification of the threat assessment team needed to be more than a single email at the beginning of the semester and a brief introduction at faculty in-service. Student notification occurred at hall meetings at the beginning of the year to address how to report through the webpage, but a sustained marketing plan needed to be "developed and introduced" to the campus (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015). One member stated, "I'm concerned that students do not truly know where and how to report a safety or security concern to the threat assessment team" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

Committee Leadership. There were several questions concerning committee leadership asked of each of the participants at RSC. When asked about the chair or leader of the threat assessment team, all three interviewees answered this question differently. The written policy for RSC failed to address team leadership or who presided as chair of the committee. The policy only deciphered between core members and ad hoc membership, however the chairman position was void in the document.

Upon inquiring about who leads the meetings, statements differed about who filled this role on the team. One member reported that different members took the lead as they were equipped or if they attained more knowledge about the situation. Another participant disagreed and stated that there was a clear chair of the committee, the Vice President. The third member expressed that he served in the role of chair at most meetings because the initial reports came to his office and he was the person who called

the meeting after speaking with the Vice President. However, he stated that he was not assigned leadership by policy.

Training and Budget. Participants stated training presented a challenge for RSC as they continued to progress as a threat assessment team. The team referenced the struggle for all team members to be absent from campus at once,

> Again…coming from a small school … you wear so many different hats because you are doing so many different things. Trying to find a time to send four or five different people to training is kind of difficult because we do so much that many things stop when you are gone. It would be nice if everyone could go to some of that training like mental health or other type of training. We went to a table top exercise at another institution about active shooters on campus. But if you don't get all your members there, it's kind of a waste. Only a few people know what to do and everyone is waiting for someone to direct (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

This statement found agreement within the interviews; however references to the cost involved with sending people to training showed the budget challenge in a time of strained budgets.

> We just don't have the budget currently to send out team to the national trainings that seem to be so helpful. We have to be creative and look for partnerships for training. Webinars are our best bet to get everyone together at the same time just for the cost-savings that are involved (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

A different perspective about training surfaced from the participant interviews as the discussion focused on this topic. Participants at RSC stated that "training centered more on the individual roles of the team members instead of training of the team as a whole" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015). These trainings concentrated on issues that addressed other job responsibilities, but supported the overall goal of threat assessment. Members' referenced trainings in student conduct, crisis intervention, mental health, legal issues, CERT, suicide prevention, domestic and sexual violence, and risk management. Participants stated that the threat assessment philosophy received attention at these trainings, but was not focused on as the primary message.

Summary for Redwood State College

Members interviewed for this study from Redwood State College were in agreement that the perception of the threat assessment team process affected campus safety in a positive manner. Likewise, threat assessment served not only as another strategy for safety, but also as a help mechanism for students. The threat assessment policy provided the purpose for the team; however it lacked a clear and concise mission statement to guide the direction of the group.

Several challenges in relation to threat assessment at RSC were voiced throughout the interview sessions. Interviewees acknowledged RSC struggled to meet consistently throughout the year for threat assessment even though policy stated they would meet monthly. Likewise, participants viewed the many roles they were responsible for hindered availability and leaving campus for training. The training and budget also presents obstacles for this smaller, rural college threat assessment team. Participants

stated training occurred individually through their respective offices, but lacked the funding for group or team training. Additionally, the team expressed the need for mental health counseling caused a critical barrier for the threat assessment team, as well as the institution; however this barrier tied directly to the budget difficulties that the higher education institution was experiencing. Finally, the lack of awareness of the threat assessment team to faculty, staff, and students surfaced as a challenge according to the group members.

Cross-Case Findings

The previous sections of this chapter described the findings from the individual institutions selected to be included in this multiple case study. The aforementioned two-year higher education institutions were selected to reflect diversity in rural and urban settings. Additionally, this segment presented the findings of the two cases taken together that provided relevance to the research questions. A total of six interviews from two institutions were conducted for the study. Five mid-level administrators and one executive administrator were interviewed for data collection purposes. Three mid-level administrators held student services positions, two held safety and security responsibilities, and one served as an executive vice-president. Specific descriptions of these institutions and individuals were introduced in Chapter III. The cross-case findings presented in the following sections provide relevance to the research questions in this study.

Perceptions of Threat Assessment Teams and Campus Safety

The two-year colleges included in this study implemented threat assessment teams on campus as a safety initiative to identify students/persons of concern and provide resources or mechanisms to mitigate risk for the institution and student. Individuals from both colleges stated that a critical event did not occur at the institution; however national incidents of violence at colleges and universities led the respective campuses to look at best practices for safety, prevention and detection. The decision to start a threat assessment team as "the right thing to do … a structured response to a campus crisis" communicates the central themes about threat assessment teams – the perception of safety and the purpose to help (Smith, M., personal communication, October 28, 2015). Study participants communicated statements about threat assessment teams and campus safety. The findings that emerged included the perception of safety and the purpose to help. This section presents the findings as described by the participants concerning the perceptions of threat assessment and campus safety.

Campus Safety. Participants at both institutions considered threat assessment teams central to campus safety as the primary function of the group and process. Written policy at both colleges cited safety as the leading principle for implementing a threat assessment team. One participant verbalized threat assessment concisely, "threat assessment is a best practice for campus safety" (Smith, M., personal interview, September 10, 2015). Participants attributed a variety of comments to threat assessment teams such as "the use of transparency during process development and the credibility afforded to the team by administration" led to the successful transition to the threat assessment philosophy (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015). The

belief that the threat assessment team concept improved campus safety by increasing awareness because it "adds another layer to patch the fence" suggested buy-in from group members (Jones, personal communication, October 28, 2015). Participants also credit support from administration as providing legitimacy and credibility to the team. This occurred by promoting efforts at the fall convocation, in-service, and campus documents such as the annual security report and the student handbook. Additionally, marketing inconsistencies of the team continued to provide barriers for threat assessment.

Help, Not Hinder. Members at both institutions referenced the threat assessment teams as being a "help" initiative for students who were struggling. One participant coined the phrase, "help, not hinder" when speaking of the additional purpose of the threat assessment team process (Smith, M. personal communication, September 10, 2015). Several participants reported this system as an additional avenue to assist troubled students without accessing the conduct or criminal process if the situation did not rise to a threatening level. The BSC team stated that faculty was appreciative of this process because it appeared to be a true channel to raise concerns and provided resources to students without immediately triggering a code of conduct violation BSC's mission statement includes thought in the mission statement to provide interventions without being punitive (BSC Threat Assessment Policy, p.1).

Challenges for Threat Assessment Teams on Two-Year Campus

Participants at both sites referenced challenges for their campuses concerning threat assessment and the team. Some of these challenges were common at both institutions and some were different. Both institutions commented that the many job

functions one person was responsible for on a two-year campus as a challenge. Participants also pointed to training as a significant obstacle because of budget constraints. Likewise, comments from members at both institutions identified the difficulties of marketing the team to appropriately communicate the presence and purpose of the team on campus as a challenge. Finally, members voiced that the inconsistent meeting times was a complication. Participants expressed issues that were not shared at both sites. These challenges included the need for counseling, team leadership, and confidentiality of the team.

Participants at both sites reported challenges that indicated the "many roles" individuals cover as a challenge for threat assessment teams on two-year campuses (Green, B., Jones, B., Manning, D., Mayes, S., Smith, M., and Smith, Q., personal interviews, September 10-11, 2015 and October 28, 2015). At RSC, a member reported he was responsible for student life, student conduct, Title IX, athletics, housing, and leadership while another subject at BSC stated he was responsible for security, occupational safety, contract security, and threat assessment. A third individual explained that he was responsible for student conduct, Title IX, threat assessment, and residential life. Individuals stated that these job duties required significant time and attention and therefore it became difficult to find time when the entire team could be trained for threat assessment. Likewise, it was noted that one person covering multiple responsibilities allowed for one person on the threat assessment team to cover several viewpoints (housing, conduct, etc.). Participants stated this concern as something each team worked through regularly.

