Behavioral Assessment Teams
Using Threat Assessment at Flagship
Universities in New England

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Incidents of violence on college campuses, although rare, are devastating. In response to the recent spate of shootings, many colleges and universities have followed the best practice recommendations of the U.S. Department of Education (2006) and formed multi-disciplinary behavioral assessment teams. The purpose of these teams is to deal with matters of crisis, disturbing behavior, and medical or psychiatric situations involving students, faculty, and/or staff in order to determine needs and appropriate responses (NACUBO, 2008). One preventative approach often employed by these teams is threat assessment.

Originally developed by the U.S. Secret Service to evaluate subjects who threatened public officials, threat assessment has evolved into operational activities designed to analyze dangerous situations. Using guidelines based on threat assessment principles, behavioral assessment teams investigate whether an individual has the intent and the means to carry out a threat. It is, however, unclear how many team members are formally trained in threat assessment or if they follow the techniques and procedures threat assessment principles prescribe.

This descriptive-exploratory study investigated behavioral assessment teams at state flagship universities in New England (N = 6). Using a mixed methods approach, the principle research question was addressed: Are there significant differences between the behavioral assessment teams in terms of composition, practices, and responsibilities related to threat assessment? Behavioral assessment team leaders (N = 6) and team members (N = 28) were surveyed to determine if there is a relationship between levels of training and the functional implementation of threat assessment. Team leaders (N = 6) and executive administrators (N = 4), who were responsible for oversight of the behavioral assessment teams, were interviewed to gather information additional information about team formation, processes, and long-term strategic planning around institutional threat assessment systems.

The findings showed that although each team was unique, there were no significant differences in terms of the research variables. However, there was a significant positive correlation between level of training and confidence in using threat assessment among team members. Team variations allowed for a number of recommendations to be made based on the findings and on expert opinions available from the literature.
I. INTRODUCTION

Until recently, most emergency planning at institutions of higher education focused on preparation, response, and recovery with very little effort being put toward prevention strategies. It was not until the tragic shootings at Virginia Technical Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in 2007 and Northern Illinois University in 2008 that administrators of higher education institutions were prompted to re-evaluate their crisis management plans and to take appropriate measures for preventing and responding to crises (Curtis, 2009).

One of the preventative measures most often cited in the literature as a best practice is the creation of a multi-disciplinary behavioral assessment team that utilizes a threat assessment model to address potential violence on campus (Delworth, 1989; Vossekui, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). Threat assessment has been defined as “a set of operational activities that combine the use of an investigative process and information-gathering strategies to inform a set of relevant questions, which are used to determine whether a student/situation poses a serious risk of targeted violence” (Randazzo, Borum, Vossekui, Fein, Modzeleski, & Pollack, 2005, p. 151). Much of the research on threat assessment has focused on explaining what the principles are behind the threat assessment processes and how these can be best utilized. However, there is little research on the degree to which these recommendations and strategies are being implemented on campuses.

The researcher has substantial interest in the topic for several reasons. First, his educational background includes a master’s degree in forensic
psychology. Second, because of this background, he has, on a number of occasions, been asked to give his opinion on the level of risk a student poses based on threats he or she has made toward others. Third, this is a topic of considerable interest to many in higher education and is one in need of more research to supplement many views that have been expressed on the issue.

**Problem Statement**

Researchers began focusing on the issue of school violence following a number of devastating school shootings in the 1990s. In 2002, the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education published the results of a five-year study that became the seminal work in the area of school shootings (Vossekuil, et al., 2002). Based on the results of this study, the U.S. Department of Education recommended the threat assessment approach as a best practice for addressing potential targeted violence in schools, and further proposed that one of the best ways to utilize this approach is with a multi-disciplinary behavioral assessment team that identifies, assesses, and manages the subject, the target, and the situation in the school setting (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski, & Reddy, 2002; Vossekuil, et al., 2002).

Not until after the killings at Virginia Tech in 2007 and Northern Illinois University in 2008 did higher education leaders begin to look at how vulnerable their institutions might be to threats of violence. Much of the research to date has been focused on explaining and defining what the threat assessment approach is. One of the main issues is that the majority of the research on threat assessment in educational settings has been conducted in
the elementary and secondary school settings. There are relatively few studies about the implementation and use of these recommendations in a college or university environment.

This study examined how the flagship universities in New England have adopted the recommended threat assessment approach. It also explored the level of understanding of the threat assessment process.

**Background of the Study**

The well being of civilized society depends upon a continued supply of educated professionals and citizens emanating from colleges and universities. One of the essential functions of institutions of higher education (IHE) is to provide a safe environment in which students can challenge themselves intellectually, mature emotionally, and prepare to become contributing members of society (Heilburn, Dvoskin, & Heilburn, 2009). Daily, colleges and universities are faced with threats to the safety and security of their students, faculty, staff, and property, which can come in several forms. Emergency preparedness is essential for the protection of campuses against natural disasters. Crisis management is concerned with human-caused disasters such as fires, bomb threats, cyber-attacks, sabotage, civil disorder, violence, and mass-casualty events (Curtis, 2009; Mitroff, & Anagnos, 2008).

As noted by Mitroff and Anagnos (2008):

It’s not possible to give a precise and general definition of a crisis, just as it’s not possible to predict with exact certainty when a crisis will occur, how it will occur, and why. A major crisis affects, or has the potential to affect, the whole of an organization. A major crisis will also exact a major toll on human lives, property, financial earnings, and the reputation and/or general health and well being of the organization. Often these effects occur simultaneously. As a result, a major crisis cannot be completely contained within the organization’s boundaries. (p. 224)
The U.S. Department of Education recommends that preparation, prevention, response, and recovery strategies should be included in all crisis management plans in order to minimize injury and destruction on college campuses (2006). Some threats are unavoidable by their very nature. Certain natural disasters, such as hurricanes, are predictable but are unpreventable. Many other threats can, with diligence and forethought, be mitigated or outright prevented. Still, “Completely preventing human-caused crises is impossible. However, with the appropriate planning and preparation, any company can limit both the duration and the damage caused by major crises” (Mitroff & Anagnos, 2008, p. 222).

**Campus Violence**

One of the most potentially devastating threats to the safety and security of those at institutions of higher education is the risk of campus violence. Unfortunately, campus violence is not a new phenomenon. As noted by Cornell (2008), “Terms such as ‘school violence’ and ‘campus violence’ are potentially misleading, because they imply that the location of the event is the defining feature of the problem” (p. 1). The location of the violence is significant only in that the perpetrator chose a school or a campus instead of a random site of opportunity (Vossekuil et al., 2002). It does not diminish or lessen the impact of the actual violent act because it took place on a campus. Indeed such violence is often perceived as more horrific because it occurred in a place associated with learning.

Campus violence, as defined by The American College Health Association (ACHA), includes the categories of sexual violence; racial, ethnic, and
gender-based violence and homophobic intimidation; hazing; celebratory violence; attempted suicide and suicide; aggravated assault; arson; attacks on faculty or staff; non-negligent manslaughter; homicide; and mass-murder (Carr & Ward, 2005). Although all of the different types of crimes described in the ACHA report are devastating, few are as overwhelming as campus shootings or other mass-casualty events (Carr & Ward, 2005).

**Targeted Violence**

Targeted violence is defined as “any incident of violence where a known or knowable attacker selects a particular target prior to their violent attack” (Vossekuil et al., 2002, p. 4). In April 2010, the U.S. Secret Service (USSS), in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), released a report that looked at the number of targeted violent attacks on or near college campuses (Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons, 2010). The study reviewed public records of lethal or potentially lethal campus assaults from 1900 to 2009. Of the 272 reported incidents, most (74%) have occurred since 1980 (Drysdale et al., 2010). Despite the disturbing trend in the last 30 years, the actual incidents of campus shootings or mass casualty events are still relatively rare. However, when they do occur, the results are catastrophic for the institution and for students, faculty, and staff.

Following the attack at Columbine High School in April 1999, the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education launched the Safe School Initiative, a three-year study focused on “the thinking, planning, and
other pre-attack behaviors engaged in by attackers who carried out school shootings” (Vossekuil et al., 2002, p. 3).

The focus of the initial Safe School Initiative was elementary and secondary schools, not colleges and universities. However, the findings were significant and have important implications for institutions of higher education. The significant findings of the Safe School Initiative (2001) study were that prior to the incidents in most cases attackers told someone about their plans; attackers made plans and were rarely impulsive; that there was no accurate or useful general profile; and that attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused concern or indicated a need for help (USSS, 2000). In nearly all of these cases the threats were not made directly to the intended victim(s), but were communicated to third parties. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that “had the threats been reported and investigated, the shootings might have been prevented” (Cornell, 2008).

**Threat Assessment**

The findings of the Safe School Initiative (2002) and the FBI report (2000) led the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Secret Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to recommend a threat assessment approach to prevent school shootings:

Findings about pre-attack behaviors of perpetrators of targeted violence validated the “fact-based” approach of the threat assessment process. This process relies primarily on the appraisal of behaviors, rather than stated threats or traits, as the basis for determining whether there is cause for concern. (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski, & Reddy, 2002, p. 5)

Threat assessment is an approach originally developed by the U.S. Secret Service in its protective intelligence activities to guard the president of the
United States and other national and foreign leaders (Borum, Fein, Vossekuil, & Berglund, 1999). There are three major functions of a threat assessment program (Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995):

1. Identification: There is no profile or single “type of perpetrator”, rather “violence stems from an interaction among the potential attacker, past stressful events, a current situation, and the target.” (Randazzo et al., 2005, p. 151).

2. Assessment: There is a distinction between “making a threat (expressing, to the target or others, and intent to harm the target) and posing a threat (engaging in behaviors that further a plan to harm the target)” (Randazzo et al., 2005, p. 151). Many people who make threats do not pose a serious risk of harm to the target. “Without a careful threat assessment procedure to distinguish serious from non-serious cases, it is inevitable that fearful school authorities will over-react to students who make non-serious threats” (Cornell, 2008, p. 14).

3. Management: “Targeted violence is neither random nor spontaneous; targeted violence is the result of an understandable and often discernible process of thinking and behavior” (Borum et al., 1999, p. 329).

**Behavioral Assessment Teams**

In a school or college/university setting, the threat assessment approach requires “the person or team conducting the inquiry to gather information, and answer key questions about the case, and to evaluate the evidence suggesting movement toward violent action” (Randazzo et al., 2005, p. 153). One strategy often employed by campuses is a multi-disciplinary behavioral assessment team (BAT). These behavioral assessment teams are often charged with addressing crises, disturbing behavior, and medical and psychiatric situations of individual students, faculty, and or staff. Behavioral assessment teams often conduct threat assessments and should be the primary investigators of whether a student has the intent and the means to
carry out the threat. Additionally the teams "will also take actions to help the student resolve the problem or conflict that stimulated the threat" (Cornell, 2008, p. 11).

**Conclusion**

Campus violence is just one of a myriad number of threats facing institutions of higher education. However, unlike other threats, campus violence may be preventable. Nationwide, colleges and universities struggle to ensure the safety and security of their campuses with interventions that are not only effective, but also affordable. Having a multi-disciplinary behavioral assessment team that uses the threat assessment approach is the most cited best practice supported by the U.S. Department of Education and federal law enforcement agencies. However, there is very little research on how to effectively implement this strategy on campuses.

**Definition of Terms**

Several terms in this study require clarification and definition.

**Behavioral Assessment Team** - Multi-disciplinary team formed to deal with matters of crisis, disturbing behavior, and medical or psychiatric situations involving students, faculty, and/or staff in order to determine needs and appropriate responses (NACUBO, 2008).

**Campus/School Violence** - The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself or another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation that takes place in the buildings, grounds, or surrounding area of a school or college/university campus. This includes, but is not limited to campus shootings, murder/suicides, homicides, hate crimes based on gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, suicides, assaults, hazing, celebratory violence, and arson (Carr & Ward, 2005).

**Core Team** - Members of a behavioral assessment team that form the core group with specific training in threat assessment that may be called upon to form a threat assessment team and respond to an escalating situation.
**Crisis** - An event, which is often sudden or unexpected, that disrupts the normal operations of the institution or its educational mission and threatens the well-being of its personnel, property, financial resources and/or reputation of the institution (Harper, Paterson, & Zdziarski, 2006).

**Crisis Management** - The process by which an organization deals with a major unpredictable event that threatens to harm the organization, its stakeholders, or the general public (Mitroff & Anagnos, 2008).

**Mass Murder/Killings** - Three or more killings committed around the same time by the same perpetrator.

**Mass Casualty Event** - Any incident in which emergency medical services personnel and equipment at the scene are overwhelmed by the number and severity of casualties at that incident; sometimes referred to as a multiple-casualty incident or multiple-casualty situation.

**Targeted Violence** - Any incident of violence where a known or knowable attacker selects a particular target prior to their violent attack (Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995).

**Threat Assessment** - A set of operational activities that combine the use of an investigative process and information-gathering strategies to inform a set of relevant questions, which are used to determine whether a person/situation poses a serious risk of targeted violence (Randazzo, Borum, Vossekuil, Fein, Modzeleski, & Pollack, 2005).

**Threat Assessment Team** - Multi-disciplinary team that "interacts and operates on a regular basis- and as needed for crisis situations. Team is available to review and discuss any students, employees or other persons who have raised concerns and may be at risk of harming either themselves or others, or who pose a significant disruption to the learning, living, or working environment" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 12).

**Behavioral Assessment and Threat Assessment Teams**

There are a number of similarities between the definition of a behavioral assessment team and a threat assessment team. In the literature the two terms are often used interchangeably. However, the primary difference is that threat assessment teams are designed to be smaller, more responsive, and focused on student or staff concerns that have escalated into threatening situations.
Conversely, a behavioral assessment team is designed to deal with any concerning behaviors that have come to its attention, with the intention of assisting the student or staff person in accessing the necessary resources. In the process of completing this task, behavioral assessment teams may be called upon to investigate and assess threatening or concerning behavior. Given the similarities in their roles and the fact that both teams can be called upon to perform threat assessments, for the purpose of this study a behavioral assessment team will be defined using the NACUBO (2008) definition: Multi-disciplinary teams formed to deal with matters of crisis, disturbing behavior, and medical or psychiatric situations involving students, faculty, and/or staff in order to determine needs and appropriate responses. This study will investigate how behavioral assessment teams use the threat assessment approach in their work.

**Research Questions**

To guide the study, one primary research question and two secondary research questions were used.

**Primary Research Question:**

Are there differences among the behavioral assessment teams at the flagship universities in New England in terms of composition, responsibilities, and practices?

**Secondary Research Questions:**

I. Are there significant differences among the behavioral assessment teams in the functional utilization of the functions and principles of the threat assessment approach?

II. Is there a relationship between the level of training that team members have received and their level of self-confidence in using the threat assessment approach?
Methodology

Research Design

This study was designed to use a two-phased mixed methods descriptive-exploratory study of the behavioral assessment team at the flagship universities in New England. The data for the study were comprised of questionnaire results, interview results, and the collection and review of online documentation from multiple sites. The behavioral assessment team at each university is described, focusing on team characteristics, the number of team members, the amount and type of training received, and any unique processes or procedures of each team.

For the first phase, qualitative information was secured from interviews with behavioral assessment team leaders and executive administrators responsible for oversight of the institutional threat assessment systems. The second phase consisted of quantitative data gathered by means of two questionnaires from behavioral assessment team leaders and team members. Additional information was retrieved from a review of web-based postings on policies and practices at each institution. Information from the three sources was triangulated.

Participants

The participants for this study were the behavioral assessment team members and executive administrators responsible for team oversight at the state flagship universities in New England ($N = 6$): University of Connecticut; University of Maine; University of Massachusetts, University of New Hampshire; University of Rhode Island; and, University of Vermont.
The New England region was chosen for convenience and because there have been no major reported incidents that may have impacted, either positively or negatively, on the development of the behavioral assessment teams at these institutions.

For the first phase, those administrators identified as the team leaders \((N = 6)\) and executive administrators with oversight responsibility for teams \((N = 4)\) were interviewed. For the second phase, identified members of behavioral assessment teams \((N = 44)\) and the team leaders at each university were asked to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire response rates were 100% for the team leaders \((6 \text{ responses/6 leaders})\) and 64% for the team members \((28 \text{ responses/44 members})\). The names of the team leaders, executive administrators, and team members interviewed and/or surveyed for this study will remain confidential. Further, to avoid any possible connection between the interviewees and their institutions, the specific universities are not identified when the results are presented and all possible identifying comments were removed.

**Instruments**

The first-phase interviews were semi-structured in nature, as flexibility was needed to lead the conversation to areas or topics that were more relevant for one institution than another. These interviews addressed the three functions of threat assessment (identification, assessment, and management) and also inquired about any policies, procedures, strategic planning, and system-wide incorporation of crisis prevention efforts and training.
There were two survey instruments developed for phase two of this study. The first questionnaire was sent to the team leaders at each institution to gather data on the teams’ composition, responsibilities, and practices in using threat assessment. The survey was divided into four sections. Section 1 asked questions about the team composition and areas of member representation. Section 2 assessed questions of training on the three major functions of threat assessment: identification, assessment, and management. Section 3 investigated the extent to which teams incorporate the 12 principles of the threat assessment approach (Deisinger et al., 2008). Section 4 assessed the team leaders’ confidence in their team's ability to use the threat assessment approach. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale.

The second questionnaire was designed for the behavioral assessment team members and was divided into three sections. Section 1 addressed the level of training individual members receive, team composition, and practice. Section 2 assessed respondents' level of confidence in their individual ability, and their team’s ability to operationalize the three main functions of threat assessment (identification, assessment, and management) effectively. Section 3 asked questions about the 12 principles of the threat assessment approach (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008). Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale.

**Data Collection**

Contact was made with the student affairs administrators at the flagship universities to identify the team leaders of the behavioral assessment teams.
Team leaders were contacted by e-mail, describing the study and requesting their assistance. Approximately three days before a scheduled interview, a confirmation e-mail was sent, providing the preliminary questions to be covered and the human subject consent form. Before the interview began, a signed copy of the human subject consent form was secured, as was agreement to record the interviews digitally in order to ensure the accuracy of the responses.

Following the interviews, the team leaders were provided a link to the online team leader survey. Team leaders were also asked to provide their team members with a link, via e-mail, to the online team member questionnaire and to encourage their participation.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis for the interview results included a “cross-case analysis, which means grouping together answers from different people to common questions for analyzing different perspectives on central issues” (Patton, 1990, p. 376). This allowed for comparison of similarities and differences across institutions.

The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Team data were compared for group differences using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the Primary Research Question. Additional team data were compared using one-way analysis of variance for Secondary Research Question I. Correlation analysis was used to address Secondary Research Question II.
Limitations/Delimitation

There are a number of limitations and delimitations for this study. Creswell (1994) advised including limitations to "identify potential weaknesses to a study" and delimitations "to address how the study will be narrowed in scope" (p. 110). One of the first limitations of the study was defining and measuring the concepts related to threat assessment. Because of the variance in how institutions define threats and threat assessment, there may not be consistency across the sample. Another limitation of the study was asking participants to give honest reports of possible deficiencies in their reporting systems.

The self-selective nature of the participants was a threat to the internal validity of this study. There may also be an issue of sample bias, because the researcher's employer was one of the institutions selected for the study. Another limitation is the use of a questionnaire and interview questions that were created specifically for this study.

One delimitation of the study was that the results are limited to the state flagship universities in New England. The issue of selection makes generalizability of the results to other institutions a problem. In this case, generalizability will be limited to state flagship institutions with similar characteristics, such as size, research areas, and resources, and not to all institutions of higher education.

Resulting Actions

The outcomes of this study have the potential to be significant. A major objective of the study was to identify deficits in policies or procedures around
threat assessment for the participating universities, thus making preventative efforts stronger. For institutions that do have behavior assessment systems in place, recommendations based on best practices models are offered based on the study results and on expert opinions from the literature, which can be followed as a way of establishing better and more effective systems. For those institutions that do not have a behavioral assessment system, the results of this study will be helpful by clearly defining and describing systems based on the principles of the threat assessment approach. The study provides preliminary conclusions about the differences between those institutions with better threat assessment systems compared with institutions that may be found lacking and in need of improvement.

This study seeks to evaluate a recommended best practice as a means of addressing a major issue facing every institution of higher education. Threat assessment has been endorsed as a best practice by federal law enforcement and educational agencies for every level of education. The threat assessment approach investigated relates directly to higher education leadership. Although it is rare, campus violence is a priority issue for institutions of higher education, despite the infrequency of these events. The end product of this study is a model of the threat assessment approach that can be implemented on college and university campuses.

