THREAT ON CAMPUS: A STUDY OF SELECT ONTARIO POST-SECONDARY THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS' EXPERIENCE WITH THREAT ASSESSMENT POLICY

by

© Melissa DiLeo

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Abstract

In Canada, there has been a total of 12 school shootings across the country over the past 40 years, four of which occurred in higher education; University of Alberta, Dawson College, Concordia University, and L'ecole Polytechnique (The Canadian Press, 2016; Payne, 2006; Rogerson, 2018; Watt, 2017). The safety of students is no longer considered to rest with one area of the campus community, such as campus security, and is instead considered to be a "we responsibility" (Mohandie, 2014, p. 131), involving administrators, parents, peers, and faculty reporting concerning behaviors to the campus team responsible for the evaluation of student dangerousness. These campus teams, commonly referred to as threat assessment teams (Meloy et al., 2014; Sokolow et al., 2016) determine the level of targeted violence risk posed by a student towards self or others (ATAP, 2006; Borum et al., 1999; Meloy et al., 2014). Limited research exists with a focus on how institutional threat assessment policies are developed at the post-secondary level. This study shed light on threat assessment in Canada through the utilization of policy in a uniquely Canadian education system, specifically within the province of Ontario. It is evident that different post-secondary institutions are choosing to support different models of threat assessment management (TAM). These different models included all aspects of violence prevention from team member selection, to policy and procedure development, to the tool used to determine level of risk.

Keywords: higher education, Canada, campus safety, post-secondary, teams, threat, threat assessment, threat assessment teams, Ontario

General Summary

To keep Ontario post-secondary campuses safe, all members of the campus community must work together to report concerning behaviour from students. These multi-disciplinary teams are commonly known as threat assessment teams. Limited Canadian research exists on how threat assessment teams are used by the institution and how institutional threat assessment policies are developed at the post-secondary level. This research study used a multi-phase process which included the use of a survey and an interview with practitioners in the field of post-secondary threat assessment. Key research findings on threat assessment teams included training on legal obligations, the recognition of team responsibilities and skills set within job descriptions, and inclusion of institutional positions that have the expertise and power to enact outcomes that align with the mission and vision of the university and support student success. Key research findings on threat assessment policy included the need to develop a common language for how we describe these teams, how we define key concepts, and how we manage and evaluate the threat assessment process within a Canadian context.

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List of Abbreviations

ASCA- Association for Student Conduct Administration

ATAP- Association of Threat Assessment Professionals

BIT- Behavioral Intervention Team

CATAP- Canadian Association of Threat Assessment Professionals

CSAO- Chief Student Affairs Officer

EAB- Educational Advisory Bureau

HE- Higher Education

IHE- Institution of Higher Education

NaBITA – National Behavioral Intervention Team Association

TAT- Threat Assessment Team

TAM- Threat Assessment Management

SOC- Student of Concern

VTRA – Violence Threat Risk Assessment

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

The consequences of failing to follow specific policy for threat assessment in higher education can result in significant harm to members of the campus community and the institution. Threat assessment, performed by the threat assessment team, is an often misunderstood topic, encompassing a variety of actions that occur across a range of contexts (Association of Threat Assessment Professionals, 2006). Threat assessment has been defined as an evidence-based approach to gathering information that identifies and assesses the specific behaviors of an individual to determine the level of threat posed to a specific target (ATAP, 2006; Borum, Fein, Vossekuil, and Berglund, 1999; Cameron, 2018; Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, and Savage, 2008; Fein, Vossekuil, and Holden, 1995; Meloy, Hart, and Hoffman, 2014). A threat assessment is the action performed by the threat assessment team, who utilize assessment to clarify the behavior of an individual who has engaged in conduct that has been interpreted as threatening. Threat assessment teams (TAT), as they are most commonly referred to in the literature (Dunkle, Silverstein, and Warner, 2008), began to appear on post-secondary campuses following targeted peer violence, such as school shootings at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014; Simons & Meloy, 2017), Northern Illinois University (Deisinger et al., 2008; Watt, 2017), École Polytechnic (Bradley, 2006; Elgin & Hester, 2003; Watt, 2017), and Concordia University (Cowan, 1994).