The teams also communicated struggles that were dissimilar from each other. RSC members expressed that the biggest challenge for the threat assessment team, process, and campus was the lack of counseling at the institution. One member stated this barrier was directly related to the cost to employ a licensed counselor in the rural area, and was not expected to change in the foreseeable future with the current budget constraints facing higher education.

Another finding difference between the two institutions concerned team leadership designation. All members at RSC quoted a different person as the leader of the group with one person stating that there was not a designated leader for each meeting, but whoever was appropriate to lead for that specific issue stepped forward.

The final difference noted in the findings was the issue of confidentiality. While BSC participants stated the current team held confidentiality of cases in the highest regard, it provided challenges in appropriately staffing the team. Members stated some areas remained unrepresented on the threat assessment team because of the concern that confidentiality would not be held by some as required in possible cases.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the interviews and documents collected for the cases included in this study. This chapter highlighted the findings for the two community colleges that participated as two individual case studies. Each of the case findings were presented including perceptions of threat assessment on campus safety and challenges for threat assessment teams at two-year community colleges. Finally, this

chapter concluded with cross-case findings of both cases taken together to address the research questions for this study.

The discussion and analysis of the findings will be presented in Chapter V in reference to the research questions, pertinent literature, and the theoretical lens as described in the methodology. Study limitations will be discussed, as well as the research study implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Chapter IV presented the findings of the individual case studies for each of the community colleges included in the study, along with the cross-case findings of both sites. A review of the problem statement, research questions, study methodology and summarized findings will be reported in Chapter V. Additionally, this chapter will discuss research and theory relevant to this study, implications for practice, limitations to the study, and offer recommendations for future research.

Statement of the Problem

Higher education continued to investigate preventative strategies to implement on campus with hopes to decrease incidents of violence. Administrators, regents, trustees, and legislators turned to recommendations by the U.S. Secret Service and the FBI to incorporate threat assessment teams into campus emergency plans (Vossekuil et al., 2002; O'Toole, 2000). As threat assessment was embraced by institutions, the promotion of best practices for creation of these teams was also marketed. Established best practices for campus threat assessment teams identified that the inclusion of specific campus professionals, written policy, and team training were critical for an effective and

multi-disciplinary approach in identifying, investigating, evaluating, and managing a person of concern on college campuses (Cornell, 2010; Deisinger et al., 2008; Randazzo & Cameron, 2011; Sokolow et al., 2011; Van Brunt, 2012). Effective teams included representatives from student conduct, campus security, mental health counseling, and the dean of students or student affairs. Other campus professionals were also included, though the previously mentioned representatives are considered the core membership of threat assessment teams (Sokolow et al., 2011; Van Brunt, 2012). Likewise, written policy and training team members allowed for members to have the appropriate resources to increase the knowledge base to conduct campus threat assessment effectively. Consequently, two-year colleges may not include critical membership components, written policies and processes, or member training in threat assessment team development as recommended by best practices for successful team operation (Cornell, 2010; Randazzo & Cameron, 2011; Sokolow et al., 2011; Van Brunt, 2012). Limited resources at two-year colleges hinder institutions to sufficiently staff and train threat assessment team members appropriately.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the threat assessment team's impact on campus safety, as well as perceptions of barriers or challenges for the campus threat assessment teams. The study focused on the following research questions:

1. What is the perception of threat assessment team's impact on the current state of campus safety on two-year college campuses?

2. How do threat assessment team members at two-year colleges describe perceived challenges or barriers for the threat assessment process?
3. How does the threat assessment team perception of risk shape the threat assessment process at the institution?

Review of Methodology

As stated in Chapter III, this study followed a constructivist worldview coupled with a qualitative research methodology by utilizing multiple case studies (Yin, 2014). The study explored the perceptions and understanding of campus safety and threat assessment teams by team members at two separate two-year colleges in a Midwestern state of the United States. Data collection from the participating institutions included documents and artifacts related to the institution's campus safety policies and threat assessment team. Likewise, three interviews consisting of two team members and an administrator were conducted at each site location. These data collection methods, along with member checks supported the trustworthiness or validity of the data (Patton, 2002). All interviews were transcribed for further analysis including initial open coding by using MAXQDA12 software to aid in the identification of general themes within the collected documents and interviews. Furthermore, data was analyzed for critical incidents and Member Meanings as described by Emerson (Emerson et al., 1995). More detailed methodology for this study is included in Chapter III.

Summary of the Findings

Participants at both institutions subscribed to the definition of threat assessment as a deductive, comprehensive approach to identify, gather and evaluate data, and the

management of an individualized plan to mitigate the concern (Deisinger, et al., 2008). Members of both teams stressed the critical component that threat assessment provided to campus security. Although neither college experienced a life-threatening event on the campus leading to the formation of the threat assessment team, participants did credit the change in national attitude pertaining to college safety after the incident at Virginia Tech for the development and implementation of their processes. Written policy for both institutions was included in the internal document collection. However, only one institution developed a mission statement to include the following:

> balance the individual needs of the student and those of the greater campus community, provide a structured positive method for addressing student behaviors that impact the campus community and may involve mental health and/or safety issues, manage each case individually, initiate appropriate intervention without immediately resorting to punitive measures, and to eliminate fragmented care (Brownsville State College Threat Assessment Policy, p.1)

Although members of Redwood State College do have written policy and a purpose statement that included "to promote a safe college learning environment for all students and to create a safe and secure work environment for employees", a developed mission statement was not provided within the policy (Redwood State College Threat Assessment Policy, p. 1).

Members across both institutions voiced safety as the primary purpose for threat assessment on campus. Furthermore, participants also highlighted the “help” philosophy of the team to provide the necessary resources to identified persons of concern as a

secondary purpose. This viewpoint held as much importance as the safety component of threat assessment according to participants. According to interviewees, there was a perception by faculty that threat assessment provided another beneficial avenue to help a student, rather than only triggering the conduct process when managing difficult students. Likewise, participants stated the transparency of team formation aided this perception. Team members reported the addition of threat assessment to other campus safety initiatives as a best practice. Members at both institutions stated that the promotion of the threat assessment team occurred during faculty in-service or through the student handbook or webpage. However, they recognized that a comprehensive awareness plan needed to be developed and initiated in the near future to maintain awareness. Members reported that the administration support of the threat assessment team lends creditability to the team.

There were several challenges or barriers referenced by participants related to threat assessment on the two-year campus. Mid-level administrators reported the many roles that one employee held at the two-year campus as a challenge for threat assessment. Additionally, participants stated that one person may hold the viewpoint for several key roles normally included in the process. For example, one mid-level administrator held responsibility for conduct, housing, Title IX, athletics, student life, and leadership programs. This provided a concern for the appropriate staffing of the team to allow for adequate viewpoints during discussion of cases. Furthermore, participants stated that training team members presented challenges as it became difficult for multiple individuals to be gone from campus at the same time. Additionally, the team reported a

lack of qualified individuals to serve on the team in a confidential manner resulted in some areas on campus not being represented.

Personnel training continued to represent a challenge for two-year college campuses to assure proper threat assessment occurred as reported by team members. Members stated that training without the complete group did little to advance the efforts of the process or the team. Additionally, members expressed the cost attached to national training became a barrier as there was little to no budget dedicated to the threat assessment team. Participants voiced that in a period of limited budget dollars, threat assessment experienced difficulty competing with other campus initiatives including recruitment and retention.

Shared challenges at both institutions included promoting awareness of the team to the campus constituency and consistent meeting times. Members' referenced minimal promotional efforts were made to the entire institution and admitted that current marketing efforts focused mostly on faculty and staff, although the annual security report and the student handbook referenced the threat assessment team to the general population and students. Participants stated that a comprehensive awareness plan to encompass promotion to students with yearlong campaign activities was needed. The teams voiced challenges and barriers that were significant to the individual institutions, but were not similar to each other.