**Dissertation Organization**

The description of this study is presented in five chapters. This first chapter serves as an introduction to the problem and an overview of the
study. Chapter II reviews relevant literature on related areas of this study. Chapter III describes in detail the research design and methodology used. Chapter IV provides the results of the data analyses and the relevant findings. Chapter V presents a summary of the major findings; recommendations based on the study findings, and suggest areas for future research on these topics.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Violence is threaded through many aspects of American life, but it is perhaps most out of place in an institution devoted to education and development. (Roark, 1993, p. 4)

Introduction

In the last five years there has been intense focus and attention given to the issues of campus safety and security. Many of the initiatives implemented by colleges and universities have been in reaction to the infrequent but devastating events at other institutions. It is only natural that after a violent event, institutional leaders think about effective ways to respond if that same event were to happen on their campuses. However, particularly in the case of campus shootings, it is too late once the shooting begins. Prevention efforts focused on identifying, assessing, and managing troubled students, faculty, and staff and helping them to resolve the problems or conflicts are among the best ways of defusing potentially dangerous situations. The use of behavioral assessment teams has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to prevent violence from erupting on college and university campuses.

This study was designed to explore and describe the behavioral assessment teams at the flagship universities in New England and the extent to which those teams follow the threat assessment approach in their work. This chapter examines the trends in violence seen on college campuses and describes the evolution of the threat assessment approach in higher education settings. The historical basis for behavioral intervention teams is addressed and relevant models are presented and discussed.
Campus Violence

Campuses as Safe Havens

For most people colleges and universities are seen as serene places of learning and growth. "In certain respects, colleges and universities function as a haven from the pressures and expectations of the broader society, providing a setting in which youth can learn, mature, and prepare to assume adult roles" (Heilburn, Dvoskin, & Heilbrun, 2009, p. 93). However, this image has become tarnished in the past few years with the perceived increase in violent crime on college campuses. "While some believe that campus crime is new to the post-secondary community environment, there is evidence that this is not an accurate perception. In reality the American college campus has never been the idyllic sanctuary often publically portrayed" (Bromley, 2005, p. 5). In fact, many college campuses experience the same crime problems taking place in the surrounding communities, including violent crime.

Defining Campus Violence

There are a number of different definitions of campus violence, ranging from the very basic to the very complex. In 2005, the American College Health Association (ACHA) published a white paper that described the nature and the extent of violent crime on college campuses. For the purposes of this study the ACHA definition of violence will be used.

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself or another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation. (Carr & Ward, 2005, p. 381)
Campus violence is violence that takes place in the buildings, grounds, or surrounding area of a school or college/university campus. This includes, but is not limited to campus shooting, murder/suicides, homicides, hate crimes based on gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, suicides, assaults, hazing, celebratory violence, and arson (Carr & Ward, 2005).

Campus violence has been conceptualized as embracing several categories: sexual violence; racial, ethnic, and gender-based violence and homophobic intimidation; hazing; celebratory violence; attempted suicide and suicide; murder/suicide; murder/non-negligent manslaughter; aggravated assault; arson; and attacks on faculty or staff (Carr & Ward, 2005).

There are those that have suggested "the university is like a city as far as crime is concerned" (Bromley, 2005, p. 6). Unlike a city, however, a college campus is a small community, where even one violent act can have an enormous effect. "When violence occurs on a college or university campus, the entire campus is impacted. The ripple effects of one rape, one hate crime, or one riot can spread rapidly and significantly contaminate the learning environment" (Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger, 2001, p. ix).

There is no question that incidents of violence on college campuses are a problem that is escalating in numbers and severity; however, "it must be placed in perspective with the larger problem of violence in American society" (Cornell, 2008, p. 10). The 2005 ACHA study found that "the 16 million students attending 4,200 colleges and universities in the United States experience a comparatively low rate of violent crime; college students are more likely to be victims of violent crime off campus than on campus" (Carr
& Ward, 2005, p. 1). Table 1 presents a summary of national crime statistics for colleges and universities during 2007-2009, the most recent years for which data were available.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Violence</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcible Sex Offenses</td>
<td>3478</td>
<td>3270</td>
<td>3284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>4956</td>
<td>4540</td>
<td>4649</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggravated Assault</td>
<td>5213</td>
<td>4827</td>
<td>4981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injurious hate crimes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>83</td>
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While other types of violent crime are prevalent on college campuses, homicides are relatively rare. For example if the approximate number of colleges and universities in the United States (4,200) is divided by the average number of homicides from 2007-2009 (50), the average institution of high education can expect a murder on campus once every 84 years (Cornell, 2008). This crude calculation is sufficient to highlight the fact that homicides and, particularly, mass attacks are very rare on college campuses. Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neil, and Savage (2008) suggested:

Homicide is but the tip of the iceberg of violent behavior. We must not lose sight of the rest of the iceberg simply because the tip is so much more apparent and frightening. The safety of a campus community is impacted on a much more regular, and perhaps insidious, basis through the occurrence of those lesser acts of violence. (p. 9)
The range of behaviors from threatening statements and bullying to homicide is "the true range of violence on campus or any workplace" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 10). There are, however, particular factors unique to college and university campuses that make them especially susceptible to acts of violence.

**Environmental Vulnerabilities of Campuses**

Colleges and universities face the potential for violence ever day. Indeed, the very nature of institutions of higher education, the characteristics that allow for an environment that fosters learning and emotional development, are also the factors that make them more vulnerable to violence and crime (Heilbrun et al., 2009; Nicoletti et al., 2001). These factors include access, location, hours of operation, and predictability.

Most institutions allow almost unfettered access to their campuses. "The permeable boundaries of campus make predator infiltration all too easy" (Nicoletti et al., 2001, p. 31). When one considers the number of people who can freely walk the campus grounds the numbers are staggering. In terms of location, one of the unique factors of a campus setting is that most campuses cannot relocate if the criminal activity in the neighborhoods surrounding the campus increases (Nicoletti et al., 2001). Hours of operation are another concern. Most colleges operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and for resident students, the day is not over when classes are finished. Student-related violence tends to occur during evening and weekend hours when professional staff are less accessible (Nicoletti et al., 2001). Another factor is that colleges operate on predictable schedules. "Anyone trying to target an
individual or group would have an easy time anticipating the location" (Nicoletti et al., 2001, p. 31).

In addition to vulnerabilities related to the facilities, institutions of higher education face a number of human and interpersonal problematic factors. Colleges and universities are "comprised of a diverse group of individuals with varying backgrounds and goals. Students, faculty and staff, and community members all contribute to the tapestry of campus life. And each group potentially brings a threat to campus safety" (Nicoletti et al., 2001, p. 33).

**Faculty and Staff**

Faculty and staff are not immune to issues of crime and violence. In fact, "Faculty members are especially vulnerable targets on college campuses. They are usually very accessible and predictable, having open office hours and regular class schedules" (Nicoletti et al., 2001, p. 37). One of the key dynamics at play is the "pronounced power differential between faculty and students, creating at least the potential of verbal, emotional, and even sexual abuse" (Heilbrun et al., 2009, p. 93). This power differential, whether actual or perceived, can also exist among colleagues, supervisors, and administrators. This is particularly true when issues of tenure are being decided (Rice, 2003).

**Students**

Traditional-aged college students, 18 to 22 year olds, face the highest risk for becoming victims and perpetrators of violence, as do others in this age bracket. "The student body is typically comprised almost exclusively of
people in the age range that is associated with the highest levels of crime and violence" (Heilbrun et al., 2009, p. 93). Developmentally, students are typically under a great deal of stress and often are removed from traditional support systems, including family and friends who might help them to cope. "For those who experience failure and loneliness, college can be a terrifying place, and the associated isolation may intensify problems" (Heilbrun et al., 2009, p. 93).

**Types of Campus Violence**

Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, and Bollinger (2001) classified campus violence into four general categories, which can occur as isolated events or in different combinations.

The first type is predatory violence. Unlike other violent offenders who use violence to get something they want, "for the predator the violence is the desired outcome. The thrill is in the kill or assault - the planning, execution, and aftermath" (Nicoletti et al., 2001, p. 15). One of the most sensational examples of a campus predator is the infamous serial killer, Ted Bundy, a former law student who kidnapped, raped, and murdered over 30 women across the country. The majority of his victims were taken from college campuses in Washington, Utah, Colorado, and Florida (National Crime Museum, 2008).

The second type of violence found on campuses is avenger violence. "For the avenger, violence becomes the only possible recourse for perceived grievances" (Nicoletti et al., 2001, p. 15). There is often a similar sequence of events leading up to an attack by an avenger-type offender.
First, there is a string of perceived injustices ending with some form of rejection or discipline. Second, the perpetrator initiates a resolution. They may initially attempt to resolve the matter through appropriate channels, but they do not get the results they desire. During the third phase, problem solving narrows and the perpetrator begins to create a violent fantasy of retaliation. When the satisfaction from the fantasies begins to wane, avengers will start to act on their ideas. They may begin with threats or milder forms of violence such as graffiti. Without confrontation avengers will escalate to more dangerous levels. Avengers usually have particular targets in mind, although they may take down many others in their violent rampage. (Nicoletti et al., 2001, pp. 15-16)

A recent example of an avenger-type offender was Amy Bishop who is accused of murdering three faculty members and injuring another three during a faculty meeting at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. "Dr. Bishop, a biology professor at the university, had applied for tenure, been turned down and appealed the decision. She learned on Feb. 12, 2010, the day of the shooting, that she had been denied again" (New York Times, 2010, ¶ 2). During the investigation into Bishop’s past, it was discovered that she had made numerous threats and was suspected of trying to kill her doctoral advisor with a bomb because she thought he was being critical of her work (New York Times, 2010).

The most common type of violence found on college campuses is relationship-based violence. "Relationship-based violence involves a one-on-one attachment that is exploited. This form of violence is unfortunately the most common and frequently the most devastating" (Nicoletti et al, 2001, p. 16). Examples of relationship violence that are likely to be seen on college campuses include domestic violence and intimate-relationship violence. One recent example was the murder of 22-year old, University of Virginia senior, Yeardley Love, on May 3, 2010 (New York Times, 2010). Love was found beaten to death in her apartment just beyond the campus grounds. Love's
ex-boyfriend, George Huguely, a University of Virginia lacrosse player was charged with first-degree murder. During the investigation, it was discovered that the local police had previously arrested Huguely. The arresting officer in that incident described Huguely as "by far the most rude, most hateful and most combative college kid I ever dealt with" (Macur, Thamel, & Zinser, 2010, p. 2).

Group-induced violence is the final type of violence on campuses. Group-induced violence occurs when "a group of individuals are swept into a mob mentality. Because the violent act is not the work of one individual, they [group members] feel that they are not as accountable" (Nicoletti et al, 2001, p. 16). Group-induced violence is often triggered by an external event or stimulus. On most campuses, group-induced violence takes the form of celebratory violence, usually alcohol-fueled rioting after a sporting event.

The seriousness of the harm associated with these events i.e., danger to the participants, destruction of student and community property, injury to law enforcement officers, and the damage to a university’s reputation, have all raised the level of concern of both university and community leaders across the United States. (Van Slyke, 2005, p. 2)

It is important to remember that violence runs the spectrum from mild forms such as graffiti, to the ultimate expressions of assault, rape, suicide, and homicide.

**Campus Shootings**

**History**

Few events have the disastrous impact on campuses as shootings and mass-casualty events. Although many may see incidents of campus killings as a relatively new phenomenon, research shows that targeted violence and
murders have occurred on college campuses for over 100 years (Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons, 2010). Findings reported in *Campus Attacks* (2010) revealed that targeted attacks on campuses go back as far as the early 1900s (Drysdale et al., 2010). The first recorded incident occurred on April 29, 1909, when Helen Marden, a student at Smith College, was killed during a murder-suicide committed by Porter Smith, a student at Dartmouth College (Simons, Deisinger, & Modzeleski, 2010). The shootings perpetrated by Charles Whitman at the University of Texas at Austin in 1966, in which 17 people were killed, including Whitman, and 33 others were wounded is often described as the first high-profile mass shooting on a college campus in the United States (Heilbrun et al., 2009; Nicoletti et al., 2001). Although the Whitman case is the first mass shooting on a college campus, it took the massacre at Columbine High School to bring the nation’s focus onto school violence.

**Lessons from Columbine**

The shootings perpetrated at Columbine High School in Colorado were one of the most memorable incidents of violent crime in the history of the United States. On April 22, 1999, two seniors, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, killed 12 students and 1 teacher, injured 21 other students, and killed themselves. At the time, it was the deadliest school shooting in the nation's history (*New York Times*, 2008).

Following the Columbine attack, the U.S. Secret Service (USSS) and the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) conducted the Safe School Initiative, a
three-year study that examined 37 incidents of targeted school violence that occurred from December 1947 through May 2000.

The most significant findings from the Safe School Initiative were that prior to the incidents:

- Most attackers told someone about their plans.
- Most attackers make plans and were rarely impulsive.
- There is no accurate or useful general profile of an attacker.
- Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused concern or indicated a need for help. (USSS, 2000)

The main recommendation to come from the findings of the Safe School Initiative was an endorsement of the threat assessment approach as an intervention that can be use to prevent school attacks (Fein et al., 2002; USSS, 2000; Vossekuil et al., 2002). The recommendation of using threat assessment was further endorsed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation after completing a study on school shooters.

Although the risk of an actual shooting incident in any one school is very low, threats of violence are potentially a problem in any school. Once a threat is made, having a fair, rational, and standardized method of evaluating and responding to threats is critically important. (O'Toole, 2000, p. 1)

In order to truly understand threat assessment in a school setting, it is important to understand how the approach was developed.

**Threat Assessment Development**

Threat assessment is a process originally developed by the U.S. Secret Service. Established in 1865 by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the original sole purpose of the Secret Service was to suppress the counterfeiting of currency (USSS, n.d.). Today, the agency is housed under the U.S.
Department of Homeland Security and is mandated by the U.S. Congress to carry out dual missions: protection of national and visiting foreign leaders, and criminal investigations (USSS, n.d.). The Secret Service is also the law enforcement agency designated to protect the president, vice president, and their families; former presidents; and visiting heads of state (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999).

**Protective Intelligence**

There are two related components to protection, physical protection and protective intelligence. Physical protection is aimed at "deterring or stopping an assault on the protected person. These protectors are prepared to stop an assailant and shield the protectee from harm" (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999, p. 321). Protective intelligence is less obvious, and seeks to prevent lethal access to a protectee by identifying potential attackers who have both the intention and capacity to mount an attack (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999). "By using a combination of investigative skill, corroboration, and common sense, a protective intelligence investigator can gather the information and evidence to make a thoughtful assessment of the threat an individual may pose to a target" (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, p. 7)

In 1992, the Secret Service undertook the Exceptional Case Study Project (ECSP), a 5-year effort that examined "the thinking and behavior of individuals who have attacked or approached to attack prominent public officials or figures in the United States since 1949" (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, p. 3). Completed in 1998, the ECSP "identified and analyzed 83 persons known to have engaged in 73 incidents of assassination, attack, and near-
attack behaviors from 1949 to 1995" (USSS, n.d.). The findings of the ECSP were significant. "Perhaps the major overall finding of the study is that many, if not most, attacks on public officials and public figures are potentially preventable. Persons intending to mount attacks follow paths to their attacks" (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999, p. 332). The findings revealed that potential attackers often engage in a discernable process of thinking and behavior before actually perpetrating attacks (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998).

Based on these findings, the Secret Service implemented significant policy changes in protective intelligence investigations. The agency also developed a framework for law enforcement officials to utilize in conducting threat assessment investigations at the federal, state, and local levels (USSS, n.d.). This framework would also be further adapted to be used in other settings, including workplace environments, K-12 schools, and institutions of higher education.

**Threat Assessment Approach**

When used by the Secret Service the purpose of threat assessment and protective intelligence activities is to identify, assess, and manage persons who might pose a threat to those being protected, while the goal of these activities is to thwart assassination attempts (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998). Unlike traditional criminal investigations that seek to gather, document, and evaluate facts about an incident in order to establish that a crime was committed and to identify and apprehend a suspect, threat assessment is the process of gathering and assessing information about persons who may have "interest, motive, intention, and capability of mounting attacks against public
officials and figures" (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, p. 7). "These investigations involve the analysis of a subject’s behavior and examination of patterns of conduct that may result in an attack on a particular target(s)" (Borum et al., 1999, p. 327).

Threat assessment is conceptually different from other types of investigations in two ways: it does not rely on descriptive, demographic, or psychological profiles and it does not rely on verbal or written threats as a threshold for risk (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998).

Psychological Profiling

Psychological profiles have received considerable attention in popular culture in the last few years. The notion of psychological profiles was initially developed as an investigative technique to aid in determining the type of person most likely to commit a given offense based on inferences from the evidence and/or the subject's behavior (Holmes & Holmes, 1996). However, profiling has not been proven to be "a useful framework for prospectively identifying persons who are at greater or lesser degrees of risk for targeted violence" (Borum et al., 1999, p. 328). The problem with this approach is that because instances of targeted violence are rare, profiles tend to be insufficiently sensitive or specific.

Given the relative infrequency of events such as workplace violence, assassinations, or school homicides, the vast majority of people who 'fit' any given profile will not engage in that behavior. Conversely, there have been (and will continue to be) people who commit these acts who do not fit any known profile. (Borum et al., 1999, p. 328)
Pre-Attack Behaviors

Although an assassin profile does not exist, the ECSP findings indicated that some patterns of behavior are common to perpetrators. Mounting an attack requires a number of preparatory decisions and activities which can include choosing a target or targets, carefully planning how to carry out an attack, finding out where the target is going to be, scouting the locations beforehand to survey security measures, securing and practicing use of the weapon of choice, and deciding on an escape. Although not every attacker or near-attacker exhibits all these activities and behaviors, most do engage in several of them (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998).

Posing a Threat

There is a distinction between “making a threat (expressing, to the target or others, and intent to harm the target) and posing a threat (engaging in behaviors that further a plan to harm the target)” (Randazzo, Borum, Vossekuil, Fein, Modzeleski, & Pollack, 2005, p. 151). Many who make threats do not pose a serious risk of harm to the target. Conversely, many people who pose a serious risk of harm do not issue direct threats prior to the attack (Randazzo et al., 2005; Vossekuil et al., 2002).

Nonetheless, the threat assessment approach pays careful attention to "identifying, investigating, and assessing anyone whose behavior suggests that he or she might pose a threat of violence, even if the individual does not communicate direct threats to a target or to the authorities" (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999, p. 332).
Although originally developed based on data about those who attacked or attempted to attack public officials, the threat assessment approach can be applied, with some modification, equally well to evaluating the risk of violence in other areas (Borum et al., 1999). The challenge for these areas is how to develop threat assessment systems that work outside a law enforcement environment.

**Threat Assessment in Educational Settings**

**K-12 Models**

Separate reports, from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (O'Toole, 2000) and the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education (Fein et al., 2002), endorsed the use of threat assessment approach as a viable measure to investigate student threats and to implement interventions appropriate for the threat. However, these reports failed to explain how the threat assessment approach used by law enforcement could be adapted to the school environment.

The challenge was to translate the FBI and Secret Service recommendations into a set of guidelines for schools to use in responding to student threats of violence, to train school personnel in the use of these guidelines, and then to field test the guidelines in sample schools. (Cornell & Williams, 2006, p. 588)

Researchers at the University of Virginia developed the Virginia model, which is a set of guidelines for K-12 school administrators to use in responding to reported student threats of violence (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010; Cornell, 2003). The model offers guidelines for K-12 school administrators to follow, based on field-testing for one year in 35 schools (Cornell, Sheras, Gregory, & Fan, 2009). One finding showed schools that “carefully implement and maintain a violence prevention
program are more likely to achieve substantial reductions in student aggression and misbehavior than schools that implement programs in a less rigorous manner" (Cornell & Williams, 2006, p. 600).

Another developed model was the Dallas Threat of Violence Risk Assessment, which assesses threats of violence by a student on three levels of risk: low, medium, and high. To determine the risk level, 19 student-related factors are used, including evidence of a plan, access to weapons, aggressive behavior, exposure to violence, and past history of threats or cruelty to animals (Van Dyke & Schroeder, 2006). In doing a threat assessment, the factors are weighted or scored, an appropriate action plan is created, and the student's progress is monitored against the plan (Van Dyke & Schroeder, 2006).

