

A DUTY TO CARE: A QUANTITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF BEHAVIORAL
INTERVENTION TEAMS AND COLLEGE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Over the last 30 years, the nation has endured frequent news stories about school shootings. In many of these incidents it has been discovered that a member of the school community was responsible for the act, leading the community to ask if these incidents could have been avoided. Students, faculty, and staff have the expectation that their educational communities will be safe spaces to learn, live, and work. In addition, there is an expectation that support will be provided to those within the community who may be struggling. In response, educational institutions have implemented Behavioral Intervention Teams in order to assess risk around student behavior.

Research conducted up to this point about threat assessment and behavioral intervention has focused on the teams themselves, including their composition and training. There is little information available about the effect of the actual interventions that are applied. This study examined the way in which one behavioral intervention team, from a large public institution in the northeastern part of the United States, engaged students, specifically looking at the types of interventions applied, and how these interactions affect student persistence. The study was designed to look for a relationship between the interventions applied and the student's ability to succeed academically one semester after their referral to the intervention team.

The study showed that on average there was improvement in students' GPAs one semester after referral to the Behavioral Intervention Team. However, results did not show a significant difference when considering age, gender, and student GPA. In addition, there was no significant relationship between the level of intensity of the intervention applied and academic persistence one semester after the intervention.

DEDICATION

To my children, Logan, Ava, and Lexie...may you always be inquisitive, try new things, and never stop learning. Education is a lifelong journey through which your eyes can be opened to the beauty that exists in our diverse world.

To my husband Jeff, for believing in me and cheering me on every step of the way. This is as much your accomplishment as it is mine.

To my parents, for instilling in me the power of learning, reading, and writing, and for encouraging me to always believe in myself.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 30 years, the nation has endured frequent news stories about school shootings. The impact has been great at every level of education with Columbine High School, Sandy Hook Elementary School, and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School impacting the K-12 field; while Higher education in the United States has been devastated by violent acts at Virginia Tech University, Northern Illinois University, and the tragic shooting by the University of California, Santa Barbara student (Langman, 2015; Pollack & Eden, 2019). In many of these incidents, it has been discovered that a member of the school community was responsible for the act, leading society to ask if these could have been avoided. Students, faculty, and staff have the expectation that educational campuses will be safe spaces to learn, live, and work. Two questions that are frequently raised following these tragedies are 1) Were there any warning signs? 2) Could this have been prevented with the appropriate intervention? In response, educational institutions have implemented Behavioral Intervention Teams in order to assess risk around student behavior. The goal of these teams is to engage students of concern in a meaningful way, that will both mitigate the risk to the community, while also providing necessary support to the student (Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons, 2010; Jablonski, McClellan, & Zdziarski., 2008).

Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, Seung Hui Cho, Steven Kazmierczak, Jared Loughner, Adam Lanza, Nikolas Cruz, and Elliot Rodger are among the most infamous names associated with school violence in the United States (Langman, 2015; Murphy & Van Brunt, 2017; Pollack & Eden, 2019). The actions of these individuals have brought

school violence to the forefront of conversation, research, and policy implementation since Harris and Klebold carried out the shooting at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999 (Cullen, 2009). The attention on this topic has only increased with the incidents that followed by Seung Hui Cho at Virginia Tech University on April 16, 2007, Steven Kazmierczak at Northern Illinois University on February 14, 2008, and the attack in Tucson, Arizona by Jared Loughner, a recently suspended Pima Community College student in January 2011 (Eaton, Gilbert, & Zimmerman, 2011; Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Unfortunately, additional tragedies occurred when Adam Lanza committed the unthinkable act of carrying out a shooting at Newtown Elementary School on December 14, 2012, Elliot Rodger attacked a number of individuals near the University of California, Santa Barbara campus on May 23, 2014, and Nikolas Cruz committed a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018 (Langman, 2015; Murphy & Van Brunt, 2017; Pollack & Eden, 2019).

These examples make it clear that despite the research conducted, and the measures that have been enacted since the Columbine shootings, concerns remain for which university administrators must continuously plan adequate interventions, and assess in order to determine the effectiveness of interventions used (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008; Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, & Swinton 2014). It is also important to note that intervention is not only necessary when it is believed that there is a mass threat, but also when there is concern about one-on-one violence (Deisinger et al., 2008). This has been particularly relevant with the stories regarding domestic violence tragedies that have occurred on campuses including the murder of University of

Virginia student Yeardley Love by her partner and fellow University of Virginia student George Hughley on May 3, 2010 (Canning, Friedman, & Netter, 2010).

It is difficult to comprehend why these incidents happen, but in almost every case there is a need to dig deeper and really understand the full context, including gaining a better understanding of the individual, the actual event, and the environment in which the tragedy occurred (Langman, 2015). By investigating the incident, it is possible to discover specific information about early warning signs (Langman, 2015). The incident at Columbine High School is a prime example that what seems accurate on the surface is not necessarily true, as media outlets initially indicated that bullying was the main trigger. The reality is that the student shooters in Columbine were not bullied, and they were not well-behaved students showing no warning signs. There were a series of incidents and run-ins with the law prior to the April shooting that were setting up the story that was to end with the tragic shooting (Cullen, 2009; Langman, 2015). What could have happened if all of the incidents had been connected, and an attempt was made to intervene with these individuals?

The shooting that took place at Virginia Tech University in 2007 resulted in a demand by constituents that colleges and universities create teams designed to collect information about students of concern, and use this information to assess the level of threat that students might pose (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). This was particularly relevant because the shooter in the case at Virginia Tech, Seung Hui Cho, had been on the radar of several faculty and administrators prior to the shooting (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Additional research conducted about campus violence recommends the use of these multi-disciplinary teams to provide threat assessment and

behavioral intervention. These teams are often known as Behavioral Intervention Teams (BITs), but may also be identified on campus as CARE Team, Behavioral Assessment Team (BAT), Campus Assessment Team (CAT), and Students of Concern (SOC) to name a few (Sokolow et al, 2014; Schiemann & Van Brunt, 2018). These teams were created to not only assess the level of threat at institutions, but also to develop a plan of action to address the behavior, including the application of various types of interventions, that would lead the student to appropriate help (Northern Illinois Task Force Report, 2008; Sokolow et al, 2014; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

Many schools have implemented BITs because they have found that these teams play a crucial role in the mitigation of potential crisis situations (Jablonski et al., 2008). While there is a great deal of research indicating the need for these teams, and recommending how the teams should be composed and trained, there is little research available on the effectiveness of the interventions being implemented (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009; Van Brunt, 2012). While it is difficult to research whether or not behavioral interventions are preventing mass incidents of violence, it is important to understand the impact that interventions have on students (Sokolow et al., 2014). One way to evaluate the intervention process is by looking at the interventions that are applied to see if they are effective in helping students of concern transition through the moment of personal crisis and succeed within their academic environment (Sokolow et al., 2014). This research study was designed to examine how one large public institution engages students through their BIT, specifically looking at how the interventions used impacted student persistence one semester after their referral to the BIT.

Statement of Problem

The early 1990's brought about the beginning of the changing mindset about risk management on college campuses in the United States. The catalyst for this change came in the form of shootings at the University of Iowa in 1991, Simon's Rock College of Bard in 1992, San Diego State in 1996, Appalachian School of Law in 2002, and the University of Arizona's College of Nursing in 2002 (Sokolow & Hughes, 2008). The shooting at Virginia Tech University brought a tremendous amount of attention to campus safety measures and access to mental healthcare on college campuses (Jablonski et al, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). The concerning common denominator between all of the school shootings mentioned throughout this study, with the exception of the Columbine tragedy, is that all of the incidents were committed by college students or adults in the 18-22 age range, some of whom showed signs of distress within their institutions or at home prior to the incidents taking place (Eaton et al., 2011; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). It should be noted that graduate and professional students also have been identified as the perpetrators of violent incidents as well (Langman, 2015; Northern Illinois Task Force Report, 2014). The fact that these individuals often exhibited behavior prior to their attacks illustrates the importance of open communication within the campus community. This allows faculty and administrators to identify at-risk students, at every educational level, know who to contact within their institutions, and engage these students before a greater tragedy occurs that brings harm to the individual or the campus community (Langman, 2015, Sokolow et al., 2014).

While shootings seem to attract the most attention, the majority of violence on college campuses is not in the category of shootings and homicides. According to data

collected through the Uniform Crime Reports in 2014, state and local law enforcement reported 76,380 incidents of crime occurring on 650 university campuses (FBI Uniform Crime Report, 2014). The majority of these crimes were property crimes, with only 4.1% reported to be violent crimes, and less than 1% of these cases reported as murder. The largest majority of violent crime were incidents of aggravated assault, making up 42% of the cases. This was followed by rape being reported in 22% of the cases, and robbery in 20% of cases (FBI Uniform Crime Report, 2014). The types of violence that have been documented most frequently on campuses have stayed consistent over the last 10 years, and include, but are not limited to, hazing, domestic violence, alcohol-induced fighting, sexual assault, stalking, and occasionally homicide (Cornell, 2005; Drysdale et al., 2010). There has been increasing pressure from the federal government to address the threat of violence specifically around the issues of sexual assault, dating violence, harassment, and stalking over the last five to seven years. A collaborative effort between Title IX Offices and campus BITs is being noted as best practice when responding to these concerns (Schuster, et al, 2015; Van Brunt & Murphy, 2017).

University leaders need to be concerned about the data, and respond in a timely manner to threats. Educational institutions have a responsibility to protect the campus environment through the control not only of campus buildings, but also through the management of student and staff behavior (Jablonski et al., 2008; Lake 2013; Ledbetter, 2009). Kaplin and Lee (2007) wrote the following:

Although most college students have reached the age of majority and, theoretically, are responsible for their own behavior separate from the institution, injured students, and their parents are increasingly asserting that the institution

has a duty of supervision or a duty based on its “special relationship” with the student that goes beyond the institution’s ordinary duty to invitees, tenants, or trespassers. (p. 91)

This duty is defined by the way in which the relationship between the school and the student is outlined through the admissions process, residential life contracts, and other institutional agreements (Whitting, 2005). It is important for institutions to define their duty of care to faculty and administration, and to train them in order to help the institution meet the expectations of the students and their families, as well as their legal duty (Jablonski et al., 2008; Lake 2013; Ledbetter, 2009). Responsibilities associated with this duty include adequate communication across campus offices in order to identify students exhibiting concerning behavior, threat assessment procedures to determine the level of threat that exists, the development of a plan to implement appropriate interventions in a safe and timely manner, appropriate resources to implement interventions, and treating all students with fairness and equity (Heilbrun, Dvoskin, & Heilbrun, 2009; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008: United States Department of Education, 2014).

During the shooting at Virginia Tech University in 2007, Virginia Tech student Seung Hui Cho shot and killed 32 students and faculty. He also wounded 17 others before taking his own life (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). The actions of Cho illustrate the dangers that can come from within the student population. Information that emerged about Cho following the tragedy showed that there were 31 separate times when disruptive behavior on the part of Cho was brought to the attention of university officials, yet little to no action was taken on the part of the university (Kapsidelis, 2019; Virginia

Tech Review Panel, 2007). The communication across campus was disjointed and there was a lack of clarity as to when information could be shared because of a misunderstanding by university employees about the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

A number of reports have been published between 2007-2018, following the various campus and school shootings, that have provided recommendations for how to respond to concerning behavior and minimize threat on campus (Eaton et al., 2011; Northern Illinois Report, 2008; Pollack & Eden, 2019; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). It was discovered that one of the best ways to intentionally address concerns was by convening multi-disciplinary teams of administrators, faculty, and staff who would meet regularly to review cases involving students of concern in order to assess the level of threat and develop strategies to minimize the risk (Sokolow et al., 2014; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008). These teams became known as Behavioral Intervention Teams (BITs) or Threat Assessment Teams (TATs), and were designed to deal with highly sensitive information, confidential student records, and emotional incidents that can be difficult to resolve (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Nolan, Randazzo, Deisinger, 2011).

While the initial purpose of many of these teams was to address threats to the educational community through threat assessment practices, it became clear that there were actually few cases involving true threat. The teams were regularly receiving referrals regarding mental health concerns, threat of self-harm, and classroom disruption that presented no actual threat to others, but indicated students were in need of support and in some ways were asking for help through those attention-seeking behaviors (Eells

& Rockland-Miller, 2011; Nolan et al., 2011). While an immediate threat might not be present, some level of intervention is appropriate in most cases that are referred (Sokolow et al., 2014). The effectiveness of the intervention may make the difference for a student between successful reintegration into the university community or leaving school permanently due to the individual's inability to continue safely on campus because they lack the support and resources necessary to obtain the proper help. In a situation that presents a true threat, the intervention may both prevent a truly devastating incident, and be essential in saving the student's life (Lake, 2013, O'Toole, 1999; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008).

BITs face the complicated task of receiving case referrals from across the campus, assessing the level of threat, and making recommendations for effective interventions (Drysdale, et al., 2010). Some BIT intervention strategies include direct communication with students and/or their families, consultation with administrators or faculty who may play a direct role in the intervention, and case management through the maintenance of database notes and paperwork in an effort to accurately track the progress of the student (Dunkle, Silverstein, & Warner, 2008; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011). The literature ultimately demonstrates that BITs need to maintain their focus on the students referred, the impact that the incident has had, and the potential threat that exists (Drysdale et al., 2010).

There is little research available that has examined the types of interventions utilized and the effect that these interventions have on students (Sokolow et al., 2014; Sokolow & Lewis, 2009; Van Brunt, 2012). While it is difficult to determine how effectively behavioral team interventions are preventing significant incidents of violence

from occurring, research conducted on campus violence indicates that attacks on a campus community rarely occur without warning (Dunkle et al., 2008; Langman, 2015; Randazzo et al., 2005; Sokolow et al., 2014). The need for some form of threat assessment as a mechanism to identify patterns when students are exhibiting signs of potential crisis and create a plan to intervene becomes essential. Considering the importance of preventing violence, the team needs to be effective, clear in their role and function, and capable of carrying out the interventions that they determine to be appropriate (Deisinger et al., 2008; Sokolow et al., 2014). Gaining a better understanding of the interventions used and their effect on students would be useful for teams as they continue to move forward with assessing cases. Administrators responsible for behavioral intervention work need to be able to assess both the effectiveness of their work with students of concern on the student's well-being, and the effectiveness of their intervention process on the safety of the overall community (Sokolow, et al, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the various types of interventions applied by the BIT in a series of randomly selected cases that have been referred during the 2017/2018 academic year at one large, public institution, in order to determine if there is a relationship between the type of intervention applied and the academic success of the student one semester after referral. It is believed that the appropriate intervention, provided at the right time, might not only prevent a student from causing harm to themselves or others, but might also be effective at guiding the student to the appropriate treatments that they need in order to move beyond the incident (Sokolow et al., 2014). This study was designed to provide those who are responsible for implementing teams on their campus

with a strategy for evaluating the intervention work that they are doing, leading to a better understanding of the administrative procedures, policies, and resources needed to effectively guide behavioral intervention work.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. Does the intervention applied during the behavioral intervention process affect students' GPA? Specifically, is there a significant difference in GPA the semester during and semester after the intervention?
 - a. Does the intensity of the intervention affect GPA?
 - b. Are there gender and age differences?
2. Does the reason for the referral to the Behavioral Intervention Team affect student persistence? Specifically, is there a significant difference in persistence one semester after the intervention based on referral type?

Theoretical Perspectives

Students in college experience a great deal of growth both in and out of the classroom. Using student development theories has proven to be beneficial for college administrators as they work to understand what students are experiencing, and is a practice that has helped to guide the provision of student services in higher education for decades (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 2010). Evans best stated this when he said, "Knowledge of student development theory enables student affairs professionals to proactively identify and address student needs, design programs, develop policies, and create healthy college environments that encourage positive growth in students" (Evans et al., 1998, p. 5). As we look at a university's duty to care, we can easily connect what we learn from theory with a university's response to helping students grow through their own missteps and transitions.

This research study was guided by Schlossberg's Transition Theory.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used to help conceptualize the student's development, specifically focusing on a student's ability to transition through major life changes, and the types of supports that may be helpful. I applied Schlossberg's work on transition as a guiding theory because it takes into consideration the whole situation impacting a student including the characteristics of the individual being impacted, the environment in which the transition is occurring, as well as the supports that are in place both within the environment as well as external to the environment (Schlossberg, 2008; Schlossberg, 1981). This falls right in line with what universities are being asked to do when assessing student risk, not only looking at the behavior and the university's support mechanisms, but also connecting with the resources available to students outside of the institution. Schlossberg's theory is particularly applicable to the work of behavioral intervention teams as the primary focus includes both the discovery of an issue that might be impacting a student, and the interventions that are most appropriate in helping the student to work through the transition successfully (Schlossberg, 2008).