Discussion

Campus safety remained a critical topic as various acts of violence continue to grab headlines nationally. Following violent events at colleges and universities in 2007,

the establishment of threat assessment teams as a best practice for campus security began seeing traction within the higher education arena (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012). Maria Randazzo reminded, "a pathway to violence can be detoured if someone reports the behavior to the right authorities" (Wilson, 2016, Para 15).

Thus, the concept of threat assessment follows the path of prevention and determent. All of the participants for this study emphasize the importance of the threat assessment team to campus safety at their respective institutions. The findings from the data provide information that can be categorized into the following areas: the lack of resources, the state and challenges of mental health, and the cultural lens or bias that the threat assessment teams at two-year colleges operate within naturally.

Perception of Campus Safety

The results of this study suggest that team members' perceptions of the threat assessment process include a positive impact on campus safety. Furthermore, team members report this process provides a "help, not hinder" philosophy to aid students, who are in need of resources, not necessarily a conduct charge (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015). However, participants state the primary function of the threat assessment teams' are to provide another avenue to address campus safety as supported by the purpose statements within each institution's policy.

> In order to promote the safety and health of its students, the TABIT addresses alleged concerning student behaviors that are disruptive and include mental health and/or safety issues (Brownsville State College Threat Assessment Policy, p.1)

> The overall purpose of the development and implementation of a Threat Assessment Team (TAT) is to promote a safe college learning environment for all students and to create a safe and secure work environment for employees (Redwood State College Threat Assessment Policy, p. 1).

Although threat assessment teams are primarily a safety initiative, the help and care factor weighs heavily into the threat assessment team purpose. Team members perceive a dual responsibility for their purpose with referring student to resources needed considered as mutually important. This philosophy holds strong value to the group as evidenced by the following statement, "the more we are aware of those who are hurting or in need of help, the better we are to address those needs early and keep them here" (Smith, M. personal communication, September 10, 2015). The strategy to provide help initiatives and advocate for students serves as a strong perception as the benefit of threat assessment on campus. he mission statement for BSC's team promotes this function as well, " … provide a structured positive method for addressing student behaviors that impact the campus community and may involve mental health and/or safety initiatives … initiate appropriate intervention without immediately resorting to punitive measures" (Brownsville State College Threat Assessment Policy, p. 1). However, these statements may point to a different reason for the "help, not hinder" philosophy. Ultimately, these perceptions pin threat assessment as a retention and graduation strategy instead of a safety mechanism. Shrinking budgets, decreased enrollments, and future budget dollars associated to performance-based funding makes every student enrollment critical for retention and graduation rates at two-year colleges. The National Center for Education Statistics through the Integrated Post Secondary Data System (IPEDS)

provides retention and graduation data for both institutions. Retention rates for BSC from fall 2014 to fall 2015, reports 54 percent retention rate for full-time students and 33 percent for part-time students. The graduation rate for students beginning coursework in fall 2012 is reported at 16% (National Center of Education Statistics, 2016). Retention rates for RSC from fall 2014 to fall 2015, reports 54 percent retention rate for full-time students and 29 percent for part-time students. The graduation rate for students beginning coursework in fall 2012 is reported at 16 percent with 29 percent of students transferring out before completing a degree (National Center of Education Statistics, 2016). With lower numbers of students graduating, a small loss of students from an institution can drastically affect these percentages, providing pressure to keep students enrolled for future budgetary dollars over separation for safety of the university.

Challenges for Threat Assessment Teams on Two-Year Campuses

These teams experience challenges that may result in negative or unintended consequences for the threat assessment team process. Two-year colleges serve 40 percent of all college freshmen in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015). Upon separating out the diversity groups, these numbers paint a telling story with 61 percent of Native American enrollment, 57 percent Hispanic, 51 percent of African American, and 43 percent of Asian American enrollment (AACC, 2015). However, "Public community colleges have seen large decreases in state funding over the past years, state funding decreased from 36 percent in 2008-09 to 30 percent in 2013-14" (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015, p.1).

In this Midwestern state of the United States, the downturn in the oil and gas industry impacted tax collections leading to a monumental budget crisis. The state agencies experienced budget reductions multiple times throughout the year. RSC experienced cuts that equaled $442,000 or 6.5 percent of the budget (OSRHE, 2016). The FY 2017 budget saw reductions of 7.9 percent. Likewise, BSC saw the FY 2017 budget reduced by 4.6 percent (OSRHE, 2016). Historically, two-year colleges often assign multiple functions deemed critical to one individual to save on manpower and cost. When budget reductions in allocation occurred, two-year institutions plugged the gap by staff reduction in the form of hiring freezes resulting in less staff. Although beneficial as a cost-savings standpoint for the college, for threat assessment it hindered the possibility to collect various viewpoints for assessing behaviors of concern. For example, on a four-year campus, the team consisted of student conduct, counseling, residential life, and Dean of Students or Vice President of Student Affairs. At two-year institutions, these job responsibilities were conducted by one or two people. Some members struggled with meeting attendance required by the threat assessment team. With individuals carrying numerous responsibilities, meeting cancellations were not uncommon. Moreover, it could be argued that groups choosing to meet on an "as needed" basis may not be operating as a true threat assessment team according to NaBita best practices (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009).

When meeting cancellations occur, typically the training meetings become compromised. This provides challenges for unified group training, as it becomes difficult for a team of individuals to all be absent at once for multiple days. Additionally, this study suggests that budget constraints negatively impact attending training opportunities because threat assessment must compete with other program initiatives for limited

budgetary dollars. Budget line items dedicated for training conferences and travel become extinct when discretionary dollars are absorbed in budget cuts. Consequently, institutions attempt to train members by placing training responsibilities on the individual or by sending a representative to training to return and share knowledge with the remaining team members. Another training method includes research of free whitepapers or low-cost webinars about relevant safety and security information for team distribution and discussion. Although team members reflect this is "better than nothing" (Green, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015), a level of frustration acknowledges that training seems pieced together in the current format as the group could not attend together.

Best practice for threat assessment identifies appropriate training for the team as critical to educate the team about process, interviewing skills, document collection, specific concerns such as mental health, suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc., record management, and case management (Deisinger et al., 2008). The lack of training resources at two-year colleges impact threat assessment teams in applying best practices as promoted by experts in the field. These threat assessment teams' manage cases related to drug/alcohol violations, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health disorders, and disruptions in the classroom. Knowing the implications of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) would be important for these teams to properly address appropriate strategies and interventions without violating the ADA. For example, teams should know and understand protections afforded to students with mental illness or that the Department of Justice states that a direct threat does not include a threat to oneself in the case of suicidal ideation (Gignac, 2013; McBain, 2008; American

Disabilities Act, 1973). Appropriate training would address these implications and also identify strategies to provide appropriate interventions for these students such as the student conduct process or mandated psychological evaluations (Gignac, 2013; McBain, 2008). Additionally, understanding how FERPA applies to student records and what can be shared according to educational interests is critical for a team (Family Education Rights & Privacy Act, 1974; Lipka, 2008; Simon, 2008). Training regarding relevant legal cases about liability for colleges is important as understanding the courts views of shared duty sheds light on how decisions may be viewed by the courts (*Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California* (1976); *Shinn v. Massachusetts* (2005); Hoffman, 2013).

Although only one institution does not have counseling services available for students, both reference counseling as a struggle for the threat assessment teams. As stated previously in Chapter II, the International Association of Counseling recommends a student to counselor ratio of 1 to 1500 (International Association of Counseling, 2010, Para 2). Following this recommendation, RSC should employ one to one and a half counselors to address mental health/counseling needs. Likewise, BSC currently employees one and a half counselors but according to this ratio should have four full-time counselors to aid the student body.