Both of these models have proven to be successful in the K-12 setting. However, research has shown that the vast differences between the K-12 and the higher educational environments inhibit the implementation of these models for college students for several reasons.

First, both models assume a known or existing threat emanating from a specific student or group of students. Often on college campuses, behavior that may be concerning and warrants a report may not have manifested into an actual threat. In a college setting individuals, not just students, are often reticent to communicate concerns to authorities.

Second, unlike K-12 schools, college and universities often have multiple and diverse reporting structures that apply to their different constituencies: faculty, staff, and students. It is reasonable to assume that not everyone will
know how to and who to report issues of concern. This is especially true with "situations that are often discreet, dynamic and often difficult to discern" (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 81). Add to that, campus settings often have multiple layers of authority such as resident assistants, teaching assistants, professors, student affairs administrators, campus safety officers, human resources personnel, and senior academic authorities. Not only are there multiple people receiving reports, but also, "Not all of these individuals have the proper training to recognize threats and/or to deal with crisis situations so merely communicating to an 'authority' does not ensure the information is being properly handled" (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 81).

Third, the K-12 models were developed for a controlled school setting. Much like a corporate environment, most individuals who present a threat typically exhibit behaviors that have brought them to the attention of authority figures. As a result, their behavior may end up being more closely monitored. Conversely, on a college campus there may be multiple discreet pieces of information about one individual that may be reported to different authorities depending upon where on campus the incident takes place. "Because of the open and autonomous nature of college campuses there is a dangerous likelihood that a critical, telltale pattern will go unrecognized" (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 82). Another element to consider regarding the setting is the residential nature of many colleges and universities. Not only must students learn to handle the academic stresses, they are often forced to deal with social stressors that they may not have experience with.
Overcrowding, noise, alcohol, and the general lack of personal space and privacy can exacerbate issues in the classroom and vice versa.

While some of the key elements of the K-12 models are transferable to higher education, many are not and remain applicable only to elementary, middle, and high schools. Not having a model or specific guidelines for dealing with threats of violence on college campuses had not been viewed as a problem until one Monday morning in April 2007, when the nation, and especially higher educational leaders, were harshly awakened to the issue of safety and security on college campuses.

Higher Education

Most experts agree, the incident that had the single greatest impact on college safety and security occurred at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University on April 16, 2007. On that Monday, Virginia Tech senior Seung-Hui Cho murdered 32 and injured 17 students and faculty in two related incidents on campus (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Three days following the shootings, Virginia Governor Tim Kaine commissioned a panel of "experts to conduct an independent, thorough, and objective review of the tragedy and to make recommendations regarding improvements to the Commonwealth's laws, policies, procedures, systems, and institutions, as well as those of other governmental entities and private providers" (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p. 5). The findings of the review panel were complied into a report that provided "an exhaustive review of the events including a timeline of key events; the local, state, and federal law enforcement responses; and the background and mental health history of
Seung Hui Cho" (Dunkle, Silverstein, & Warner, 2008, p. 587). The review panel concluded that there were warning signs in Cho's behavior before the attacks but that "the information was scattered throughout different departments and personnel on campus. No one person or entity at the Virginia Tech campus was looking for or knew all the available pieces of information" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 16).

Many hoped that the shootings at Virginia Tech were a terrible anomaly, instead of a harbinger of things to come. Unfortunately, they were wrong.

Ten months later on February 14, 2008, Steven Phillip Kazierczak shot and killed five students and then himself at Northern Illinois University (NIU) (Saulny & Davey, 2008). There were a number of significant differences between the two incidents. Unlike Cho at Virginia Tech, who left a long trail of warning signs and disturbing behavior, Kazierczak "was revered by the faculty and staff and students alike" (Saulny & Davey, 2008). The day after the shooting, Donald Grady, the chief of police at NIU said, "There were no red flags. It's unlikely that anyone would ever have the ability to stop an incident like this from the beginning" (Nizza, 2008, p. 1). However, it later became known that Kazierczak had a history of mental illness and had been hospitalized at a psychiatric center. In the two weeks prior to the shootings, Kazierczak's behavior had become erratic and that he had stopped taking his medication (MSNBC, 2008).

Perhaps what is most troubling about these incidents was they highlighted the vulnerability of institutions of higher education to attacks of violence and, though these were isolated events, no campus is immune.
Behavioral Assessment Teams

Early Model

Despite campus violence being heralded by the media as a new phenomenon, colleges and universities have been dealing with students of concern for decades. An early model for intervening with concerning students was the Assessment - Intervention of Student Problems (AISP) (Delworth, 1989). Although over 20 years old, the AISP model still provides the framework for many more recent models. "There are three essential components to this model: a) the formation of a campus assessment team; b) a general assessment process for channeling students into the most appropriate on-campus and off-campus resources; and c) intervention with the student of concern" (Dunkle et al., 2008, p. 590).

The first element of this model is the creation of a campus assessment team as the basis for providing a coordinated, campus-wide system for dealing with problems.

All campuses have or should have some system in place for handling the discipline or judicial problems and the psychological problems of students. The issue often becomes one of insufficient coordination, inadequate information flow and lack of shared process. Therefore, a coordinated system is an essential component of the AISP model. (Delworth, 1989, p. 17)

The AISP model suggests that at a minimum the team should be composed of key personnel from these areas: campus mental health services, campus security, student services, legal counsel, and the student conduct or judicial office (Delworth, 1989). Several key responsibilities were suggested for the team. The first responsibility is to develop policies and procedures to assess students and assign them to specific systems and
resources on campus. The second responsibility is to stay apprised of each assessment and referral. The third, and perhaps the most time-consuming, is to "develop and important assessment and intervention programs for students who are either initially assessed as disturbed/disturbing or do not profit from initial assignments"(Delworth, 1989, p. 17).

The AISP model classifies students of concern into three categories: disturbing, disturbed, or disturbed and disturbing. "Disturbing students are those whose conduct violates an institution's code of conduct but who do not have any evident mental health concerns" (Dunkle et al., 2008, p. 596). Whereas, disturbed students are those "who may be experiencing mental health problems but whose conduct does not violate the college or university's code of conduct"(Dunkle et al., 2008, p. 596. Most concerning are the disturbing/disturbed students who are "both disruptive and suffering from mental health problems. It is this category of students that can cause the most vexing and challenging problems for campus assessment teams and other members of the campus community"(Dunkle et al., 2009, p. 596). One of the benefits of the AISP model is that it "offers a framework that campus assessment teams can use to distinguish between student behavior that should be addressed through disciplinary channels and student mental health issues that may require intervention of a different kind" (Dunkle et al., 2009, p. 596).

The AISP model was updated by Dunkle, Silverstein, and Warner (2008) in response to the post-Virginia Tech climate in higher education. In addition to the team responsibilities put forth in the original model, a number of new
tasks were suggested for the team to manage. For instance, teams should develop policies around team functioning, including frequency of meetings and responsibility distribution, and should function as consultants to campus community with regard to identifying and reporting troubling individuals or situations (Dunkle et al., 2008). Teams should go beyond just referring students out to other resource, but rather develop "a system to monitor students, and review the results of assessments to track trends and evaluate team performance" (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010, p. 13).

Even after 23 years, the AISP model with modification remains the foundation for behavioral assessment teams at colleges and universities around the world.

Second Generation Model

Even though the AISP model represents seminal work, in recent years, researchers have developed a new or second-generation model for behavioral assessment teams. Sokolow and Lewis (2009) offered a number of critiques of the early model and pointed out that the behavioral assessment teams that existed prior to Virginia Tech were often informal, narrow in scope and function, rarely had the capacity for longitudinal tracking of student behaviors, and lacked the ability to see trends in behavior, both individually and collectively. Conversely, the second generation model suggests that behavioral intervention teams (BITs) be characterized by twelve key elements:

- Use formalized protocols of explicit engagement techniques and strategies;
- View their role as primarily to support and provide resources to students, and secondarily to address threats;
Utilize mandated psychological assessment;

Have the authority to invoke involuntary medical/psychological withdrawal policies;

Are undergirded by sophisticated threat assessment capacity, beyond law enforcement and psychological assessment tools;

Use rubrics to classify threats;

Foster a comprehensive reporting culture within the institution;

Train and educate the community on what to report and when;

Are technologically advanced and supported by comprehensive databases that allow the team to have a longitudinal view of student's behavior patterns and trends;

Focus not only on 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- meaning monitoring periods where a student in distress goes dormant. The role of BIT is determining whether such quietude raises increased or decreased monitoring needs, and acting accordingly.' (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009, p. 12)

In another review of first and second-generation behavioral intervention teams, Eells and Rockland-Miller (2011) noted that the difference between the two models highlights important concerns. The primary concern is whether to emphasize supporting students or conducting threat assessments, which raises the related question about the "team's responsibility to students versus its role in supporting the entire campus, including faculty and staff, and communicating with risk managers. These roles at times seem to be in conflict" (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011, p. 15).

**Principles of Threat Assessment**

In *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams*, Deisinger et al. (2008) suggested that there are 12 principles, developed
from research conducted by the various law enforcement agencies that can be useful in guiding threat assessment and management on college campuses. Whether convened exclusively as a threat assessment team or as part of a larger behavioral assessment team, the 12 principles can be utilized to focus assessment efforts, while remaining true to the underlying tenets of the process.

Principle 1: Target violence can often be prevented. Based on the data describing pre-attack behaviors, this principle suggests that incidents of targeted violence are preventable. By identifying pre-attack behaviors it may be possible to intervene and stop the situation from escalating further.

Principle 2: Violence is a dynamic process. Threat assessment is based on the understanding that violence is not a static event, or a state of being. Rather violence is a fluid, dynamic process that is influenced by changes in the person's life that may increase or decrease the likelihood of violence. "The particular threat posed by an individual of concern varies with the ebb and flow of his/her situation and the interventions applied" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 27).

Principle 3: Targeted violence is a function of several factors, but stems from the interaction of the individual of concern, the triggering situation, the setting in which the situation is playing out, and the target. "Threat assessment should not focus solely on the individual, but should also take into consideration all of these factors" (Deisinger et. al, 2008, p. 28).

Principle 4: In threat assessment, corroboration is critical. "The threat assessment and management process is based on facts and behaviors, not assumptions" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 29) Acquiring corroborating information from multiple sources is critical to successful threat assessment and management.

Principle 5: Threat assessment is about behavior, not profiles. Both the FBI and the Secret Service agree that there is no general profile for an attacker. Instead "the focus in threat assessment is on what this individual in this particular context has done (or is doing) that causes concern" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 29).
Principle 6: Cooperating systems are critical to threat assessment. Using other departments or agencies provides more input on the process of both assessing and managing potentially violent situations. Effective communication, collaboration, and coordination are necessary for the receipt, assessment, and response to critical information (Deisinger et al., 2008).

Principle 7: Does the person pose a threat? "The central question of a threat assessment is whether the person in question poses a threat, not solely whether he/she made a threat" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 30). Posing a threat includes behaviors that indicate that the person of concern is furthering a plan or building capacity for a violent act (Fein et al., 2002).

Principle 8: Keep victims in mind. Anyone conducting a threat assessment needs to consider victim safety and victim well being. "This encourages a focus on the management plan rather than focusing primarily on level of risk" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 30).

Principle 9: Early identification and interventions help everyone. The primary concern of threat assessment and management is the early recognition, reporting, and intervention with persons who have raised concerns. The main task of a threat assessment is "to recognize signs of thoughts and behaviors that tend to precede violence and to intervene as early as possible in order to prevent further escalation" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 31).

Principle 10: Multiple reporting mechanisms enhance early identification. Teams on college campuses should make it as easy as possible for the campus community to report concerns. "In order to be effective, threat assessment and management requires simple and easy access to reporting, consultation and intervention resources" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 31).

Principle 11: Multi-faceted resources can provide effective interventions. Threat management depends on using multiple, sustained, and coordinated interventions. These interventions should include strategies that de-escalate the individual, connect the individual to resources on or off campus, address situational or environmental factors, reduce access to the target, and decrease the vulnerability of the target (Deisinger et al., 2008).

Principle 12: Safety is a primary focus of threat assessment. The ultimate purpose of a threat assessment and management system is
to ensure the safety of the campus community by identifying and managing threats (Deisinger et al., 2008).

Regardless of the composition of the team, the principles help to clarify and enunciate the basic practices, responsibilities, and underlining theory behind a successful threat assessment and management system.

**Proliferation of Behavioral Assessment Teams**

The Virginia Tech review panel offered a number of recommendations to help other institutions learn from the events of Virginia Tech. One key recommendations was that "institutions should have inter-disciplinary threat assessment team on their campus charged with detecting and monitoring students of concern and managing the flow of information regarding such students" (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p. 19). These teams are seen as "a proactive and comprehensive approach to managing the risk posed by disruptive, threatening, or criminal behavior among individuals in university settings" (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 77). Behavioral assessment teams have become so prevalent that they have their own professional association, the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NBITA) (Lipka, 2009). There are an estimated 1,600 NBITA affiliated teams in operation at colleges and universities, schools, and workplaces with the majority coming into existence after 2008 (Hughes et al., 2011; Lipka, 2009).

Since the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007, colleges and universities have made great strides in improving campus safety and security measures. Researchers and other experts have focused on describing the need for behavioral intervention systems on college campuses. Others have created detailed manuals for how to implement teams that can work within the
unique culture and climate on each campus (Deisinger et al., 2008; Depue, & Englander, 2008; Dunkle et al., 2008; O'Neil, Fox, Hemphill, & Hephner LaBanc, 2010; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009; Sokolow et al., 2009; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009). However, only recently have researchers begun to explore how these recommendations have been implemented. Having teams in place is not enough if they are not doing what they were created to do. If behavioral assessment teams are not following the recommended best practices, it is possible that they are not functioning to their fullest potential, and thus, the campuses they serve are still exposed to greater risks than are necessary.

**Conclusion**

Threat assessment is the process by which threatening behavior by a person of concern is identified, assessed, and managed. Although originally developed by law enforcement, school shootings and mass casualty events have required that the process be adapted for both K-12 and higher education settings. This evolution of the threat assessment approach was used as the basis for this study. Institutions of higher education have been encouraged to develop multi-disciplinary behavioral assessment teams as an integral part of the campus threat assessment system. Behavioral assessment teams will differ from institution to institution, but it is assumed that most teams will be based on the AISP model (Delworth, 1989) and that their composition, practices, and responsibilities will reflect the recommendations suggested by experts (Dunkle et al., 2009). This study built upon previous research and explored how existing behavioral
assessment teams use the threat assessment approach in addressing the potential for targeted violence on campuses.

The following chapter describes the methodology used in the study. The variables framed in the research questions were taken from the literature and include the three general functions of threat assessment: identification, assessment, and management (Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995) and the 12 principles of threat assessment (Deisinger et al., 2008).
III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The intent of this two-phased, sequential mixed methods study is to explore how behavioral assessment teams utilize threat assessment strategies in addressing threats of targeted violence to campuses. This study used a descriptive-exploratory approach to examine the behavioral assessment teams and their practices at the six flagship universities in New England. The descriptive-exploratory approach was selected because, "In new fields of study where little work has been done, few definitive hypotheses exist and little is known about the nature of the phenomenon, qualitative inquiry is a reasonable beginning point of research" (Patton, 2002, p. 193). In addition,

Descriptive studies are concerned primarily with determining 'what is'. Most educational research has a strong inclination toward discovering cause-and-effect relationships and testing new instructional methods and programs. However, unless researchers first generate an accurate description of an educational phenomenon as it exists, they lack a firm basis for explaining or changing it. (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 301)

The data were constructed by using interviews, questionnaires, and online documents from the multiple sites. The behavioral assessment teams for each university are described in terms of composition, practices, and responsibilities.

The first phase of the study was qualitative explorations of the behavioral assessment teams, which was accomplished by interviewing the team leaders. Additional interviews with executive administrators responsible for oversight of the institutional threat assessment systems were also conducted. Findings from the qualitative phase were used to support the
quantitative phase that sought to determine how each team utilized threat assessment strategies to address threats of targeted violence on campus. The reason for undertaking an initial qualitative phase was twofold. The first reason was to verify the existence of a threat assessment team and to gather team-profile information. The second was to interview the team leaders in order to explain the purpose of the study, thus securing their support and their assistance in recruiting other team members for the quantitative phase.

The second phase consisted of two quantitative questionnaires, one designed for behavioral assessment team leaders and the other for team members. Additional qualitative data were retrieved from web-based information about the teams including policies and practices at each site university. Information from the three sources was triangulated. The results were de-identified and data were analyzed by institution and across institutions. The results were synthesized to "identify and extrapolate lessons learned" (Patton, 1990, p. 425).

**Research Questions**

To guide the research, one primary research question and two secondary research questions were used.

**Primary Question**

Are there differences among the behavioral assessment teams at the flagship universities in New England in terms of composition, responsibilities, and practices?

**Secondary Questions**

I. Are there significant differences among the behavioral assessment teams in the utilization of the functions and principles of the threat assessment approach?
II. Is there a relationship between the level of training team members received and their level of self-confidence in using the threat assessment approach?

**Variables**

The variables used to address the primary research question were based on the nine principles associated with effective prevention programs, as identified by Nation, Crusto, Wandersman, Kumpfer, Seybolt, Morrissey-Kane, and Davino (2003). Effective prevention programs include these defining elements (Nation et al., 2003):

1) **Comprehensive** - provides multiple interventions in multiple settings and "addresses risk and protective factors across domains or settings (e.g., community, family, school, peers)" (p. 451).

2) **Varied teaching methods** - involves "teaching methods that focus on increasing awareness and understanding of the problem behaviors and on acquiring or enhancing skills" (p. 452).

3) **Sufficient dosage** - provides "enough intervention to produce the desired effects" and provides "follow-up as necessary to maintain the effects" (p. 452).

4) **Theory driven** – "theoretical justification based on accurate information, and supported by empirical research" (p. 452).

5) **Collaborative** – "characterized or accomplished by collaboration in a way that promotes strong relationships and supports positive outcomes" (p. 452).

6) ** Appropriately timed** - "initiated early enough to have an impact on the development of the problem behavior and are sensitive to the developmental needs of the participant" (p. 452).

7) **Socioculturally relevant** - "tailored to the community and the cultural norms of the participants and make efforts to include the target group in program planning and implementation" (p. 452).

8) **Evaluation and improvement** – includes "clear goals and objectives and make an effort to systematically document their results relative to the goals" (p. 452).
9) Well trained staff - "staff supports the program and are provided with training regarding the implementation of the intervention" (p. 452).

Although these principles are based on programs that addressed substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, school failure, and juvenile delinquency and violence, they are transferrable to the behavioral assessment teams, as their purpose is to ensure campus safety by preventing incidents of violence or crisis from occurring on campus. The principles were used to address the three main variables of the primary research question: team composition, practices, and responsibilities. The principles of comprehensive membership and collaboration were addressed in the team composition variable. Varied and comprehensive methods, appropriately timed, and theory-driven were addressed in the practice variable. The principles of evaluation and improvement, sustainability over time, and delivery by well-trained staff were addressed in responsibilities variable.

The variables for the first secondary research question came from the literature on the three functions of the threat assessment approach developed by the U.S. Secret Service: “identification of a potential perpetrator; assessment of the risks of violence posed by a given perpetrator at a given time; and management of both the subject and the risks that he or she presents to a given target” (Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995, p. 3). Additionally, the level of understanding and incorporation of the 12 guiding principles of threat assessment, as proposed by Deisinger et al. (2008), were measured. The other secondary research question focused on the variables of
level of training and level of confidence and self-confidence of the team members.

Participants

There were a number of different levels of participants used in this study. "When one is studying people, programs, organizations, or communities, the population of interest can be fairly readily determined" (Patton, 2002, p. 238). The study participants consisted of the behavioral assessment team leaders, executive administrators, and team members for the flagship universities in New England. For this study, operational construct sampling was used. "Operational construct sampling simply means that one samples for study real world examples (i.e., operational examples) of the constructs in which one is interested" (Patton, 2002, p. 239). The universities selected to participate in this study where chosen through both operational construct and purposeful selection. "In purposeful sampling the goal is to select cases that are likely to be ‘information-rich’ with respect to the purpose of the study” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 178). Purposeful selection is not designed to achieve population validity, but rather to achieve “an in-depth understanding of selected individuals, not to select a sample that will represent accurately a defined population” (Gall, Gall, & Borg 2007, p. 178).