Schlossberg's Transition Theory focuses on the fact that students will experience events that impact their day-to-day functioning and states that their ability to cope with these issues, and successfully transition through them, depends on four factors (Schlossberg, 2008). The four factors are situation, self, support, and strategies. Situation is about the characteristics of the event itself that includes timing of the occurrence, how long the event lasts, and the amount of stress caused by the event. Self refers to the personal characteristics of the individual that might help that person deal with what has happened. This includes the person's psychological state that will have an

impact on how well the student is able to deal with the situation. Support involves the availability of people around the person to help support them, and includes family, friends, and the general community in which the individual lives. Strategies represent the planning that the individual is able to do to not only help them navigate the event, but also to help them manage the stress that the event creates (Schlossberg, 2008; Schlossberg, 1981).

Schlossberg emphasizes that students who are in transition often feel that they do not matter and that their feelings are not important (Schlossberg, 2008). Institutions have an obligation to not only assess situations of concern, but also to work with the student of concern to help provide them with a path to move forward (Sokolow et al., 2014). Considering the effect of behavioral interventions using Schlossberg's theoretical base can be helpful in understanding how interventions may impact students by taking into account the student, the support network surrounding the student, and the environment (Schlossberg, 2008). Analyzing the data collected in this study using Schlossberg's Transition Theory allowed me to better answer the research questions that I developed in a structured way that provides context to both the student development work in behavioral intervention, and why institutions have the duty to be diligent in their efforts to address concerning behavior.

Definition of Terms

Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) - A multi-disciplinary team of administrators, faculty, and staff who meet regularly to review cases involving students of concern, and develop a plan to intervene and address the behavior (Sokolow & Hughes, 2008; Van Brunt, 2012).

Clery Act - The Clery Act requires the publication of crime statistics on and immediately around college campuses. This Act is also responsible for the requirement of timely warnings to students, faculty, and staff when there is a potential threat to the campus community (Lake, 2013).

Direct Threat – A threat made against another that presents a significant risk, and has a high probability of happening (Deisinger et al., 2008; Jed Foundation, 2008).

Duty of Care – The obligation to provide a certain level of care based on the institution's ability to foresee harm and as an obligation to published policy (Whitting, 2005).

The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) – FERPA protects the release of student educational records without the student's consent, and applies to all schools receiving federal student aid. An educational record is defined as any document that is kept by an educational institution regarding the student's academics, and includes disciplinary records (McDonald, 2008).

Foreseeability – The ability of an institution to identify a threatening person or situation and take the necessary steps to prevent harm (Whitting, 2005).

Profiling – Pulling together common characteristics of those who commit violence and assessing threat based on these characteristics (Randazzo et al., 2005).

Threat Assessment – The exercise of assessing a threat or threatening behavior to determine the level of risk that exists and determining the action steps to minimize this risk (Heilbrun et al., 2009).

Threat Assessment Team – This is a multi-disciplinary team that meets frequently to assess the level of risk that exists when a student exhibits concerning behavior. This team is able to respond in a crisis situation (Deisinger et al., 2008).

Transition- An event that happens in an individual's life that that brings about change. This may be expected or unexpected, and may also include non-events in terms of something that an individual expects to happen, but does not. A transition may alter an individual's life in a way that is difficult to overcome (Schlossberg, 2008; Schlossberg, 1981).

Significance of the Study

The work of BITs should play a crucial role within the campus community. This study is significant because there is very little research available to colleges and universities about the functional role of BITs, the effectiveness of intervention strategies, or the relationship between behavioral intervention and student persistence (Dunkel et al., 2008; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Nolan et al., 2011; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008). These teams are being called upon to respond to threatening behavior, and it is important to know how they are affecting individual students. The majority of the research that exists on the BIT includes information about team composition, administrative organization, the training needed for the team to work well together, and the models that teams are using to assess risk (Sokolow et al., 2014).

This research studied how one campus uses interventions to engage students, specifically looking at the types of interventions used, and the effect of these interventions on students. This evaluation includes the way that the team uses the information received to not only assess the risk to the student and the campus community, but also to take action and develop a plan for working with the student in order to help the student transition through the incident. Through a study conducted by Keller, Hughes, and Hertz (2011) that focused on how to reduce incidents of violence on college campuses, it was determined that there has not been enough attention given to the college setting and that sufficient ways to address student behavior could not be fully understood without this type of research. The literature that will be presented in Chapter Two will explain why behavioral intervention teams have become so relevant in higher education, through a look at the history of school and campus violence, the legal requirements of institutions of higher education, as well as the evolution of the teams themselves, and current best practice recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Universities have the unique challenge of educating future leaders by engaging students inside and outside of the classroom. Many college students have moved away from home for the first time and are beginning their exploration of what it means to be self-sufficient, and newly able to make decisions about their own health, financial wellness, and future goals (Drysedale et al., 2010). During this time of transition and growth it is not uncommon for students to experience high levels of stress that may develop into greater challenges, mental health concerns, poor decision making, feelings of hopelessness, and fear of failure and inferiority (Fox & Savage, 2009; Heilbrun et al., 2009). Without appropriate intervention, students experiencing these most extreme impacts might languish in their struggles, and may be at greater risk for causing harm to themselves or others. Students may also find that their struggles lead to issues with continuing education successfully (Fox & Savage, 2009).

Students and faculty began to experience a greater amount of fear and distress regarding the safety of their academic community during the 1990's (mostly in the K-12 system) with the release of a number of news reports detailing youth violence (Cullen, 2009). The tragedy at Columbine High School was the culminating event that led to the overall perception that random school violence was prevalent (Cornell, 2005). Following years of research on various incidents of school violence, threat assessment and behavioral intervention emerged as best practice models for addressing risk to the educational community (Pollack, Modzeleski, & Rooney, 2008, Sokolow et al., 2014).

Today's college campus is more diverse than ever with students arriving each day coming from a variety of backgrounds, and experiences (Silverman, 2008). The campus environment is an exciting place that brings together students, faculty, researchers, and scholars with the intention of developing tomorrow's leaders and trailblazers. There are many factors that can impact a campus's ability to cultivate a safe learning environment. According to the work of Kirk Heilbrun, Joel Dvoskin, and Anna Heilbrun (2009) university campuses are especially vulnerable to violence due the fact that campuses are open environments with many areas that are available for gathering in order to facilitate the types of educational conversations and social opportunities that are important to the college experience. In addition to this risk factor, college students are under a great deal of stress due to academic and family issues, and are at the age when mental health difficulties might arise (Jed Foundation, 2013). The very nature of the college environment and the importance of free speech impact the way that institutions may respond to reports of concerning behavior. Educational institutions also focus on student persistence, and the role that they play in helping students succeed in their studies (Heilbrun et al., 2009; Sokolow et al., 2014).

This literature review provides a brief overview of the history of campus violence in order to provide the background for why behavioral intervention has become an important and regular activity on college campuses, often with dedicated staff being hired specifically to address this need (Schiemann & Van Brunt, 2018; Sokolow et al., 2014). The chapter will progress into an overview of policy that affects the ways in which institutions address student behavior, followed by a review of the duty that administrators and faculty have to provide a high level of care. The information provided in this chapter

will also include an in-depth look into how threat assessment and behavioral intervention is implemented within higher education. The chapter will conclude by connecting Transition Theory to the intervention process.

History of School Violence

Unfortunately, there is a long history of violence in schools dating back to the 1700s. These incidents involve a variety of types of violence that have been committed by students, faculty, staff, and those outside of the school community. The earliest examples are in the K-12 system with the first shooting in a school by a student having occurred in 1853 (Amada, 2007). Violence has been recorded on college campuses since as early as the 1930s, with the first documented student violence occurring in 1955 at Swarthmore College, when a student who was the victim of fraternity hazing confronted fraternity members with a rifle (Amada, 2007). In 1966, the first college shooting to receive national attention occurred at the University of Texas at Austin, when Charles Whitman shot from the clock tower on campus, killing 16 people and wounding an additional 31. This shooting incident lasted for 96 minutes, and a closer look into the life of Whitman following the shooting, indicated a history of violence toward his partner, as well as access to weapons through his military career and training (Langman, 2015).

There have been a number of incidents of violence involving college-age students that have led to studies, and recommendations regarding ways in which schools can address campus threats. Many of these have occurred throughout the last 15 years and include the shootings at Virginia Tech University in 2007, Northern Illinois University in 2008, and the attack in Tucson, Arizona by a student from Pima Community College in 2011 (Eaton et al., 2011; Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Virginia Tech Review

Panel, 2007). Most recently the incidents at Newtown Elementary School in 2012, and the shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018 have provided some updated guidance (Pollack & Evans, 2019; Sedensky III, 2013).

Studies on campus violence.

Several studies have been conducted with the goal of determining not only the prevalence of violence within schools and colleges, but also the lessons learned from these incidents. Many of the reports include an attempt to identify similarities between the attacks and any information that might help schools prevent these from occurring in the future (Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). While the focus is on higher education, I would be remiss if I did not include some information about research and findings in the K-12 system. Many of the first studies were on this population, and some of the lessons learned and strategies implemented are transferrable to higher education (Cornell, 2005; Fein et al., 2002). Following the tragedies mentioned, several reports were produced that have provided a great deal of useful information to help identify and respond to student concerns. Information included in a review of the Virginia Tech shooting, and a report on the shootings at Northern Illinois, provide in-depth descriptions of what occurred in their schools, as well as a series of recommendations about how to respond, and the types of prevention strategies to use (Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). In addition to these specific reviews, there have been several studies conducted on violence in general that have helped to provide significant data (Drysdale et al., 2010; Fein et al., 2002)

In one study conducted by the United States Secret Service (2008), 37 cases involving targeted acts of violence within schools were examined in an effort to determine what could be learned to help academic institutions with their prevention efforts. The researchers found several characteristics that the incidents had in common. The similarities include the fact that these incidents rarely occurred without some type of warning, specifically noting evidence that at least one other person knew about the impending incident, whether they believed the threat to be real or not. In many of these cases there was at least one intended target who had not been directly threatened prior to the attack, and the perpetrator had access to weapons (Pollack et al., 2008). The researchers determined through the course of the study that profiling was not sound practice in terms of threat assessment because they did not find common personality characteristics among those who acted violently. They did find that there were a number of common behavioral characteristics among those involved in the cases. These characteristics included difficulty dealing with transition, suicidal ideation, attempted suicide, and evidence that the individual had been bullied or picked on prior to committing the attack (Pollack et al., 2008).

The researchers described how peers were made aware of a student's plan to commit violence, as well as the barriers that may prevent these individuals from sharing this information with someone in authority who could intervene. In many cases the peer was made aware of the threat within days or weeks of the incident, with some knowing as early as a year in advance (Pollack et al., 2008). In less than 20% of these cases the perpetrator made their plan known within only hours of the incident (Pollack et al., 2008). Research has been conducted regarding bystander intervention that supports the

role that peers can play in communicating threats to university officials because they are typically in the best position to be made aware of pre-attack behavior and language (Jablonski et al., 2008). The greatest barriers to reporting include the student not taking the threat or the plan seriously, and poor institutional relationships that keep students from feeling comfortable approaching school staff and administration. The research indicated that the better the relationship between the school and the students, the more likely students would be to share knowledge about concerning behavior with school officials (Pollack et al., 2008). Specifically, if school administration and faculty intentionally work to cultivate a trusting and supportive environment, students will be more likely to share concerns that they have about their peers. They will be more likely to engage the help of members of the school community because they will trust that their friend will be helped, as opposed to getting into trouble (Pollack et al, 2008).

A second major study conducted jointly by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Secret Service, and the Department of Justice entitled “Campus Attacks – Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education” was published in April 2010. This study was conducted in response to a recommendation by the *Report to the President on Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy* which stated: “The U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of Justice, should explore research of targeted violence in institutions of higher education and continue to share existing threat assessment methodology with interested institutions” (Drysdale, et al., p. 1, 2010). This study involved a critical evaluation of 272 reports of violence on college campuses dating back to 1900 (Drysdale et al., 2010). The

researchers found that 60% of the incidents took place during the last two decades and almost 100 of these incidents have taken place since 2000 (Drysdale et al., 2010).

In 84% of the cases, the type of institution where the attack occurred were categorized as four-year colleges (Drysdale et al., 2010). The researchers acknowledged that violence seems to be more prevalent during the months of October and April, but do not provide detail as to why this might be the case. When assessing safety on campus some additional useful information to consider is where historically these attacks occur. Drysdale, Modzeleski, and Simons (2010) share that 79% of the incidents studied occurred on campus with 27.7% of these taking place in residence halls. The remaining campus incidents typically occur in parking lots, and administrative or academic buildings. In only three percent of the studied cases the perpetrator moved throughout campus attacking in more than one location (Drysdale et al., 2010). Similar to the study by the United States Secret Service in 2008, this study also looked at commonalities between the incidents in an attempt to understand the behavior and warning signs that may have been apparent prior to the act (Drysdale et al., 2010).

Qualitative data were collected that provide a better picture about the people involved, both as the accused and the victim. In 73% of the cases studied more than one individual was targeted. In 79% of the incidents only the intended target(s) were injured. The study also concluded that a majority of the incidents occurred following some type of event that seemed to trigger the action. These events ranged from relationship breakups to academic failure, and workplace dispute. The researchers found that in 60% of the cases the individual(s) committing the violent act were current or former students (Drysdale et al., 2010). The results of this study are also supported through the research

work of Peter Langman, which will be reviewed later in this literature review, who also identified similar triggering events, but concluded that there is not a characteristic type that can be associated with every instance of violence (Langman, 2015).

The researchers also shared data that examined the type of behavior exhibited by the accused prior to the violent act. In 13% of the cases there was some type of threat made to the victim either verbally or in writing, and in 10% of the cases at least one act of physical aggression precipitated the main act of violence. Pre-behavior was noted in 31% of the incidents that included some type of mental health concern including, but not limited to, depressed behavior, disciplinary issues, suicidal ideation, and “bizarre” or “odd” behavior (Drysdale et al., 2010). Following the shootings at Virginia Tech University and Northern Illinois University reports were produced from task forces that were established to review what had happened and asked to make a series of recommendations about how to prevent these events in the future (Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Both of these reports included an evaluation of what took place leading up to the incident, including what was going on with the student, any pre-attack signs, life history of the student, and any actions taken by the institution prior to the incident occurring (Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). A series of recommendations were produced by each group that have served as a guide for the higher education community.

In 2014, a study was conducted that compared 51 completed school attacks to 51 averted attacks, in order to gain a greater understanding about school violence (Langman & Straub, 2019). This study was a joint effort by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, and the National Institute of Justice, and

looked at incidents that occurred within K-12 schools and institutions of higher education within the United States between 1999 - 2017. The researchers defined a completed attack as one that took place on school ground, and led to injury or death. An averted attack was one that was planned, but the attack was stopped in advance, or on the school property, but before any injuries occurred (Langman & Straub 2019). Ultimately, the researchers were able to provide a better idea of who was involved in committing attacks on educational institutions, helping to identify strategies for mitigating risk.

The researchers found that 80% of all the attacks, both completed and averted, occurred in the high school or college setting. They also found that 39.2% of the completed cases occurred in colleges and universities, while only 11.8% of the averted cases occurred within colleges and universities. An interesting variable that was studied was age. The researchers found that the individuals within the age range of 20-27 were the most dangerous in terms of injury and the number of victims (Langman & Straub, 2019). They also found that with the completed acts of violence, all were carried out by one individual, compared to 58.8% of the averted attacks having been planned by more than one person. Gender was another variable, and the researchers determined that the perpetrators in both the completed and averted cases were overwhelmingly male by over 90% in each group (Langman & Straub, 2019).

This data also included the variable of race and ethnic identity. The researchers found that in attacks that happened in an institution of higher education, 90% were committed by someone who identified as non-white. In 82% of the completed attacks, the perpetrator was someone who had either a current or previous relationship with the institution where the attack occurred. In 90% of the averted attacks the perpetrator had

some type of connection to the institution where the attack occurred (Langman & Straub, 2019). The researchers found that in 94% of the completed attacks the perpetrator had experienced some type of event that could be classified as life altering. In this study examples of life changing events included, but were not limited to financial concerns, failing relationship, substance abuse, and illness. The researchers also found that many of the individuals involved in both the completed and averted attacks experienced some type of mental health concern that included schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Substance abuse was also noted in approximately 27% of the cases (Langman & Straub, 2019).

In addition to the national studies conducted on campus attacks, some of the institutions who experienced violence also produced reports sharing what they learned. The Virginia Tech Review Panel (2007) made specific mention about the fact that administrators and faculty were hesitant to share crucial information regarding concerns about the student shooter due to their fear of potentially violating the student's FERPA rights (Schuchman, 2007; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Several university officials were aware of Cho's behavior, yet there was little done on the part of the institution to try to address the behavior because the information was not shared (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). This panel also concluded that there was not enough done on the part of the intervention team at the time to make appropriate referrals to counseling, and that there were issues with information sharing, external to the university community, between the medical profession and the institution, following a mental health evaluation that took place outside of the university. The sharing of medical information is particularly difficult due to privacy regulations, but the task force mentioned that the

ability to share this type of information should be reviewed at the state level due to the threat that might have existed upon the student's release (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). All of these communication missteps, including the fact that the institution did not contact Cho's family about his behavior, contributed to the student continuing down a path that eventually placed the entire campus community at risk.