Counseling presents the most difficult challenge for RSC's threat assessment team. The institution does not offer counseling to students, nor is there a mental health counselor on staff. RSC attempts to offset this by placing a faculty member from the psychology department on the team. Although this provides a textbook knowledge, this team member does not serve as a practicing mental health counselor and for liability

purposes it remains important that this individual works within the scope of employment. As such, this team member expresses knowledge of mental health; however, it would be inappropriate for this person to make suggestions or recommendations from a practitioner viewpoint as this is outside the employment duties. Therefore, the missing role of the counselor continues to be an issue of concern. A team member states,

> We don't have campus counseling and we need it. I think in most TATs that somebody with that kind of training tends to be on those teams and I can see where that would be valuable to have that knowledge and experience (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015).

The administrator responsible for threat assessment at RSC recognizes the critical need for counseling on campus to aid the study body and the team. However, he voices that in the time of strained budgets, it is not likely a mental health counselor will be hired in the near future. The decision to employ a new counselor battles against new hires such as faculty, front line staff in areas of student services, recruitment, and advisement. At RSC, hiring a licensed practical counselor requires a high salary and a person willing to live in a rural location. This proves to be a significant challenge for the rural institution. Therefore, the administrator perceives high competition for hiring a campus counselor when compared to other campus positions and initiatives able to stretch budget dollars.

In 2010, the CLASS Task Force survey of colleges and universities researched safety and security initiatives following the shooting at Virginia Tech. Questions asked of the institutions included the topic of campus counseling. This study found that, "52% of all colleges and universities have only one or two counselors … 12.9% report no

counseling services on campus" (p.11). The Association of Community Colleges and the Wisconsin HOPE lab conducted a study of 4000 students at community colleges in six states – California, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, and Wyoming (Eisenberg, Goldrick-Rabi, Lipson & Broton, 2016). The authors claimed that mental health was a wider concern for community colleges as these students entered with a variety of life stressors and "broader public health issues" than their four-year counterparts (Eisenberg, Goldrick-Rabi, Lipson & Broton, 2016, p.1). Issues such as family pressure, financial struggles, balancing time between work and school requirements all served as sources of emotional unrest and some two-year students did not know where to turn to find resources (Eisenberg et al., 2016). Additionally, the findings presented a stressed student body with almost half reporting a current or recent mental health problem with depression (36%) and anxiety (29%) cited as the most common disorders (Eisenberg et al., 2016, p.9). These overall mental health problem numbers were higher than reported by the four-year counterparts (Eisenberg et al., 2016). Unfortunately, only ten percent of two-year institutions reported offering onsite psychiatry resources. Likewise, two-year colleges that did offer counseling did so at counselor to student ratio of 1 to 3000 compared to 1 in 1600 at four-year institutions (Gallagher, 2015). Both of the institutions included in this study are described by the abovementioned statements with an older student population, little or no counseling services, and a variety of life stressors.

Coupled with counseling inadequacies and dire financial resources such as those at BSC and RSC, these scenarios prescribe an equation for disaster. The absence of mental health counselors or low prevalence of counselors for threat assessment teams allows for opportunities for individuals who need help to slip through the cracks. The

mental health counselor proves to be a critical component to the threat assessment team as per best practice. Because of this inadequacy, the argument can be made that threat assessment teams at two-year colleges may be missing the mark.

This study also suggests that although institutions know that awareness for threat assessment needs to be promoted to the entire campus community, promotional efforts target faculty and staff only, failing to adequately message to students. The promotion of awareness campaigns at BSC and RSC lack a comprehensive strategy to communicate to all campus constituents. This produces a disconnect between the threat assessment team and a valued source of information, the students themselves. Currently, the teams receive reference in the Annual Security Report and the Student Handbook, both available to students. However, these publications prove lengthy and arduous to read. Neither institution distributes promotional materials dedicated to the purpose and process of threat assessment.

Participants at both colleges recognize that promoting awareness of the team to the student body needs improvement. Student input is important and students may supply a unique voice or perspective as a fellow peer. If the student body is not aware of the threat assessment team process and how to report concerns, opportunities to intervene early could be missed. Likewise, if faculty and staff lack awareness of the threat assessment team or the purpose and function of the team, then the effectiveness of the safety initiative may be lessened. The funding issues two-year institutions experience, require available dollars to be stretched as far as possible. Again, in the age of competing priorities, marketing of threat assessment competes with recruitment, enrollment and retention programs.

This study also illustrates that institutions experience individual challenges that serve as barriers that are not consistent over both institutions. However, these challenges relate to best practices suggested for threat assessment teams and therefore they should be addressed. BSC stresses the importance that the team practices confidentiality at its highest regard. For the campus counselor, this tenant becomes vital for her continued relationships with student clients. The balance of maintaining the counselor-client relationship and sharing relevant information to TABIT must be considered. Current law gives the counselor authority to disclose with proper authorities per the Tarasoff ruling if a person's life is threatened. However, the counselor can provide information if a student is known to counseling without disclosing confidential details of the client. However, the counselor can provide information if a student is known to counseling without disclosing confidential details of the client. All members state that the group considers confidentiality one of its most important core values. Because of this, some work areas that may want to be included on the team are omitted due to lack of eligible candidates to serve in a confidential manner. The following statements represent the perception of importance of confidentiality for BSC,

> It's hard … you feel like you are excluding people and you have people who really want to be involved. The good thing … is they really understand the confidentiality piece of our policy (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015.

> Information could be leaked if the team is too big and a student could be stigmatized by the campus community (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015)

Likewise, another viewpoint from another participant, "the pool is so small that on this campus there is no one that I would probably select that we could have confidence in to keeping the information confidential" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015). This creates a smaller, tight-knit group to decipher incoming information and how it translates for the team. The NaBita Survey states the average team consists of eight to nine members (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Golston, 2014). This team functions with five members to address all concerns and members hold multiple viewpoints. Discussions that occur within threat assessment meetings must be held with the highest confidentiality because of the sensitive nature of the information. Team members should be concerned about keeping details confidential; however qualified professionals should be included if appropriate for the team and trained about the confidentiality expectation.

Finally, both institutions maintain paper files for case documentation and to provide a record of case management. The Dean of Students and the Chief of Security houses these paper files for Brownsville State College and Redwood State College respectively. One institution states they were converting to an online database case management system to aid in the tracking of these cases. Participants from both teams state that student follow up is assigned to an individual who then becomes responsible to report back to the team any issues or findings that need to be addressed. One team discusses these cases at their monthly meetings until that student is removed from case management, leaves the institution or graduates. However, the other institution only discusses the case management if the person assigned to manage the case notifies

the committee. The later example does not follow best practice and may place liability on the institution by the campus knowing issues, but failing to act on them appropriately.

As discussed in the literature, the courts' viewpoint of liability has shifted from *in loco parentis* to no duty to shared duty (*Bradshaw v. Rawlings* (3rd Cir. 1979); *Furek v. University of Delaware* (Del. 1991; *Tarasoff v. Board of Regents of the University of California* (Cal. 1976). This shared duty holds both students and institutions responsible for safety. Threat assessment team will open institutions to some level of possible liability with this shared responsibility. Before the *Shin v. Institute of Massachusetts (2005)* case was settled, the courts signaled the institution's treatment team may have had a special relationship and a duty to warn her family about her suicidal ideation. Case management documents revealed the institution knew she was struggling mentally. This case demonstrated the importance of follow up, documentation, understanding the health/safety exception of FERPA and the Tarasoff rule for threat assessment. Likewise, poor case management provided opportunities for liability to be assessed. These same issues may be in play for the sites included in this study as the case management and follow up are not up to par to best practice.

These challenges suggest that proper threat assessment is not occurring at these two institutions according to best practice. The table below identifies best practices utilized at each institution. This visual shows that Brownsville State College engages in ten of fifteen best practice strategies for threat assessment teams regularly. Likewise, Redwood State College only utilizes four of fifteen strategies consistently.