In this study, typical case selection was also utilized in that “the site[s] is specifically selected because it is not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (Patton, 2002, p. 236).

The purposeful typical case selection in this study was of the state flagship universities in New England ($N = 6$). In alphabetical order the
participating universities were the University of Connecticut, the University of Maine, the University of Massachusetts, the University of New Hampshire, the University of Rhode Island, and the University of Vermont. State flagship universities were selected because it was assumed they had both the capacity and resources to initiate and implement behavioral assessment teams.

The New England region was chosen for a number of reasons. The first reason was the familiarity and accessibility of the institutions in this region to the researcher. The second reason was there have been no major incidents or mass casualty events reported that might have impacted, either positively or negatively, the development of the behavioral assessment teams at these universities. Although there have been incidents of violence and even homicides at some of these universities, there have been no mass shootings or other mass casualty events like those seen at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) or Northern Illinois University. The third reason the region was chosen was for the comparability of the institutions. Although the six universities are demographically different, there are at least two within the group that are generally comparable to each other in terms of size, location, and resources (The College Board, 2011).

All of the institutions in this study are land-grant state universities and all are accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) (NEASC, n.d.).

The University of Massachusetts (UMASS), located in rural Amherst, MA, is the largest university in this study. UMASS has a total enrollment of
27,269, including 21,373 undergraduate and 6,196 graduate students (University of Massachusetts Office of Institution Research, 2011).

The University of Connecticut (UCONN) is located in rural Storrs, CT. With a total enrollment of 23,757 students, including 17,345 undergraduates, UCONN is the second largest university included in this study (UCONN, n.d.).

The University of Rhode Island (URI) is a land-grant, sea-grant, and urban-grant university located in rural Kingston, RI. For the academic year 2010, URI had a reported total enrollment of 16,294, with 13,094 undergraduate students and 3,200 graduate students (URI, 2011).

The University of New Hampshire, located in rural Durham, NH, is the only university in this study that is a land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant chartered university. For the academic year 2011, UNH had a total enrollment of 14,469, with 12,183 undergraduates and 2,286 graduate students (UNH, 2011).

The University of Vermont (UVM) is the only university in this study located in an urban setting, the small city of Burlington, VT. UVM is also a land-grant and sea-grant university with a total enrollment of 13,568, including 10,461 undergraduate students and 1,490 graduate students (UVM, 2011).

The University of Maine (UMAINE) is located in the rural setting of Orono, ME. UMAINE is also a land and sea-grant university. UMAINE is the smallest university in this study with a total enrollment of 11,501, including 8,483 undergraduate students and 2,318 graduate students (University of Maine Office of Institutional Studies, 2011).
The study participants comprised the entire universe of New England flagship universities, meaning that every possible institution was invited to participate and every one took part. The second level of participant selection was those individuals who acted as team leaders of the behavioral assessment teams at the participating universities. The third level was the executive administrators who had oversight of the threat assessment systems at each institution. The fourth level was the members of the behavioral assessment teams.

For the first phase of the study, those administrators identified as the six team leaders and the six executive administrators with oversight responsibility for teams were contacted for interviews. All identified team leaders were interviewed and completed the questionnaire; however, only four of the executive administrators with team oversight agreed to participate. Of those who declined, one did not respond and the other said he had nothing to add and referred the researcher back to the team leader.

For the purposes of the study, team leaders were identified as those individuals responsible for the organization and facilitation of the team’s efforts. These individuals were “responsible for running the team meetings, assigning responsibilities to other team members, ensuring that the threat assessment and management process is followed and leading and facilitating discussions” (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 38).

For the second phase of the study, team leaders agreed to send an e-mail to their team members asking them to complete an online questionnaire. In
total, 44 team members were invited to complete the team member questionnaire and 28 did so, for a response rate of 64%.

The names of the team leaders, the executive administrators, and the team members are not disclosed. To avoid any possible connection between the participants and their institutions, when the results are presented the universities will not be associated with the data or the results and all potential personal identifiers were removed from the reported data.

Instrumentation

Interview Protocols

There were two interview protocols created for this study. Both protocols were based on sound techniques, in this case the threat assessment approaches in higher education, and sought to determine whether, and if so how, the studied universities implement the best practice recommendation of using a multi-disciplinary behavioral assessment team that uses the threat assessment approach. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain rich, descriptive data that were complex, subjective, and allowed for in-depth details about individual perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These interviews were elite interviews in that the participants were well-informed, prominent people at the studied universities. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, as flexibility was needed to lead the conversations to areas or topics that were more relevant for one institution than for another. The introduction to the interview clearly stated the purpose of the interview and the study, and began with broad questions first and funneled down to more specific questions. Probing questions were used to clarify certain points.
Team Leader Interview Protocol

The interview protocol for team leaders was divided into five sections (see Appendix A). Section I contained the introductory script and explanation of the consent form. After both written and oral consent were secured, the researcher gave a brief and general introduction to the study. Section II contained questions pertaining to the team leader and the team. Team leaders were also asked about how the name for the team was selected and the decision-making process behind choosing that name. Section III focused on team organization and functioning. Team leaders were asked if the team had a written mission statement and procedures, and how these are implemented. Section IV focused on the how the behavioral assessment team fit with the larger safety and violence prevention efforts on campus, how the institution supported these efforts, and what specific policies enabled the team to function more effectively. Team leaders were also asked if any supports not in place would be helpful. Section V was the closing script. Team leaders were given the opportunity to ask any questions they might have. They were also asked to complete the questionnaire, if they had not done so previously.

Team leaders were also asked to contact the other members of their team on behalf of the researcher to ask them to complete the team member questionnaire. In closing, the team leaders were thanked again for their time and their participation in the study.
Executive Administrators Interview Protocol

The interview protocol used for the executive administrators was also divided into five sections (see Appendix B). As in the team leader protocol, Section I contained the introductory script and explanation of the consent form and Section II focused, though more heavily, on how the team was organized and functioned within the university. The administrators were also asked how and why the team leader was chosen, and to describe the reporting structure for the team, including the point at which upper level administrators become involved. Section III focused on risk management and strategic planning at the institution and the place of the team in those processes. Section IV asked about university support of the team's efforts and about the decision-making processes for resource allocation and strategic planning regarding the team. Section V concluded the interview with appropriate thanks and the opportunity to ask additional questions.

Questionnaires

The use of questionnaires for the second phase of this study was justified for a number of reasons. The ultimate goal of survey research is to allow researchers to generalize about a large population by studying a small group. Questionnaires provide a "numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of the population and then generalizing the results" (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). Survey research involves "soliciting self-reported verbal information from people about themselves" (Rea & Parker, 1992, p. 2) and "setting objectives for information collection,
designing research, preparing a reliable and valid instrument, analyzing data, and reporting results” (Fink, 1995, p. 1).

Given the geographic distance between the studied universities, the questionnaires were administered electronically over the Internet. The surveys were created using SurveyMonkey™ (2011). Each questionnaire used the same text, font, and layout; however, they were different in one respect. The background color of the online questionnaire was different and reflected the colors of each university. There was an IRB approved human subjects implied consent statement included with each questionnaire that conveyed the following information: Answers would remain completely anonymous; participation was voluntary; there were no known risks to taking part in this survey; participants did not have to answer any questions that they did not wish to answer; and responding to the survey was viewed as consent to participate.

**Team Leader Questionnaire**

The first questionnaire was designed to gather data from the team leaders on the composition and responsibilities of the team, and on the threat assessment practices used (see Appendix C). The 47-item instrument was divided into four sections. Section 1 focused on the team composition and team structure (Items 1 to 3). Section 2 asked questions about team functioning including training, procedures, and the three major functions of threat assessment: identification, assessment, and management (Items 4 to 24). Section 3 investigated the extent to which teams incorporate the 12 guiding principles of the threat assessment approach and other
recommended practices (Items 25 to 40). Section 4 assessed confidence in the ability of the team and the self-confidence of the respondent to use the threat assessment approach (Items 41-47). The first section used multiple-choice responses; for the other sections, 5-point Likert-type scales were used.

**Team Member Questionnaire**

The second questionnaire was designed for the behavioral assessment team members with the objective of describing and measuring attitudes toward their level of training in threat assessment and their level of confidence in using the threat assessment approach (see Appendix D). The 27-item questionnaire was divided into three sections, which corresponded to the last three sections of the team leader questionnaire and used the same reporting format. Section 1 addressed the level of training individual members received, the composition of the team, and practices used by the team (Items 1-8). Section 2 assessed the respondents' level of confidence in their ability and that of the team to operationalize effectively the three main functions of threat assessment: identification, assessment, and management (Items 9-15). Section 3 asked questions specifically about the 12 principles of threat assessment (Items 16-27) as proposed by Deisinger et al. (2008).

**Validity and Reliability Issues**

According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), "In practice, researchers tend to apply looser validity and reliability standards to questionnaires and interviews than to tests, because they are typically collecting information that is highly structured and more likely to be accurate” (p. 229). Validity and reliability
issues were addressed through a number of methods. First, validity of a questionnaire “depends on careful instrument construction to be sure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure” (Patton, 1990, p. 14). This was accomplished by establishing content validity.

Content validity is "a subjective measure of how appropriate the items seem to a set of reviewers who have knowledge of the subject matter" and is not quantifiable with statistics, because it is "presented as an overall opinion of a group of trained judges" (Litwin, 1995, p. 35). For the interview protocols and the questionnaires, content validity was supported through the literature (Fein et al., 1995; Randazzo et al., 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2006), and by the judgment of an expert in the field of threat assessment: Marisa Reddy Randazzo, Ph.D., a national expert on threat assessment and targeted violence. "Formerly the Chief Research Psychologist for the U.S. Secret Service, Dr. Randazzo has provided threat assessment training to over 10,000 professionals in higher education, secondary schools, corporations, law enforcement agencies, human resources, mental health, and the intelligence community throughout the United States, Canada, and the European Union" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. vii). Dr. Randazzo kindly reviewed both the interview protocols and the questionnaires for variable identification, terminology, item structure, and clarity; most of her suggestions were incorporated into the modified instruments.

Validity was also checked using triangulation. With triangulation, researchers "vary methods used to generate findings and see if they are corroborated across variants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 474). “A multi-
method triangulation approach to fieldwork increases both the validity and reliability of evaluation data” (Patton, 1990, p. 245). In this study, the third data point was document analyses of the written policies and procedures at each university. These analyses provided an explanatory framework with which to reconcile inconsistent or contradictory findings (Gall, Gall, & Borg 2007).

**Pilot Tests**

Both the interview protocols and questionnaires were piloted at a small, private, urban institution in New England that had a well-established behavioral assessment team in place. The purpose of the pilot was to verify the clarity of the instructions, the rating format, and the terms and concepts used in the interviews and the questionnaires. The researcher interviewed and surveyed the team leader, and surveyed seven unidentified team members at the pilot site, all of whom provided valuable feedback, which was used to improve the instruments and the procedures.

**Data Collection**

The data collection stage started with an Internet search of the six universities involved in this study for two reasons. First, to determine if there was a behavioral assessment team in place and, if so, how much information was available online about the team. The second reason was to identify the contact person for each team. The next step involved contacting, by telephone, the student affairs administrators at the universities to explain the purpose of the study and to request assistance in identifying the leaders of the behavioral assessment team. Once identified, the team leaders were
contacted by e-mail (see Appendix E). This e-mail explained the purpose of the study, outlined the two-phased design, highlighted the small sample size and the necessity of securing participation from all six universities, and assured anonymity of the participants. The e-mail concluded with a request for an interview and notification that the researcher would be calling the team leader to discuss participation and to schedule the interview. There was very little response to the initial e-mail. However, during the follow-up calls, the researcher found that most team leaders had read the e-mail and were open to discussing their participation. In some cases the researcher was redirected to another person, who was deemed better able to make the decision on participation and who was a more appropriate interview subject.

Once agreement for the interview was secured, the researcher e-mailed the team leader to confirm the date and time of the interview and attached the informed consent form for review and signature (see Appendix F). Participants were asked to read, sign, and fax the consent form back to the researcher prior to the interview. Included in the consent form was agreement to participate in the study and to have the interview recorded and transcribed. All six team leaders signed and returned the forms. The signed consent forms were then scanned into an electronic document and stored on an external hard drive that was locked in a secured location until the study was completed and the results disseminated.

Also included in the pre-interview e-mail was a link to the online team leader questionnaire. Participants were asked in the e-mail to complete the
questionnaire either before or after the interview, depending on their preference. All the team leaders completed the questionnaire.

Because of the distances involved and the uncertainly of New England winter weather, three of the six team leader interviews were conducted over the telephone. One interview was conducted with online video conferencing using Skype™ (2010) and recorded using IMCapture™ (2011). The two remaining team leader interviews were conducted in person. All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. The team leader interview protocol was used as the guide for all team leader interviews. During the first interview a discussion about data collection and its use in strategic planning arose. This issue had not been considered during the creation of the initial interview protocol; however, a question addressing this issue was added for all subsequent interviews. Each interview took approximately 45-60 minutes to complete.

At the end of the interview, the team leaders were asked if they would e-mail their team members requesting that they complete the team member questionnaire; a short description of the study and a link to the team member survey was provided. The researcher asked only to be provided the number of team members contacted and no other identifying information. By knowing the number of requests that went out, a final response rate was determined based on the number of completed questionnaires submitted from each institution. In three cases, the researcher requested that an additional e-mail reminder be sent to the team members, because the initial response rate was low.
Also at the end of the interview the team leaders were asked to identify the executive administrators at their universities who had oversight of the behavior assessment team and responsibility for safety and risk management. The identified executive administrators were contacted and interviewed in a manner similar to the team leaders. There were four executive administrator interviews, two were conducted over the telephone and two were conducted in person. The executive administrator protocol was used for all executive administrator interviews. For one of the executive administrator interviews the researcher used both interview protocols, as this individual was also the team leader for that university.

Once the interviews and questionnaires were completed the researcher sent a hand-written thank you note to each team leader with a $25 gift card for coffee and doughnuts to be shared with the team as a thank you for their participation.

Due to the small size of the sample, a high response rates for both the interviews and the questionnaires was anticipated. As the team leader identified each team member, it was also expected that there would be a certain level of intrinsic interest in the topic. Although there was 100% completion rate from the team leaders for both the interviews and the questionnaire, the response rate for the executive administrator interviews was 66%, and for the team member questionnaire, 64%. There are a number of possible reasons for this lower than expected rates of return, most notably the timing of the study. Team leaders and team members were initially contacted during their winter semester break. However, the
interviews and questionnaires were not completed until after the spring semester started. Given that all of the participants in the study were professional university administrators and the start of a semester is always busy, the timing was poor. Perhaps if they were approached at a less busy time of the year, there would have been greater response.

**Data Analysis**

Following the research design of the study, the data analyses incorporated a two-phased plan. Because the purpose of the study should drive the analysis, the analysis should begin “by going back to the intent of the study. Indeed throughout the analysis process, the researcher should remember the purpose of the study” (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 127). In addition, the analysis should be systematic, sequential, verifiable, and continuous (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

**Interview Data**

Analysis of the interview data included a “cross-case analysis, which means grouping together answers from different people to common questions for analyzing different perspectives on central issues” (Patton, 1990, p. 376). This allows for comparison of similarities and differences across universities. Patton (2002) recommended developing a manageable classification and coding system as the first step. Coding is when themes, phrases, and patterns are identified in the text and placed into categories developed by the researcher.

The system was achieved by first coding the responses into concepts that accurately reflect the meaning of the words. The second step was identifying
a thematic framework, developing categories based on “short phrases, ideas, or concepts arising from the texts” (Rabiee, 2004, p. 657). In the third step, indexing, which “comprises sifting the data, highlighting and sorting out quotes and making comparisons both within and between cases” (Rabiee, 2004, p. 657) was used. Charting was the next step, and involved “lifting the quotes from their original context, and re-arranging them under the newly developed thematic content” (Rabiee, 2004, p. 658). The final steps in analyzing the quantitative data were mapping and interpreting. The data were manipulated by putting them into different arrays, making a matrix of categories, and placing the data into these categories (Yin, 2009).

**Team Leader Questionnaire Data**

The Standard Package for Statistical Science (PAWS/SPSS-18) computer program was used to analyze the questionnaire data. An item level analysis using descriptive statistics was performed on the items from the team leader questionnaire. Frequencies, ranked means, and standard deviations were used to analyze the results of the team leader survey in regards to the primary research question and the variables of composition, responsibilities and practices. Frequency is the measurement of the number of times that each response occurred for a given item or items (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Means are measures of central tendency determined by finding the average of the responses for each item. Means were calculated by dividing the sum of the responses by the total number of responses (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Using frequencies and means for all responses for each item provided descriptive information and allowed for comparisons and the emergence of
patterns or trends across the set of responses (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The means were ranked from highest to lowest for ease in determining the most frequently selected response for each variable. The associated standard deviations for each item reflected the extent to which the scores deviated around the mean (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

The research variable composition was measured using items 1, 3, 15, 16, 17, and 19 in the team leader questionnaire. Items 1 and 3 asked team leaders to identify the areas of campus represented on their respective teams. These data were converted into a percentage. Percentages reflect the frequency of the responses by comparing them to the total number of responses (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

**Team Member Questionnaire Data**

Three one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the results of the team member questionnaire in regards to the Primary Research Question. The variables of team composition, responsibilities, and practices were measured using the questionnaire items related to program characteristics and were compared with those of effective prevention programs suggested by Nation et al. (2003).

Additional team member data were compared using two one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) for Secondary Research Question I. The threat assessment functions, including identification, assessment, and management, were measured (Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995). In addition, how team members incorporated the 12 principles of threat assessment (Deisinger et al., 2008) into their work was also assessed. In order to reduce
the risk of Type I error, the Bonferroni adjustment was used to calculate the appropriate significance level for each item-level statistical test used. For example, for the Primary Research Question the composition variable defined by items 4, 5, 20 and 21 of the team member survey, the Bonferroni adjustment was calculated as \( p = \frac{.05}{4} = .012 \).

Correlation analyses with data from the team member questionnaire were used to address Secondary Research Question II: the relationship between the level of training team members received and their level of confidence in using the threat assessment approach. To test the significance of these relationships, Pearson correlation coefficient \( (r) \) was used with appropriate significance levels, effect size, and Cohen's decision about effect size.

**Summary**

The utilized research design was a two-phased mixed methods descriptive-exploratory approach, designed to investigate how behavioral assessment teams at flagship universities in New England use threat assessment in addressing potential targeted violence. The first phase included in-depth elite interviews with behavioral assessment team leaders and executive administrators. The second phase involved the use of two questionnaires: one for behavioral assessment team leaders and the other for the team members at the studied universities. Analyses of the data from both phases led to the findings that are presented and discussed in Chapter IV.
IV. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from both the qualitative phase and the quantitative phase of the study. A summary of the findings from each phase will be presented with analysis of those findings by research question. The data collected from the interviews with the six behavioral assessment team leaders and four executive administrators resulted in a number of relevant themes that will be examined as they relate to the primary research question. The data from the questionnaire, completed by the team leaders and team members at the six universities, were analyzed with reference to the two secondary research questions.

The data from each university were aggregated and analyzed as a whole. The universities are identified by randomly assigned numbers, rather than alphabetic or other identifiable order. To protect the identity of the institutions, responses were not analyzed for individual universities, except to report the questionnaire return rates.

The response rate for the team leader questionnaire \((N = 6)\) was 100%. The response rates for the team members at each institution varied:

- University 1 \((N = 5)\) = 71%
- University 2 \((N = 3)\) = 60%
- University 3 \((N = 4)\) = 67%
- University 4 \((N = 4)\) = 57%
- University 5 \((N = 3)\) = 33%
- University 6 \((N = 9)\) = 90%

Total \((N = 28)\) = 64%
The small number of team leaders \((N = 6)\) and team members \((N = 28)\), limited the number and type of statistical analyses performed on the data.

**Virginia Tech as the Common Theme**

The over-riding theme common to all of the interviews conducted was the significance was of the shootings at *Virginia Polytechnic* Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) on Monday, April 16, 2007. All of the team leaders and executive administrators agreed that prior to the shootings at Virginia Tech there was some type of informal group that met on their campus to discuss students or events that raised concerns. One administrator described this nicely:

In one form or another, this committee predates any sort of formal discussions, it predates Virginia Tech. We were doing this sort of thing back in the 80s, but back then we called it “coffee”, and they were very informal conversations. It wasn't a violation of confidentiality, it was more just this is what we do on Monday mornings. We talked about what happened over the weekend. We had this transport; we had this, we had that.