The report produced following the shooting at Northern Illinois University on February 14, 2008, actually provided a different view into school violence because this review panel found that Steven Kazmierczak had assimilated well into his academic community. There were no warning signs prior to the violent act. The reviewers did find that Kazmierczak had a history of mental health concerns prior to attending the university, but these had never presented in a concerning way while he was a student (Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008). The only concern that the reviewers did note was that Kazmierczak changed his course of study because he was concerned that the academic department that he originally joined had changed the curriculum in a way that did not meet what he was looking for in the major (Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008).

A series of recommendations were produced through both the Virginia Tech report and the Northern Illinois report that were intended to address the concerns that had been identified. The recommendations include the fact that universities should recognize that they play a role in the growth and development of their students, and with this responsibility comes the obligation to reach out to internal partners, as well as parents and families to address health and safety concerns that may arise (Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). In addition, institutions should

evaluate the policies that they have in place to address student behavior. These policies should include how to recognize and intervene when students are in distress, as well as a look at the student conduct code and how the disciplinary proceedings are implemented, considering that the student conduct process may be the necessary way to address certain types of behavioral issues (Amada, 2007; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). These behavioral issues include, physically threatening language, physical assault, and continuous classroom disruption (Amada, 2015). In addition, it is recommended that universities provide appropriate mental health care for their student population, and work to break down the stigma of use of these services. When a student is deemed to be potentially dangerous, the school should not only have a threat assessment team that they can use to evaluate these cases, but also should immediately engage this team in evaluating the behavior and intervening with the student (Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

In 2010 another tragedy occurred in Arizona that again brought attention to how higher education institutions respond to student behavior. In this case a Pima County Community College student named Jared Loughner opened fire in a shopping mall parking lot during an event, killing and injuring several people (Eaton et al., 2011). Loughner had recently been suspended from Pima Community College following several instances of disruptive behavior in the classroom over an eight-month period of time. The reports indicated that people in the institution had noted this behavior, and the school stated that Loughner had to have a mental health evaluation to stay in school. Loughner was ultimately suspended when he refused to have the evaluation (Carey, 2011; Eaton et al., 2011). The Pima Community College behavioral intervention team began to meet

about a month after this incident occurred, but the school gained some negative attention when the question was asked of whether or not the institution had a duty to warn the general public about Loughner's behavior when they implemented the suspension (Carey, 2011; Sulzberger & Gabriel, 2011;).

The Sandy Hook shooter, Adam Lanza, exhibited many of the characteristics described above including a history of mental health issues, obsession with and access to weapons, and a preoccupation with violence (Sedensky III, 2013). Police investigators found several articles in Lanza's bedroom regarding the Columbine and the Northern Illinois shootings (Sedensky III, 2013). The research indicates that students rarely just snap and commit these acts of violence without providing some type of warning through pre-attack behavior (Amada, 2007; Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995; Pollack et al., 2008; Randazzo et al., 2005). In addition to the reports regarding incidents of mass violence, studies have also been conducted to look into the factors that may lead students to act violently.

The information collectively presented in these studies can help practitioners better identify risks and provide intervention before an incident can occur. The more recent studies conducted by Peter Langman and Frank Straub (2019) provided a series of recommendations based on their research that combined the work done within previous studies. They agree with several previous reports that it is important for schools to be prepared, and that one way of preparing is through the use of threat assessment teams who are trained to look into threats (Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). They also noted the importance of engaging students, and building relationships throughout the school community that are trusting, and breaks down barriers

that might prevent peers from coming forward and reporting concerns about a fellow friend (Langman & Straub, 2019). They also highlighted the need to take threats seriously, and to be open to the possibility that these may present in a variety of places, especially considering the use of social media (Langman & Straub, 2019). Ultimately, the reports together highlighted the importance of strong university communities that allow for open communication, have an understanding of FERPA, and when student information can be shared, and are willing to engage the community as a whole when intervening (Drysdale et al, 2010; Langman & Straub, 2019; Northern Illinois Review Panel, 2008; Pollack, et al, 2008; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

Studies on individuals committing acts of violence.

Although it is typically difficult to study the population responsible for the most serious incidents because many kill themselves during the incident, gaining an understanding of those who have been involved with these acts is helpful in thinking about how we can implement strategies for an adequate response (Langman, 2015). Peter Langman did a great deal of research on the shootings at Columbine High School, Virginia Tech University, and a number of less publicized incidents in both K-12 and higher education, looking for commonalities among the perpetrators (Langman, 2015). Through his research he has concluded that there are three types of shooters; psychopathic shooters, psychotic shooters, and traumatized school shooters (Langman, 2015). Langman defines each of these in order to help the reader understand the difference between them, and how they can identify each type. The psychopathic shooter is one who is incapable of feeling empathy, and takes pleasure in inflicting pain. This individual does not typically feel remorse (Langman, 2015). Eric Harris, one of the two

shooters in the Columbine High School incident, can be classified in this category (Cullen, 2009; Langman, 2015). Langman (2015) describes the psychotic shooter as an individual who may be struggling with identity and may have a perception of the world that is not actually what is occurring. This label is not meant to be a diagnosis or to indicate that there has been a diagnosis of psychosis. A person characterized as a psychotic shooter may or may not have a mental health diagnosis that is creating the struggle with identity or incorrect perception of what is occurring. The second Columbine High School shooter, Dylan Klebold and Seung Hui Cho, the shooter at Virginia Tech, fall into this category (Langman, 2015). Klebold had social anxiety and showed evidence of thought disturbances in his journal writings, while Cho showed signs of delusional thinking and social anxiety, all characteristics of psychotic shooters (Langman, 2015). Steven Kazmierczak, the shooter at Northern Illinois, also can be categorized as a psychotic shooter. It was determined that Kazmierczak had a significant history of mental health problems, and it is believed that he acted after stopping use of psychotropic medication that had been prescribed to him (Langman, 2015; Northern Illinois Report, 2008). The final category, traumatized shooter, typically is an individual who has experienced some type of trauma during childhood or adolescence which then contributes to what has led this individual to a violent act (Langman, 2015).

In general, Peter Langman was able to draw some conclusions about behavioral commonalities among several of the school shooters. These commonalities include an obsession with violence and weapons, access to weapons, fascination with other school shootings, and struggle with transition to a new setting or with one's identity (Langman, 2015). Langman also found that many students committing acts of violence became

more isolated from people prior to the incident, and that they usually revealed their plans to someone prior to the event either through bragging, journaling, or trying to recruit others to help them (Langman, 2015).

Jay Silverman (2008) also conducted research on student violence in an attempt to try to determine commonalities that could help in the assessment of threats and disturbing behavior. Through her research she labeled students of concern as distressed or disturbed. Those that have developed coping skills, but may still have trouble working through difficult situations, are categorized as distressed students (Silverman, 2008). Students who have not yet developed any type of coping skills are known as disturbed students (Silverman, 2008). Silverman's work emphasized the importance for anyone working with this population to understand that the prefrontal cortex in the brain, the area responsible for impulse control, reason, and judgment, is still developing through the mid-20s and may play a role in why some students are able to cope better than others (Silverman, 2008).

Student mental health has been a hot topic of conversation concerning the discussion of student behavior and violence. Concern has been expressed that students who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition will be violent by the very nature of their disability (Jed Foundation, 2008). The reality is that students with mental health conditions who become aggressive typically do so when some other factor is involved. If a mental health condition is emerging for the first time, there are typically warning signs that allow others enough time to report the behavior and get help for the individual (Langman, 2015). These may include changes in hygiene, altered mood, or statements of distress either in writing or through conversations (Amada, 2015; Langman,

2015). People with mental health disorders that lead to violent behavior are typically too sick to be able to function in college (Langman, 2015).

A more recent study was conducted in collaboration by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U. S. Department of Justice on individual behavior that led to school shootings between 2000-2013 (Silver, Simons, & Craun, 2018). The researchers provided valuable information that corroborated the work of previous studies regarding the fact that there is not a specific type of person or a definite variable that can be considered when identifying a student who may pose a risk. They found that the perpetrators represented a range of ages, were from diverse backgrounds, and only 25% of them had a diagnosed mental health concern (Silver et al, 2018). They found better information in terms of behavior. The researchers concur with previous studies that in many cases the perpetrator provides warnings through things that they say or pre-attack behaviors that others observe as unusual for that person. The people identified as most likely to notice these behaviors are classmates, faculty or administrators within their school, and family members (Silver et al, 2018). The researchers discovered that there was typically at least one stressor in the individual's life that occurred before the attack, and that early recognition of all of these signs is helpful in mitigating the concern, and successfully intervening (Silver et al, 2018).

The research in this section provides an idea about the many factors that may contribute to disruptive or violent behavior. It is clear that there are many factors that might contribute to violent behavior, and that it is impossible to rely on one concrete way to identify those who pose a risk. Campus administrators should consider that student behavior may be a cry for help, a sign that the student is struggling with their transition

during college or of an emerging mental health issue, and the appropriate intervention and support might prevent a tragic incident from occurring (Jablonski et al., 2008).

School administrators have a responsibility to respond to reports of concerning behavior, and the studies above provide information about a variety of things to consider when assessing a case. The reality is there is not one type or characteristic to look for in a potential perpetrator of a violent act. The acts can be targeted, random, be focused on revenge, or be out of desperation. Therefore, there is not one intervention that will work with every case (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Langman, 2015).

Responses to Disruptive and Threatening Behavior in Schools and Colleges

An important consideration when looking at concerning behavior is the fact that behavior or words within themselves do not constitute a threat. The words and actions must be assessed within the context that they are made. The individual of concern also has to be evaluated as an individual, and all pieces must be considered together (Sokolow & Hughes, 2008). Based on the recommendations of task force reports, critical incident review, and research on individuals as described above, a number of recommendations have been developed to help guide school administrators on how best to respond to disruptive behavior. In response to student behavior, schools and colleges have implemented a variety of protocols and interventions, including but not limited to zero tolerance policies, profiling students, and the implementation of teams designed to evaluate the level of threat that exists and provide intervention. These methods are described below.

Zero tolerance policies.

One mechanism that schools have utilized to address behavior is the implementation of zero tolerance policies, specifically automatic expulsions for certain types of behavior (Cornell, 2005). When zero tolerance policies are implemented there is no discretion permitted by those dealing with the incidents. All involved are required to follow a standard discipline that has been predetermined and cannot be molded to fit the case at hand (Insley, 2001). This practice emerged in the 1980s/1990s as a response to weapons in schools, but started to be used more broadly and for instances that probably did not warrant zero tolerance (Insley, 2001).

Schools are using zero tolerance policies to address threats, suicidal ideation, and classroom disruption, leading to the same treatment for individualized and unique cases, a practice that is not considered to be sound, and essentially moved schools away from providing developmental remedies to behavioral issues, moving closer to punitive measures. While the general population may feel safer with this method, it does not allow for meaningful engagement with the individual being expelled and may actually lead to greater threat to the community (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, Jimerson, 2010; Cornell, 2005; Insley, 2001; Jed Foundation, 2008). One assumption that is made by administrators is that if students know of, or see fellow students being removed for disruptive behavior, they will then avoid that behavior themselves. This, however, does not adequately address the student whose behavior is the precursor to a bigger concern. The threat is not necessarily removed from the campus as a whole by removing the individual from the classroom, as we see in the incident involving Jared Loughner (American Psychologist, 2008; Eaton et al., 2011; Insley, 2001). The individualized

assessment process of each unique case is lost when a zero-tolerance policy is implemented. Suspending students is not always the answer to preventing violent outbreaks, and schools would be better served to engage these students prior to making the decision to suspend (American Psychologist, 2008; Jed Foundation, 2008).

Zero tolerance also raises the concern that institutions are allowing their fear to cause them to pull away from the students they should be engaging in a developmental process. The message that these policies send to the student community is that schools will be supportive up to a point, but once a certain threshold is crossed the institution is no longer willing to work with the student. This type of environment can cause students to not fully engage with their institution, both as it pertains to themselves, and as it pertains to reporting a peer who may need help (American Psychologist, 2008; Insley, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The final concern with a zero-tolerance policy is the lack of due process that it affords to students, and a growing concern that using zero tolerance may have some issues with legality (Borum et al., 2010, Jed Foundation, 2008). In addition, students in underrepresented populations may be disproportionately affected by zero tolerance policies, which further erodes trust between students and school faculty and administration (American Psychologist, 2008).

Profiling.

A second method that schools have used to address students of concern is profiling. Profiling is considered to be risky because it involves compiling a list of characteristics about students who are likely to carry out violent acts (Cornell, 2005). Profiling is not considered to be good practice because the list of common characteristics is often broad, leading to inaccurate identification of students who will never pose a risk

(Borum et al., 2010; Fox & Savage, 2009; O'Toole, 2014; Van Brunt, 2012; Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modezelski, 2002). In addition, while there may be similar behaviors that emerge in multiple cases of violence these behaviors will not always lead to violence, and school administrators should not be in the business of trying to predict future behavior (Langman, 2015; O'Toole, 2014; Van Brunt, 2012). There is also a concern that implementing procedures that look like profiling may have a greater impact on diverse populations, especially students with disabilities, students of color, and international students (Heilbrun et al., 2009). There simply is nothing personality-wise that can be consistently identified as leading to violent behavior (Langman, 2015; Silverman, 2008).

Threat assessment and intervention.

Threat assessment provides a safer process that is more legally defensible and fair than a zero-tolerance policy or profiling (Cornell, 2005; Deisinger et al., 2008; Deisinger & Scalora, 2016; Jed Foundation, 2008; Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, Swinton, & Van Brunt, 2014). There are various models of threat assessment that have been introduced for the higher education setting, most of which focus on methods used by the Secret Service and FBI. While it is helpful to look at incidents in K-12 to gain some insight into ways to address student concerns, universities cannot solely rely on their models for assessing and addressing threatening situations as the physical environments and legal obligations are different in various ways (Deisinger et al., 2008; Deisinger & Scalora, 2016; Drysdale et al., 2010; Fein et al., 2002). The remainder of this literature review will look specifically at higher education and the duty to provide a certain level of care, as well as models for threat assessment and behavioral intervention.

Policy affecting campus response to concerning student behavior and duty to care.

In the earliest days of education there was an expectation that institutions would be the care takers of students attending universities, and would serve as the parental figure known as *in loco parentis* (Lake, 2013). Under *in loco parentis* the philosophy that guided decisions regarding students and their behavior was that the institution had the right and responsibility to discipline because they needed to act in place of the parent while the student was attending the institution (Lake, 2013). The courts largely avoided involvement in disputes between students and their institution due to the belief that the institution had an obligation to act regardless of a formalized system ensuring due process rights (Lake, 2013).

This mindset was eventually replaced by the belief that there was a level of freedom associated with college life and that many students were of adult age, and should be treated as such. During the mid-1960s to early-1970s, the Civil Rights Movement factored into a shift on the role of the campus in regulating student behavior (Lake, 2013). Courts did become more involved in disputes between students and universities because it was believed that students did have rights that needed to be respected. This change in philosophy continued through the mid-1980s to the present time where colleges have now moved into the duty phase, and are expected to take responsibility for student behavior and student safety, while also balancing student freedom and right to expression (Lake, 2013). Lake noted in 1999 that he was seeing courts beginning to shift their perspective, moving toward holding institutions liable for student injury as a result of student behavior, as well as external threats to the university community. This is very

much in line with the more modern perspective that views students and their families as consumers.

Institutions are receiving a great deal of pressure from students, their families, as well as political leaders, who often are influential with educational funding decisions, to act on threatening situations in a timely manner, and to consistently maintain a safe campus environment (Lake, 2013; Patel, 2019). Federal regulations have been passed and taskforces have produced reports instructing higher education about the best ways to address student behavior, and to warn the campus community when there is an imminent threat. The fact that institutions have a number of confidentiality requirements, as well as an understanding that free speech and heated debate are an important part of the academic process, may prevent faculty and staff from coming forward to report concerning behavior to campus administrators, both because of a misunderstanding of what information can be shared about a student, and fear that they are making a bigger deal out of something than they should (Heilbrun et al., 2009). The fact that campuses have to balance the confidentiality of student records with reporting standards can have an effect on a campus's ability to respond early enough to prevent a more serious issue from occurring if the behavior is a precursor to a more serious event (Lake, 2013). These regulations come in the form of privacy consideration for students through the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and timely information sharing about potentially dangerous situations through the Clery Act (Lake, 2013).