Table 5.1 Site best practice identification

Best practice	Brownsville State College (Urban institution)	Redwood State College (Rural institution)
Fixed Membership	X	X
Campus Counselor	X	
Meet regularly	X	
Standardized procedures/policies	X	
Mission Statement	X	
Address threat and provides resource	X	X
Utilize mandated psychological assessment	X	
Invoke involuntary withdrawal policies		X
Use of rubric	X	
Comprehensive reporting structure		
Train and educate campus community		
Comprehensive tracking databases		
Focuses on students and employee behaviors		X
Mechanism to "mind the gap"	X	
Integration with other risk management processes	X	

In the following section, the findings of this study will be discussed in relation to relevant research. Also, the implications for practice and research including Cultural Theory will be considered. Finally, the limitations of this study and future research recommendations will be presented.

Findings in Relation to Relevant Research

The findings of this study were consistent with previous research on perception of campus safety. Woolfolk (2013) wrote in his Mercer University study about perceptions of campus safety that "perceptions are strong indicators of how individuals view their world" (p. 129). Previous studies found that parents, students, faculty, staff and

administrators believe the campus is a safe place (Janosik, 2004; Janosik & Gehring, 2003; Janosik & Gregory, 2002; Janosik & Gregory, 2009; Patton & Gregory, 2014; Santucci & Gable, 1998; Woolfolk, 2013). However, these studies also emphasized that the community did not access the safety data supplied by the Annual Security Report. A majority of people perceived their exposure to danger was less than the average person (May, 2007). Likewise, Vermillion (2006) emphasized that the general public was not aware of crime or crime rates; however they still believed that campus crime was on the rise.

The participants of this study perceive that the threat assessment process adds to other strategies to make the campus safe. Team members view the campus as a safe place overall as long as people remain aware of their surroundings. Additionally, participants believe the process of threat assessment provides the campus another preventative technique.

The findings of this study related to threat assessment teams at two-year colleges' center around best practices (Deisinger et al., 2008; Randazzo & Plummer, 2007; Van Brunt, 2013; Van Brunt et al., 2014). These best practices suggest that teams do the following: set membership, established chair, regular meetings, member training, written mission statements and operating protocols, utilize case management record systems, utilize psychological assessments, invoke withdrawal policies, use rubrics, train and educate the campus, and focus on both student and employee concerns (Deisinger et al., 2008; Randazzo & Plummer, 2007; Sokolow & Hughes, 2007). Both of these teams' perceive they operate as a functioning threat assessment team, however the omissions of best practice provides gaps that reduce their effectiveness. Additionally, most research

addresses higher education at the four-year level and does not focus on the two-year school perspective. This research is significant as the two-year campus brings different challenges from the four-year selective admission counterparts, and this study provides more data to the growing literature stream of threat assessment. However, as a qualitative study it would not be appropriate to make generalizations to the population.

Best practices identify key personnel as crucial for threat assessment to be conducted appropriately including mental health counseling, student conduct, security, legal counsel, residential life, and student affairs (Deisinger, Randazzo, & O'Neill, 2008; Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009). The participants included in this case study reveal that some identified personnel deemed critical are missing because these positions are not available on campus. For one case, the mental health counselor position is vacant. The counselor function explains the mental health component and if missing voids a critical viewpoint to the threat assessment team. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the median pay for a mental health counselor in the area stands at $44,610 (www.bls.gov, Retrieved 10/5/16) plus a conservative benefit rate of 30% equaling a total salary package of $58,000. Finding funds to add this level of employee continues to be a challenge for institutions. Both cases lack a representative from legal counsel that sits directly on the team. Nevertheless, teams do consult with legal counsel as needed although this does not happen immediately without higher administration approval.

These teams struggle with meeting consistency and frequency for threat assessment. The failure to meet consistently does not support best practice as previously identified. NaBita recommends a schedule of standing meetings to assure the group is

meeting regularly to discuss issues. When meetings occur where there are no issues up for discussion, NaBita recommends that team training should take place (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009). Participants from both institutions state there are times when it becomes difficult to meet during previously scheduled meeting times. One site states that they currently only meet as needed leading the question to be if this still makes them a functioning team. Although these teams know training needs to occur, both groups voice that, instead of scheduling training during periods of absent case management, meetings are cancelled. The NaBita survey of institutions reports a variety of meeting frequency including weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, once per semester, and as needed with the last two mentioned reported at 3 percent and 10 percent (Van Brunt et al., 2014). Although reports of meeting frequency vary, there is support for a higher number of meetings to assure cases are managed correctly and effectively.

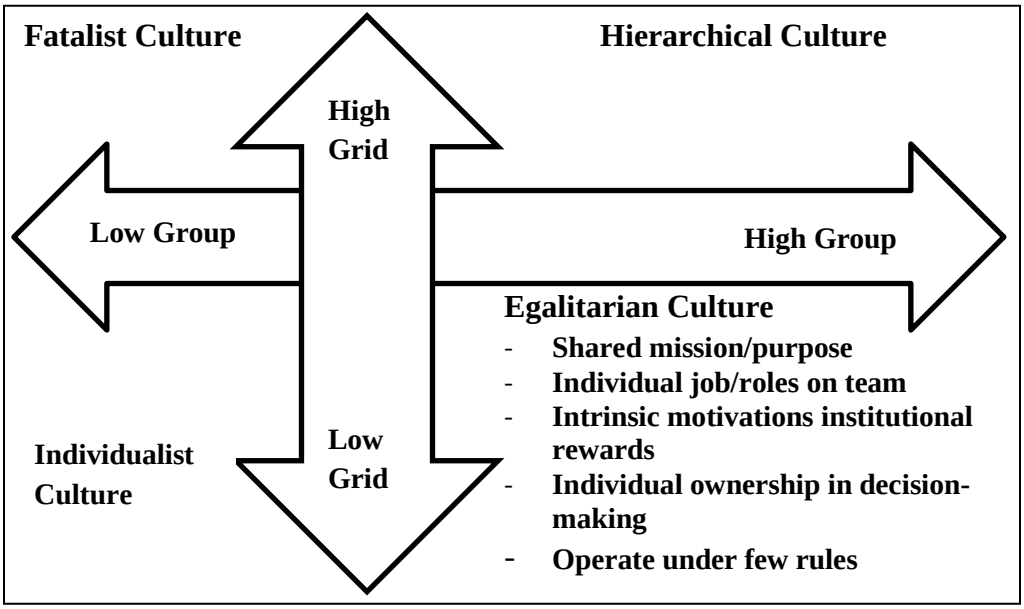
Relevance of Findings to Theory

Cultural Theory functions as the theoretical framework lens to view data and to uncover how threat assessment teams assign risk and make decisions as a unit. Specifically, this theory addresses how groups assess and assign risk to various issues or behaviors (Douglas & Wildsvasky, 1982). CT operates under the assumption that "culture is a system that holds one another mutually accountable" (Douglas, 1992, p. 31) The theory suggests that people, groups, or systems choose what to fear in relation to their cultural biases and these biases bind people together in working groups (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). CT's Group-Grid model discussed in Chapter II is a two-dimensional model that describes how groups work together. The group dimension portrays how strongly the group is bonded together and how they relate to one another. The grid

dimension explains how different or similar job roles are and how dependent the members are on each other to function (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). The four biases referenced are hierarchal, individualist, egalitarian, and fatalist. Likewise, the worldview to which a person relates determines how they perceive fear and risk.

The study presents a variety of questions aimed to examine the perceptions of how team members view risk as an individual, but more importantly as a team. The data suggest that the threat assessment team members in this study perceive that they operate within the high group/low grid quadrant, or egalitarian. CT is applicable to this study regarding threat assessment teams because they make decisions related to fear and risk.

Figure 2. Threat Assessment Team Group Grid Model Typology



Utilizing the Cultural Theory lens, each of the threat assessment teams identified with the egalitarian quadrant on the theory's Group-Grid model. Both teams' shared common demographics as both groups function as open admission institutions. Although

their environments differ as rural or urban institutions, the groups experienced some similarities with residence halls, faculty to student ratio, and similar budget challenges. The following characteristics of the egalitarian sector included descriptions such as partnerships, group solidarity, peer pressure, mutualism and cooperation (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982).