The shootings at Virginia Tech truly became a major turning point for American higher education. Suddenly all of these informal efforts became highly scrutinized. Team leaders described the initial impact of Virginia Tech in the following ways:

We were asking ourselves “Geez, what would've happened if what happened at Virginia Tech happened here?” Because the information came out about what Seung-Hui Cho [the perpetrator of the Virginia Tech shootings] had done prior to the shootings and how the university missed some of those signs. And we asked ourselves, “What would we have done if we knew that?”

It was right after Virginia Tech. We thought we had really good communication. But we never really met. We met when we had to, over a particular incident, or whatever. But we didn't meet on a regular, on-going basis.
What followed after April 2007 was a major push at all of the studied universities to formalize previously unofficial practices and make these efforts more transparent.

The team was created formally after Virginia Tech. We had modeled some team strategies before, but once Virginia Tech happened, and these ideas came out, we decided to formalize what we were already doing.

After Virginia Tech, we took the same people that we normally speak to on a regular basis and put them together and formed the behavioral assessment team.

After Virginia Tech it became more formal, more involved. I think we had a good system going prior to Virginia Tech. But after, we were much more transparent about it now.

One university chose, at first, to remain inconspicuous:

We didn't want to begin with any big splashy publicity. And, to that, we did not want to stimulate or provoke concerns by making this big announcement that we have this group of people who are monitoring students who are distressed or distessing.

All of the participants of the study identified the events at Virginia Tech as the tipping point that ushered in a time of change. This catalyst for change was matched to an equal degree by the shootings at Northern Illinois University 10 months later (Cable News Network, 2008). This incident was equally significant because it showed that the massacre at Virginia Tech was not an isolated incident and that this would be a problem that colleges and universities would have to continually address.

Profile of Team Leaders and Teams

Using data from the interviews and the questionnaires, a profile was developed for the behavior assessment teams and their leaders. The team leaders’ positions ranged from a vice president of student affairs to director of disability services. However, the most frequently cited position of the team
leader was assistant or associate dean of students. The executive
administrators, responsible for oversight of the behavior assessment team,
most frequently were vice presidents of student affairs.

The team names varied for each university. According to Deisinger et al.
(2008), "The team's name should reflect the values of the institution and the
mission of the team" (p. 13). In alphabetical order, the team names were:

- ACT - Advanced Care Team (UMASS);
- Behavioral Intervention Team (UNH);
- CARE Team (UVM);
- Student Behavior Review Team (UMAINE);
- Student Concerns Team (UCONN); and
- Threat Assessment Team (URI).

However, as Dunkle (2008) wrote, "The name of the team is not nearly
as important as deciding which campus administrators should serve on the
team and delineating the roles and responsibilities of each member" (p. 591).
All of the behavioral assessment teams included in the study were located in
the division of student affairs. The teams ranged from five to ten members
with an average size of seven members. All of the teams reported having
representation from these areas: housing and residential life,
dean of students/student life, and mental health consultant/counseling
center. Most also reported having members from police/campus security,
student conduct, and specialty members who are determined on a case-by-
case basis. Interestingly, none of the studied universities had
representatives from the faculty or from the faculty senate, media relations, or the international student office.

**Findings by Research Question**

**Primary Research Question**

Are there differences among the behavioral assessment teams at the flagship universities in New England in terms of composition, practices, and responsibilities?

The differences between behavioral assessment teams were investigated by examining the composition, practices, and responsibilities as they relate to threat assessment for each of the six flagship universities. The variables for this primary research question were developed based on the principles of effective prevention programs (Nation et al., 2003). The variable of team composition was measured by examining how comprehensive the team was in regards to having membership from key areas of the campus, and how collaboratively the team members communicated with and interacted within the team itself and with those in other campus areas (Nation et al., 2003).

The second variable, team practices, was measured by investigating whether the teams used varied methods, in terms of investigations, information gathering and reporting, and educating and encouraging reporting by the campus community. Practices were also measured by examining how comprehensive the information gathering efforts used by the team appeared to be and whether the interventions were appropriately timed; that is, did the team have the capacity to intervene quickly enough to have an impact on developing situations. Another investigated element of practice was to determine whether these practices were driven by the
principles of the threat assessment approach as described by Deisinger et al. (2008).

The third variable of team responsibilities was measured by investigating whether interventions are sustained over time; if there was an effort to continually evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the team; and if the team members engaged in regular basic or advanced training in threat assessment.

For each variable, the component elements of the variable are described and are followed by relevant quotations from the interviews that illustrate the point.

**Composition.** The major themes, developed from the team leader and executive administrator interviews, that spoke directly to the issue of team composition were leadership, team model, and team membership based on functional area within student affairs.

**Leadership.** The first theme to emerge from the interviews concerned the leadership of the various teams. This proved to be important because the leadership of the teams ran the spectrum from being led by someone at the executive level to not having a named leader at all. On one end of the spectrum there is a university whose vice president of student affairs leads the team.

I decided to convene it, so I decided to chair it. It is one of those things that I consider extremely important, and as a result I wanted to make a statement of that importance, so I decided to chair it to show the importance of it.
On the opposite side of the spectrum there is one university that purposely does not name a leader, instead choosing to designate someone a convener.

There is not a leader, per se. I am the convener. It is a very deliberate wording because it is a team approach that brings together various functional areas of student affairs, without a set leader. As the convener, I provide the office space and bring people together, and help with the operational issues and all of that. But everyone has a responsibility to the team.

Of the remaining teams, two are co-led by a student affairs professional and the head of psychological services. One executive administrator explained the decision to have the team led by co-leaders as:

Well, I wanted my second there, because they know how I think, and what our concerns are and issues are in regards to the overall approach of the institution. And I wanted an expert psychologist there basically, because so many of these things have to do with psychological maladies to be there to guide the process and be a consultant.

A single designated leader, the dean of students or a member of the dean of students office, leads the remaining two universities.

Another theme related to leadership was the issue of "making the call" or deciding who makes the final determination in a situation or pertaining to a student. For all but one institution, it was the team approach that is the team discusses the issue and makes the decision. The team leader or the vice president, depending on the seriousness of the situation, acts upon the recommended decision. For one university, the team leader gathers the perspectives of the different members; then the team leader uses that information to make their final decision.

I will take the information and consult the team. And again, because we've got psychologists, we've got police, we've got academics, when we consult, and we have all those different perspectives. If we determine that someone needs to call the student in then I will make that call.
**Team model.** Another major theme that developed was the number of teams used to deal with behavioral and threat assessment issues at each university. Three different models were presented in the responses, which were dependent on the focus of the team: students' behavior, rapid threat response, or faculty and staff concerns. The first model was that of a single team to handle all three possibilities. This one team meets to review concerns about students, campus events, and faculty and staff behaviors. This team, or a smaller subset of the team, also responds to more serious or escalating situations as a threat response team, with all of the members of the response team being drawn from the larger team. There was one university in the study with this model.

The second team model utilizes two teams: one team responds to concerns regarding student behaviors, which includes acting as the threat response team; a second team responds to issues concerning faculty and staff. The faculty and staff concerns team is a separate entity and there is very little, if any, crossover between the two teams. There were three universities in the study that employ this two-team model. As team leaders noted:

> They're separate from us in that they are not part of student affairs. It’s just based on models that most schools are doing right now.

> We don't (focus on faculty and staff) because here the faculty is unionized. But there is an attempt now to form a loose faculty staff concerns team.

The third model is having three separate teams: a student concerns team led by a student affairs professional; a threat response team, with some membership crossover, but led by a different administrator; and a faculty
and staff concerns team that is a separately run team, based out of a different division of the university. Two of the studied universities employ this model. The team leaders described the model in these ways:

As I referenced earlier there is a campus-wide risk assessment team that is aware that when concerns that come up that involve students, they are going to be brought to me and my team.

Just to clarify, at the university we have two teams. There is the student concern team, and there is also a threat assessment team, and there is some overlap in membership. But that is an initiative under public safety. Two very separate teams, with separate responsibilities and goals, which are collaborative, but separate. Now, there is also a separate team for faculty and staff issues, but that is run out of a different division.

**Team size and membership.** In addition to the number of teams, the size of the behavioral assessment teams at each of the studied universities differed, with some being purposefully very small and others being larger and more diverse. Reasons given for the size of the teams included:

We are a small team on purpose, so that we can act quickly.

We wanted to be small. I had very significant concerns about confidentiality, and that’s one reason to keep it small.

Conversely, other teams were much larger, and incorporated members from many different areas:

Well, we took the folks that we normally interact with on a regular basis and put them together to form the team. We have at the table what we think is a pretty good set of folks that are in the line of reporting these incidents.

We have a consistent meeting with the team, about 10 to 12 folks. We stay pretty consistent with who sits on the team. They are selected based on their interactions with the office of the dean of students. They are folks that we see as always at the table when it comes to dealing with students in crisis.

**Functional area.** One of the most consistent themes found in all of the interviews was the notion that members were not selected necessarily
because of their training or experience, but more for their role in a functional area they represent.

Our experience with people who aren't in student affairs is when they know too much about what students do they don't react well. They are not up to speed with what students do, the current culture of students. They are usually 2 to 3 decades behind. And to involve them in our student process just seems not very productive for the team, and not particularly good for the students.

We want to have at the table individuals who either have response responsibilities to difficult situations or are likely to be where someone with a concern may call to report a problem.

I think it is an exceptional model because I think it takes the strengths, and skills, and abilities, and competencies of these various functional areas in student affairs and makes sure that the student is appropriately handled based on the nature of what their concern is.

We will take that person as opposed to someone with specific threat assessment expertise. Because I think the collective knowledge base and thinking of that group works so well together that even if some people may not feel that they have a particular expertise, by working together with that group they pretty quickly begin to realize what rises to be worth talking about in this group and what doesn't.

When asked why the team was housed in student affairs as opposed to another area of the campus, one executive administrator said:

It is seen as an extension of student affairs. It is because we in student affairs are responsible for crisis management generally. All those things flow through us, and we think about those things.

**Collaboration.** The second principle used to define the composition of the teams was the collaboration of the team's work, both among the team members and with those in other campus functional areas. The first common theme concerning collaboration from the interviews was the notion of breaking down silos within student affairs and getting the necessary people together around the same table on a regular basis.

We have [on the team] folks who have their eyes and ears and tentacles throughout campus. They know people, who know people, who know people. The whole thing was to break down silos and to get the word out by having people on the team who have contacts all over campus.
So what the team has done is sort of increase collaboration and sharing, an appropriate sharing of information, so that we are not in silos with the student acting up over here and then acting up over there and those two silos not recognizing it. The team can close that loop.

**Increased communication.** In addition to breaking down silos, another theme common to all of the teams was the belief that the team created increased and improved communication among functional areas.

The committee is good, because a whole lot of stakeholders are sitting down and sharing information once every two weeks. But the real information sharing occurs daily. Back and forth, and back and forth. We are very good in student affairs about keeping people informed.

We meet weekly, and we share information through an Internet site called XXXXX, which is a site that is confidential and only members of the team have access to it. It is a mechanism for us, a scaffold or safety net, whatever you want to call it. A framework, so that we are making certain that once a student of concern is referred, the information is put out to the team.

One of the often-cited benefits of this increased communication was the importance of seeing the issue from a variety of perspectives.

So it really is who has high student contact at any given moment, and it really is the educational academic college, residential life, the police, and the counseling center that really gives us that safety focus. We're really able to look at a situation through their lens around safety and health.

The team leader and executive administrator interviews revealed six main themes for the variable of composition. Each studied university had different leadership and team models. However, team membership by functional area and improved communication were themes consistent across all six universities.

**Practices.** The second research variable for the main research question was team practices. The principles of employing varied methods and appropriately timed interventions were measured.
**Reporting methods.** One theme of note to emerge from the interviews was that most of the universities depended on telephone calls and e-mails to collect reports.

Phone calls and e-mails - that is usually the two ways people report [concerns]. In some rare cases we will have someone walk in throwing up their hands, but usually it is phone calls and e-mails.

[Phone call] is the preferred way because then we can talk to them and get more information. Something in writing is less useful because you end up going back to them to find out exactly what they mean.

Two of the studied teams employed an online reporting form that members of the campus community could fill out to file a report.

The form is linked to my e-mail, the associate vice president, and the director of the counseling center, so the three of us get that form as soon as it is submitted. Sometimes students use it for themselves. They submit a report about themselves saying “I'm concerned for my well-being,” which is kind of interesting. It's a great resource.

**Individualized responses.** The second common theme in regard to team practices was the importance team members gave to developing individualized responses to students with whom they were engaged.

We really personalize it. It's tailored to wherever they are connected to on campus as well.

It's very individualized. We sit down and talk to the student about why he or she has come to our attention, what are the behaviors that have been noticed, and then ask the student to talk about what is going on. We hope to get the student's perspective.

A very individualized approach based on whatever the circumstances seem to indicate and it may be an approach where every member of the team feels some sort of responsibility for how they are going to provide outreach. And that is the safety net for the student.

**Campus radar.** Another common theme that emerged from the interviews was the notion of the team acting as campus “radar” or a mechanism that is constantly searching and scanning the environment for
early signs of trouble. Like radar on a ship, once a situation is noticed, the
level of seriousness is raised.

We have a guide that we send out so that all members of the campus
community, [because we] understand that anyone can be an entry point in terms
of getting a student on the radar, whether it is a faculty member, an academic
advisor, or a housekeeper.

If a student pops up on our radar for whatever reason, we find out what we can
by going through the university system first.

I think it brings the importance to a new level. It's not just another case. When it
gets on our radar and is brought to the surface, then everyone at the table takes
it very seriously. Most of it is aimed at prevention; it is proactive by allowing us
to talk about it before something happens.

**Responsiveness.** The principle of how appropriately timed the
practices the teams used was assessed. The importance of responsiveness
was a common theme among the team leaders and often tied to decisions
about the size of the team. Also, responsiveness was also frequently cited as
the reason for having a separate smaller threat response team.

A second team is pulled together for when a student is a threat to him or herself
right there in the moment. Our response team gets together as needed at any
given time with some typical key players in there, and then we add a couple of
other people that would allow us to get more information depending on the
situation.

When a student situation evolves and become more complex, anyone on the
team can call an emergency meeting, to seek advice and assess and say, "This is
escalating, what are we going to do?"

**Observable behavior.** The most consistent theme, and probably
most important, related to team practices: all of the actions of the teams
were based on assessment of observable behavior. The focus was not on
what the student may have said, although it is taken into consideration, it is
based more on what the student has done to raise a concern.

We ask ourselves: “Is that concerning behavior popping up in several places? Is
the behavior escalating, i.e., in speech or physically? Are they getting into
people's faces and getting more confrontational? What is the level of disruption?
Is it one class or two classes? So really it becomes a question of is this behavior representing a problematic core situation? Or is it related to one person? Or is it spreading? And then are the individual behaviors escalating?

One interesting finding was around the issue of using a threat rating scale to classify situations. Only one institution reported using such a scale:

We have three levels: mild, elevated, and extreme risk. Mild is verbal or written behaviors that come to someone's attention, and the available evidence establishes that the student poses a mild threat to safety. Elevated risk is that there are reasonable grounds to find that someone poses a serious or substantial risk to themselves or someone else. And for elevated risk, a disruption of the setting has occurred. And then extreme risk we're saying either interim suspension or separation is required, as is a notice to the campus community, because there is clear and convincing grounds to find there is a clear and convincing risk.

Conversely, other universities have chosen to stay away from using classification systems.

We are not organized like that. It is really more of an ad-hoc, professional judgment on a case by case basis.

We do not use a scale or criteria because for us to misidentify someone as low risk or high risk or whatever there are going to be a lot of issues with that. So we don't ever identify someone as high or low risk threat. In our minds we might be saying this is a high risk threat, but we discuss them as a full picture and come up with a plan of action in the moment.

**Data collection.** One additional theme was the practice of collecting data on the cases seen by the behavioral assessment team

So in terms of case recording and that kind of thing, we just want to be able to document what were the actions taken, who was in the room, what was the referral source, how did the information come in.

One university collected considerable data and used it for strategic planning and decisions on resource allocation.

One of our divisional goals is to promote campus health and safety, so in that document I include data about what our students are doing. We put those numbers into public reports in terms of mental health and medical withdrawals and stuff like that. It helps us figure out our benchmark trends about what we are seeing. So we really use it to inform us on our programming goals for the following fall.
Another university used the team as a clearinghouse for information around student trends and concerns. The executive administrator for that university said:

No one person in our division was responsible for keeping good data on why students were leaving or what are the trends that we are seeing around mental health or alcohol and drugs. So the team's role is to act as a conveyor of information, a central clearinghouse if you will, of information about students and about behavioral trends and issues.

Other universities are reluctant to collect data at all.

I’m not sure what we would do with that information. I don’t know that we would want to get it out there. It’s not helpful information to have out there on the website or anything.

We do spend a good deal of time on the cases post facto, trying to learn some lessons from them. But I would say we focus our attention on how well we are doing. We document what we are doing in order to improve, instead of putting out reports. I am not interested in making a report beyond my supervisor or appropriate interested parties.

The team leader and executive administrator interviews revealed seven main themes for the variable of practices. Each studied university agreed on the importance of responsiveness, developing individualized responses, and using observed behavior to assess threat. However, the universities differed on data collection and use of a threat rating scale.

**Responsibilities.** Assessing the principles of having a well-trained staff, outcome evaluation, and institutional support measured the research variable of responsibilities.

**Well-trained staff.** There were a number of consistent themes related to the principle of having a well-trained staff. One interesting finding was that these themes were focused more on educating other campus members on when and how to report concerning behavior, rather than on training team members on the theory and functions of threat assessment.
Three respondents described the importance of training team members. The trainings were described as both active and passive. Active training involved participating in sessions led by a professional in threat assessment. Passive training included materials made available to the team, as needed, in the form of webinars and other materials.

The team decided last summer, right before the beginning of fall semester, that we needed to get additional training in threat assessment. One of the things we are struggling with, and it seems a lot of folks are struggling with, is how do you determine the dangerousness of someone? Because that is typically the question you end up asking yourself.

They have received this grant, and we are actually getting trained by former members of the secret service, who are now affiliated with homeland security. It’s pretty exceptional training that we are getting, and I’m just in awe of what I’ve been able to learn that is just amazing, in terms of helping to recognize when it’s really a threat assessment versus a student of concern.

After the initial training when forming the group, we’ve mostly taken advantage of the webinars. There is a proliferation of webinars out there. And we’ve found that there have been a couple that are very, very good. We are now purchasing these webinars so that we can show them at our convenience.

The most significant theme related to training was concerns about educating the other areas on campus on how and when to make a report. For every institution in this study, considerable effort was focused on outreach to the community, in order to ensure that as many people as possible were aware of the team and how to utilize it. For some universities this takes the form of annual notifications or annual distributions of informational pamphlets.

Our director of counseling does several workshops around campus on dealing with troubled or stressed students. He’s been to 60-70% of the academic departments this year.

So we took our dog-and-pony show on the road. And in that time we had a couple of incidents happen, so we were able to triage those situations and follow-up not only with the people involved, but the whole department. So we are doing a lot more outreach directly to and down the line to faculty. Our information and pamphlet are being included for all faculty in their orientation booklet."
The focus for these trainings appeared to be solely on faculty and staff.

When asked about reaching out to students, one team leader said:

For students it’s been harder. We tried several different ways of letting students know. But again nothing took. So we decided that if we keep our faculty and staff informed they are the ones first in line to hear from the students anyway. That is our best mechanism.

According to one executive administrator, the concern was not necessarily reaching the faculty or staff; it was more making sure the adjunct and part-time faculty are informed on how to report concerns.

Our biggest issue is faculty not reporting issues earlier. Staff is not a problem; they report things all the time. We have a lot of per-course faculty, a lot of part-time faculty, hundreds of them. Those are the people that are very hard to reach. The real issue is the part-time folks. I worry about them.

**Outcome evaluation.** In addition to the well-trained staff principle, the other significant principle was having a mechanism for outcome evaluations. One theme taken from the interviews was the importance of having clear goals and objectives, particularly relating to student retention.

This group is the one thing I know I do that really matters. Because I think the focus is on getting to the students, helping them getting their issues resolved, and helping them move forward.

Our philosophy is that we are going to be here for the students, all the time around health and safety risks. We believe that students can still be retained here if they get all the appropriate networks and supports they need. So our philosophy is really that we care about students being retained here, while at the same time we're looking after their health and safety, as well at the community's.