The most relevant legislation to the work of threat assessment and behavioral intervention is the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (McDonald, 2008). According to Peter Lake (2013) many within higher education misinterpret

FERPA, the goal of which is to protect a student's educational record, but not to prevent conversations between individuals at the institution and even with families when there are health and safety concerns (McDonald, 2008; Schuchman, 2007). In general, FERPA provides students with the ability to control who has access to their educational record. FERPA states that institutions can only release information contained in a student's educational record when the student has provided an appropriate waiver stating who can have access to the information, and the purpose for the information needing to be released. FERPA allows for several exceptions to the release of information, one of which involves the ability to share information when intervening in situations concerning the safety or health of a student (McDonald, 2008).

Due to the need to intervene when threats are made by students to cause harm to themselves or others it is imperative for higher education institutions to develop policies for release of FERPA information and to communicate this throughout the university to ensure consistent application, and to help administrators address student concerns promptly (McDonald, 2008). University administration, in collaboration with legal counsel, needs to ensure that institutional policies are in line with these regulations, and that campus administrators understand the requirements when evaluating and intervening with students, and are properly trained to manage these situations (Jablonski et al., 2008; Jed Foundation, 2008; McDonald, 2008). An additional regulation impacting the release of information is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). This act pertains to the release of information contained in medical records, including mental health records (Lake, 2013). While HIPAA does not apply to all mental health records and health records created on campus, some campuses follow the stricter HIPAA

regulations in order to encourage students to utilize their campus counseling center and student health facility, without fear that the information will be shared with others (Jed Foundation, 2008). Mental health professionals assert that by following strict confidentiality standards, students will feel more comfortable using the services, thus breaking down barriers in encouraging students to access resources (Shuchman, 2007). Even with the application of HIPAA standards, schools are still able to release information when a health and safety emergency exists (McDonald, 2008).

The information presented above outlines a number of legal factors that administrators must face when handling cases of student behavior. As we move into the discussion about the duty of care that is owed on behalf of the university it is important to understand that these regulations exist. Institutions often find that they are put into situations that are not easy to resolve, and administrators may have to maneuver the regulations that require a certain level of confidentiality with the release of information to relevant people who may be able to intervene when a student is in trouble. Ultimately schools have to balance the regulations described in this section with their policy, and with the duty that they have to provide a caring environment that addresses student behavior adequately and is supportive of student development. This duty of care is described in greater detail in the next section.

Duty of care.

Christian Whitting (2005) helped to explain the relevance of the duty of care in higher education by explaining the concepts of foreseeability, proximity, and policy. According to Whitting (2005) foreseeability focuses on an institution's capability to identify a threatening person or situation and take the necessary steps to prevent harm.

Foreseeability is a difficult concept to implement because it is essentially asking university administrators to identify and respond to any type of repeated behavior that may or may not be a precursor to something more severe. Proximity refers to the relationship between the parties involved and whether or not this relationship defines the school's responsibility in responding to the incident and/or preventing the incident. There are a number of factors that impact how the relationship between the student and the institution is defined.

According to campus crisis management experts, Eugene Zdziarski and J. Michael Rollo (2007), "Caring for the individual, providing support to those who can benefit from attention to their needs, and enhancing the human experience as educators and mentors underlie much of what we do in higher education" (Zdziarski, Dunkel, Rollo, & Associates, 2007, p. 4). Beverly Ledbetter (2009) also provides guidance in this area by stating why institutions have a duty to respond to concerning student behavior. Ledbetter explains that it is the idea of a special relationship that leads to the determination of the level of care needed in any one situation. A school does have the responsibility to protect the campus environment through the management of student and staff behavior. This is based on the relationship that is solidified once a student accepts admission to the institution (Ledbetter, 2009).

When it comes to protecting students on campus from violent crimes, administrators today face more challenges with the steps that they need to take in order to provide protection as well as to avoid the legal ramifications of negligence (Kaplan & Lee, 2007; Lake, 2013). The duty of care requires reactions to incidents that are thoughtful and intentional versus those that are reactionary to stress and fear. Courts

have made their opinions clear through case decisions that there is not an expectation that educators be able to predict future behavior (Cornell, 2010). The expectation is that the institution has a process for dealing with potential and actual threats and that they will follow the process that they have outlined (Cornell, 2010).

Recommended best practices for providing the level of care and concern that is expected by students and their families includes the implementation of threat assessment, allowing schools to identify the level of threat that may exist, and behavioral intervention strategies for addressing the student, ultimately mitigating the risk (Cornell, 2010; Deisinger et al., 2008; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008). Once concerning behavior is reported, university staff have an obligation to determine the level of threat that exists, and the appropriate intervention that is in the best interest of both the referred student and the institution (Fox & Savage, 2009). The next section will address the literature in support of threat assessment, and behavioral intervention as a response to concerning student behavior, and an essential element in an institution's duty of care.

Threat Assessment and Behavioral Intervention

There has been increased conversation in recent years about the scope of threat assessment and behavioral intervention in the college setting. Following Virginia Tech, much of the literature and recommendations focused on creating campus teams dedicated to assessing the level of threat an individual might pose to the community. It was soon discovered that few cases referred to these teams actually fell into the category of true threat (Jed Foundation, 2008; Sokolow et al., 2014). The cases referred were often lower level cases of concern about a student's behavior that did not ultimately pose a safety risk, but did indicate the need for some type of intervention to help the student (Jed

Foundation, 2008, Sokolow et al., 2014). This realization helped to move the field forward in thinking more about prevention, and how observed behaviors that are reported to university officials would better equip the institution to identify concerns at a point when intervention could be the most effective (Sokolow et al, 2014).

While it is difficult to know when applying preventative measures may be stopping a violent attack from occurring, it is clear that early intervention strategies can have a positive impact. Early recognition allows university administrators to guide a student to the available resources on campus, including mental health care and academic support that might be necessary to help the student overcome the circumstances that have led to their behavior (Fox & Savage, 2009). One of the recommended practices by multiple sources is the formation of a multi-disciplinary campus team that can provide threat assessment and intervention strategies (Borum et al., 2010; Deisinger et al., 2008; Fox & Savage, 2009; Jablonski et al., 2008, Sokolow et al., 2014). The literature has found there are a number of factors impacting how colleges and universities should think about responding to students of concern. While the exact method for addressing student behavioral concerns may not look the same on every campus, it is apparent that having a plan in place to help students is not only important for the development of the student involved, but also may prevent violence from occurring. According to Cornell (2010),

Although violence often cannot be predicted in individual cases, a college campus that strives to help troubled individuals and intervene in threatening situations will prevent violence as surely as a college that reduces alcohol intoxication among its students will prevent automobile fatalities. (p. 7)

Many colleges and universities are addressing their students through the use of threat assessment or behavioral intervention teams which will be described below.

Threat assessment on college campuses.

Incidents of campus crisis often evolve out of seemingly smaller events that can progress into a more serious threat if they are not adequately addressed. Best practice recommendations specify that campuses need to have a mechanism in place that allows them to identify concerning behavior at the lowest level and create a plan to respond (Sokolow et al., 2014; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Threat assessment is one mechanism that schools can use to evaluate concerns, and involves identifying the risk, and developing a plan to remove that risk from the environment (Nolan et al., 2011).

Threat assessment, a tool developed by the Secret Service in 1865 to address counterfeiting, involves an evaluation of the actual threat, including the context of the threat, to help determine the likelihood that the threat will become a reality (Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995; Cornell, 2010). Today threat assessment is a part of Homeland Security and its techniques are used both to assess the potential for threatening behavior, as well as in the actual physical protection typically of public figures (Fein et al., 2002). Threat assessment found its place on college campuses because it provided a mechanism to evaluate a situation with flexibility, taking each case for the unique incident that it is and developing a plan of action (Cornell, 2005). Violent behavior typically develops over time and is the product of three main factors: 1) the individual involved, 2) an event that triggers the behavior, and 3) an environment that facilitates the behavior (Fein et al., 2002). The basic role of threat assessment on a college campus is to gather information about a potentially dangerous student, identify all available

information about the student both academically and socially, engage the appropriate university officials in the assessment and intervention process, and develop a plan of action to minimize the risk to the campus community (Borum et al., 2010; Cornell, 2010; Dunkle et al., 2008; Fein et al., 2002; Jablonski et al., 2008; Randazzo et al., 2005; Van Brunt 2015). Ultimately this procedure involves the evaluation of each case based on its unique characteristics, not on misperceptions, fears, or preconceived notions, encouraging the institution to consider the facts that are before them in planning their response.

When establishing a threat assessment model careful attention must be paid to choosing the model that will work within the environment of the institution, considering not only the students and institutional personnel, but also the mission of the institution (Dunkle et al., 2008; Sokolow et al., 2014). One of the greatest issues facing higher education is that many of the models available to schools when establishing their teams were models based in mental health crisis and active shooter situations, which represent a small percentage of the cases reviewed by university teams (Sokolow et al., 2014). In the university setting, case referrals to threat assessment teams are not typically cases where true threat exists (Sokolow et al, 2014).

Institutions using threat assessment as their predominant model to respond to concerning student behavior need to develop a deliberative threat assessment process, and share the plan with the university community in order to be transparent and encourage community members to refer cases to the team. Any threat assessment plan needs to include a step-by-step process that involves interviewing all relevant parties when a threat becomes known in order to understand the context of the threat. This will allow the team

to determine if the threat is substantive, creating a need for immediate action on behalf of the institution (Cornell, 2005). If a substantial threat is identified, the team should move forward with evaluating the likelihood of the threat happening by determining whether or not a true plan to carry out the threat exists. Typical plans that may indicate that a true threat exists include identifying the time, place, and target, as well as whether or not the individual has the means to commit the threatened act (Cornell, 2005, 2010; O'Toole, 1999). Finally, if it is determined that a threat does exist, measures should be taken to mitigate the risk. The assessment should also include other factors that impact the student, including family dynamics, the school environment, and issues of social integration (Cornell, 2010; O'Toole, 1999). Considering all of these factors will provide the team with a more complete picture, leading to a more accurate diagnosis of the threat level (O'Toole, 1999).

New research indicates that while threat assessment is a crucial component to intervening with concerning student behavior it is no longer enough (Borum et al., 2010; Sokolow et al., 2014). Institutions must now take further action by providing effective interventions that not only alleviate the threat, but also engage the student of concern in a way that is intended to help them develop through the situation that they are experiencing. The earlier an assessment can be made and an intervention put into place the more successful the school will be at preventing an event and helping a student to succeed (Randazzo et al., 2005). Many schools are now going beyond the threat assessment model, and are implementing behavioral intervention through the use of campus teams that are trained in both assessing the level of threat that exists and working to engage students (Sokolow et al., 2014).

Behavioral intervention on college campuses.

Behavioral assessment and intervention has found a place in higher education as campuses have realized a need to provide greater support and resources to students experiencing crisis (Deisinger et al., 2008; Sokolow et al., 2014). Few of the cases that university teams encounter are criminal in nature, necessitating the use of police threat assessment and intervention protocol. It has also been determined that few cases are dependent only on the assessment of threat to self that is often the focus of mental health assessment protocol (Sokolow, Van Brunt, Lewis, Schieman, Murphy, & Molner, 2019). For these reasons campus Behavioral Intervention Teams (BITs) cannot rely solely on models that are available through police procedures or the mental health field. The purpose of developing BITs as part of campus protocol is to provide the campus community with a way to intervene in the cases of students of concern as early as possible, with the hope of preventing violence, and helping that student overcome the difficulties that they are facing (Sokolow et al., 2014, Sokolow et al, 2019).

BITs have been established to address concerning behavior in a detailed and transparent way. One of the most difficult aspects of the BIT's job is balancing the concerns of the university with what is best for the student (Sokolow et al., 2014). Addressing the behavior that has already occurred, attempting to determine what the student might do next (the true threat level), as well as how to possibly reintegrate the student into the community are all challenges faced by these teams (Sokolow et al., 2019). It is not enough for a campus to have a team. They must also insure that the proper procedures for the team are in place and that the information about the team is shared in a way that allows the university community to understand their overall role, and

that they are responding to threats in a way that allows the school to meet their legal requirements while remaining true to their academic mission (Fox & Savage, 2009; Nolan et al., 2011, Van Brunt, Schiemann, Pescara-Kovach, Murphy, & Halligan-Avery, 2018).

Behavioral Intervention Teams

The general purpose of BITs is to gather information when a student is brought to the attention of university officials, and assess the information that has been gathered. The next step is to use the assessed information to develop a plan of action, implement the plan in a way that is both beneficial for the student and the university, and continue to monitor the case once the plan has been implemented. The timeline for monitoring the case will depend on the facts of the case and the level of risk (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow et al., 2014). There are various models available for campuses to use to establish the type of team or teams that will work for them. Two of the experts in the field, Brett Sokolow and W. Scott Lewis (2009), not only have recommended a model that can be used, but have also helped to explain the difference between threat assessment and behavioral intervention, recommending that both be used in order to have the most comprehensive approach. The establishment of a team that can take a comprehensive look at referred students is helpful in the development of a complete picture of the full threat potential. (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009).

Various agencies and groups have provided guidance on how to develop a BIT as well as procedures that should be used for assessing cases. The process of addressing concerning behavior is one that is constantly in motion, requiring vigilance on the part of all members of the university community, and a willingness and ability to act quickly

when concerning behavior is identified (Jablonski et al., 2008). Keller et al. (2011) have put together a model that takes into consideration everything from collecting information on a perceived threat to assessing this information, and implementing a plan of intervention that includes data management, follow-up, and assessment. The model recommends the use of a centralized data management system, managed by one individual who can make sure that there is consistent monitoring. It is recommended that this system is web-based, allowing for quicker access to crucial information by those on campus who have the responsibility and ability to respond to cases. Best practice indicates that institutions develop a team comprised of those on campus who can best work to analyze cases and implement appropriate interventions. All cases referred should be handled on a need to know basis which makes it important to consider who should be sitting on the team to get the job done, while also protecting the confidentiality of the student involved. The analysis of the case should involve a review of all available information including academic performance, discipline records, documentation about the student in the admissions application, as well as information that can be gathered from individuals who have encountered the student on campus, and information available on public facing social media (Sokolow et al., 2014). Once the team has thoroughly reviewed the information and consulted with law enforcement officials to conduct a background check including a check for previous criminal history and weapons ownership, the team should move forward with making recommendations to intervene (Keller et al., 2011).

The National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA), an organization that was formed in 2009, has helped to guide behavioral intervention

practice within higher education by identifying procedures and practices that are appropriate for the college setting (Sokolow et al, 2014; Van Brunt et al, 2018). These recommendations for operation are based upon the premise that BITs should assume the roles of both threat assessment and intervention in the hopes of preventing a violent incident from occurring, and providing appropriate resources to students (Jed foundation, 2013; Sokolow et al., 2014, Van Brunt et al, 2018). NaBITA has created a risk assessment tool that can be modified and used by BITs across a variety of different types of campuses. This tool considers all types of risk including those related to self-harm, as well as harm to others, and provides schools with a consistent way to determine the level of threat that exists, allowing them to then match up the appropriate level of intervention (Sokolow et al., 2019, Van Brunt et al, 2018).

NaBITA conducted a survey in 2018 to collect information about actions schools were taking to behavioral intervention on their campuses. There were 416 responses to this survey from community colleges, traditional universities, and for-profit institutions of all sizes. The survey found that 97% of the schools had some type of team to address concerning student behavior, with 70% of them stating that they classified their team as a student-focused behavioral intervention team (Schiemann & Van Brunt, 2018). Team membership predominantly included counseling center staff, campus police, residential life staff, Dean of Students, student conduct, disability staff, Title IX, and academic affairs. The schools reported that 39% are using case managers to conduct follow-up on cases. These case manager positions are hired specifically to provide intervention work and continued outreach for students referred to their campus BITs (Schiemann & Van Brunt, 2018). Record keeping is another important aspect of behavioral intervention

teams, and the recent study reports that 92% of the schools who participated are using some type of database for their record keeping. The teams reported that 72% of them used a risk assessment rubric to help them determine the level of risk involved with each case referral, and the appropriate level of intervention to address the risk (Schieman & Van Brunt, 2018).

There is a great deal of consistency among many of the experts in the field of behavioral intervention. While each model may be a little different in who makes up the team or how the team should be managed, all models highlight the need for communication, and for the people involved to be able to evaluate cases both for concerns about threatening behavior, and for ways to engage the student. All of these approaches consider the people involved and acknowledge the uniqueness of each case. As institutions are working on the formulation of behavioral intervention teams, they need to consider the overall mission and purpose of their team as well as their unique campus environment (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow et al., 2014). While the overall purpose for most teams is to bring together officials from across campus in an effort to improve communication and prevent a violent incident from occurring, many are expanding their scope to include the provision of resources to students of concern through case management (Jed Foundation, 2013). In order to fully understand the way in which BITs are being utilized on campuses, and the importance of being deliberative in developing the best approach it is important to understand a little more about best practice recommendations for how these teams operate.