The National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) has found that between 2012 and 2018 the number of American institutions of higher education (IHEs) to report having campus teams mandated to assess student dangerousness has risen from 92% to 97% (Association of Student Conduct Administrators, 2016; Mardis, Sullivan, and Gamm, 2013;

NaBITA, 2014, 2018). It can be difficult to determine the number of institutions with teams specifically devoted to threat assessment. NaBITA (2018) findings indicate up to 97% of schools have teams to address students of concern, these statistics include behavioral intervention teams, threat assessment teams, care teams, and student of concern teams; 27% of American schools have specifically designed student-focused threat assessment teams. Well-developed threat assessment policies not only help to protect the broader campus community from identified threats but they also ensure that intervention processes are in place to support students displaying signs of dangerousness. Although there is an increase of up to 97% of US schools reporting student of concern teams, one of the most significant weaknesses of teams indicated by participants was the lack of established process or procedure (NaBITA, 2018).

Currently, there is little empirical research available (Watt, 2017) which studies threat assessment policy in Canadian institutions of higher education. Rogerson's (2018) seminal research on *Use of Perceived Effectiveness of Multidisciplinary Teams to Address Problematic Student Behavior to Prevent Campus Violence in Canadian Higher Education,* developed the robust foundation, for this concomitant research study to occur. Rogerson (2018) conducted multi-year seminal research on Canadian post-secondary institutions and found that 75% of institutions indicated they have implemented behavioral intervention teams. This research indicated that 39.5% of Canadian IHEs use the term *threat assessment* as a phrase in their team name (Rogerson, 2018). Rogerson's work further noted that the use of *threat assessment* in the team name closely reflected the work of the team, which was addressing individuals who posed an identified risk. This identified Canadian trend is significant in that the function of the team did not align with proactive best practice for addressing students of concern (Rogerson, 2018).

As a practitioner in the field as well as a researcher in Memorial University of Newfoundland's Master of Education program I seek to understand the administrative policies for supporting students who display threats towards themselves and/or other students. Specifically, this study explores threat assessment team's experiences with threat assessment policies in Ontario post-secondary intuitions. Through a multi-phase process entailing a survey and an interview with practitioners in the field of threat assessment I explored how threat assessment teams are utilized on campus and made recommendations for further research in the field.

1.2 Background and Rationale

The transition to post-secondary studies can be a time of exploration and success for many students who encounter new challenges such as an increase in academic work and new social engagements. Campus culture will not be experienced the same for a small number of students. For any number of reasons these students present a safety risk to the campus through the threat of harm to self or others. While most students will never have school violence affect them directly (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski & Reddy, 2004), there exists pressures from government bodies and parents to demonstrate that administrative measures exist to keep students safe (Perotti, 2007). The goal of "getting out ahead of violence" (Sokolow, Lewis, Van Brunt, Schuster, Van Brunt & Swinton, p. 87, 2016) with effective prevention and proactive approaches to campus safety must be viewed as a top priority for post-secondary institutions.

Targeted violence on campus dates back to the University of Oxford in the14th century, a tragedy which resulted in the death of 63 students (Paterson & Kibler, 2008). In Canada, there has been a total of 12 school shootings across the country over the past 40 years, four of which occurred in higher education; University of Alberta, Dawson College, Concordia University, and

L'ecole Polytechnique (Payne, 2006; The Canadian Press, 2016; Rogerson, 2018; Watt, 2017). Over the last 20 years, threat assessment and its ability to determine future dangerousness (O'Toole & Smith, 2014) has come a long way (Borum et al., 1999). The safety of students is no longer considered to rest with one area of the campus community, such as campus security, and is instead considered to be a "we responsibility" (Mohandie, 2014, p. 131), involving administrators, parents, peers, and faculty reporting concerning behaviors to the campus team responsible for the evaluation of student dangerousness. These campus teams, commonly referred to as threat assessment teams (Meloy et al., 2014; Sokolow et al., 2016) determine the level of targeted violence risk posed by a student towards self or others (ATAP, 2006; Borum et al., 1999; Meloy et al., 2014). By analyzing student behavior, these multi-disciplinary teams of higher education administrators render a determination of level of risk posed on the greater community and recommend proactive approaches to addressing the concerning behavior (Sokolow et al., 2016).