One executive administrator explained:

It has evolved in a direction of being around threat assessment, but it really is a much more basic level. It's around retention. We want to retain our students. We profess a certain philosophy towards how we work with students.

**Institutional support.** One aspect of having clear goals and objectives is the importance of knowing that the team has institutional support. Every team leader reported feeling very supported and appreciated
by the executive administrators. For some it was from knowing that their mission or charge comes directly from the vice president of student affairs.

There is no question. I don’t have any concerns about our work not being supported. Often people are referred to us from other executive areas at the highest levels. So I know they are aware of us and the work we do.

The executive administrators echoed this feeling as well.

The university is very supportive. The president knows about our team and asks questions about what our data looks like about students at risk, and what is going on at the moment, and what some of the trends are we are seeing on campus. It really is highlighted among these administrators, and they really are aware of this team and are very supportive and are really appreciative.

The team leader and executive administrator interviews revealed three main themes for the variable of responsibilities. For the studied universities training efforts appeared to focus on the campus community rather than the team members; outreach to the campus community was a priority; and student retention was a primary goal for the teams.

The following sections provide the quantitative findings from both the team leader and team member questionnaires.

**Team Leader Questionnaire Findings**

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, ranked means, and standard deviations, were used to measure the items related to the variable of composition, practices and responsibilities in the Primary Research Questions. A review of the data (Item 1) revealed the top six areas represented on the behavioral assessment teams were:

- Housing and residential life (100%)
- Student life/dean of students (100%)
- Mental health consultant/counseling center (100%)
• Police /campus security (83%)
• Student conduct (83%)
• Specialty members, determined on a case-by-case basis (83%)

(See Appendix G, Table G1).

Team leaders were asked to identify the members of the core team, or the team more likely to respond to a viable threat situation (Item 3). A review of the data revealed the top six areas represented were:

• Mental health consultant /counseling (100%)
• Student life /dean of students (100%)
• Police/campus security (83%)
• Student conduct (67%)
• Housing/residential life (67%)
• Specialty members, determined on a case-by-case basis (67%)

(See Appendix G, Table G2.)

Composition of the behavioral assessment teams was further explored (Items 15, 16, 17, and 19). The top two reported items were Item 15, there is adequate representation from different areas on campus, \((M = 4.50, SD = .55)\), and item 19, with the exception of medical/ mental health information it is easy to obtain and share information between areas and departments on campus \((M = 4.50, SD = .55)\). The lowest ranked response was on item 16, unrepresented areas are monitored effectively \((M = 3.67, SD = .52)\) (See Appendix G, Table G3.)
The variable of practices was measured (Items 10, 11, 12, 14, 21, 33, and 37). Item 11, *the team utilizes multiple reporting mechanisms and encourages reporting from all constituents on campus, (M = 4.67, SD = .52)* and Item 14, *the team has the capacity to conduct investigation and assessment quickly enough to have an impact on the developing situation, (M = 4.67, SD = .52)* had the highest ranked responses. Item 37, *the team is familiar with the theory of threat assessment and the principles behind it, ranked lowest (M= 4.17, SD= .75).* (See Appendix G, Table G4.)

The variable of responsibilities was measured (Items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 18, 20, 22, 23, and 36). Item 4, *there is a concerted effort to continually improve the effectiveness of the team, was ranked the highest (M = 4.67, SD = .52).* Item 20, *the team has the capacity and resources to monitor cases for as long as the individual poses a threat, was ranked second (M = 4.50, SD = .55).* Item 9, *previous training and experience was not a factor in team member selection, was ranked lowest (M = 2.83, SD = 1.32).* (See Appendix G, Table G5.)

**Team Member Questionnaire Findings**

Review of the three ANOVAs conducted indicates that there was a significant difference for only Item 7, *the team has clearly stated goals and objectives and/or a clear mission statement,* for the six university behavioral assessment teams \([F (5, 23) = 5.74, p = .001]\). Post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe’ test indicated that the mean score for University 6 \((M = 2.44, SD = .88)\) was significantly lower from University 1 \((M = 4.16, SD = .41)\) and University 3 \((M = 4.50, SD = .58)\) on Item 7. Taken together, these results
suggest that the behavioral assessment teams at the flagship universities are different in regards to having clearly stated goals and/or a clear mission statement. Specifically, these results indicate that the team members of University 6 show the team was lacking in either clearly stated goals or a clear mission statement, whereas Universities 1 and 3 both had very high agreement among their respective team members that their teams had clearly stated goals and/or a clear mission statement.

In addition, the data indicated that there was a non-significant trend for Items 5 and 20. Item 5 assessed whether areas that do not have representation on the team are monitored effectively $[F (5, 23) = 2.81, p = .040]$. Item 20 assessed whether the team makes every effort to corroborate reports from additional sources, including off-campus sources $[F (5, 23) = 2.60, p = .052]$. For both of these items the trend appears to be University 3 having higher ratings than University 6. (See Appendix G, Table G6.)

In summary, for the primary research question there were a number of themes developed from the team leader and executive administrator interviews. Although there were a number of differences among the teams in regards to these themes, the questionnaire findings suggest that the only significant difference among the teams involves clarity of goals and mission statements. There were no significant differences among the teams for any of the other measured variables. The next section will present findings for the secondary research questions.
Secondary Research Question I

Are there differences among the behavioral assessment teams at the flagship universities in New England in the utilization of the functions and principles of the threat assessment approach?

The functions of threat assessment, namely identification, assessment, and management (Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995) and use and understanding of the twelve principles of threat assessment as described (Deisinger et al., 2008) for each of the behavioral assessment teams were assessed from responses to the team leader questionnaire and the team member questionnaire.

Team Leader Questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, frequencies, ranked means, and standard deviations, were used to measure the items related to the functions of threat assessment (see Appendix G, Table G7) and the 12 principles of threat assessment (see Appendix G, Table G8), as reported by the team leaders.

The variable of identification was measured (Items 41 and 42) of the team leader survey. Item 42, I am confident in my team’s overall ability to investigate threats of targeted violence, ranked higher (M = 4.00, SD = 1.10) than Item 41, I am confident in my overall ability to investigate threats of targeted violence (M = 3.83, SD = .98).

The variable of assessment was measured (Items 43 & 44). Item 44, I am confident in my team’s ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves, to other, or both, ranked higher (M = 4.33, SD = .52) than Item 43, I am confident in my ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves, to others, or both (M = 4.12, SD = .75).
The variable of management was measured (Items 35, 45, 46, 47). Item 35, *the team has the capacity to develop different individualized plans for the same person/case to intervene and reduce the threat*, ranked highest ($M = 4.50, SD = .55$). Item 45, *I am confident in my team's ability to develop individualized intervention plans*, ranked lowest ($M = 3.33, SD = 1.63$).

The 12 principles of threat assessment were measured (Items 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 39, 39, 40). (See Appendix G, Table G8.) Principle 5 (Item 24), *threat assessment is about behavior and not profiles*, ranked the highest with a perfect score ($M = 5.00, SD = .00$). Principle 1 (Item 40), *the team operates under the supposition that targeted violence can be prevented*, ranked lowest ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.50$).

**Team Member Questionnaire Findings**

Two one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the results of the team member questionnaire in regards to both the functions of threat assessment and the twelve principles of threat assessment respectively.

For the study identification was defined by measuring the team member’s confidence in his or her ability and the composite ability of the team to investigate threats. Level of confidence was assessed using Items 9 and 10 on the team member questionnaire.

Assessment was defined as team member’s confidence in his or her ability and the composite ability of the team to discern whether someone posed a serious threat. Assessment was measured using Items 11 and 12 on the team member questionnaire.
Management was defined in terms of the team members’ confidence in the ability of the team to develop, implement, and monitor individualized interventions for students of concern. This included measuring whether team members thought they had the capacity to monitor students until they no longer posed a threat. Management was assessed (Items 13, 14, and 15).

For the first one-way ANOVA, the variables of identification, assessment, and management were analyzed. (See Appendix G, Table G9.) In order to reduce the risk of Type I error, the Bonferroni adjustment was used to calculate the appropriate significance level, $p = .017$. No significant differences were found among the behavioral assessment teams in regards to the threat assessment functions of identification, assessment, and management.

For the second one-way ANOVA the variables were the 12 principles of threat assessment (Deisinger et al., 2008) (Items 24, 23, 19, 20, 25, 21, 26, 27, 18, 16, 17, and 22). (See Appendix G, Table G10.) The data indicated that there were non-significant trends for Principle 4 (Item 20), Principle 9 (Item 18) and Principle 11 (Item 17). Principle 4 (Item 20) described the importance of corroboration when investigating a threat $[F (5, 23) = 2.60, p = .052]$. Principle 9 (Item 18) described the importance of encouraging reporting to assist in early identification $[F (5, 23) = 3.11, p = .028]$. For both of these items the trend appears to be University 6 having lower ratings of agreement than the other studied universities. Principle 11 (Item 17) described the importance of having multiple resources available in order to offer multifaceted interventions $[F (5, 23) = 2.29, p = .079]$. For this item
the non-significant trend appears to be that University 1 and University 6 had lower ratings of agreement than did Universities 2, 3, and 4.

**Secondary Research Question II**

Is there a relationship between the level of training team members have received and the level of self-confidence in using the threat assessment approach?

To address this question, Items 1, 2, and 3 were used in conjunction with Items 9 and 11 on the team member questionnaire. Item 1, *I have received basic threat assessment training, including how to identify, assess, and manage persons or situations that raise concern, including threats of violence or self-harm and other significantly disturbing or disruptive behavior from an expert in the field of threat assessment*, assessed whether team members had received basic threat assessment; Item 2, *I have received enough training to effectively use threat assessment in my work on the behavioral assessment team*; and Item 3, *I am satisfied with my level of formal training in threat assessment*, all address levels of training received and satisfaction with formal training. Whereas, Item 9, *I am confident in my overall ability to investigate threats of targeted violence*, and item 11, *I am confident in my ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves, to others, or both*, measured team members' level of confidence in using threat assessment functions. (See Appendix G, Table G11.)

There was a positive correlation between Item 9 and Item 1 \( (r = .48, r^2 = .23, p < .009) \) and between Item 9 and Item 2 \( (r = .46, r^2 = .21, p < .001) \). There was also a positive correlation between Item 11 and Item 1 \( (r = .61, r^2 = .37, p < .001) \) and between Item 11 and Item 2 \( (r = .64, r^2 = .39, p < .001) \).
There was not a significant correlation between Items 9 and 11, and Item 3, satisfaction with level of formal training. These results suggest that there is a strong relationship between the team members' level of self-confidence with threat assessment and the level of training they had received.

**Analysis of Web-Based Team Information**

As a third point of data collection, an Internet search of the six universities was conducted. The search consisted of key word searches for related phrases: behavioral assessment, threat assessment, disruptive or threatening student behavior, and student concerns. Following the key word search, the sites were searched for team specific information including: team name, team mission statement or charge, goals and guidelines for team operations, team membership list, contact information, reporting mechanisms - online or otherwise, and definitions.

The results of the searches showed that University 4 exhibited 9 of the 10 search parameters. University 1 had 0 results out of the 10 searched phrases. The complete findings can be seen in Appendix G, Table G12. A summary of the findings are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Web-based Search Results for Team Information on University Websites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Word/ Team Specific Search Parameters (N = 11)</th>
<th>University 1</th>
<th>University 2</th>
<th>University 3</th>
<th>University 4</th>
<th>University 5</th>
<th>University 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ r^2 = .41, p < .001 \]
Analysis of the web-based information of each university was considered important because it gives an indication of how easy it is to find information and resources. If someone is looking for information on how to make a report or where to turn if they have concerns, one of the first places they will check is the university website. If the information is not readily available, universities are making it more difficult for students, faculty, and staff to be able to report behavior they deem serious or concerning.

**Summary**

A number of themes were gleaned from the team leader and executive administrator interviews. The main theme reported throughout all of the interviews was the impact of the Virginia Tech shootings on April 16, 2007. Based on the themes and the questionnaire data, one significant difference emerged among the teams for the variable of responsibilities. The data indicates that the behavioral assessment teams at the flagship universities are significantly different in regards to having clearly stated goals and/or a clear mission statement. There were no significant differences among the teams in terms of the use of threat assessment functions or use of the 12 principles of threat assessment. There was, however, a significant positive correlation between levels of training team members had received and team member confidence in using the threat assessment approach.

The fifth and final chapter summarizes the major findings of the study, offers recommendations based of those findings and the literature, and suggests avenues for future research.
V. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study, offers recommendations for university leaders based on the findings, and proposes suggestions for further research related to behavioral assessment teams and threat assessment in higher education. The findings are compared and contrasted with other related research findings and expert opinions available from the literature.

This study used a two-phased mixed-methods, descriptive exploratory design. The data for the study were collected from interviews with the six behavioral assessment team leaders and four executive administrators at the six flagship universities in New England. Questionnaire results from the team leaders (N = 6) and team members (N = 28) from the studied teams complimented the interview data.

The study was designed to explore the differences among the six behavioral assessment teams in terms of team composition, practices, and responsibilities as related to threat assessment. Furthermore the extent to which the studied teams utilized the three functions of threat assessment and the 12 principles of threat assessment (Deisinger et al., 2008) taken from the literature was also examined. Finally, the study sought to determine if there was a relationship between level of training and confidence in using threat assessment.
Summary of Findings

The first area of findings is related to the analysis of team leader and executive administrator interviews, which revealed a number of relevant themes.

**Composition.** Under the variable of composition, five main themes were identified concerning behavioral assessment teams.

**Leadership** - Several leadership models for the team were identified and ranged from have a senior student affairs officer leader to having no named leader.

**Making the call** - Teams varied in terms of whether the team made the final determination of a threat or if the decision was made by the team leader after receiving feedback from the team.

**Team model** - Three different team models were identified that were based on the various configurations used by the studied universities.

**Size and functional area** - Teams also varied in size; however, every team leader reported that team membership was based on functional area not on personalities.

**Increased communication** - Teams were credited with breaking down traditional communication barriers and intrinsically fostering increased communication between different areas on campus.

**Practices.** Under the variable of team practices, seven main themes were identified.

**Reporting methods** - Many teams rely on telephone, e-mail, or walk-in reporting methods. However, one team has a functional online
reporting mechanism and two other teams have an online reporting option in development.

**Individualized responses** - One of the most consistent themes was the importance of the team addressing each situation on a case-by-case basis and offering individualized interventions.

**Campus radar** - Team members frequently act as the campus radar system; that is, they continually scan the environment and when they become aware of a particular situation that spans multiple areas, they give attention to that situation.

**Responsiveness** - The importance of team responsiveness, namely being able to react in sufficient time to intervene in an escalating situation, was stressed.

**Assessing behavior** - All teams agreed that their assessments are based on observed behavior and not profiles, hearsay, or other suppositions.

**Threat rating scale** - Only one team reported using a threat rating scale in assessment of concerning behavior. Others reported being reluctant to categorize a situation that might cause quick escalation to a dire situation.

**Data collection** - Teams varied on the amount of and purposes for data collection. Some used data for case management purposes only, while others collect as much data as possible in the hopes of identifying trends to guide strategic planning.
Responsibilities. Under the variable of team responsibilities there were three identified themes.

Training - Most training focused on the campus community and not on team members. Although there were some reported instances of specific team member training, most focused on the teams' efforts to train others in the campus community on how, where, and when to report concerning situations.

Outreach - All but one team reported spending considerable time and resources on outreach to the campus community to inform various groups about the team and to explain the reporting guidelines.

Student retention - Another theme common was the importance of student retention as a goal for the team. The focus of all the teams is to help students who are in crisis reach the resources they need in order to continue with their education, with as little interruption as possible.

The themes from the team leader and executive administrator interviews highlighted many similarities and differences among the teams. However, the team member questionnaire results indicated that the only significant difference among the six universities was on the measure of having clearly stated goals or a clear mission statement for the behavioral assessment team. There were other items that trended toward significance, particularly whether areas without representation on the team are monitored effectively and whether reported threats are corroborated by additional sources.
Questionnaire results showed no significant difference among the teams on either the functions of threat assessment: identification, assessment, and management, or the 12 principles of threat assessment.

From the questionnaire, a significant positive correlation emerged between levels of training and confidence in using threat assessment techniques. The items related to basic and advanced training were significantly correlated with the confidence respondents reported in the use of threat assessment techniques.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations were based on the study findings and were compared and contrasted with relevant studies from the literature.

One of the key assumptions underlying the study was the understanding that every university is different, with different challenges, cultures, students, and resources. Acknowledging this fact provides the rationale for why every university will not, and should not, have the same type of behavioral assessment team. In fact, the studied universities use completely different team structures in terms of leadership, model, and membership for the behavioral assessment teams. However, the findings show that although all six teams are different, they are not significantly different in terms of their composition, practices, and responsibilities. These findings, and the literature, suggest that there are some key areas that all universities should consider when putting together or reconsidering their behavioral assessment teams.
Leadership

One key study finding was the importance of the behavioral assessment team leadership. The studied teams varied greatly in terms of their leadership models. Although they employed different models, all but one of the teams had an identified leader or co-leaders. The literature suggests leadership is a primary concern that needs to be addressed. Dunkle et al. (2008) described the role of the team leader as follows:

The team leader can serve as a designated point of contact for staff, faculty, and others who may have concerns about a particular student. The team leader can also be responsible for assembling the team to begin the assessment process. The team leader's principal role at the beginning of the assessment process is to consider what other institutional systems or external resources should be involved in a given situation. Furthermore, the team leader can help the team stay focused on a student’s conduct rather than his or her actual or perceived mental health condition or disability. Finally, if parental contact is necessary, the team leader may be in the best position to initiate that contact. (p. 594)

Deisinger et al. (2008) also described the importance of selecting a team leader, "It is important that the leadership hierarchy on the Team be established, so that meetings can be run efficiently and goals are met with minimal time wasted on process" and that the team select a leader who "relates well with others, has an inquisitive and skeptical mindset, and is familiar with threat assessment principles and practices" (p. 38). The team leader should have "appropriate resources upon which to draw and have a good sense of judgment, objectivity, and thoroughness” but, "perhaps the most important quality for a team leader to possess is that she/he be passionate about the role and the work it entails” (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 38).

There are different opinions on who should lead the behavioral assessment team. Dunkle et al. (2008) suggested that the leader should be a
senior student affairs administrator "who has high-level authority to manage student behavior and who has a solid understanding of the institution’s administrative structure, the institution’s policies and procedures concerning student conduct, and the complexity of managing difficult student issues" (p. 593). Conversely, Randazzo and Plummer (2009) looked at the team at Virginia Tech, which was led by the campus chief of police, and suggested this was a good choice as a team leader for a number of reasons.

First, his position crosses campus constituencies. That is, he does not come from a faculty, staff, or student perspective; rather, his perspective is campus wide. Second, he has the rank and stature necessary to make command decisions about cases when necessary and to gain the attention of the university president and other leaders without having to work through layers of hierarchy. Third, he is widely liked and respected on campus (and by team members), lending immediate credibility to the new Threat Assessment Team's efforts. (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 24)

Most researchers agree, however, that it is not advisable to have the team led by the counseling services director or some other mental health professional (Deisinger et al., 2008; Dunkle et al., 2008; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). "Ethical codes and legal guidelines around confidentiality preclude the mental health professional from sharing information with the team, absent patient consent or some assessed level of imminent risk" (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011, p. 16). However, it is critical to have a member of counseling or psychological services on the team to act as a consultant.

In the role of consultant the mental health professional can help the team understand the relevant mental health context of the situation. Furthermore, the consultant can serve as a conduit back to the counseling service, informing therapists of campus concerns about a student client, or placing alerts with critical information about a student who is being referred. (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011, p. 16)
The study findings suggest that there is not one leadership model that would work for every university. But given the suggestions in the literature and from this study, the co-leader model emerged as one worthy of consideration with both a senior student affairs administrator and the chief of the campus police force leading the team. There are several benefits to this model. First, "A senior-level student affairs administrator is often in the unique position of having a broader perspective regarding student issues as a result of receiving information from a wide variety of campus constituents outside the threat assessment team context" (Dunkle et al., 2008, p. 593). Similarly, the campus police chief "may have contacts with persons whose behavior does not result in criminal charges, but which may reflect a violations of conduct standards or indicate a need for assistance" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 51). Additionally, "in situations where a subject of concern has come from another community or institution, campus police are often more able (than a non-law enforcement member of the team) to obtain information from law enforcement agencies at those previous locations" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p.51).