Behavioral intervention team composition.

The leadership of the team is as important as the full team composition, if not more so. The leader of the team needs to have access to key resources that might be needed, the authority to act on team recommendations as quickly as possible, and the respect of the campus community (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008; Sokolow et al., 2014; Van Brunt, 2012). This individual needs to be seen as someone who is supportive of students, while also respected by faculty and staff in their position (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008; Sokolow et al., 2014; Van Brunt, 2012). The Dean of Students or senior student affairs officer for the institution is often in the best position to be the leader of the campus behavioral intervention team both for the student affairs function of supporting students, but also because many of the recommended team members who would most likely be acting on the case recommendations report directly to the student affairs division on their campuses (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008; Sokolow et al., 2014; Van Brunt, 2012). The leader of BIT must provide a strategic vision and clear goals for the team (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow et al., 2014, Van Brunt et al, 2018).

The team leader has the responsibility of explaining team procedures as well as clarifying the roles of each member (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow et al., 2014). There are a great deal of legal implications dictating the work of BITs, including the manner in which records are maintained, when information from student records can be released and to whom, and how the intervention process and case follow-up is managed. Each member of the team should be chosen for a specific reason, most likely based on their expertise of a particular area of the university. Once the team is chosen training for the

team is essential, and falls under the purview of the team leader (Jed Foundation, 2013, Sokolow et al., 2014, Van Brunt et al, 2018). It is also important for the team leader to set expectations regarding meeting times and availability to get together should an emergent situation arise that cannot wait for the next scheduled meeting (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow et al., 2019).

Team composition is an important consideration and needs to be addressed thoughtfully and intentionally. A good place to start is with the number of team members. Size is important to consider, as you need a team that is able to work together, meet on a regular schedule as well as an emergency basis, and challenge one another through decision making on difficult cases. The report, *Balancing Support and Safety on Campus* (2013), recommended keeping the group relatively small, between five and eight members, believing that this is small enough to allow flexibility with meetings, but large enough to allow the needed diversity in expertise around the table. NaBITA has taken a similar approach in team membership recommendations stating that 5-10 members is a reasonable size for both response and diversity of expertise on the team (Van Brunt et al, 2018). Each member selected to the BIT, typically because of their campus role and function, serves to provide information about every aspect of student life (e.g., residence life, conduct, academic progress, counseling, health, and safety) and will create a complete picture of the concern. The members of this team provide diverse perspectives on the appropriate ways to work with the student, the student's family, as well as the campus community to develop an adequate intervention. Recommended team membership includes representatives from campus safety, counseling, student health, student conduct, dean of student's office, and housing and residential life (Jed

Foundation, 2013; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008). While these are the commonly recommended members, there is also supporting literature for the inclusion of legal counsel, faculty representation, disability resources, human resources, and most recently Title IX given the need to include threat assessment and intervention when evaluating sexual misconduct referrals (Jed Foundation, 2013; Schuster et al., 2015; Sokolow & Hughes 2008, Van Brunt et al, 2018).

Most of the administrators who serve on behavioral intervention teams have to balance their role on the team with their hired campus role. This can be especially challenging for team members who also work in student health and counseling. They have an obligation to keep records confidential, and have to maintain this ethical role while participating as a member of the behavioral intervention team. Team members must always be mindful of their role on the team and how this role interacts with their daily job duties. It is important to clearly state that the role of clinical health professionals sitting on these teams is for consultation purposes only (Sokolow et al 2014). This is important for the ethical obligations of the counselor's profession, and to reassure the campus community that information shared in the counseling setting is confidential. A safe role for clinicians, bound by confidentiality, to play is that of a consultant who can explain to the team how cases similar to the ones they are discussing would be handled in a clinical environment (Jed Foundation, 2013). This can be helpful for team members as they create their action steps for resolving the case.

Once the team is formed, training for all members of the team is crucial, especially if the team is engaging in threat assessment as well as behavioral intervention. Training for threat assessment should include the three concepts of threat assessment,

personality assessment, and risk assessment (O'Toole, 1999). Through the training process the team leader should educate the team on the scope and purpose of the BIT, procedures used to assess cases, and intervention protocol (Sokolow et al, 2014).

Training should be conducted throughout the academic year, including providing team members with the opportunity to practice tabletop activities in an effort to practice their case assessment skills as a team. If a rubric is being used to assess cases, training on this rubric is essential as well (Sokolow et al, 2014; Van Brunt et al, 2018).

Behavioral intervention team procedures.

There is a great deal of work in which behavioral intervention teams need to engage beyond the work that they do assessing concerning student cases. These teams need to educate the campus about their mission and the work that they do in order to create the channels through which they will receive referrals. The campus needs to know what types of behaviors to look for and who they should contact when a concerning situation presents itself (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow et al., 2014). An important piece of forming relationships across campus and keeping the lines of communication open is a team's ability to effectively communicate with those who are making referrals and providing some type of follow-up, even if it is just in the form of acknowledgement that the case has been received and the appropriate individuals are working on a resolution .

Teams should expect to begin receiving case referrals as soon as they have formed the team and announced to the campus community that they are available as a resource. The communication about the team should include intentionally reaching out to students, as they will most likely be the first to witness concerning behavior and may

know the least about campus resources to which they can report this behavior (Heilbrun et al., 2009). Once a case is received, the team must have a plan for assessing the level of threat and helping the student. This can be accomplished by evaluating the behavior, determining if a threat to the campus community exists, and gathering information about the background of the student. Included in this evaluation should be a determination about ways in which the student may already be connected to resources, and what is needed to best address the concerns (Dunkle et al., 2008; Sokolow et al, 2014; Van Brunt et al, 2018). Included in the conversation should be an evaluation of any additional information collected about previous trouble that the student might have gotten into both at school and criminally, as well as any mental health history or substance abuse history that is known and able to be discussed. If information about counseling or health matters is available it is typically available by talking with family or from the student themselves, versus the availability of clinical records that are protected by confidentiality (Jed Foundation, 2013). In addition, the team needs to consider any information that they have on the student's social interactions and fascination with anything pertaining to violence, including weapons (Jed Foundation, 2013; O'Toole, 1999, Sokolow et al, 2014). The team needs to consider how the information that they collect may impact the individual involved, the campus community, and must consider any legal implications. Once the assessment is concluded, the team needs to consider that a serious problem exists if the student has issues in a majority of the four main areas assessed: personality, family dynamics, school dynamics, and social interactions (O'Toole, 1999, Sokolow et al, 2014). If it is determined that a serious concern exists, the team must then identify strategies for addressing the behavior.

Appropriate documentation of cases needs to be considered as well. Team members must be clear on who is permitted to keep information and how that should be stored. Campuses have largely moved to the utilization of secure databases to store team records and interventions applied, providing one location for all records to be kept. This allows for accurate tracking of cases, and better control over case follow-up (Jed Foundation, 2013; Sokolow et al., 2014; Van Brunt et al, 2018). Accurate record keeping is also important in order to enable teams to assess their effectiveness, and in recognizing potential trends on campus (Sokolow et al, 2014; Van Brunt et al, 2018). Behavioral intervention is a constantly changing practice, and constant assessment of practices is crucial for teams to be able to stay up-to-date in their work, and effective within their campus communities (Sokolow et al, 2014; Van Brunt et al, 2018).

There is not one right way to design a BIT. As stated earlier it is important to implement a team that is right for the needs of the campus. In a report published in November 2009, a team of experts examined the implementation of the Behavioral Threat Assessment Team at Virginia Tech University (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). Reacting on information that the majority of campus attacks take place after the perpetrator has exhibited behavior that was of concern to friends, classmates, and/or instructors, the administrators at Virginia Tech realized that they needed to implement a behavioral intervention team that responded to lower levels of concern and were not just responding to major events (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). Virginia Tech created a team that was designed to detect early warning signs and intervene prior to a major crisis. The implementation of the team was a thoughtful process that included strategically planning the membership and working to create a mission. The president of the institution was

clear that he wanted the chair of this team to be the Chief of Police and stated his confidence in the team to make key decisions. Thought was also given to the possible workload and additional staff were hired to help with case management and administrative duties. There was a realization that an effective team needed to be able to not only gather information, but also thoroughly follow up on cases (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009).

Once the team was established, the structure was set, the mission was written, the team was empowered to act, and a marketing campaign began. The administration at Virginia Tech recognized the importance of making the team public and making sure the faculty, staff, and students knew who they were and that they were there to accept referrals no matter how insignificant the behavior might seem (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). At the end of the day, the campus BIT tends to be the most visible group on campus who receive a majority of the calls for help from various campus entities (Sokolow & Hughes, 2008).

BITs, while not the first thing that pops up in the minds of many when thinking about compliance with federal rules and regulations, should be considered as an integral piece of institutional compliance (Jed Foundation, 2013). While not expected to predict behavior, the teams can provide reasonable care in a timely manner and consider the foreseeability of incidents that might create a harmful situation for students, faculty, and staff (Jed Foundation, 2013). Behavioral intervention teams can play an integral role in this by providing essential assessment of behavior that may lead to a threatening situation.

Referrals to campus teams may come from a variety of people including campus administrators, faculty, students, parents and families, and the general community. The team members can use the information presented to them to help prevent concerning students from falling through the cracks and can provide the connection for all of the various information that might be collected about the student. This will allow members to piece together key information that might not be fully understood if viewed separately from one another (Jed Foundation, 2013).

Behavioral interventions and legal implications.

Considering the impact that behavioral intervention teams can have in the area of threat assessment and legal obligations it is also important to understand the types of interventions that are typically available to teams. Skills that interventions can help to address and build are problem solving, resiliency, and responsibility (Borum et al., 2010; Cornell, 2010; Keehan, 2009). The types of interventions that might be applied are family notification, meeting with the student of concern, coaching those within the university setting who have a close relationship with the student on how to intervene, involvement of law enforcement, referral to mental health services, voluntary or involuntary medical withdrawal from the institution, involuntary hospitalization, and implementing protective measures for the victim or community (Borum et al., p. 28, 2010; Cornell, 2010; Keehan, 2009).

Other legal implications to consider are those surrounding involuntary withdrawals and medical leaves. These are considered to be one tool that teams have for dealing with students of concern, but there is a great deal that needs to be considered before enacting this type of intervention. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

has introduced new guidelines around this issue that make it extremely difficult to involuntarily withdraw a student from the institution (Jed Foundation, 2013). Many schools do have interim suspension protocols written into their student conduct codes for students who present a safety risk to the campus community, but these need to be well documented cases that can be resolved with a disciplinary hearing relatively soon after the interim suspension is implemented (Jed Foundation, 2013).

While it is not easy to remove someone from campus who is not interested in leaving, it is acceptable in many cases to require a mental health evaluation as part of the assessment and evaluation process (Jed Foundation, 2013). Counseling cannot be mandated, but an evaluation is considered an acceptable request. The type of institution the student is attending and state law may impact the school's ability to make this request, so it is important for teams to get the advice of their legal counsel before implementing a mental health assessment (Jed Foundation, 2013).

Taking the time to understand the personality dynamics guiding the student of concern is also important not only in evaluating the threat risk, but also in helping to determine interventions that will be effective (O'Toole, 1999). The way in which the student interacts with people, views authority, sees the world, handles stress, and feels toward others are all important factors when assessing risk and student need (O'Toole, 1999). The same is true for family dynamics. It is not uncommon for schools to engage families in the process of helping students, but in order for this to be an effective intervention there needs to be an understanding of how the student interacts within the family unit in order to determine the level of family involvement that is appropriate

(O'Toole, 1999). Information regarding a student's social interactions and interactions at school are also important factors (O'Toole, 1999).

The appropriate intervention applied is going to depend greatly on the seriousness of the incident. Low-level threats may involve little more than meeting with the student and checking in to offer resources while interventions for more serious concerns may warrant the involvement of the student's family, the police, or a recommendation that the student takes a leave of absence (O'Toole, 1999). Accountability is a major theme of student development while in school, leading to the necessity for schools to not act solely by kicking students out. There is an obligation for an institution to work with students and their families on a reasonable resolution (Sokolow, et al, 2014). Holding students accountable through well-defined behavioral expectations is important. We have an obligation to address overall behavior, even if we believe the behavior is the result of a diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health condition (Amada, 2007).

In order to effectively manage the interventions that are recommended, close attention and follow-up must be provided for the student. Considering the fact that the behavioral intervention team members are employees of various offices around the campus, schools are finding it necessary to move to a case management model, hiring full time employees strictly for the purpose of managing behavioral intervention case follow-up. In considering this important role that is evolving on campus it is important to look into case management, and talk briefly about the impact this position can have on behavioral intervention work.

Case management.

All of the considerations listed above are causing many campuses to look at more intense case management through the hiring of full-time staff dedicated to carrying out the recommendations of behavioral intervention teams (Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden, 2014; Jed Foundation, 2013). The professionals hired to serve in the capacity of a case manager are frequently charged with the job of connecting students with the necessary resources on and off campus, and breaking down the barriers that block students from receiving the help that they need (Adams et al, 2014; Jed Foundation, 2013; Wilson et al., 2012). The main function of this individual is to help to coordinate outreach for students through collaboration with university academic and non-academic departments as well as with community agencies in order to provide the direct services needed by the student (Adams et al, 2014; Wilson et al., 2012). The work of case management in higher education is grounded in theory from a number of areas, including student development theory, threat assessment, and social work theory (Wilson, et al., 2012).

One of the action steps needed might be to involve the family of the student, a decision that requires a great deal of consideration and the right individual from the campus community to make the connection (Jed Foundation, 2013). Team intervention strategies will usually involve more than one type of action, and coordination of the multiple steps needed might be particularly challenging. Team involvement does not end until the case is resolved to the comfort of all team members (Jed Foundation, 2013). Even once a case is resolved, there is an argument for continued follow-up with the student in order to see how they are able to maintain the progress that they have made. The case management position can help to navigate all of this.

The practice of case management has been around in social work and psychology since the 1860s when practitioners were helping to coordinate services for individuals who could not get the social service help that they needed through the health system. Case managers helped these patients with finance management, job placement, and reintegration into social life following mental health hospitalizations (Adams, et al, 2014; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Wilson, et al, 2012). While case management has basically been provided by social service agencies, there is evidence that higher education began to utilize these practices during the 1860s as well, specifically in the area of student affairs. Case management as it pertains to the modern version of behavioral intervention is relatively new, dating back to 2000 at the University of Miami when they created a position that was a split between the counseling center and student affairs. A second position was created in 2006 due to the demand for this type of service (Wilson et al., 2012). Sadly, the need for these positions was reaffirmed following the tragedies at Virginia Tech University and Northern Illinois University (Adams et al., 2014; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Wilson, et al, 2012). In 2012, the Higher Education Case Managers Association (HECMA) formed as a resource, and to provide best practice information to this emerging field (Van Brunt et al, 2012).

Case management in higher education emerged as a stand-alone position when it was realized that there is a benefit to having someone support the work of the behavioral intervention team by working with students who were referred, helping them engage the academic and non-academic resources that are available on campus and off (Van Brunt et al., 2012). The value of the case manager on campus is becoming more recognizable. Between 2007 and 2009, 40 case manager positions were created on college campuses

across the United States. This represents 23% of the schools (Wilson et al, 2012). A recent survey of 416 schools across the United States indicated that 39% now have at least one dedicated case manager position for their behavioral intervention team (Schiemann & Van Brunt, 2018).

Cases are assigned to case managers using a variety of strategies. They may come from offices or processes within the university, but many are connected to the behavioral intervention team. Communication and collaboration with multiple offices is essential for effective case management (Adams et al., 2014; Van Brunt et al., 2012). Once a student has been referred to a case manager, the basic model of interaction involves assessment of the student and the situation that led to the referral, a determination of the student's needs, application of interventions for both the student and the community, followed by continuous monitoring of the case and advocacy on behalf of the student (Wilson et al., 2012).

Some advantages of case management include keeping a record of work with a student, detailing any changes or new issues that arise, and allowing the institution to identify increasing concern or dissipating risk with a student case. Accurate, complete, and confidential record keeping that is compliant with all legal requirements is essential in case management (Van Brunt et al., 2012). Effective case managers will clearly articulate their role as separate from counseling, will have knowledge of student development theory, as well as the ability to work with a student through change. Having a case manager affiliated with the behavioral intervention team allows for rapid response when students of concern are identified. They are also seen as more general and can help

anyone, as opposed to models that have the case manager linked with specific offices or services (Van Brunt et al., 2012).

Case managers are beneficial to a college campus because they help to reduce liability by aiding the college with their duty to provide care. The work they do also plays a role in persistence and retention by helping to provide support to students who may leave school during periods of distress without care and direction from the case manager (Adams et al., 2014; Van Brunt et al., 2012). It is essential to think about the job skills and educational background needed to adequately and effectively carry out the function of a case management position, and considering disciplines like social work could be beneficial to the case management position (Adams et al., 2014).