The Safe School Initiative, "an extensive examination of 37 incidents of targeted school shootings and school attacks that occurred in the United States" (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, and Modzeleski, 2002, p. ii) found that targeted violence, specifically school shootings, were planned and that the shooter's peers, and other students, typically knew that the violent attack was likely to occur (Vossekuil et al., 2002). Gun violence and the images associated with its devastation, come to mind readily when discussing threat assessment. Gun violence should not be the sole concern for consideration of a threat assessment as it is not the only form of targeted violence on campuses that institutions are confronted with. As Watt (2017) explains, violence occurs in higher education in a diverse manner, which may include intimate partner violence, stalking, general violence, sexual violence and on occasion group-based or honour violence.

With such a high potential for violence to occur on campus, threat assessment teams must have strong policy in place to ensure all types of campus threat are explored. As Van Brunt and Lewis (2014) note, it is vital to "identify those on the path to violence at the early stages of ideation and planning rather than the later stages of acquisition of weapons and implementation" (p. 22). The consideration for early identification of threat requires IHEs to utilize processes whose scope includes the assessment of all types of threat on campus.

1.3 Researcher Assumptions and Approach

I began this research as a practitioner and scholar in the area of behavioral intervention and threat assessment. Years of training in risk management and assessment and a keen interest in working with young adults led me to continue to pursue studies that would provide me with the opportunity to work with post-secondary students in an educator capacity. As a practitioner, I have had the opportunity to work as part of a multi-disciplinary risk management team and in researching best practice models have conversed with many other practitioners and researchers in the field.

In practitioner conversations, it became clear that different post-secondary institutions were choosing to support different models of threat assessment management (TAM). These different models included all aspects of violence prevention from team member selection, to policy and procedure development, to the tool used to determine level of risk (Chapter 4). Sorting through best practice identified in the literature as a Canadian practitioner became an interesting task of sorting through the "right way" to determine student dangerousness within the Canadian context. Add to the increase in threatened litigation between students and their parents, and institutions of higher education (Black, 2012; Paterson & Kibler, 2008; Rogerson, 2018; Stark, 2014) it seems pertinent to explore specifically how Ontario post-secondary institutions are procedurally

managing students that have been identified as a threat. With the threat of litigation on the minds of so many administrators in higher education, particularly those that work with students engaged in threat assessment processes, using a mixed method approach of confidential, surveys and remote interviews provided a platform for discussing Ontario post-secondary threat assessment policies.

1.4 Research Questions

This thesis aimed to answer the research question 'how do a select number of Ontario post-secondary institutions' threat assessment teams experience threat assessment policies?' Based on primary sourced research, this study sought to understand:

i. What is current policy in Ontario post-secondary institutions related to student threat assessment?
ii. To what degree are post-secondary institutions involved in student threat assessment?
iii. What institutional variables may influence assessment practices?
iv. Which areas of the institution are most involved in assessing student threat level and;
v. How is threat assessed?

1.5 Overview of Methods

To provide an understanding of the experiences of threat assessment practitioners in Ontario working within their institutional policies, a research study was needed that would grant access to the practitioners themselves. As a current practitioner in the field, the researcher is aware that access to these teams is often safe guarded by the institutions themselves and

therefore, concerns for confidentiality of both the institution and the participant's contribution was paramount in this two-phase study.

In phase one of this research study an online survey was distributed to eight Ontario universities, asking participants to identify details of their threat assessment team such as membership, functions of the team, and developed policy. In phase two of this research, participants were invited to a remote, semi-structured one-to-one interview. This interview focused primarily on the threat assessment team's experiences with their threat assessment policy. More information and details of this multi-staged mixed methods approach are presented in Chapter 3.

1.6 Significance of Study

Limited research exists with a focus on how institutional threat assessment policies are executed at the post-secondary level. This study aimed to shed light on the utilization of policy in a uniquely Canadian education system, specifically within the province of Ontario. Secondly, as there continues to be a need to support students exhibiting threatening behavior, this research explores current threat assessment policies in order to inform best practice models for Ontario post-secondary institutions. Recommendations are made which have broad application for other IHEs in Canada. Lastly, this research provides a solid foundation of recommendations for continuing research in the area of threat assessment procedures, and the utilization of threat assessment teams in higher education.