A second benefit of this model is that unlike mental health professionals, neither senior student affairs administrators nor campus police are "limited by medical confidentiality laws and, therefore, often has greater flexibility in sharing student information on a need-to-know basis" (Dunkle, 2008, p. 593).

However, in order for this co-leader model to be successful, both individuals should "be well respected and have outstanding communication
skills and judgment" (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011, p. 16). The key to this model is that the co-leaders would need to work together effectively. If there is a pre-existing positive relationship built on mutual trust and understanding, or if one can be achieved, this model could be extremely successful in that it would streamline many of the communication processes and increase the responsiveness of the team.

As a result, it is recommended that universities should investigate the possibility of having the team co-led by the senior student affairs administrator and either the head of the campus police or the director of the psychological services on campus.

**Team Member Selection**

There are many different theories and models in the literature about how to select members of a behavioral assessment team, but it really comes down to the needs of the particular institution. "Critical to successful team operation is selection of team members, which depends on the mission of the team and specifics of the community" (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011, p. 15). The study findings and relevant literature are in agreement that team members should initially be selected based on their functional area within the university. Many of the studied teams were composed mostly of student affairs personnel. That is to be expected, given that they represent areas that are likely to have the most student contact. However, it is important to consider including representatives from other "touch points" on campus where decisions with consequences are made or areas with high student
traffic (Deisinger et al., 2008). One such area that is often overlooked is the campus registrar.

For example, an important resource for the team has been involving the university registrar, and the team has benefitted from her ability to provide information, when appropriate, about a student's academic progress. In addition, the registrar's access to student records and knowledge of the laws and regulations associated with confidentiality have been invaluable. (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 22)

Teams should be constituted so that "each member of the team has his/her own area of expertise, and makes a unique contribution to the team. It is important that team members do not overstep their area of expertise when giving input and making recommendations" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 41).

A number of the studied universities rely on their counseling or psychological services personnel to make assessments of dangerousness or "fitness to stay" and "fitness for re-entry" evaluations. However, "while some psychologists and psychiatrists on staff at college/university counseling centers may be qualified to conduct such assessments ... psychologists and psychiatrists' training do not typically include the skills required for conducting such evaluations" (Deisinger, Pollard, & Randazzo, 2011, ¶ 4). It is recommended that universities insure that the professional in question has specialized training, practice, and experience in conducting the evaluations. "The professional standards for forensic evaluators of forensic psychologists/psychiatrists are good baselines for measuring the competence for someone whose position requires that they conduct such evaluations" (Deisinger, Pollard, & Randazzo, 2011, ¶ 4).
One key component of selecting team members, which should not be neglected, is not only having the right offices represented, but having the right people on the team from those offices. "It is critical that team members be able to work together; thus the personalities of the team members matter nearly as much as the areas/departments on campus they represent" (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 23). It does not necessarily need to be the highest ranking person from a particular area, especially if there someone else better suited for team membership in terms of his or her personality (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009).

Another consideration is the dynamic of having members serve alongside their supervisors on the team. "Several among the leaders argued against having supervisors and subordinates on the same team to ensure that concerns raised and opinions voiced would never be hindered by workplace hierarchy" (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 23). The primary concern is that "team members keep their supervisors informed of situations that might require their supervisors to act" (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 23).

Therefore, it is recommended that team leaders ensure that not only are all of the "usual suspects" at the table, but that they are able to think outside the box. Consider having people serve on the team who may have access to vital information or resources that could be useful to the team, regardless of whether they are in a different division.

**Clear Goals and Mission**

The only significant difference among the studied teams was the issue of having clear goals and a mission statement available to the campus
community. "The mission and purpose of these teams have been based on history and culture of the IHE, law enforcement models, and behavioral intervention models developed specifically in reaction to the recent high profile incidents of targeted violence" (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011, p. 13). These teams should serve as "a venue for sharing information and streamlining protocols across departments as well as a decision-making platform for staff to determine the best institutional response" (Eells & Rockland-Miller, p. 13). It is imperative that teams operate with clearly defined goals, ones that help guide team decisions and processes. Deisinger et al. (2008) suggested that having a written mission statement helps to clarify goals and purpose for the team and for the entire campus community. They further suggested that "the team should also have a strategic plan that sets forth how it intends to accomplish its mission. The strategic plan does not need to be complicated or overly detailed, but should be congruent with the institution's campus-wide safety plan" (p. 26).

It is important that the mission statement and the strategic plan reflect the nature of the team's work. If one of the primary goals of the team is student retention, as noted in the interviews, then that should be indicated in the goals and mission statement. It is important to review the goals and mission of the team annually, as the purpose of these items is to "serve as a guide for the teams' overall operations, and to serve as a reminder of the team's purpose when it gets caught up in day-to-day minutiae" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 26).
Accordingly, it is recommended that behavioral assessment teams review annually the goals and mission of the team to ensure that these statement continue to be effective, timely, and applicable. The review process is a good way, as well, to remind members of their responsibilities and to check to determine consistency with the overall mission of the university.

**Training**

One of the key study findings was the positive correlation between level of training and team members' confidence in using the threat assessment approach. However, there was some disagreement about which members of the team need to be trained. Some of the studied teams make an effort to train each member on threat assessment; others rely on their law enforcement or counseling services for the actual threat assessment, while the rest of the team was relegated to information gathering and area expertise.

Although team members should work from their own area of expertise, it is recommended that they all receive training on the threat assessment approach. The reasons for this recommendation are simple. The more people who are trained, the more likely they are to recognize situations that have the potential to escalate toward violence. The more familiar team members are with the process, the greater understanding they will have with what they are trying to achieve as a team.

Training in threat assessment should be comprehensive, ongoing, and provided by an expert in the field (Deisinger et al., 2008; Deisinger & Randazzo, 2011; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). Comprehensive training
covers the basics of threat assessment, including how to identify, assess, and manage persons or situations that raise concern, including threats of violence or self-harm and other significantly disturbing or disruptive behavior from an expert in the field of threat assessment (Randazzo, personal communication, January 21, 2011).

Once the basics are covered, the team can engage in more advanced training. Advanced training can include exercises, where the team works through case scenarios in the same manner they would an actual case. Team members should also be encouraged to attend statewide and regional training conferences on behavioral threat assessment and case management (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). It is recommended that training include "strategies for balancing the demands of threat assessment work with personal life concerns and for watching out for fellow team members in efforts to maintain a healthy quality of life while participating on a threat assessment team" (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 27).

Experts suggest that training occur at least semi-annually and provide an occasion to look back on cases and lessons learned.

About twice per year, the TAM Team members should train together and conduct tabletop exercises or review cases for lessons learned. These trainings and exercises help to ensure that the Team is up-to-date on current threat assessment and management issues, and improves the team members' working relationships with each other. After-action reviews should be conducted in order to capture the lessons learned and update the team's strategic plan. If needed, outside consultants, agencies, and/or institutions can be brought in for assistance. (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 85)

Some institutions may lack the resources to provide ongoing training. But, "institutions with fewer or limited resources on campus may be able to engage with off campus resources such as community mental health
providers and local law enforcement” (Dunkle et al., 2008, p. 591). By partnering with other colleges and universities, or even PK-12 school systems, universities can share the cost burden of providing training that would benefit all parties.

Training should, of course, be facilitated by individuals with demonstrated experience in assessing threat techniques and procedures.

While there is no hard and fast rule, we think that it takes a good 7-10 years of experience working on threat cases (depending on the level of direct involvement) before a person has truly developed a level of expertise in threat assessment and management. Preferably they should have received all, or at least some, of their experience from a structured work setting such as a law enforcement agency, security service, forensic mental health program, or established campus or workplace threat assessment program where they could learn from others with more experience in the field. (Randazzo & Deisinger, 2010, ¶ 4).

Therefore, it is recommended that behavioral assessment teams commit to incorporating annual training sessions for all team members. If annual training opportunities cannot be provided, universities should encourage and support the efforts of team members to attend external training, when available, particularly at professional association meetings. Additionally, training materials, such as webinars, should be purchased or accessed so that team members can stay up-to-date while new members, who join the team between scheduled trainings, can receive orientation.

**Case Management Resources**

Another recommendation is for university leaders to consider expanding follow-up and case management resources.

At the heart of effective threat assessment efforts and violence prevention is case management: coordinating and brokering the resources necessary to intervene with a particular person or situation of concern to reduce the risk of the threat posed, connecting the person with necessary help, and monitoring the progress of the intervention plan. (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 41)
Case management is effective when it is coordinated and monitored. "That is, when the threat assessment team develops a case management plan that is then implemented, monitored to ensure that it is working and that there are no unintended negative consequences, and adjusted if it is not working as planned" (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 41-42).

The functions of case management are important elements in identifying and referring students at risk. University leaders should consider formalizing a case management process to coordinate assistance and monitoring interventions for students of concern (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009).

Several of the reviews of the Virginia Tech incident highlighted the need for case management efforts to ensure that students of concern were receiving coordinated ongoing care and treatment. "These reviews also noted that failure to provide such coordinated follow-up efforts for distressed students could leave the student and the institution at risk for experiencing further trauma or disruption" (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 41).

All of the studied teams were comprised of professionals, but professionals with other full-time roles. The added responsibilities of behavior assessment case management can easily become overwhelming. By employing case managers specifically to work with students of concern, universities can add another layer of protection to ensure that interventions are being followed. University leaders are encouraged to "Above all else, implement a case management model and hire a case manager...Somebody needs to be dedicated full time to following 30, 40, 50-plus students who need assistance" (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 42).
To augment the efforts of case management personnel, documentation and data collection processes and procedures should be developed and implemented. Two key components of the assessment and management process are 1) sharing information among team members and others, who have information about a person of concern; and 2) keeping accurate and detailed records for each individual case (Deisinger et al., 2008). It should be noted that different universities have different philosophies and strategies with respect to confidentiality of information. Sometimes these "professional philosophies and practical strategies may have broader reach than what specific confidentiality laws (state and federal) dictate" (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 25). Regardless of how records are maintained "institutions should give careful consideration to the method of recording information to ensure that the assessment team has a clear record of the actions it has taken and the reasons for doing so" (Dunkle et al., 2008, p. 602).

All but one of the studied universities reported having set procedures for documenting the cases that came under behavior assessment team review. Only two went so far as to create an electronic, searchable database that would house data on every case that could be used to inform strategic decisions.

It is essential for teams to document their deliberations, actions considered, and decisions made. Critical information to document includes date of discussion, student identifying information (using double identifiers to avoid potential confusion), reason for concern, offices involved, interventions considered and decided upon, and follow-up response. (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011, p. 17)
Most of the concern around documentation stems from the possibility of records being subpoenaed in a court proceeding in the event of a bad outcome. However, “it should still be the preferred option to document careful deliberations and courses of action rather than having members called to testify without an accurate record of what was discussed or agreed upon” (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011, p. 18).

In addition, by implementing a documentation and data tracking system, the team will have the ability to record any important trends that emerge from the various cases they assess. "In this way, the institution will have access to longitudinal data that can help its threat assessment team identify significant trends and adjust the team's practices and procedures accordingly" (Dunkle et al., 2008, p. 602).

Therefore, it is recommended that behavioral assessment teams should thoroughly evaluate their case management processes and request additional resources, if needed. In addition, teams should develop and maintain a comprehensive data collection and storage system for their cases. Once in place, teams should mine their data for trends and offer that data in support of strategic planning efforts for future resource allocation and training.

**Transparency**

Another issue for behavioral assessment teams is one of transparency. The study findings show that although all six universities had a behavioral assessment team, the extent to which these teams were "out in the open" differed greatly. Students, faculty, staff, and even potential students and parents recognize the potential for violence on all campuses, which has
become part of the culture. Having a team to monitor and respond to students exhibiting disturbing behavior is now commonplace. However, several of the studied universities do not publicize the existence of the behavioral assessment teams.

Each of the studied universities had extensive team outreach efforts to the campus community to encourage reporting. However, few publicized the existence of the team and their efforts, beyond the faculty and staff. Often the existence of behavioral assessment teams is hidden in order to avoid creating a negative impression. Instead, university leaders should publicize the teams as part of the efforts being made to keep students safe and secure.

The general goal of all of these teams is to identify and provide assistance to those in need and to assess whether individuals pose threats to themselves or to others and intervene when necessary (Deisinger et al., 2008). The focus is not only to prevent people from harming others, "but also from harming themselves or disrupting their own ability to succeed in their employment of educational goals" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 25). Given the benevolent nature of the teams' efforts, there is no reason why existence of the team should be hidden.

Therefore, it is recommended that the behavioral assessment team be identified as one effort to prevent violence on campus. Just as campus violence has become part of the culture, so have efforts to prevent or to counter such violence. These efforts should be acknowledged throughout the
university and made known, as well, to prospective students and their parents.

**Opportunities for Future Research**

This study examined six state flagship university behavioral assessment teams and their use of the threat assessment approach to address incidents of targeted violence. As a result of this study, several areas have been identified for future research opportunities.

One is to complete a similar study at other types of higher education institutions. There are a number of variances among public and private institutions. All of the universities in this study were public research universities. It would be interesting to see what differences emerge among other types of institution, such as large public two-year colleges and small, private, four-year institutions. Religious affiliation may be another factor that could influence the use of behavioral assessment teams. Comparing rural and urban institutions and the factors at each that influence the effectiveness of their teams, should be considered for future research.

Another suggested area of research would be a more focused study of the leadership and team models that resulted from this research. There were many diverse leadership models presented in the results that the issue of leadership could be looked at from a number of different perspectives, including the team members and the team leaders themselves.

More research on the actual implementation of the threat assessment approach at colleges and universities needs to be conducted. There is a gap in the research on the transition from what institutions should do and how to
implement desired procedures and practices. Although this study identified the ways universities use threat assessment, more research is needed on actual best practices for the mechanisms and techniques used. Sharing the results of this type of research would be beneficial to institutional leaders and administrators.

Research is also needed to assess the effect that behavioral assessment teams have on campus cultures. Future studies should examine how students, and even potential students, perceive these teams and if the work of the teams has an impact on students' perception of safety on campus.

**Conclusion**

This study explored the differences between behavioral assessment teams and their use of the threat assessment approach at flagship universities in New England. Violence on college campuses has been considered one of the leading issues facing institutions of higher education, both in the United States and around the world. Incidents like those at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University, and, most recently, the University of Alabama at Huntsville have served to open the eyes of many higher education leaders. These incidents, and others like them, have caused an increased focus on how colleges and universities manage disturbed and disruptive students who pose a threat to themselves and others.

A number of government agencies and researchers, who have analyzed this problem at various levels, recommend that multi-disciplinary teams be used to monitor and respond to students who are exhibiting disturbing behavior. There are several models for these teams that include a single
stand alone team; a large team with a smaller core group that responds to emergency situations; or two completely separate teams, one that meets to discuss students of concern and another that focuses mainly on threat assessment.

This research found that although each studied university employed different leadership and team models, the teams were not significantly different from one another in terms of team composition, team practices, or team responsibilities. The teams were also similar in terms of the use and understanding of the three techniques of threat assessment: identification, assessment, and management. There were also no significant differences among the teams with regard to incorporating and understanding the 12 principles of threat assessment. One of the key findings was the positive correlation between the levels of training received and the confidence of team members in using the techniques of threat assessment.

The findings of this study will provide university leaders with information that can be used to make campus threat assessment teams more effective. By gaining a better understanding of what threat assessment is and how to employ threat assessment techniques on campuses, university leaders can make great strides in keeping students and campus communities safer for everyone.
References


Randazzo, M. R., & Deisinger, G. (2010, December 2). How to find a good threat assessment consultant: 5 questions to ask before you hire [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://threatmanagement.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2010-01-01T00%3A00%3A00-05%3A00&updated-max=2011-01-01T00%3A00%3A00-05%3A00&max-results=5


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Appendix A
Behavioral Assessment Team Leader Interview Protocol

I. Introduction/ Consent
“Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I have with a copy of the Informed Consent form that I emailed you previously for your review. I also have a consent form to digitally record and transcribe our conversation. I can assure you that neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the recording or transcription. Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions about either of the consent forms?”

(After securing consent and signatures on both forms)

“Thank you very much.”

The purpose of this study is to look at the similarities and differences of Behavioral Assessment teams at Flagship universities in New England. Having a Behavioral Assessment Team on campus that uses the threat assessment approach is the endorsed best practice for violence prevention on campus by the U.S. Dept. of Education. However, given that every institution is different and faces unique challenges I would like to get some specific information about what you do at your university.”

II. Participant Profile

1. To begin with, can you give me some general information about the (Insert specific name of Behavioral Assessment Team)?

2. Can you describe for me how and when the team came be?
   2a. (If team was created prior to April 17, 2007- PROBE)  Was there any specific incident or event that brought about the creation of the team?
   2b. (If team was created post April 17, 2007- PROBE)  Can you tell me how the events at Virginia Tech impacted the decision to create the team?

3. Can you tell me how the different members of the team were selected?
   3a. Can you tell me if previous training in threat assessment was a factor in your consideration of team members?
   3b. Can you describe your training experiences?

III. Shared philosophy

4. Can you tell me about the shared purpose of the team?
   4a. (PROBE) Is there a shared philosophy (or particular theory) that the team follows in its work? Mission Statement?

   5. Can you walk me through the process of how the team responds to a reported threat?
6. In what ways does your team integrate threat assessment and management in their work?
   
   6a. (PROBE) Can you tell me how a report is investigated, what sources of information are used?
   
   6b. (PROBE) Once a reported, what steps are taken to determine the seriousness of the threat?
   
   6c. (PROBE) Can you describe the different mechanisms in place on campus for people to file a report?
   
7. Can you tell me how the team fits in with the different violence-prevention efforts on campus?

8. In what ways does the administration of the university support your efforts?
   
   8a.) (PROBE) Can you tell me about any specific policies that have been put in place that enable the team to function effectively?
   
   8b.) (PROBE) Are there any supports not currently in place that would be helpful if they were provided by the university?

IV. Wrap up/ Debrief

“I think that covers most of my questions. Do you have questions or would you like to add anything before we wrap up? Again, I understand how valuable your time is, and I greatly appreciate your willingness to speak with me today. If you have any questions after I leave, please feel free to contact me. Thank you again.”
Appendix B

Behavioral Assessment Team Executive Administrator

Interview Protocol

I. Introduction/ Consent

"Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I have with a copy of the Informed Consent form that I emailed you previously for your review. I also have a consent form to digitally record and transcribe our conversation. I can assure you that neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the recording or transcription. Before we being the interview, do you have any questions about either of the consent forms?"

(After securing consent and signatures on both forms)

"Thank you very much.

The purpose of this study is to look at the similarities and differences of Behavioral Assessment teams at Flagship universities in New England. Having a Behavioral Assessment Team on campus that uses the threat assessment approach is the endorsed best practice for violence prevention on campus by the U.S. Dept. of Education. However, given that every institution is different and faces unique challenges I would like to get some specific information about what you do at your university."

II. Participant Profile

1. To begin with, can you give me some general information about the (Insert specific name of Behavioral Assessment Team)?

2. Can you describe for me how and when the team came be?
   2a. (If team was created prior to April 17, 2007- PROBE) Was there any specific incident or event that brought about the creation of the team?
   2b. (If team was created post April 17, 2007- PROBE) Can you tell me how the events at Virginia Tech impacted the decision to create the team?
   2c. (PROBE) How has the team's shared purpose evolved over time?
   2d. (PROBE) What do you see as the team's primary function?
   2e. (PROBE) What is the team trying to accomplish?
   2f. (PROBE) How does the team impact the campus climate?

3. Can you tell me how the different members of the team were selected?

Continue . . . .
3a. (PROBE) Can you tell me how the team leader was chosen and why?

4. Can you walk me through the decision process behind the design of the team?
   4a. (PROBE) How was it decided where in the university system the team would be placed?
   4b. (PROBE) What is the reporting structure like for the team?
   4c. (PROBE) When do the upper level administration become involved?

III. Risk Management/ Strategic Planning
5. Can you describe the university’s overall approach to manage risk?
   5a. (PROBE) Can you describe the areas of the university that are strategically important and how the team effects those areas?

6. Understanding that every institution is different, how does a university take a recommended best practice and translate it to their own unique situation?
   6a. (PROBE) How does the team fit with the overall violence prevention efforts of the institution?

7. How does the administration support the team’s efforts?
   7a. (PROBE) How are decisions around resources made?
   7b. (PROBE) How is the team included in long-term strategic planning?
   7c. (PROBE) Are there any supports that are not in place that would be helpful if they were provided by the university?