Summary

The literature review provided a comprehensive look at campus violence and the variety of recommended strategies for resolving threatening situations in a way that is sensitive to the needs of every member of the campus community. The information included the moral and legal obligations of universities when dealing with students of concern, and provided a look at the research that has been focused on the creation of behavioral intervention teams and their ability to calmly react to referrals and critically think about appropriate solutions. This research study was designed to investigate the impact that these teams are having on their campuses, specifically examining if behavioral interventions applied to student cases have an impact on a student's ability to persist in their education one semester following referral to the team.

Research indicates that BITs are effective at responding to potentially threatening situations because they bring a multi-disciplinary approach to reviewing cases (Eels &

Rockland-Miller, 2011; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008). The intention behind the BIT is to connect the dots when a student is identified, and provide measures for addressing the behavior and helping the student, but there is little data available that indicates how the interventions applied are actually addressing cases and the ultimate outcome for the student that has been referred (Dunkel et al., 2008; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Nolan et al., 2011; Sokolow & Hughes, 2008). The majority of the research that exists on the BIT includes information about team composition, administrative organization, as well as the training needed for the team to work well together (Sokolow et al., 2014).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This study examined the impact that behavioral intervention teams have on engaging students with the intervention process. There is little research available that has examined the types of interventions used and the effect that these interventions are having on students (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009; Sokolow et al., 2014; Van Brunt, 2012). While it is difficult to determine how effective behavioral team interventions are at preventing significant incidents of violence from occurring, it does seem clear that some form of assessment and intervention strategy is needed in order to mitigate the concern (Deisinger, et al, 2008; Randazzo et al., 2005; Sokolow et al., 2014). Gaining a better understanding of behavioral interventions and their potential impact on students is useful for campus behavioral intervention work.

Through a quantitative analysis of fifty student cases that were referred to their institution's behavioral intervention team during the 2017/2018 academic year, this study looked at multiple variables and the affect on the students' GPAs for the semester during the intervention, and one semester after the intervention. In addition, three core members of the behavioral intervention team were interviewed in order to provide context to how the team evaluates the cases that are referred and to determine the interventions that are applied. The information obtained in these interviews allowed me to better understand why certain interventions were used when evaluating cases.

This chapter addressed the study design that was used with an in-depth discussion of the data that was collected, the research site, and the participants. A description of how the data were analyzed is also included, and the role of the researcher explained.

Research Questions

1. Does the intervention applied during the behavioral intervention process affect the students' GPA? Specifically, is there a significant difference in GPA the semester during and semester after the intervention?
 - a. Does the intensity of the intervention affect GPA?
 - b. Are there gender and age differences?
2. Does the reason for the referral to the Behavioral Intervention Team affect student persistence? Specifically, is there a significant difference in persistence the semester after the intervention based on referral type?

Study Design

The quantitative study was designed to determine if there was a relationship between the type of intervention applied and student academic success, specifically looking at the student's GPA during the semester of the referral compared to one semester after the referral. This study is a correlational study to identify the effect of behavioral interventions on student persistence. A correlational design was chosen because this type of design allows a researcher to identify variables, and see if these variables have an impact on the subject that is being studied (Creswell, 2008). The current study aimed to identify a correlation between behavioral interventions, the reason for referral, and student academic success, specifically looking to see if student academic outcomes are related to the intervention process. Qualitative interviews with three principal informants were conducted to help me better understand the interventions applied, and the reasons that certain interventions are used.

The data were collected and analyzed from a systematic random sample of student cases referred to the Behavioral Intervention Team, on a large urban campus in the northeast, between September 1, 2017-May 15, 2018. The dataset consisted of the following variables: gender, academic standing at the time of the referral, academic major, reason for the referral, a list of interventions applied, GPA at time of referral, and GPA for one semester following referral, or following return to the institution if the student left as a result of the incident. In addition to the quantitative data, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with principal members of the team were conducted to help me better understand how the team evaluates cases and determines which types of interventions to apply.

This study was conducted in compliance with all research policies and ethical procedures as outlined by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subject Research (IRB) at Temple University (Appendix A). Approval for the study was obtained through the IRB, and all procedures were followed to ensure the safety of the participants involved, and the security of the dataset. The process included obtaining informed consent from the people participating in interviews, and steps for making sure that all identifiable information was removed from the data prior to gaining access.

Site Location and Participants

This study was conducted at a large, urban public university located in the Northeastern United States. A systematic random sample of 50 undergraduate and graduate student cases that were referred to the campus's behavioral intervention team between September 1, 2017-May 15, 2018 was provided in accordance with all IRB guidelines. No identifiable information was provided. The dataset consisted of the

following categories: referral month, gender, academic standing at the time of the referral, academic major, reason for the referral, a list of interventions applied, GPA at time of referral, and GPA for one semester following referral, or following return to the institution if the student left as a result of the incident. Descriptive data on the participants are presented in Chapter 4.

The participant profile shifted slightly from the original proposal for this study. This study was originally going to examine approximately 750 undergraduate cases that were referred to the behavioral intervention team on their campus between the Fall Semester 2012 and Spring Semester 2015. The proposal analysis was to include the same variables as the current study with the addition of a deeper look at students who left the university following a behavioral intervention team referral. This analysis would have been conducted to see if there was a predictive correlation between the interventions applied, and the student's successful return to the university. Upon further inquiry with the department that oversees the behavioral intervention team it was determined that this dataset could not be available with the current database set-up. The database had been updated by the company who owns it, and the upgrade impacted some of the reporting functions. The functions impacted made it impossible to obtain a report with the variables requested. The study was modified in order to capture the available dataset, and analyze it in a meaningful way.

In addition to the student participant data, interviews were conducted with three core members of the behavior intervention team. The individuals were chosen by the positions that they hold on the team, and were determined to be core members based on best practice that identifies these positions as the principal members of any behavioral

intervention team. These members are identified by the position that they hold in the university, and include; a student conduct staff member, the leader of the Behavioral Intervention Team, and the Behavioral Intervention Team case manager (Sokolow et al., 2019).

Data Sources and Analysis

The Dean of Students Office who oversees the Behavioral Intervention Team was presented with the Informed Consent Form when the dataset was requested (Appendices B & C). The quantitative data for this study were provided through an excel spreadsheet that included the following variables: month of referral, gender, academic standing at the time of the incident, academic major, reason for the referral, a list of interventions applied, GPA at time of incident, and GPA for one semester following the incident, or following return to the institution if the student left as a result of the incident. The data were extricated from the secure database that is used to hold Behavioral Intervention Team case information. Once the data were imported into an excel format they were shared via google docs. Identifiable information was removed from the quantitative data prior to receiving the dataset. This dataset was stored on a secured computer that could only be accessed by using a password.

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, looking specifically for a relationship between the interventions applied and the student's academic progress. Qualitative interviews with students were not included. I made an intentional decision to not include this in the study design and protocol. Students were not directly involved in this research due to the sensitive nature of this information, and the desire to avoid re-

traumatizing the students by asking them to relive incidents that undoubtedly were difficult for the students.

In order to complete the analysis, the categorical variable data provided in the excel spreadsheet were coded prior to being entered into the software system. In addition to the quantitative analysis of the data, interviews were conducted with three core members of the Behavioral Intervention Team. I provided the Informed Consent Form to the interviewee prior to the start of the interview (Appendices B & D). Semi-structured, 60-minute interviews were conducted with the interviewees via phone due to the current national guidelines in place regarding social distancing. The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the individuals being interviewed, and handwritten field notes were taken. All interviews were transcribed, and the interviewee was given the opportunity to review the interview to ensure that there were no errors, and that I had interpreted what was being said accurately. The audio recordings, notes, and transcription were stored in a secure location on my home computer that is password protected and contains antivirus software. The notes taken during these interviews were stored in a locked file cabinet in my home (Creswell, 2008). I was the only individual with access to the interview information. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a better understanding of how cases were evaluated, and interventions were applied. Specific cases were not discussed, and no personally identifiable information was collected during these interviews. Using semi-structured interviews allowed me and the interviewee to engage in a conversation that led to a more detailed discussion because semi-structured interviews allow for structured and open-ended questions (Appendix E).

Role of the Researcher

I have worked in the field of higher education administration for approximately 20 years. I received a bachelor's degree in Justice System Services, a major that included study in both the fields of social work and criminal justice. In 2006, I earned my masters of science degree in Organization Leadership. Immediately following graduation with my bachelor's degree, I began work with the Defenders' Association in Philadelphia working as a Child Advocate Case Worker. My caseload included approximately 250 children, ranging in age from birth to 21. The clients on my caseload were referred to the system for a variety of reasons, ranging from abuse to mental health concerns. When I entered the field of student affairs, I worked with new student orientation and leadership development, as well as supported the Director with her work in student conduct.

Approximately 16 years ago I transitioned into full-time responsibility with student conduct, eventually working up to an Assistant Dean's Position, leading to my promotion to the Senior Associate Dean of Students position, and ultimately my current role as the university's Title IX Coordinator. I began working with student crisis in 2007 both as a member of the Dean of Students Incident Response Team and as a member of the newly formed Behavioral Intervention Team. The Incident Response Team was developed to manage the Student Affairs response to incidents that had an impact on the student body, ranging from accidents and injuries to student death. The Behavioral Intervention Team was created following the recommendation of a university committee that was charged with looking into the University's response and vulnerability to a Virginia Tech-type incident. The recommendation included the formation of a team of individuals from across the university who would meet to assess cases regarding students

of concern, and develop plans for intervening in potentially dangerous situations. My current role as Title IX Coordinator has responsibility for compliance and working with students who experience gender discrimination, including sexual assault.

I participated in this study as an interviewer and collector of data. I respected all established rules as outlined by the Institutional Review Board. In the interest of full-disclosure, I used to be a member of the behavioral intervention team whose data was studied. I worked on this team from its inception in the fall semester 2007 until May 2016, and have served as an alternate chair in the absence of the appointed chairperson. My responsibilities on the team over the years have included everything from receiving referrals from faculty, staff, and students to providing suggestions for case interventions, as well as follow-up with students, families, and the referring party. It is important to fully explain potential bias through the bias statement included below.

The experience with this team could easily bias my look into how difficult it can be to resolve referred cases. I understand the group dynamics including how team members work with one another in meetings, as well as outside of the meetings, and I have an appreciation for the unique experiences and backgrounds, both personal and professional, that each member brings to this group. As a behavioral intervention team member, I also understand the complex political environment in which many teams function. Following the shootings at Virginia Tech, more attention was given to these teams, and that pressure is still felt on many campuses. When a suicide takes place, or someone is injured by another student, one of the first people contacted on many campuses is the head of the behavioral intervention team to check and see if the student was on the radar of that team. I understand and appreciate how difficult it is to evaluate

cases and make decisions knowing the expectations of the entire campus community, as well as the need to fairly work with the student of concern.

My undergraduate degree and work experience in these areas could definitely have impacted my thoughts as I conducted this research. I am aware that it could have been incredibly easy to apply my own thoughts on addressing case referrals. As the researcher I actively worked to not be judgemental of the process, and focused on an open-minded analysis of the data and cases based on theory and non-biased interpretation.

My unique experience working with this team and area can be useful in this research because my knowledge of the team, the way the team began, and how the team has changed since its inception helped me to present a more complete picture of how the team has evolved and works together to provide intervention recommendations. In addition, this area is a difficult one to study due to access to sensitive information regarding students. My work in this area and with sensitive student data allowed me to be cautious with the information.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the quantitative analyses that were described in Chapter 3. Initially, the chapter provides a discussion of how the dataset was coded for purposes of analysis. Descriptive characteristics of the participants are presented, including demographic information, as well as information about academic standing and majors. Data based on each research question are then presented with a discussion of these results.

Descriptive Statistics

To provide context to the data analyzed in this chapter, Tables 4.1 through 4.7 provide descriptive information about the participants in this study. As indicated in Table 4.1 the sample size was almost evenly split by gender with 48% identifying as male, and 52% identifying as female. This variable was used to help with answering one of the research questions that is discussed later in this chapter.

Gender	Frequency	Percent of Sample
Male	24	48.0
Female	26	52.0

As shown in Table 4.2, study participant ages ranged from 18 years of age to 36 years of age, with the sample age averaging slightly above 21 years of age. The research indicates that students of all ages can find themselves in the position of needing support and services as a result of behavior that may be brought to the attention of a campus behavioral intervention team (Sokolow et al., 2014). The largest percentage of students

in this study was between the ages of 18-21. This group comprises 56% of the sample size. As this continues to be known as the traditional college-aged student, it was expected that the largest number of students would fall into this group (Schieman & Van Brunt, 2018). This variable was used to answer one of the research questions, and is discussed later in this chapter.

Age	Frequency	Percent of Sample
18	10	20.0
19	3	6.0
20	11	22.0
21	4	8.0
22	7	14.0
23	4	8.0
24	4	8.0
25	3	6.0
26	0	0.0
27	1	2.0
28	1	2.0
29	1	2.0
36	1	2.0
Mean	21.56	

Data were also provided about the student's year in school, and are shown in Table 4.3. As indicated in Table 4.3, the highest percentage of students referred to the Behavioral Intervention Team were students who were in their Freshman year. This group made up 40.8% of the sample. Graduate students comprised 4% of the sample. This helps to provide a piece of the student profile that are presented in Chapter Five as part of the discussion and implications of this study.

Year	Frequency	Percent of Sample
Freshman	20	40.8
Sophomore	5	10.2
Junior	12	24.0
Senior	7	14.0
5 th Year Undergrad	2	4.0
6 th Year Undergrad	1	2.0
Graduate	2	4.0

In addition to collecting information about the student's year in school, descriptive information was provided regarding whether a student began at their institution as a first-time student, or if they transferred from another institution. Table 4.4 provides the breakdown of this information. As indicated in this table, 76% of the students in this sample had only attended the institution that was the location of this study. These data were used to provide information to add to the student profile.

Transferred	Frequency	Percent of Sample
Yes	11	22.0
No	38	76.0
Missing	1	2.0

In order to gain a better understanding of the sample, information regarding the students' majors was also collected. Table 4.5 provides a breakdown of the categories of academic majors. In this sample of 50 students there were 34 unique majors. For the purpose of evaluating student cases, I coded the academic majors into the categories of Business, STEM, Liberal Arts, and Media/Performing Arts/Arts. The decision as to which major falls into each category coincided with the way that the majors are housed at the study location institution. The highest percentage of referrals were by majors with

the STEM disciplines, with 32% of the sample identifying with these academic majors. This was closely followed by students within the Media/Performing Arts/Arts fields, which represent 30% of the sample size. While the research questions were not asked specific to this statistic, understanding the breakdown of majors adds to the student profile.

Major	Frequency	Percent of Sample
Business	7	14.0
STEM	16	32.0
Liberal Arts	12	24.0
Media/Performing Arts/Arts	15	30.0

Table 4.6 provides a look at the reasons why students were referred to the behavioral intervention team. The database in which the records are obtained provided some coding in this area. I provided additional analysis through a review of a brief description that was included for each referral. It was evident that each case was unique. The reasons for referral included, stress over class work, body image issues, class absences, threats of self-harm, classroom disruption, transition issues involving college and moving from childhood to adulthood, concerns regarding interactions with peers, family issues, erratic behavior, and suicide attempts. These behaviors were placed into the three main categories of Mental Health, Academic Concern, and Behavioral Disruption for purpose of analysis. In accordance with the literature, it was not surprising to find that in the sample the largest percentage of concerns fell with the category of Mental Health (Schiemann & Van Brunt, 2018). As indicated in Table 4.6, 66% of the case referrals were in this category.

The two cases represented in the Respondent Care Type noted as missing were cases referred for an alcohol transport to the hospital, and insecurity issues. Through the interviews conducted with the principal informants, I learned that it is not uncommon for referrals in the beginning of the academic year to include students who are transported to the hospital for excessive consumption of alcohol. The second case with missing data fell in the category of insecurity. This was explained to me to be a more frequent referral over the last two years, and typically includes the student population with food and housing issues due to lack of financial funds.

Type	Frequency	Percent of Sample
Mental Health	33	66.0
Academic Concern	10	20.0
Behavioral Disruption	5	10.0
Missing	2	4.0

Research Question 1:

Does the intervention applied during the behavioral intervention process affect students' GPA? Specifically, is there a significant difference in GPA the semester during and the semester after the intervention?

- a. Does the intensity of the intervention affect GPA?
- b. Are there gender and age differences?

In order to answer Research Question 1, the GPAs of the sample were analyzed, and are displayed in Table 4.7. As indicated in the table, the average GPA for the sample during the semester of the Behavioral Intervention Team referral is 2.33. The average GPA for the sample one semester after referral to the team is 2.85.