1.7 Overview of Thesis

Chapter one of this thesis highlights the background and rationale, the approach and method, and the research questions are addressed. Chapter two provides an overview of the

international and current Canadian literature on threat assessment, student dangerousness, student intervention, and assessment teams. It is noted that limited Canadian research exist, which supports the explanatory nature of this study. Chapter three outlines the methodological design of the study, including the survey, participant interviews and the collection of information and coding. Chapter four presents the findings from the study as well as presents thematic pairings of data findings. Chapter five discusses the results as compared and contrasted to current literature on the subject of threat assessment teams, discusses limitations, and offers possibilities for future and continuing research in the field of threat assessment teams in higher education.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

Recent media emphasis (on threats to campus safety and security appear to indicate that campus violence is a new phenomenon, though records dating back to the 14th century indicate that 63 students died at Oxford University during a violent town and gown riot (Paterson & Kibler, 2008). Threats to campus safety continue to exist today, and while violations to campus policy such as theft and underage drinking (Jackson, Terrell, & Heard, 2007) are more commonly reported, instances of extreme violence, like the Columbine tragedy, have exposed society to a fear of constant threats of school-based violence (Atheide, 2009; O'Toole, 1999). In response to these types of student behaviors, institutions of higher education have created multi-disciplinary teams most commonly referred to as Behavioral Intervention Teams (BIT) or Threat Assessment Teams (TAT), whose purpose is to identify disruptive or dangerous students and prevent targeted campus violence (Bennett & Bates, 2015; Borum et al., 2009; Eels & Rockland-Miller, 2011).

Many challenges, including both mental health and behavioral, create difficulty in decision making regarding the interests of the individual student, and the broader safety of the community (Eels & Rockland-Miller, 2011). "Institution type, location, and campus composition individually and collectively affect and cultivate the unique campus environment. These factors in turn influence the types of administrative practices and policies that are appropriate institutional responses" (Jackson et al., 2007, p. 9). Each institution has the advantage of knowing their unique campus culture and is best positioned to determine the appropriate prioritization of an individual's safety and the safety of others. IHEs often have the advantage of access to students of concern and are often privy to leakage (Meloy & O'Toole, 2011) as it

relates to targeted violence. Early identification of students of concern is key as acts of targeted violence are rarely impulsive, often "the end result of an understandable and often discernable process of thinking and behavior" (Cameron, 2018, p. 19). Following the school shooting at Columbine in 1999, and the massacre at Virginia Tech in 2007, threat assessment teams have become progressively more recognized as a vital component of higher education for assessing, managing, and mitigating targeted violence, yet little is known about the practices of (Bolante & Dykeman, 2015) and experiences of threat assessment teams.

This chapter provides historical context to school-based targeted violence beginning with examples in the United States and concluding with the historical Canadian context. The role of threat assessment teams within the campus context, noting that this data largely addresses the US experience, is reviewed followed by a review of current legislation in Ontario that is of key consideration for the threat assessment team and the development of their own policy. Further, literature on threat assessment team's membership and responsibilities, mental health and threat assessment, and the role of the campus community is identified. Gaps in current literature are identified and a summary concludes this chapter.

2.2 School-based violence

Universities and colleges are often recognized for their breadth of services available, closely replicating a microcosm of the broader community. Access to law enforcement, mental health clinicians, financial assistance, and career support are a few examples of supports afforded to students on many Canadian post-secondary campuses. While these services exist to support all students, there is no doubt that some will require elevated levels of assistance, utilizing more institutional resources than those of their peers. Institutions of higher education are rarely reserved when it comes to publicising and promoting the resources they provide to students who

may be struggling to overcome a financial crisis, or a family emergency. Students having access to monies and services that support their retention and progression is great marketing for IHEs. Conversely, when discussing individuals deemed students of concern (SOC), IHEs tend to shy away from press releases. It could be argued that the number of individuals deemed SOCs and the breadth of support services utilized by IHEs is one of the most institutionally guarded secrets (Chan & Olivier, 2016; Newman, 2009; Watt, 2017).