The egalitarian within this theory functions with a shared focus in collaborative efforts, as a tight-knit group moving forward towards a common goal. Members identify with this characteristic by stating that "we come up with a plan of action for that student and it is a collaborative approach" (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015) and "we are a tight-knit group united in purpose to aid students and keep the campus safe" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015). Furthermore, these groups take personal ownership in decision-making. Although both sites include written policy addressing threat assessment and the process for collecting data, participants operate under few rules and procedures for the inner workings of the team. However, the institution ultimately decides what risks are acceptable by defining threats within policy but the teams maintain the autonomy to make recommendations or act as needed. These groups function under the assumption that all "have the same levels of involvement – same voice … same input" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015). Team members in this study perceive their workings as collaboration with little structured leadership. Participants describe the decision-making process as "assessing the situation per policy and threat assessment tool and then coming to a consensus" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) and "coming to a consensus with an equal voice" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28,

2015). Additionally, the egalitarian remains self-motivated leaning towards intrinsic rewards and further away from extrinsic recognition. Most members state that they were not seeking outside recognition, but want "the best for the institution" (Green, B., personal communication, September 11, 2015) and the personal reward includes "helping a student complete their educational goals and walking the stage of graduation" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015).

Although the findings of this study may suggest that these teams operate under the aforementioned bias, there were several questions that members identify with the hierarchical viewpoint. The hierarchical viewpoint emerges as present and competing for prominence with the egalitarian bias. This appears to be relevant to previous research that states these biases are at constant struggle within individuals and groups (Lachapelle, Montpetit, & Gauvin, 2014; Song, Silva, & Jenkins-Smith, 2014; Wildavsky 1986). Threat assessment teams receive multiple streams of information regarding a student of concern. Each piece requires analysis of the collected information and then a determination made about its relevance to the total concern. Cultural Theory states members will decode information, analyze and make a decision according to the cultural bias to which they identify (Song, Silva, & Jenkins-Smith, 2014). This may explain why some responses associated with the hierarchical bias emerged instead of the egalitarian bias. For example, members stress the importance of the knowledge each person brings to the team and how this aids in the threat assessment, "everyone picked for this team is on because of position, but then also the specific background or expertise they can bring to the group (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015). This viewpoint emphasizes the importance of the credibility of experts and aligns with the hierarchical

lens instead of the egalitarian viewpoint. Although the threat assessment team operates within a value-based system, there is an equal pull from the hierarchical viewpoint for rule and order. This aligns to member statements such as, "following the student code and the established policy" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) and "security of the institution trumps all" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015). These statements fall in line with a strong Grid structure. Further research needs to be conducted to fully determine how a team could function in competing quadrants of the Group-Grid model, as well as how individual perception of risk influences team decisions.

Relevance of Findings to Practice

Participants express concerns or challenges for two-year institutions moving forward with the threat assessment team concept. Members from one institution voice concerns that they are missing the critical function of a mental health counselor on the team. Participants from both institutions state that some positions are dually-filled as individuals hold multiple functions within the team. Finally, case management and record management appears to rudimentary, not the comprehensive tracking as required by best practice. Best practices may not take the two-year campus setting into consideration as a different or unique atmosphere because of the lack of resources. Threat assessment teams may not be conducive in the two-year college atmosphere.

Team Membership

Although the history of the threat assessment process finds prominence in law enforcement, the establishment of these teams in the college and university setting did not

rise until after the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting. NaBita surveys colleges and universities every two years concerning the threat assessment process. In the NaBita 2014 survey of 500 higher education institutions, 94 percent report having a threat assessment team with roughly 50 percent of these teams created in the last four years and another 44 percent starting within the 5-9 year range (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Golston, 2014). This data reports a high four-year institutional response at 67 percent compared to 33 percent of two-year colleges (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Golston, 2014). The statistics report four and two-year colleges taken together and responses are not divided out by university type. Likewise, this survey states that 92 percent of respondents claim a mental health counselor serves on the team (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Golston, 2014). Again, this data do not decipher the breakdown of these numbers between two and four-year institutions. The findings in this study present only one institution with a mental health counselor serving on the team. This suggests that there is a lack of employed mental health counselors or licensed psychologists functioning as members of the threat assessment team at the two-year college level. However, more research is needed to fully support this claim as only two institutions are represented in this study. The Hope/Wisconsin study suggests the two-year institution lacks counseling resources stating only 12 percent provide psychiatry services or other "license professionals on staff or contracted" (Eisenberg, Goldrick-Rabi, Lipson & Broton, 2016, p.4). Additionally, most research addresses higher education at the four-year level and does not focus on the two-year school perspective. Further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of these teams without all areas represented or when one person represents multiple campus roles.

Meeting Consistency

Besides team membership, best practices highlight the importance of several process related functions. These include areas such as case management, data records management, meeting consistency, and training (Randazzo & Plummer, 2007; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009). Participants admit to struggling with meeting consistency, with one institution stating they only meet "as needed, without a scheduled calendar meeting" (Jones, B., personal communication, October 28, 2015) and the other claiming that it "gets difficult at the end of the semester to meet" (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015). The NaBita survey reports that 39 percent of threat assessment teams meet weekly. This number declines to 12 percent for monthly meetings and 10 percent for an "as needed" meeting (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Golston, 2014, p.1). This study did not research how frequently teams should meet for effective threat assessment. However, it may suggest that threat assessment teams at two-year schools operate differently than the four-year counterparts.

For practice implications, meeting regularity and/or meeting cancellation may be connected to team complacency (Randazzo & Plummer, 2007). It is recommended that a regularly scheduled meeting be established for the calendar year to assure process and policy are followed consistently. Furthermore, to combat complacency by members, it is recommended that threat assessment team members continue to manage cases according to the meeting schedule and include team training sessions.

Team Training

Participants in this study express the need for more group training related to threat assessment for the perspective teams. Likewise, members voice concerns of limited budgets, training costs, and problems with the group being absent at the same time from campus as reasons group training becomes difficult. Free or low-cost training appears to be the selected source of training for threat assessment at the two-year level. Likewise, teams research free whitepapers and webinars for professional development in relation to threat assessment (Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Golston, 2014). The participants perceive training as important and crucial to team credibility and effectiveness. Members state training is "pieced together in parts" (Mayes, S., personal communication, September 11, 2015) and "everyone focuses on training for their individual role" (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015), but the perception of value appears to surround the group focus for these individuals as members state group training allows for the “big picture including all components instead of being pieced together role by role” (Manning, D., personal communication, October 28, 2015). Furthermore, group training seems to be the preferred method of training for all individuals to hear the same information in order to develop the same process and reasoning to conduct assessments. None of the participants reference a line item budget or allocation for threat assessment training. However, all acknowledge stressed budgets and cost of training as a barrier for the group. Participants state their colleges suffered significant budget cuts over the last two fiscal years during the state budget allocation process.

It is recommended that team members should meet to establish training needs and cost to request funding from administration to assure proper and adequate training for the group. Furthermore, group training may prove beneficial as the group moves forward towards one purpose and goal (Randazzo & Plummer, 2007; Van Brunt, Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, & Golston, 2014).