GPA	Semester During	Semester After
0 – 1.0	7	3
1.01 – 1.25	2	0
1.26 – 1.50	1	1
1.51 – 1.75	3	1
1.76 – 2.00	1	1
2.01 – 2.25	1	2
2.26 – 2.50	5	2
2.51 – 2.75	2	1
2.76 – 3.00	6	7
3.01 – 3.25	1	3
3.26 – 3.50	4	4
3.51 – 3.75	4	5
3.76 – 4.00	5	7
Mean	2.33	2.85

In addition to the above, there were several students without GPAs which are explained in greater detail during the discussion in Chapter 5. Table 4.8 shows the number of students who did not have a reported GPA during the intervention.

	Semester During Intervention
Dropped/Deleted	3
Medical Withdrawal	3
Withdrew	1
Missing	1

Through the intervention process, students may have decided to leave school to focus on treatment directly pertaining to the reason for their referral to the behavioral intervention team. Table 4.9 provides information about students who did not have GPAs the semester after the intervention. These are students who did not return to the institution, graduated the semester that they were referred, or who had missing data in the system.

Table 4.9 <i>Students without GPAs after the intervention</i>	
	Semester After Intervention
Did not Return	11
Graduated	1
Missing	1

To answer the research question, a paired samples t-test was computed comparing the GPAs of the students the semester in which the intervention occurred and the semester following. Results are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 <i>Results of Paired Samples t-test</i>				
Time	Mean and (Standard Deviation)	t-test	Two-Tailed Probability	Cohen's d
Semester of Referral	2.49 (1.16)	2.70	.011	.34
One Semester After Referral	2.92 (1.02)			

Note: The means in Table 4.9 and 4.8 differ because only subjects with both GPAs are included in the paired samples t-test.

As shown in Table 4.10, there is a significant difference between the two GPAs with a small to medium effect size. These results indicate that there is a statistically significant ($p < .05$) difference between the two semesters. Students' GPAs one semester after referral to the Behavioral Intervention Team was averaged higher than students' GPAs during the semester of referral.

Research Question 1a:

- a. Does the intensity of the intervention affect GPA?

All of the interventions were coded as being low, moderate, or high. Low interventions represented those that included email outreach to the student along with referrals to campus resources. Moderate interventions included phone calls or in-person

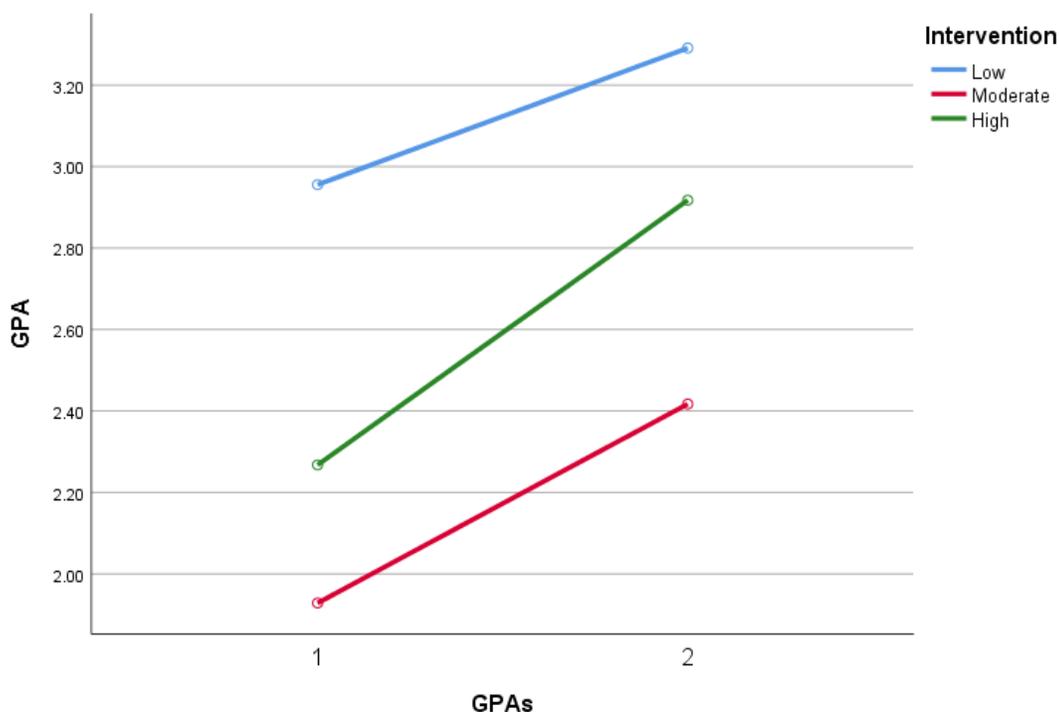
meetings with the student. These direct interactions were with the office responsible for the Behavioral Intervention Team or with another campus individual who was identified as having a relationship with the student. A high-level intervention included parental/family contact by the institution and/or hospitalization for the student.

Two analyses were conducted. The first involved ANOVA, comparing the GPA for each level of intervention intensity and the second involved a Chi-Square analysis, using student persistence (returning/not returning) as the dependent variable. The means and standard deviations of the GPAs are presented in Table 4.11.

	Means and (Standard Deviations) During	Means and (Standard Deviations) After
Low (n = 28)	2.96 (.95)	3.29 (.72)
Medium (n = 18)	1.93 (1.28)	2.42 (1.21)
High (n = 8)	2.27 (.84)	2.92 (1.07)

A graph of these data is presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: GPAs During and After Intervention as a Function of Intensity



A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the data. The main effect for semester was significant as already reported in Table 4.9: $F(1, 32) = 6.17, p = .018$; as was the main effect for Level of Intervention $F(1, 32) = 4.20, p = .024$. As shown in Figure 4.1, the students with the lowest GPAs at both time periods were those with a moderate intervention level. The interaction, however, was not significant: $F(2, 32) = .217, p = .806$. As such, the level of intervention did not have a differential effect. Since the student groups had significantly different GPAs during the intervention, the data were analyzed again using GPA time/semester as the covariate. This produced an identical non-significant effect.

The second analysis used student persistence (returning/not returning) as the dependent variable. These data are presented in Table 4.12.

	Number Not Returning	Number Returning
Low (n = 28)	5	18
Medium (n = 18)	4	14
High (n = 8)	2	5

The Chi Square computed on the data in Table 4.11 was not significant (Chi Square = .150, $p = .928$).

Research Question 1b: Are there gender and age differences?

To answer this question, the same repeated measures ANOVA as described above was computed but with gender replacing intensity. There was a significant main effect for gender with females obtaining higher GPAs. As before, the interaction was not significant, indicating that the intervention was equally effective for both genders.

To address age difference, a simple change score (GPA After intervention minus GPA During intervention) was computed and correlated with the student's age. The correlation was not significant ($r = -.045$), indicating that age did not make a difference with this sample.

Research Question 2:

Does the reason for the referral to the Behavioral Intervention Team affect student persistence? Specifically, is there a significant difference in persistence the semester after the intervention based on referral type?

A repeated measures ANOVA was repeated using Academic Care Type as the between-subjects factor. Since only the Mental Health and Academic Concerns groups had adequate sample sizes, only these subjects were used. As would be expected, the

students whose intervention was based on academic concerns had lower GPAs at both time periods. As before, however, the interaction was not significant.

The study showed that on average there was an improvement in a student's GPA one semester after their referral to the Behavioral Intervention Team. However, results did not show a significant difference between age, gender, and student GPA. In addition, there was no significant relationship between the level of intensity of the intervention applied and academic persistence one semester after the intervention.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact that behavioral intervention teams have on engaging students with the intervention process. There is little research available that has examined the types of interventions used and the effect that these interventions are having on students (Sokolow & Lewis, 2009; Sokolow et al., 2014; Van Brunt, 2012). While it is difficult to determine how effective behavioral team interventions are at preventing significant incidents of violence from occurring, it is clear that some form of assessment and intervention strategy is needed in order to mitigate reports of concerning behavior on campus (Deisinger et al., 2008; Randazzo et al., 2005; Sokolow et al., 2014). Gaining a better understanding of behavioral interventions and their potential effect on students is useful for campus behavioral intervention work.

Summary of Findings

The primary objective of this study was to look at the interventions applied by Behavioral Intervention Teams, specifically to see if there was a relationship between the interventions applied and the student's ability to succeed academically in future semesters. The research indicated that in general students did academically do better the semester after their referral to the behavioral intervention team. While the finding was significant, the effect size was in the small-to-medium range. When the research took a deeper dive to see if other variables impacted academic success, it was discovered that age did not make a significant impact, and neither did gender. While the research showed that female students performed at a higher academic level, the interaction was not

significant, indicating that the effect of the interventions on males and females was comparable.

I also looked at the level of the intervention. In looking at levels of intervention, I was interested in seeing if there was a difference for students based on how they interacted with the intervention, specifically investigating if there was a difference between students who actively engaged and spoke with people as a result of the intervention versus those who received an email with resources, but did not respond or participate in an actual meeting or conversation with a university administrator or faculty member. Interviews with principal informants of the behavioral intervention process allowed me to understand that there was a range of interventions applied based on the team's analysis of the cases. Some of the interventions were passive in the sense that it was determined that an email to the student containing campus and community resource information, with an offer to meet with an administrator if the student would like, was sufficient. In these cases, it was not uncommon for students to either not respond to the email or to respond indicating that they did not need to meet. I coded these interventions as lower-level interventions.

The second type of intervention was coded as moderate. Moderate interventions included more active interventions with an administrator reaching out to the student through phone calls or in-person meetings. The goal of the moderate intervention was to engage with the student through some type of conversation to allow the campus administrator to gain a better perspective on the student's experience, and actively work with the student on strategies to move forward. The final type of intervention was high-level intervention, and typically included interaction with a student's family. A high-

level intervention may also have included working with a student to take time off from school. This type of intervention was enacted when there was significant concern about a student, including following a hospitalization or when there was a concern that they might be a threat to themselves or others. The goal of the outreach to family, and other types of support, was to allow the university to gain a better perspective on the student's history, and factors that might help them understand what was going on with the student. This type of outreach also allowed the university to notify others within the student's circle of support about a serious concern that might require their help.

The research into the level of intervention did not indicate a differential effect on GPA during the period studied. As indicated earlier, in general, GPAs did improve one semester after the Behavioral Team intervention, but the research did not indicate a correlation between the level of intervention applied and the GPA. The impact of this is discussed further in the next section of this chapter, but this was of particular interest given the theoretical perspective on which this study was based. According to Schlossberg, there are four elements involved with an individual's transition through a stressful situation. The third of these factors is support, which involves the availability of people around the person to help support them, and includes family, friends, and the general community in which the individual lives (Schlossberg, 2008). Schlossberg emphasizes that students who are experiencing a transition often feel that they do not matter and that their feelings are not important (Schlossberg, 2008; Schlossberg, 1991). Responsibility lies on an institution to be a part of the support element available to a student when concerning behavior presents itself (Sokolow et al., 2014).

A secondary question asked within this study was whether or not the reason for a student's referral had a potential impact on their academic persistence one semester after the referral. Students are referred to campus Behavioral Intervention Teams for a variety of reasons. Consistent with the literature, the primary informants of the intervention process told me that students are referred to their campus behavioral intervention team for behaviors that include drug and alcohol use, class absences, campus disruption, threatening behavior, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. These are consistent with the types of behaviors identified by the literature (Sokolow et al., 2014).

In the current study the behaviors were coded into three categories: mental health concerns, behavioral concerns, and academic concerns. Mental health concerns included anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. Behavioral concerns included classroom or campus disruption and threatening behavior. Academic concerns generally included excessive class absences or students who stopped attending class without communicating with the faculty member. The research did not find a significant effect on GPA based on the reason for referral. The research did indicate lower GPAs with the students who fell in the academic concerns group, which is an outcome that could be expected considering that the reason the student was referred to the team was for academic concerns.

Discussion of Findings

In order to fully discuss the findings, it is important to gain an understanding of the team whose case data was used as the sample for this research. Through the interviews conducted, I learned that the intended purpose of the Behavioral Intervention

Team is threefold: break down the barriers that exist within the community, leading to miscommunication, and lack of reporting; prevent large scale incidents of violence from occurring; and retain students through the implementation of a flexible process designed to resolve case referrals. The flexibility allows the team to consider each case based on its own unique set of circumstances. The team functions heavily based on the best practices that have been included throughout this document in terms of operation and team membership. They are managed out of the Dean of Students Office, and membership includes the counseling center, campus safety, student conduct, legal counsel, faculty and academic representation, disability office, student health, and residential life. They also have a full-time case manager, who, along with the team leader, is predominantly responsible for implementing the recommended interventions.

The university continues to see an increase in the number of cases that are referred to the team each year, which they attribute to their intentional efforts to reach out to the university community through presentations, the creation of an informational folder that faculty and staff can keep as a resource, and the implementation of an online reporting system in the fall semester 2019. When a case is referred to the team, the case manager triages the information to determine if immediate action is needed. This individual will do what they need to do in that moment, and will add the case to the list for the weekly meeting with the entire team. When the team meets, they collectively analyze all of the available information for purposes of threat assessment, and to help to determine the interventions. The team does not use a risk rubric when assessing cases. This was an intentional decision based on the belief that not using a rubric will give them greater flexibility as they work through their large caseload.

Over the last three years, the caseload for this team has grown to over 900 cases a year. The team members interviewed talked about resource concerns in terms of having sufficient human resources to meet the case management demands of a caseload this high. The Counsel for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) for case management in higher education recommends one case manager position for every 10,000 students (Counsel for the Advancement of Standards, 2018). The institution in this study is a school of 40,000. The biggest concern expressed by the team leader and the case manager is that they are not able to do true case management with extended follow-up on cases, due to the high caseload, and low number of administrative positions.

In order to better understand the need and the demand for services in today's college environment, it is also important to gain an understanding of the modern student, as well as to consider the diversity of today's campus. "Higher education institutions are simply microcosms of the world around them – a world that often includes violence" (Silverman, 2008, p. 1). Students are arriving to college as veterans who have been in war zones, international students whose cultural norms offer a differing perspective from those in America, nontraditional-age students who have the stresses of financially supporting themselves and their families, and students with diagnosed mental health conditions (Silverman, 2008). These are all groups of students who need adequate campus support.

Predicting student persistence and retention is a difficult task regardless of the systems that an institution may have in place to identify and address issues that may emerge (Davidson, Beck, & Milligan, 2009). Some issues may be recognizable through screening during the admissions process, but this is not a fool-proof mechanism, as many

issues impacting persistence do not arise until the student has already matriculated and begun to take classes (Davidson et al., 2009). It is recommended that institutions put into place a system that can provide early warning signs in order to intervene with students, and that this system should be unique to the institution's environment, and culture (Davidson et al., 2009; Sokolow et al., 2014). Davidson et al. (2009) conducted a study to determine how institutions could use the information presented by various researchers to help develop early warning systems and effective interventions. Their findings indicated that a person's ability to socially integrate into the community, satisfaction with support services, and an individual's commitment to completing their degree helped to determine persistence.

When looking specifically at support services, it was determined that these were less of a factor in student environments where less institutional support was needed, either because the population posed less of a risk or because there was a great deal of support for the student outside of the institution, typically within their family life (Davidson et al., 2009). The implications that this has on BIT is that it shows that the more familial/friend involvement is included in the intervention process, the more successful the intervention may be. Interventions are meant to help students continue to push toward completion of their degree or successfully return if they have to take a break from school as a result of what they have experienced. Interventions are also used to help restore the classroom environment when there has been disruption, and to help prevent a violent incident that brings harm to others.

The current study was designed to examine the impact that interventions through the Behavioral Intervention Team process have on students and their ability to persist with their education. I specifically focused on how to further the discussion of the intervention process, and to map out a way for schools to assess the interventions that they are applying as it relates to academic persistence, a topic not always thought of when considering threat assessment and behavioral intervention. The research is clear that the majority of cases that are referred to campus teams are not cases of imminent threat, but are cases where help is needed (Sokolow et al., 2014). These interventions may, in fact, prevent violence from occurring, but maybe even more importantly, may help a student who is struggling move beyond their experience and succeed in their role as a student.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory focuses on the fact that students will experience events that impact their day-to-day functioning and that their ability to cope with these issues, and successfully transition through them, depends on four factors (Schlossberg, 2008). The four factors are situation, self, support, and strategies. Situation is about the characteristics of the event itself that includes timing of the occurrence, how long the event lasts, and the amount of stress caused by the event. In talking with the team members, I was able to understand that the elements of the incident that led to the referral are very much a part of the discussion by the team prior to interventions being determined and applied. It is important for the case analysis to include the complete picture in order for them to be able to consider a holistic approach.