IHEs are beginning to recognizing the significance of having threat assessment and management processes that enhance early identification and intervention of SOCs that pose a safety risk or disrupt the campus community (Dunkle et al., 2008; Meloy et al., 2014). In particular, schools face the challenge of preventing targeted violence once the institution has information or ought to have received communication about concerning student behavior (Reddy, Borum, Berglund, Vossekuil, Fein, & Modzeleski, 2001). This ability of the institution to respond expeditiously to information, hinges on the very premise that there is a ubiquitous campus understanding of threat, threat assessment, and communication channels for reporting SOCs. While it is argued that instances of targeted campus violence occur infrequently, the impact on the campus community when they do occur is quite profound (Dunkle et al., 2008) and thus efforts to keep IHEs safe from threat must include all campus and community stakeholders (ASCA, 2016; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; NaBITA, 2014; Warren, Mullen, & McEwan, 2014).

2.2.1 History of campus violence

The reported facts of the following instances of targeted gun violence on school campuses are easily accessible and have been public for some time. The school tragedies included in this paper, even if information is not common knowledge, are articulated for academic purposes and

to demonstrate the connection between school-based violence and legislative change. These tragic examples of campus violence are not meant to be inclusive, exhaustive or demonstrate the totality of devastation that exist on campuses and communities that are touched by school-based violence. These violent attacks differ in their educational environment, perpetrator relationship with the institution, reason for the assault and information made available prior to the attack. The outcome of these cases, which binds these attacks, is that administrators, mental health professionals, and policymakers alike, have come under increasing pressure to create safe spaces on campus (Fox & Savage, 2009; O'Toole, 1999; Reddy, et al., 2001).

2.2.1a Historic American institutional threats

In 1999, two students at Columbine High School, carried out a heavily planned and armed attack on their peers, teachers, and school administrators, the result of which wounded 24 individuals and killed 13 others (Cameron, 2018, Fein et al., 2004; National Threat Assessment Centre, 2018). One of the most grave outcomes of this devastatingly violent attack was that Columbine would become a tragedy to compare all other tragedies against (Fox & Savage, 2009; King & Bracy, 2019), and was the fuel behind the panic and fear over school-based shootings (Altheide, 2009; Schildkraut & Hernandez, 2014). Following this targeted tragedy, the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of Education partnered to review elementary and secondary school violence (National Threat Assessment Centre, 2018). The *Safe School Initiative,* a study implemented through the US Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center and the Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program paired the experience of Department of Education with the Secret Service's knowledge of the prevention on assassinations and other types of targeted violence, in the creation of safe environments for

students, staff, and faculty (Vossekuil et al., 2002). This research study continues to inform threat assessment practices in US schools today.

Almost ten years later in 2008, a Virginia Tech student shot and killed 32 people and wounded 17 others (Karp, 2015; Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011; Mohandie, 2014; Van Brunt & Lewis, 2014) in what is perhaps the most deadly account of extreme violence in US higher education. This student's writings which idealized suicide and homicide, along with the student's behaviors including his admiration for the Columbine shooters, drew attention from this student's instructors, peers, and administrators from high school onward (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, and Savage, 2008; Langman, 2013). This event motivated higher education, to create safe campuses, like no other event has in recent memory (Dunkle et al., 2008).

Less that 10 months later, a former student at Northern Illinois University who did not exhibit obvious warning signs of violence (Fox & Savage, 2009), contrary to the Virginia Tech attacker who had more than 31 touch points with administrators and campus security (Keller et al., 2011; Van Brunt & Lewis, 2014), opened fire in a crowd, killing five students and injuring 17 others (Hollister & Scalora, 2015; Langman, 2013). That same year, *The Campus Security Enhancement Act of 2008* mandated that every IHE in the state of Illinois have a threat assessment team "as part of its overall violence prevention efforts" (Bennett & Bates, 2015, p.5). ASME Innovative Technologies Institute, LLC (2010) would further develop US national higher education risk standards designed to identify and address campus risk and with recommendations that included colleges and universities implement their own threat assessment teams (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012).

Most recently in 2019, a former student of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) killed two people and left four wounded (Zaveri & Fortin, 2019) after he entered the campus with a gun and

began shooting. The shooter was quickly disarmed on campus by campus police. The UNCC Chancellor spoke to press about UNCC previously holding live mass shooter drills on campus and credited these drills for preventing a higher number of casualties (Gonzales, Campbell, & Chappell, 2019). This aligns with the suggested best practice of Bennett & Bates (2015) who identified prevention efforts as needing to not wait for an incident to occur before they are put in place.