Team Awareness

Providing awareness of the team to the campus community at the two-year college remains a concern according to the participants. All members state a stronger promotional effort to the student body is needed. Furthermore, the perception that institutions lack a comprehensive, sustaining approach to reach the campus community continues to plague the threat assessment members. Participants state that most awareness efforts are focused towards the faculty and staff; however, statements such as "those that know about it" (Smith, M., personal communication, September 10, 2015) or "those that get involved" (Smith, Q., personal communication, October 28, 2015) may reveal the awareness of the campus threat assessment team continues to struggle. The Faculty Senate minutes support the belief that more education of the threat assessment team is needed as faculty recommended that information about the threat assessment team be shared at faculty in-service and spring convocations. Moreover, awareness and promotional efforts to students center on the student handbook, Annual Security Report and webpage. There does not appear to be a campaign that centers on students at either location included in this study. Nationally, the use of Department of Homeland Security's "If you see something, say something" campaign reminds citizens to notify law enforcement if they see suspicious or questionable behavior by individuals throughout the

year. The integration of this familiar campaign in a different setting may aid two-year institutions to gain more visibility to the campus constituency. Likewise, campuses should promote the team for transparency purposes to the student body during orientations, hall meetings, first-year experience programming, website, student handbook, and other social media streams utilized by the campus.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study provide possible implications for institutional policy consideration. Specifically, two-year institution administrators should investigate the true cost involved with operating a threat assessment team according to best practice to reduce foreseeability and liability for the college. Likewise, if institutions choose to operate a threat assessment team, written policy should include a well-defined mission statement that clearly expresses the safety function of the team. Furthermore, this study suggests that if an institution is unable to implement a threat assessment team according to best practice then it should not utilize a threat assessment team at all.

Study Limitations

This study explored perceptions of threat assessment team members' views concerning how threat assessment contributed to campus safety and the perceived challenges and resources afforded to the group. As this study included a low number of participants, the study is limited to perceptions of six individuals. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized to the population. Likewise, the participants included only current faculty and staff who served on the threat assessment team. This study did not take the general faculty, staff or student perceptions into consideration.

The researcher voice in this study may represent a limitation as well. My voice includes employment background at a two-year institution, as well as chair of a threat assessment team. Although this provides a unique insight into threat assessment from a practitioner viewpoint, it may also lead to an unanticipated bias to the information. An opportunity for participants to review interview transcripts supplies an avenue to combat bias and address accuracy, validity, and trustworthiness of the data. Likewise, the participants' comments serve to supply the themes that emerged from the data are brought forward in the interviews.

Because this study reviewed the threat assessment team at two-year colleges, institutions were required to have a threat assessment team with written policy to be eligible for inclusion as participants. As previously stated in Chapter III, all two-year colleges were invited to participate in this study by email to the campus Vice President of Student Affairs or Student Services. Several administrators from different institutions initially indicated they would provide access to their threat assessment teams for possible participation. However, once I followed up to further explain the study two institutions declined to participate citing non-formalized teams or restructuring the threat assessment team policy or team. This resistance indicated that a qualitative study did not provide the needed confidentiality or anonymity needed to provide a truthful representation for these institutions.

Participants indicated from their responses that they operated within an egalitarian bias according to Cultural Theory. These responses related to how the threat assessment process worked, decisions were rendered; resources attained and managed, and team motivations. Perceptions of Risk assignments according to Cultural Theory were

contemplated from a team perspective. The consideration of how an individual assessed risk and what Cultural Theory bias an individual used in the determination was not contemplated in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored the perceptions of threat assessment team members at two institutions at the two-year college level. Research should be repeated increasing participants and two-year institutions to present a better understanding of the issues beyond the two colleges in this study. Expanding the study to include faculty, staff and students of the general college populations would provide varying perceptions of how threat assessment teams affect campus safety and if true threat assessment occurs at the two-year college level. Furthermore, threat assessment team research should focus on the two-year college environment, as most research leans heavily towards the four-year university with a different student body makeup. Limiting the research to this specific area provides further knowledge on how a threat assessment team operates at these higher education entities. This would add more research to the growing literature on threat assessment on college campuses. Additionally, by conducting a quantitative study, findings could be generalized to the population and provide numbers data to the types of student concerns managed, threat assessment team process, training and budget, and team characteristics within the two-year college arena.

Research directed towards best practices of threat assessment teams should also be intensified to determine effectiveness of teams without all critical roles represented compared to teams that incorporate all recommended roles, specifically the mental health

counselor. The absence or low numbers of the mental health counselor position provided concerns for the institutions in this study as this area may not be readily available on the two-year campus or mental health resources may be inadequate to service the numbers at the two-year level. These data could be derived from studies about team effectiveness and possibly decipher if teams operated on two-year campus as directed by best practice. Likewise, replicating and limiting the NaBita survey for only two-year institutions would provide a more detailed understanding of team makeup, process, training, meeting consistency, and how many schools have a functioning team. Research related to what types of training are most beneficial for threat assessment teams and other resources needed should also be studied to determine a true cost of threat assessment teams on campus. With the continued pressure that higher education budgets experience, research that addressed the actual cost associated to conduct an effective threat assessment team for the campus could aid administration with budget development.

Finally, the individual perception of risk in relation to Cultural Theory and threat assessment teams should be studied further to determine if this theory presents implications for the threat assessment process. Specifically, research related to how team members' perceptions of risk influences teams' decisions and group organization may be helpful for decisions related to team membership selection and provide a greater understanding of team dynamics. Consideration of what cultural view of risk best aligned for team effectiveness could be studied for a better understanding of theory application. Although member background and expertise held importance, the knowledge of what cultural bias worked best for assessing risk and supported institutional goals could afford a more detailed process for member selection.

Summary

This chapter discussed the findings presented in Chapter IV in relation to previous research, practice, and theory. Future research recommendations were also provided for suggestions to build upon the current research in the field. The findings of this study suggested that two-year institutions do not conduct threat assessment as a working threat assessment team according to best practice due to balancing efforts of retention and safety, missing critical membership roles and struggles with meeting consistency and frequency. Specifically, the role of the mental health counselor appeared to be a critical function either missing or not meeting the recommended counseling ratios. Additionally, this study suggested that threat assessment team member's desired group training to allow for the entire group to gain knowledge together, instead of individual training that was then shared secondhand. The application of the theoretical framework of Cultural Theory found that these two cases operated in the Egalitarian Bias within the Group - Grid Model; however the hierarchical bias was slightly present as both viewpoints were at constant struggle for dominance. Implications for practice recommendations included the need for group training and dedicated budget for professional development of the threat assessment team, employment of mental health counselors, consistent meeting schedule, and a comprehensive marketing plan for the team.

Further study is needed to understand if threat assessment teams should be operating on the two-year campus with the current gaps in resources. Additionally, further research of how an individual's perception of risk according to Cultural Theory shapes decision-making in the threat assessment process would be beneficial to identify how viewpoints associates with team efficiency and effectiveness.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol – Administrator Interview

1. What is your official role on campus?
2. How long have you been employed at this institution?
3. What other, if any, positions have you held on campus or at other institutions?
4. How long have you served as the TAT Chair/Administrator?
5. What other roles have you served on the TAT?
6. How did your campus go about developing a threat assessment team on campus? Was this the result of a crisis, and if so, what was the crisis?
7. How would you describe the official policy for the threat assessment team on campus and can you explain it to me?
8. How were the members selected for the threat assessment team?
9. Who are the members of your team (positions, not names) and what are their roles on the TAT? What are the missing components (if any) of your team?
10. How many cases do you typically manage on the TAT?
11. Describe the process of how your team works from the beginning of a report to conclusion.
12. Have you referred students to the TAT?

13. How often does your campus threat assessment team meet?
14. What is the process for team members to follow during threat assessment meetings?
15. What type of administrative support is provided to the team members to address any issues the team may have?
16. What type of training is provided to the threat assessment team members?
17. How does your written policy address reporting concerns to the threat assessment team?
18. Describe the steps that you TAT uses in assessing a student concern?
19. What does your TAT do well?
20. What challenges does your TAT struggle with?
21. What misconceptions as a group or as an institution have you had to face? How did you address these misconceptions?
22. What record keeping processes does your threat assessment team utilize for this process?
23. How has the threat assessment process been communicated to the campus community?
24. How do you perceive this process has been received by the campus community?
25. How would you describe the campus culture regarding TAT?
26. As the chairperson, how do you feel about the role faculty are asked to take in reporting students to the TAT?
27. What networks have been beneficial over time for the TAT?