Self refers to the personal characteristics of the individual that might help that person deal with what has happened. This includes the person's psychological state that will have an impact on how well the student is able to deal with the situation

(Schlossberg, 2008). It is vital that, when analyzing cases, the team is considering the person, their experiences, and what may be making it easier or more difficult for them to move through the incident (Sokolow et al, 2014; Van Brunt et al, 2018). This will likely differ between undergraduate students and graduate students, depending on the stressor. Through the information gathering stage, the team members helped me to understand that learning as much as they can about the individual is helpful in moving forward with an individualized plan. This is also the benefit of having a team with various administrators who hold a variety of positions around the university. Each member brings a level of expertise that can help to analyze what is happening with a student, and suggest appropriate interventions (Sokolow et al., 2014).

Support involves the availability of people around the student to help support them, and includes family, friends, and the general community in which the individual lives (Schlossberg, 2008). During the analysis of cases, the team gathers information about the areas within the university that may be a support to the student. They also have the opportunity to talk about the support available to the student outside of the community. This type of information can be particularly helpful in understanding the full array of options available for supporting the student. One area that the head of the behavioral intervention team mentioned was insecurity. It was mentioned that this has been an issue that has come before the intervention team more frequently in the last two years. The team tends to see insecurity in terms of financial struggles that might present as homelessness, lack of ability to get food, and/or the inability to pay tuition. Understanding this as a stressor, and a factor for the student, is important when developing the strategy for helping the student.

Strategies represent the planning that the individual is able to do to not only help them navigate the event, but also to help them manage the stress that the event creates (Schlossberg, 2008). This is where intervention comes directly into play. The team studied takes the information that they collect and uses it to develop a plan for working with the student. Some plans are more intensive than others. One recommended intervention that the interviewees noted as sticking out to the team members as previously unanticipated within their scope is the intervention of suggesting that a student takes time off from school or leaves permanently. This is not uncommon in the cases involving insecurity. At the end of the day, if the student is unable to afford to live at school or pay tuition it is not necessarily helpful for them to continue to stay. Maslow's hierarchy of needs indicates that if a person's basic needs are not being met, then they will not be able to be successful (Evans et al., 1998). As insecurity continues to be a concern on college campuses, teams have to be prepared to work with students who come to their attention as a result of these concerns.

In looking at Schlossberg's transition theory in relation to intervention work, it is clear that the elements that she has identified as being integral in a person's ability to transition through a stressful episode are also integral in the consideration of the appropriate intervention. A team coming together and considering all of these aspects is not only in the position to properly assess a possible threat to the community, but is also then well-positioned to recommend and carry out interventions that will be effective. One thing that the case manager for the intervention team mentioned was a concern about having the appropriate human resources to be able to provide for continuous follow-up with students, and for a longer period of time, after the referral.

Limitations of the Study

One major limitation of this research was the nature of the information that was being studied. Student information is highly confidential, especially information regarding a health, mental health, or behavioral issue. Gaining access to case information can be limited not only due to its sensitive nature, but also limited by the form in which it can be accessed. The original data set that was discussed for study included two years of data that would have amounted to approximately 750 to 1,000 participants. This dataset would have provided for greater validity and confidence in the findings of the analysis of the information due to its size. In addition to the variables that were included in this study, additional variables could have been studied with a larger sample size. The variables of age and gender were specifically included in this research, and were important to look at given some of the information provided in the literature review. The studies on campus violence looked at variables that included gender and age, specifically the most recent study conducted between 1999-2017, which indicated that many of the perpetrators of campus violence are male-identified individuals (Langman & Straub, 2019). In addition, it was determined that the age group most likely to be involved with completed attacks falls between the ages of 20-27 (Langman & Straub, 2019). Gaining an understanding of these variables and the impact of behavioral intervention on persistence can be helpful for team communication, marketing, and strategy. The research also indicated that other variables are important. I would have liked to include race and ethnic identity as well. This dataset was not available due to limitations with the system used to record cases.

Another limitation exists in the lack of access to the referred students. Given the highly confidential and delicate nature of these cases, it was not possible to include qualitative interviews with the student participants. One-on-one conversations would have allowed for the collection of descriptive data about how the student viewed the event and how they interpreted the intervention that was offered. Being able to hear from the student what worked for them, and what was not effective, would have added another layer to this research, leading to a deeper understanding of the impact of the interventions. In addition, other factors that might have contributed to the student's academic success or decision to ultimately leave the institution could have been evaluated, leading to a greater understanding of the effect of the intervention.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Challenges continue to exist for academic institutions in relation to how they respond to concerning student behavior. Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine stated in an email response to a family member of one of the victims of the Virginia Tech tragedy, "Cho's actions over the course of slightly more than two hours, and the circumstances over months and years that led him to mass murder and suicide, have called into question many fundamental aspects of university life..."(Kapsidellis, 2019, p. 144). These words continue to ring true for today's university, tasked with constantly walking the thin line between care for their community, privacy rights, and safety practices. Some consider the current era to be that of the new 'In Loco Parentis', driven by a more consumer-orientated relationship with students and their families, legal liability concerns, and a better understanding of student development. This is a time when administrators have a better understanding of moral development and decision-making, and this information

drives university administration to look differently at engaging today's student (Patel, 2019).

“A review indicated that variables within the following categories or themes were prominently represented in the retention literature: academic performance (e.g., high school and college grades, Scholastic Achievement Test scores), institutional and degree commitments, academic and social integration, support services satisfaction, finances, social support, and personality and psychological adjustment” (Davidson et al., p. 3, 2009). To be more specific, academic and social integration includes everything from how a student engages in the classroom to how the student views their fellow students on campus. Social support variables include the support that students receive from family members, friends, and significant others in their pursuit of higher education. This also includes how much access students have to people within the university who can provide support, including faculty and staff (Davidson et al., 2009). Behavioral Intervention Teams are positioned to be the areas within the university that offer this level of support and care. One major implication of these research findings is on the ability of the university to provide intervention and appropriate follow-up with students.

This research can have implications on the practice of behavioral intervention, specifically the use of case management practices. Students consistently performed better one semester after referral to the team. Considering how the support is provided, the need for accurate evaluation of what is needed is crucial to the intervention process. Interaction with a member of the behavioral intervention team may be the first step for a student starting to move through a major transition in their life. Feeling heard and believed can help a student become more confident in the next steps that they need to

take. The ability to have case managers who can follow-up with students, and be engaging for a longer period of time, may lead to continued success, and needs to be considered as part of this process.

This research provided a look into how data can be used to help teams with assessment. Behavioral Intervention Teams have access to rich data through the nature of their work. Intentionally using this information to assess their impact on students can help teams evaluate how they are doing and provide feedback to make adjustments to their work as needed. This is a constantly changing area of student engagement which requires administration to consistently review their policies. The information that can be obtained from student cases is an integral piece of this evaluation process.

Finally, this research can have implications on how the team interacts with their campus community. In order for a behavioral intervention team to be effective, the campus community needs to know about the work of the team, and needs to trust that the team is operating with the best interest to both students and the community in mind. Intentional work needs to be done by campus teams to form relationships with the community and build trust. This can be particularly challenging on large campuses with a high population of commuter students who are not always engaged with their campus beyond coursework. It can also be challenging to engage faculty who are not always comfortable turning a student over to administration. Being transparent with the community, and explaining how you interact with cases, and how you will communicate back to them once they make a referral are just a few ways that a team can make positive steps in building their campus community.

Directions for future research.

Academic institutions have a wealth of data regarding students, student behavior, and academic persistence. As indicated in the NaBITA 2018 membership survey, 92% of the 416 higher education institutions that responded maintain records on their behavioral intervention team cases (Schiemann & Van Brunt, 2018). The data from these records can be used to tell the story of behavioral intervention, including the impact that the teams are having on their campus community. As stated previously, due in great part to the sensitive nature of behavioral intervention team cases, most research conducted on teams has been on the composition and training of team members. More research is needed both on the interventions and the assessment process leading to interventions (Sokolow et al, 2014).

In direct relation to this study, a larger sample size would have allowed me to better understand the intervention process, and the relationship between the level of intervention, and the effect on student persistence. Does an active intervention that includes a conversation or meeting with a student have a greater impact on students than the more passive intervention of sending an email with resources? Does it matter who the person is who is reaching out to the student to intervene? How does faculty engagement with the student and the intervention process impact the intervention process? Does an educational background involving social work or case management provide the skillset needed to effectively provide behavioral intervention to students?

In addition to these questions, more work is needed to study the relationship between the reason for the referral and effective outcomes as they relate to student persistence. If more can be understood about the assessment and intervention process, it

might be possible to develop a formula for applying interventions, and to better predict how these interventions affect the student. Additional research is needed in the area of student development and how this affects students as they are transitioning during their college years (Drysdale et al., 2010). The study also points out that research needs to be conducted on how culture and diversity play a role in campus violence (Drysdale et al., 2010). Future research should focus on additional student demographics, such as race, ethnicity, and soci-economic status, to better understand these variables and the impact of interventions on student success in students who may otherwise not have had equal access to support resources in past educational environments.

Ultimately, behavioral intervention teams are working to assess student behavior and determine appropriate levels of intervention, with the goals to both help the student and to prevent a campus tragedy (Sokolow et al., 2014). Are teams effectively assessing students? What team strategies are the most effective at determining the level of risk that exists? Are there specific strategies that allow campus administrators to accurately determine risk levels? There are a number of risk rubrics that exist to help teams, but not every team uses a risk rubric when evaluating cases. Is there a relationship between the use of a risk rubric, and effective behavioral interventions? A look into graduate students in relation to the intervention process and risk assessment is another area of opportunity. Research exists that states that the graduate student population can be a vulnerable population. Fox and Savage (2009) indicate that the student on campus most likely to commit an act of violence is the stressed-out graduate student who is facing academic failure versus a traditional-aged undergraduate student. Understanding the answers to the questions posed in this section would allow university administrators to more confidently

approach the important work of behavioral intervention. More research on this topic could also lead to more effective strategies for working with students.

Conclusion

Campus administrators and faculty have a duty to care for students by engaging students both in and out of the classroom, and by helping to get students to appropriate resources when they are in need. By providing swift and effective interventions when a student may pose a threat to themselves or others, an institution is able to mitigate a potentially serious situation before one occurs, and help the student exhibiting the concerning behavior move beyond the incident. The evolution of the behavioral intervention team from their strict focus on threat assessment to more intense interventions may be critical in not only helping students directly, but also maintaining a safe environment for all students, faculty, and staff. In order to effectively help the campus community, and adequately perform the duty to care, consistent strategies, sound policy, and substantial resources need to be provided to the area of behavioral intervention. This is a constantly evolving area within higher education that plays a meaningful role in the lives of many individuals.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

Temple IRB Approved

03/30/2020

RESEARCH SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

Title: A Duty to Care: Behavioral Intervention Teams and College Student Engagement

Protocol No.: 26667-0001

Investigator: PI: James Earl Davis, Ph.D., College of Education, email: jdavis21@temple.edu; Co-PI: Andrea Caporale Seiss, Doctoral Candidate, College of Education, email: andrea.caporale@temple.edu.

Daytime Phone Number: 215-204-3283

APPENDIX B: BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION REPORT REQUEST EMAIL

March, 2020

Dear Behavioral Team Leader:

My name is Andrea Seiss and I am a doctoral candidate at Temple University in the College of Education. My advisor, Dr. James Earl Davis, a professor in the College of Education, and I are conducting research exploring the impact that behavioral intervention teams have on student persistence, specifically through the interventions that are applied. The title of this project is A Duty to Care: Behavioral Intervention Teams and College Student Engagement. The purpose of this study is to do a quantitative analysis of interventions applied throughout one academic year to see if there is a correlation between the interventions and the student's ability to continue successfully in their academic work. I am reaching out to gain access to a report about cases referred to the Behavioral Intervention Team between September 1, 2017 – May 15, 2018.

I am not requesting any identifiable information. The information obtained by your office will be used to run statistical analysis through SPSS in order to see if there is a correlation between interventions and academic success. In addition to the quantitative analysis I will be conducting approximately five semi-structured face-to-face interviews with individuals who sit on Behavioral Intervention Team. These interviews will not be about specific referred cases. They will be used to provide context to the intervention process. No names or identifiable information will be used in the research. Information gained in this study will provide insight into ways that colleges and universities can use student behavioral interventions in order to more fully support students exhibiting concerning behavior, and the communities impacted by the behavior.

I am requesting an excel report that includes a random sampling of 50 cases referred to the behavioral intervention team between September 1, 2017 – May 15, 2018. This can be achieved by starting with the first case in the system, and providing the data for every 15th case. I am requesting the following columns: **Month of referral, student age at the time of the referral, gender, academic standing at the time of the incident, academic major at the time of the incident, reason for the referral, a list of interventions applied, GPA at time of incident, and GPA for one semester following the incident, or following return to the institution if the student left as a result of the incident.** All information will be maintained in accordance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

I have attached a copy of the IRB protocol and approval that will provide further details pertaining to this study. Please contact me at 215-204-3283 or andrea.caporale@temple.edu or Dr. James Earl Davis, Principal Investigator, at 215-204-3002 or jdavis21@temple.edu if you have any questions. The Institutional Review Board can be reached at 215-707-3390 or irb@temple.edu if you have any questions pertaining to the IRB documents.

APPENDIX C: EMAIL RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR ADMINISTRATORS

March, 2020

Dear Behavioral Intervention Team Member:

My name is Andrea Seiss and I am a doctoral candidate at Temple University in the College of Education. My advisor, Dr. James Earl Davis, a professor in the College of Education, and I are conducting research exploring the impact that behavioral intervention teams have on student persistence, specifically through the interventions that applied. The title of this project is A Duty to Care: Behavioral Intervention Teams and College Student Engagement. The purpose of this study is to do an analysis of interventions applied throughout one academic year to see if there is a correlation between the interventions and the student's ability to continue successfully in their academic work. You have been identified as one of the potential research participants due to your role as an administrator serving on the behavioral intervention team.

We invite you to participate in this study, as your feedback would be greatly valued as we explore the effect of behavioral intervention team work on student persistence. During this interview you will be asked only about your role, and the process of determining interventions. You will not be asked to discuss specific cases, confidential, or sensitive information. The purpose of the interview is to gain descriptive information that will add context about the intervention process. **Your participation includes a 60-minute individual audio-recorded, face-to-face interviews to discuss your role on the behavioral intervention team.** You will be asked to review the interview transcription once completed to check for accuracy of responses. **This entire process should not take more than two-hours of your time.**

Your participation in this study is voluntary and the information obtained will only be used for this study. This study will have no impact on employment, and your identity will only be known to the researchers. All information will be maintained in accordance with the Institutional Review Board. If you decide to participate in this study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without consequence. Any information provided up until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed, and will not be used in the research analysis.

I have attached a copy of the IRB protocol and approval that will provide further details pertaining to this study. Please contact me at 215-204-3283 or andrea.caporale@temple.edu or Dr. James Earl Davis, Principal Investigator, at 215-204-3002 or jdavis21@temple.edu if you have any questions. The Institutional Review Board can be reached at 215-707-3390 or irb@temple.edu if you have any questions pertaining to the IRB documents.

APPENDIX D: ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Administrator Participant Interview Questions

1. Participant Background

- a. What is your role with the university?
- b. In what capacity do you serve on the behavioral intervention team?
- c. How long have you been a member of the behavioral intervention team?
- d. Have you had any training specific to behavioral intervention?

2. Behavioral Intervention Team Purpose

- a. What is the purpose of the behavioral intervention team?
- b. What are the outcomes associated with the behavioral intervention team process, and if so how are the outcomes measured?

3. Behavioral Intervention Team Procedures and Cause of Behaviors

- a. How do students of concern come to the attention of the behavioral intervention team?
- b. What is the standard protocol when cases are referred?
- c. What positions within the university make up the team?
- d. Are all members of the team responsible for helping to implement recommended intervention and follow-up, or are there specific people designated for these duties?
- e. What is the range of behavioral issues that are referred to the behavioral intervention team?
- f. What process do you use to analyze cases that are referred?
 - i. Are there specific variables that you are looking for?
 - ii. Do you use a rubric or guide to determine the level of threat or risk?
 - iii. Do you use student development theory to guide your analysis of a case?

4. Behavioral Intervention and Follow-up:

- a. What types of interventions do you use when intervening with students of concern?
 - i. Are there specific outcomes associated with each intervention?
- b. Are there factors in each case that help you to determine which interventions to apply?
- c. Are there interventions that you believe work in every case?
 - i. What are these interventions?
 - ii. Why do you believe them to be effective?
- d. Do you play a direct role in the implementation of case interventions?
- e. What helps you to determine if the interventions that you have applied are successful?
- f. Is there continued follow-up with the student of concern?
- g. What challenges do you experience with the behavioral intervention process?
- h. What ways do you use campus resources to support students who have been referred to the behavioral intervention team?