2.2.1b Historic Canadian institutional threats

In the last 40 years, there have been a total of 12 school shootings across Canada, four of which occurred in higher education; University of Alberta, Dawson College, Concordia University, and L'ecole Polytechnique (The Canadian Press, 2016; Watt, 2017). In 1989, Canada's worst mass shooting, which has now been named as Canada's first mass femicide (The Canadian Press, 2020) occurred on the campus of the Universitie de Montreal's École Polytechnic when a heavily armed individual entered a classroom, killing 14 people and injuring another 13 individuals (Bradley, 2006; Elgin & Hester, 2003; Scott, 2018). This Montreal tragedy ended with the shooter turning the gun on himself, leaving behind a suicide note (Bradley, 2006) that articulated his intentions to kill feminist who were responsible not only for his failures, but in particular feminist were responsible for his lack of admission to L'École Polytechnique (Elgin & Hester, 2003). This tragedy, which is annually mourned across the country, was the first of its kind in Canada and rightly so attention was paid to the devastating loss of life and its connection to both access to guns and women's rights (Bradley, 2006; Rogerson, 2018). This circumstance of gun-violence on a university campus was regarded more as an opportunistic means to an end rather than an overarching safety risk to IHEs.

Four months later, and a week following the Colorado massacre at Columbine High School, a major school shooting occurred in Taber, Alberta, that halted after one student was killed and another wounded (Cameron, 2018; One dead, 1999; Randazzo & Cameron, 2012). Together, the Columbine massacre and the Taber shooting would re-initiate draconian measures of 'zero-tolerance' policies in schools in both Canada and the United States (Evans & Vaandering, 2016.) These zero-tolerance safe schools policies, that address bullying among other forms of violence, tend to focus on responses to inappropriate behavior by using approaches to discipline, such as increased surveillance, additional security measures, and the adoption of codes of conduct (Paré & Collins, 2016). Although many educators still regard violence in schools as an "American problem", this Taber shooting, would be the impetuous for Canadian schools to seek "a more formalized process for preventing school violence" (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012, p. 282). This tragic event would become the call to the Canadian Government to provide resources to schools for evaluating *any* serious violence that occurred, including school-based shootings (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012).

In 1992, Canadian's witnessed another school-based shooting tragedy, this time in Quebec, at Concordia University. Beginning in 1989, a faculty member at Concordia University began to display an array of behaviors which began as disruptive, but quickly progressed to threatening (Cowan, 1994, Langman, 2013). Concordia University acknowledged the threats insofar as video surveillance cameras were installed, guards were placed outside offices, armed security was hired, and panic alarms were installed (Langman, 2013). These surface attempts at creating a safe campus environment unfortunately did not prevent the murder of four Concordia professors at the hands of a faculty member who repeatedly threated violence towards faculty and administrators alike (Brown, 2009; Langman, 2013). Following the attack, an external

reviewer was appointed by the Board of Governor's to make recommendations to address, "(iii) policies, procedures, practices and mechanisms for dealing with harassing, uncivil and disruptive behavior from members of the University community" (Cowan, 1994, p. 40). Among the overall 14 recommendations, this report noted the following: 1) Formalize the University Intervention Team or scrap it, and 2) Decision-making on significant matters must be a collaborative process (Cowan, 1994, p. 36). These two recommendations are significant in that in 1994, Concordia University would be the first Canadian institution to recognize key aspects of threat assessment teams today: the multi-disciplinary approach to a formalized process of decision-making (Deisinger et al., 2008; Deisinger et al., 2014; Nolan, Randazzo, & Deisinger, 2011).

In what would become Montreal's third fatal school shooting, Dawson College experienced tragedy in 2006 when one student was shot to death and 19 more were wounded (Brown, 2009; Newman, 2009; Payne, 2006). This incident of extreme violence ended when the shooter turned the gun on himself; police were to again, find a suicide note (The Canadian Press, 2016). Information collected through social media and further investigation confirmed the gunman romanticized death and his role as the Angel of Death and the Death Knight (Payne, 2006). His social media posts entailed dozens of images of himself cloaked in all black, holding assault rifles and other weapons, glamorizing the panicked state of individuals fleeing from gun violence (Payne, 2006). This social media information, referred to as leakage, communicated the intent to harm others (Cameron, 2018; NaBITA, 2016) while also offering information about his mindset.