28. How often does executive administration review the written policy for updates?
29. How are the executive administration kept aware of the issues the threat assessment team are addressing in their investigations? Is this feedback loop (if applicable) addressed in the written policy?
30. How has the campus culture been effected by the presence of a threat assessment team?
31. In your opinion, what is needed for your TAT to run more effectively?

Interview Protocol – Threat Assessment Team Members

1. What is your position with the institution where you are employed?
2. How long have you been employed at this institutions?
3. What other, if any, positions have you held on campus or other institutions?
4. What was the process for you to be a part of the threat assessment team?
5. Was your involvement with the threat assessment team a choice or by assignment? Tell me more about this.
6. In what capacity do you serve on the TAT?
7. Tell me your threat assessment policy and how that relates to your team operations.
8. How necessary is the TAT on your campus?
9. What processes have been developed to aid faculty/staff to work with the TAT?
10. What resources or trainings were provided to your team to help identify students in crisis? What was the name of the training? Was this training appropriate for you to feel properly trained and informed?

11. What is the leadership structure of your team process?
12. What are the strengths of your threat assessment team?
13. What are the weaknesses of your threat assessment team?
14. How are decisions made about concerns brought to the threat assessment team?
15. What is the relationship between the threat assessment team and the administration?
16. How has university administrated demonstrated commitment to the TAT?
17. How does your team communicate about concerns on campus?
18. How does your team store information and monitor case load?
19. What roles are represented on your threat assessment team and how do they contribute to the function of your team?
20. Are there any missing components that are needed on your team to run more effectively?
21. What are your feelings about threat assessment teams on college campuses?

APPENDIX B

ADULT CONSENT FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: A case study exploring members' perceptions of threat assessment teams' training and resources at two-year colleges

INVESTIGATORS: Kristi Pendleton, M.S. Oklahoma State University, Dr. Jesse Mendez, Ph.D., Oklahoma State University

PURPOSE: This study will explore the perceived impact of threat assessment teams on campus safety and similarities and differences of threat assessment team resources in urban and rural two-year college institutions. I am asking you to take part in this study as your institution is a two-year college and has a working threat assessment team on campus. You must be an assigned member of the campus threat assessment team either as a member or administrator and 18 years old to participate in this research study.

PROCEDURES

You will participate in an interview with a researcher. You will be asked questions about how you perceive risk, your role on the threat assessment team, how your threat assessment team process works, your institution's policy and procedures, the strengths and weaknesses of your team and/or team process, and the institution's campus culture. With your permission I will audio record this interview for transcription purposes only. This study is designed to last approximately 30-45 minutes.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:

There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

You may gain an appreciation and understanding of how research is conducted. The higher education community continues to identify and hone the threat assessment team process as a strategy to impact campus safety and identify students of concern at the lowest risk level. Threat assessment teams at two-year colleges may operate differently than at four-year institutions. This study may provide a better understanding of the two-year college's viewpoint of threat assessment. If you are interested, we will send you a copy of the results of the study when it is finished.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher and individuals responsible for research

oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research.

CONTACTS :
You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study: Kristi Pendleton, MS., OSU-OKC, Office of Student Life, 900 N. Portland Ave., Oklahoma City, OK 73107, (405)945-3378 or Jesse Mendez, Ph.D., 204 Willard Hall, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-4407. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Hugh Creathar, IRB Chair, 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:
I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION:
I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:
I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

The interview will be recorded. All recordings will be destroyed after transcription.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____ _____
Signature of Researcher Date

APPENDIX C

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Monday, August 03, 2015
IRB Application No	ED15106
Proposal Title:	A case study exploring members perceptions of threat assessment teams training and resources and two year colleges
Reviewed and Processed as:	Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 8/2/2016

Principal Investigator(s):

Kristi Pendleton
900 E. Beam Dr.
Yukon, OK 73099

Jesse P. Mendez
312 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1.Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2.Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3.Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4.Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

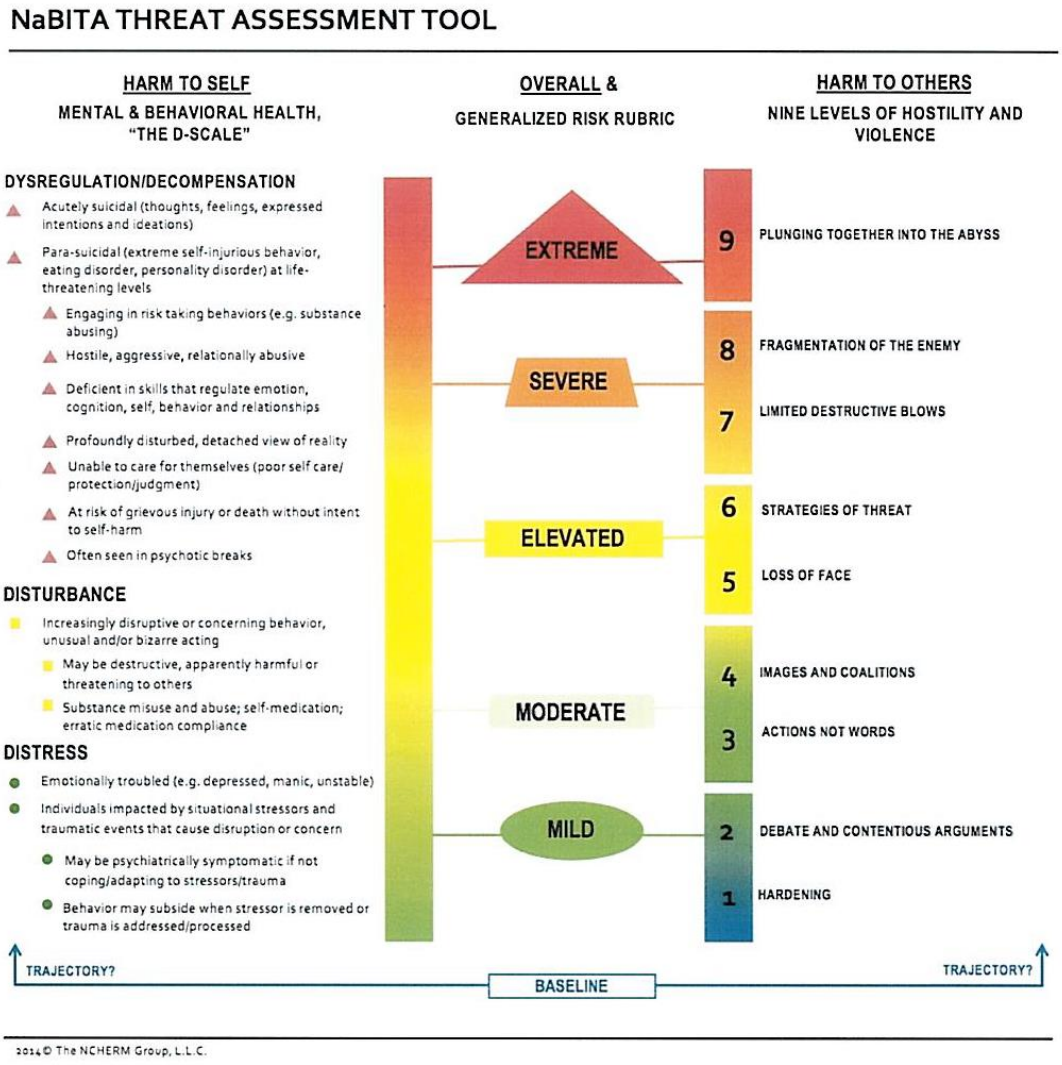
Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX D

NaBITA Risk Assessment Tool



VITA

Kristi A. Pendleton

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY EXPLORING MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS' TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in Higher Education major at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2017.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Educational Leadership Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2009.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Community Health at The University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 1995.

Experience:

Director, Student Engagement	2009 – Present
Adjunct Faculty Member	2009 – Present
Director, Campus Life	2004 – 2009
Director, Student Activities	2000 - 2004