IV. Wrap up/ Debrief
“I think that covers most of my questions. Do you have questions or would you like to add anything before we wrap up? Again, I understand how valuable your time is, and I greatly appreciate your willingness to speak with me today. If you have any questions after I leave, please feel free to contact me. Thank you again.”
Appendix C
Team Leader Questionnaire

1. Please check all the areas listed below that are represented on your team:

   Administration (Vice President level or above)
   Academic Affairs / Provost
   Faculty (From multiple colleges/depts.? Faculty Senate?)
   Media Relations
   Police/ Security
   Housing or Residential Life
   Student Life/ Dean of Students
   Mental Health Consultant
   Legal Counsel
   Graduate / Professional Schools
   Human Resources
   Other touch points (offices where problems are already likely to exist, or places on campus where decisions with consequences are made)
   Other “eyes and ears” buildings and grounds, food service
   Specialty member (determined on a case by case basis)

2. Is the team structured as one large team or as a smaller core group with specific others added on as needed?
   - Large
   - Core
   - Unknown

3. Which areas represent the core team members?

   Administration (Vice President level or above)
   Academic Affairs / Provost
   Faculty (From multiple colleges/depts.? Faculty Senate?)
   Media Relations
   Police/ Security
   Housing or Residential Life
   Student Life/ Dean of Students
   Mental Health Consultant
   Legal Counsel
   Graduate / Professional Schools
   Human Resources
   Other touch points (offices where problems are already likely to exist, or places on campus where decisions with consequences are made)
   Other “eyes and ears” buildings and grounds, food service
   Specialty member (determined on a case by case basis)

Continue....
Please rate your degree of agreement with the following statements using the following 5-point scale:

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree Neither Agree Strongly
Disagree Agree/disagree Agree

4. There is a concerted effort to continually improve the effectiveness of the team.

5. Team members are offered basic training, including training on how to identify, assess, and manage persons or situations that raise concerns, including threats or violence or self harm and other significantly disturbing or disruptive behavior with an expert in the field of threat assessment.

6. The team participates in advanced training led by an expert in the field using scenarios and table-top exercises.

7. The team reviews new/relevant readings and research.

8. The team uses evaluations and feedback to highlight areas in need of improvement.

9. Previous training and experience is a factor in team member selection.

10. The team employs a multipronged approach to identification and information gathering.

11. The team utilizes multiple reporting mechanisms and encourages reporting from all constituents on campus.

12. The team holds annual general awareness trainings for (please check all that apply):
   - The campus
   - New hires
   - Parents
   - First year students

13. The team uses diverse strategies to encourage reporting on campus.
   - Newspaper ads
   - Posters on campus
   - Websites/links
   - Orientations (student and new staff)
   - Annual Notifications (CLEARY act, student handbooks, faculty manuals)
   - Other

Continue...
14. The team has the capacity to conduct investigations and assessments quickly enough to have an impact on the developing situation.

15. There is adequate representation from different areas on campus.

16. Unrepresented areas are monitored effectively.

17. There is regular contact between the team and unrepresented areas on campus.

18. Administrators and staff in unrepresented areas on campus receive additional training.

19. With the exception of medical/mental health information it is easy to obtain and share information between areas and departments on campus.

20. The team has the capacity and resources to monitor cases for as long as the individual poses a threat.

21. The team has clearly stated goals and objectives and/or a clear mission statement.

22. There is a concerted effort to systematically document results relative to these goals.

23. The team has a mechanism in place to gather feedback from individuals that are involved in the threat assessment process.

24. The team uses factual accounts of observed behavior to make their assessments, as opposed to relying on profiles, guesses, or rumors.

25. The team understands the difference between making a threat and posing a threat.

26. The team always considers the needs and feelings of the victim/target of threats when conducting an investigation, assessment, and intervention.

27. The team encourages reporting and operated with a clearly defined threshold for information regarding level of behavior or concern that should trigger a notice to the team.

Continue....
28. The team believes that targeted violence is a function of factors (the target, the individual, the setting, and triggering conditions), and considers all four factors when conducting an investigation, assessment, and management plan.

29. The team makes every effort to corroborate reports from additional sources, including off-campus sources (i.e. parents, medical/psychiatric records).

30. The team effectively uses the systems in place on campus to address threats by acquiring information from multiple sources and systems.

31. The team encourages reporting and offers multiple ways for constituents to report concerning behaviors.

32. The team has the capacity to offer multiple interventions including short-term emergency response and long-term case management.

33. The team operates with a clearly defined classification of what constitutes an emergency or imminent danger situation.

34. Every assessment the team completes seeks to answer:
   - Does the person pose a threat to harm him/herself, to others or both?
   - Does the person’s behavior suggest he/she is on a pathway to violence?
   - If they do not pose a threat, do they need help or intervention?

35. The team has the capacity to develop different individualized plans for the same person/case to intervene and reduce the threat.

36. The team has the capacity and resources to monitor individualized plans until the individual is deemed no longer a threat.

37. The team is familiar with the theory of threat assessment and the principles behind it.

38. Safety of the student, faculty, staff, and surrounding community is the primary concern for the behavioral assessment team.

39. The team views violence as a dynamic process, as opposed to a spontaneous act.

Continue....
40. The team operates under the supposition that targeted violence, defined as any incident of violence where a known or knowable attacker selects a particular target can be prevented.

41. 

42. I am confident in my overall ability to investigate threats of targeted violence.

43. I am confident in my team's overall ability to investigate threats of targeted violence.

44. I am confident in my ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves, to others, or both.

45. I am confident in my team's ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves, to others, or both.

46. I am confident in my team's ability to develop individualized intervention plans.

47. I am confident in my team's ability to implement individualized intervention plans.

48. I am confident in my team's ability to monitor individualized intervention plans.
Appendix D
Team Member Questionnaire

Please rate your degree of agreement with the following statements using the following 5-point Likert scale:

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly     Neither    Agree
Disagree     Agree/disagree     Agree

1. I have received basic threat assessment training, including training on how to identify, assess, and manage persons or situations that raise concern, including threats of violence or self harm and other significantly disturbing or disruptive behavior from an expert in the field of threat assessment.

2. I have received enough training to effectively use threat assessment in my work on the Behavioral Assessment Team/Threat Assessment Team.

3. I am satisfied with my level of formal training in threat assessment.

4. The team has adequate representation from key areas on campus.

5. Areas that do not have representation on the team are monitored effectively.

6. The team effectively monitors cases past the initial threat situation.

7. The team has clearly stated goals and objectives and/or a clear mission statement.

8. The team has to capacity to investigate reports quickly enough to have an impact on developing situations.

9. I am confident in my overall ability to investigate threats of targeted violence.

10. I am confident in my team’s overall ability to investigate threats of targeted violence.

11. I am confident in my ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves, to others, or both.

12. I am confident in my team’s ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves, to others, or both.

Continue...
13. I am confident in my team’s ability to develop individualized intervention plans.

14. I am confident in my team’s ability to implement individualized intervention plans.

15. I am confident in my team’s ability to monitor individualized intervention plans.

16. The team encourages reporting and offers multiple ways for constituents to report concerning behaviors.

17. The team has the capacity and resources to offer multiple interventions including short-term emergency response and long-term case management.

18. The team encourages reporting and operates with a clearly defined threshold for information regarding the level of behavior or concern that should trigger a notice to the team.

19. The team believes that targeted violence is a function of factors (the target, the individual, the setting, and triggering conditions), and considers all four factors when conducting an investigation, assessment, and management plan.

20. The team makes every effort to corroborate reports from additional sources, including off-campus sources (i.e. parents, medical/psychiatric records).

21. The team effectively uses the systems in place on campus to address threats by acquiring information from multiple sources and systems.

22. Safety of the students, faculty, staff, and surrounding community is the primary concern for the Behavioral Assessment Team/Threat Assessment Team.

23. The team views violence as a dynamic process, as opposed to spontaneous act.

24. The team operates under the supposition that targeted violence, defined as any incident of violence where a known attacker selects a particular target prior to their violence attack, can be prevented.

25. The team uses factual accounts of observed behavior to make their assessments, as opposed to relying on profiles, guesses, or rumors.

Continue....
26. The team understands the difference between making a threat and posing a threat.

27. The team always considers the needs and feelings of the victim/target of threats when conducting an investigation, assessment, and intervention.
Appendix E
E-mail to Participants

Date
Name
Title
University name
Campus address
Street address

Dear Title Name:

My name is Daniel Graney, and I am the Assistant Director of Student Life for Substance Abuse Prevention Services at the University of Rhode Island and a doctoral student at Johnson and Wales University. I am currently in the dissertation research phase of my program. I am contacting you is to seek your assistance with my research, which addresses threat assessment policies and practices at flagship universities in New England.

This research is designed as a descriptive study to determine the ways in which different universities have developed and operate teams organized to deal with campus-based threats. The research is not intended to be critical of current efforts, but instead is purely for discovery purposes; I aim to determine how universities are interpreting and implementing threat assessment polices and practices which have become markedly more important to colleges and universities.

As the leader of the team on your campus, I would like to request to interview you and also ask you to complete an online survey. The total time commitment for these two tasks is approximately 90 minutes. I am also asking you to distribute another online survey to the members of your team, which will take about 15 minutes to complete.

I can assure you aside from being identified as a research site and providing general background information on your university's team, all results of the interview and surveys will remain confidential and the collected data will be aggregated across institutions when presented.

Because the focus of my study is flagship universities in New England, securing information about all six institutions is imperative to the results. Therefore, I would greatly appreciate your assistance and participation. My intention is to produce results that will be useful to the flagship universities and to other institutions as well, as they continue to try to address threats of violence on their campuses.

Continue....
I will contact your office to determine a time that would be convenient for me to talk with you by phone about this timely and relevant topic. Should you have questions prior to my call about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at (401) 874-5073.

Thank you for considering this request.

Most sincerely,

Daniel Graney
Asst. Director of Student Life
Substance Abuse Prevention Services
University of Rhode Island
(401) 874-5073
dgraney@uri.edu
Appendix F
Consent Form for Behavioral Assessment Team
Team Leader/ Executive Administrator Interview

You are being asked to take part in the research project described below. The researcher will explain the project to you in detail and you should feel free to ask any questions about the project that you may have. If at a later time, you have further questions, you should contact Daniel Graney, who is the person mainly responsible for this study (Phone: 774-254-0126; email dgd323@student.jwu.edu).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:
This study will investigate the similarities and differences of behavioral assessment teams at state flagship universities in New England regarding their use of the principles of threat assessment in addressing threats of targeted violence on campus.

This study is designed as a mixed methods two-tier study. The first tier involves an in-depth semi-structured interview to gather information on policy decisions, long-term strategic planning, institutional threat assessment systems, and oversight of the behavioral assessment team.

The second tier of the study involves the administration of an anonymous survey to team leaders and members of behavioral assessment teams.

There are no known risks to taking part in this study. The benefits to you from your participation in the study may include the opportunity to learn more about behavioral assessment teams. The information you provide may help other people who want to engage in best practices in the field of behavioral assessment on their campus.

The interviewer will ask approximately 8-10 questions, however the exact number of questions may vary. The interview will not take longer than 90 minutes. The information that you provide for this research project will not be personally identified with you, either by name or title. The data will be stored in a locked file and available only to the researcher. After the research is concluded, the data will be destroyed.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. If you do decide to terminate your participation, simply inform Daniel Graney of your decision and no penalty will result.

Continued...
If you are not satisfied with the way in which this study was conducted, you may convey your concerns to the Johnson and Wales Institutional Review Board, which can be contacted at 401-598-1803.

I have read the consent form. My questions have been answered. My signature below indicates that I understand the information and that I consent to participate in this study.

Name of Participant ____________________ Signature of Participant ____________________ Date ______

Signature of Researcher ____________________ Date ______

Please check one of each of these pairs of options.

Recording the Interview

☐ I consent to having my interview recorded
☐ I do not consent to having my interview recorded

Transcription of Interview

☐ I consent to having my recorded interview transcribed into written form
☐ I do not consent to having my recorded interview transcribed into written form

Use of Transcriptions

☐ I consent to the use of the written transcription of my interview in presentations and written documents resulting from the study, provided that neither my name nor other identifying information will be associated with the transcript
☐ I do not consent to the use of the written transcription of my interview in presentations or written documents resulting from the study.

Signature of Participant ____________________ Date ______

I hereby agree to abide by the participant’s instructions as indicated above.

Signature of Researcher ____________________ Date ______
# Appendix G

## Study Findings & Statistical Tables

Table G1

*Team Member Areas Identified by Team Leader Questionnaire (N = 6)*

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<th>Area Represented</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing &amp; Residential Life</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Life / Dean of Students</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Consultant / Counseling Center</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police / Campus Security</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Conduct</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Members (determined on case by case basis)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other &quot;Eyes and Ears&quot; offices</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs / Provost</td>
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<td>Faculty from multiple colleges / departments</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Senate</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Relations</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Office</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Represented</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Consultant / Counseling Center</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Life / Dean of Students</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police / Campus Security</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Conduct</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Members (determined on case by case basis)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing &amp; Residential Life</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Counsel</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other &quot;Eyes and Ears&quot; offices</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (Vice President level or above)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs / Provost</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate / Professional Schools</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Touch Points</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty from multiple colleges / departments</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Senate</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Relations</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Office</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table G3

*Team Composition Description From Team Leader Questionnaire (N = 6)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items related to team composition.</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item No.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. There is adequate representation from different areas on campus.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. With the exception of medical / mental health information it is easy to obtain and share information between areas and depts. on campus.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. There is regular contact between the team and unrepresented areas on campus.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Unrepresented areas are monitored effectively.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Response Format: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *undecided*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*
Table G4

*Team Practices Description From Team Leader Questionnaire (N = 6)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items related to team practices.</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item No.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The team utilizes multiple reporting mechanisms and encourages reporting from all constituents on campus.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The team has the capacity to conduct investigations and assessments quickly enough to have an impact on the developing situation.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The team employs a multipronged approach to identification and information gathering.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. The team has clearly stated goals and objectives and / or a clearly written mission statement.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. The team operates with a clearly defined classification of what constitutes an emergency or imminent dangerous situation.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. The team is familiar with the theory of threat assessment and the principles behind it.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Response Format: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree*
Table G5

*Team Responsibilities Description From Team Leader Questionnaire (N = 6)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items related to team responsibilities.</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item No.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There is a concerted effort to continually improve the effectiveness of the team.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The team has the capacity and resources to monitor cases for as long as the individual poses a threat.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. There is a concerted effort to systematically document results relative to these goals.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. The team has the capacity and the resources to monitor individualized plans until the individual is deemed no longer a threat.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The team reviews new / relevant readings and research.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Team members are offered basic training with an expert in the field of threat assessment.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The team uses evaluations and feedback to highlight areas in need of improvement.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table G5

Team Responsibilities Description From Team Leader Questionnaire (N = 6) (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items related to team responsibilities.</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. The team participates in advanced training led by an expert in the field.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. The team has a mechanism in place to gather feedback from individuals that are involved in the threat assessment process.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Administrators and staff in unrepresented areas on campus receive additional training.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Previous training and experience is a factor in team member selection.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Response Format: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree
Table G6

Comparisons of Team Composition, Practices, and Responsibilities From Team Member Questionnaires (N = 29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Variable</th>
<th>University</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMPOSITION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Adequate representation.</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Unrepresented areas are monitored effectively.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Reports are corroborated from additional sources.</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Effectively uses systems in place on campus.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Capacity to investigate quickly to have impact.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Encourages reporting and offer multiple ways.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Capacity to offer multiple interventions.</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table G6

Comparisons of Team Composition, Practices, and Responsibilities From Team Member Questionnaires (N = 29) (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Variable</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Received basic training in threat assessment.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Enough training to use threat assessment.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Satisfied with level of formal training.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Effectively monitors beyond initial threat.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Clearly states goals and/or mission statement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Using the Bonferroni adjustment required significance at the p<.012 for Composition, p<.01 for Practices, and p<.017 for Responsibilities; For item 7 (p = .001) the effect size is .56; Effect size guidelines indicate .01 = small; .09 = medium; .14 = large.

Note. The response format is as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.
Table G7

*Functions of Threat Assessment From the Team Leader Questionnaire (N = 6)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Identification / Investigation</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Item related to the three functions of a threat assessment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identification / Investigation; Assessment; and Management.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identification / Investigation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. I am confident in my team's overall ability to investigate threats of targeted violence.</td>
<td>- 17 -</td>
<td>50 33</td>
<td>4.00 1.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. I am confident in my overall ability to investigate threats of targeted violence.</td>
<td>- 17 -</td>
<td>66 17</td>
<td>3.83 .98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. I am confident in my team's ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves, to others, or both.</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>67 33</td>
<td>4.33 .52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. I am confident in my ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves, to others, or both.</td>
<td>- - 17</td>
<td>50 33</td>
<td>4.12 .75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. The team has the capacity to develop different individualized plans for the same person/case to intervene and reduce the threat.</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>50 50</td>
<td>4.50 .55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table G7

*Functions of Threat Assessment From the Team Leader Questionnaire (N = 6) (continued)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46. I am confident in my team's ability to implement individualized intervention plans.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. I am confident in my team's ability to monitor individualized intervention plans.</td>
<td>- 17</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. I am confident in my team's ability to develop individualized intervention plans.</td>
<td>- 17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The response format is as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.*
### Table G8

**Principles of Threat Assessment From Team Leader Questionnaire (N = 6)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Items related to the 12 principles of threat assessment.</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Threat assessment is about behavior</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Safety is the primary focus</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Does the person pose a threat</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Multiple reporting mechanisms enhance early identification.</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Cooperating systems are critical resources</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Violence is a dynamic process</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Corroboration is critical</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Keep victims in mind</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Multi-faceted resources can provide effective interventions</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Targeted violence is a function of factors</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table G8

*Principles of Threat Assessment From Team Leader Questionnaire (N = 6) (Continued)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items related to the 12 principles of threat assessment.</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Early identification and intervention helps everyone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Targeted violence is preventable</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The response format is as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.*
Table G9

Comparisons of Team Use of Functions of Threat Assessment From Team Member Questionnaire (N = 29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence in ability regarding functions of threat assessment</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My ability to investigate threats</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Team's ability to investigate threats</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My ability to discern who poses a threat</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Team's ability to discern who poses a threat</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Team's ability individualized plans</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Team's ability to implement plans</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Team's ability to monitor plans</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Using the Bonferroni adjustment required significance at the p<.025 for Identification and Assessment, and p<.017 for Management. No significant differences were found. The response format was as follows: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree.*
Table G10

*Comparison of Team Use of the Principles of Threat Assessment From Team Member Questionnaire (N = 29)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles of Threat Assessment</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Violence can be prevented</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Dynamic process</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Function of factors</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Corroboration critical</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Behavior not profiles</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Cooperating systems</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Posing a threat</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Victims</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Early identification</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Multiple reporting</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Multi-faceted resources</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Safety is primary</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Using the Bonferroni adjustment required significance at the $p < .004$. The response format was: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *undecided*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*. 
Table G11

**Correlations Between Level of Training and Level of Self-Confidence in Using Threat Assessment From Team Member Questionnaire (N = 29)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Self-Confidence</th>
<th>1. Basic Training</th>
<th>2) Enough Training</th>
<th>3) Satisfaction With Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Confident in overall ability to investigate threats.</td>
<td>( r = .48 ) ( r^2 = .23 )</td>
<td>( r = .46 ) ( r^2 = .21 )</td>
<td>( r = .15 ) ( r^2 = .02 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.009)(^a)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(.431)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Confident in ability to discern when someone poses a serious threat to themselves or others</td>
<td>( r = .61 ) ( r^2 = .37 )</td>
<td>( r = .64 ) ( r^2 = .41 )</td>
<td>( r = .13 ) ( r^2 = .02 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(.001)</td>
<td>(.517)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Significant levels are listen in parenthesis.

\(^b\) Effect size guidelines \( r^2 \): small = .01, medium = .09, and large = .25
Table G12

*Web-based Search Results for Team Information on University Websites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Word / Team Specific Search Parameters</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Word</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Behavioral Assessment</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Threat Assessment</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Disruptive/Threatening Student Behaviors</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Student Concerns</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Specific Parameters</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Team Name</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Mission/Charge</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Operating Goals/Guidelines</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Contact Information</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Online Reporting Mechanism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Team Members</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Term Definitions</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>