Meloy & O'Toole (2011) further explain leakage as:

> a type of warning behavior that typically infers a preoccupation with the target, and may signal the research, planning, and implementation of an attack…occurs in the majority of cases of attacks on and assassinations of public figures, adult mass murders, adolescent mass murders, and school or campus shootings (p. 513).

While this shooter was not affiliated with the College, it is important to recognize that school-based violence prevention cannot lay solely with the campus community and instead must include broad community partnerships and the true creation of a culture of reporting which involves all key community stakeholders (Ceglarek & Brower, 2007; Nolan et al., 2011).

2.2.1c Summary of post-secondary threats

In the last 40 years there have been a number of devastating school-based shootings both in the United States and in Canada. Although these instances of school-based violence are heretofore, the reality is there continues to be violence on North American school campuses today. While school's work toward identifying risk on their own campus, it is evident that not all school-based violence originates from a member of that specific school community. In response to school-based violence, such as the tragedies of Dawson College, Virginia Tech, and Northern Illinois University, IHEs have developed multi-disciplinary threat assessment teams as one component of a larger strategy for the prevention of school-based violence (Bennett & Bates, 2015; Berkowitz, 2001; Watt, 2017).

2.3 Definitions

To understand threat, threat assessment, and threat assessment teams a brief overview of the vernacular most commonly used follows:

Assessment - Assessment is, most generally, the process of gathering information for use in decision-making (Meloy et al., 2014).

Leakage - communication to a third party of an intent to do harm and is regarded as a type of warning behavior which may include letters, diaries, journals, blogs, videos on the internet, emails, voice mails, and other forms of social media transmission (Meloy & O'Toole, 2011).

Procedures - facilitate the implementation of policies (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2021).

Policy - ensures the institutions of higher education processes and practices align with the vision, mission, and values of the IHE. They describe the institution's position on a particular issue (MUN, 2021).

Student of Concern (SOC) - an identified student who exhibits behavior that raises alarm to others. These behaviors may include committing harm to self, others, or property (Fox & Savage, 2009; Golston, 2015; Rogerson 2018; Vossekuil et al., 2002).

Threat - a threat is inherently dynamic, changing over time, and contextual, changing in response to the environment (Borum et al., 1999). A key feature of threat, risk, or hazard is that it is uncertain. There exist uncertainty of what will happen (its nature), how bad the consequences will be (severity), when it will happen (imminence), how often it will happen

(frequency), how long it will last (duration), or the probability that it will happen (likelihood) (Meloy et al., 2014).

Threat assessment - school threat assessment aims to investigate whether the person has engaged in behavior(s) which suggest they pose a threat. The student's own threatening or concerning behavior triggers are evaluated. Threat assessment typically relies on dynamic variables when evaluating the level of risk (Borum et al., 2009; Meloy et al., 2014; O'Toole, 1999).

Threat assessment team (TAT)– a collaborative, multi-disciplinary team which facilitates the process of information gathering through a broad range of channels in order to assess and manage risk following a threat made to a member of the community (Deisinger et al., 2008; Golston, 2015; Sokolow et al., 2016; Mohandie, 2014; Penven & Janosik, 2012; Rogerson, 2018; Watt, 2017).

Threat assessment management (TAM) - is the process of developing and executing plans to mitigate the threat of violence posed by a person or persons (Meloy et al., 2014, p. 13).

Targeted Violence – an incident(s) in which an identified (or identifiable) target is selected by the perpetrator before the attack (Vossekuil et al., 2002, p. 79).

Violence - any actual, attempted, or planned injury of other people that is intentional, nonconsenting, and without lawful authority (Meloy et al., 2014). Any threatened or actual use of physical force or power, against oneself or others that has the likelihood of resulting in harm (World Health Organization, 2020).

Violence Risk Assessment – is the process of gathering information, usually in a judicial or clinical context to evaluate the likelihood that violence could occur in the future (Meloy et.al, 2014; Mohandie, 2014; Rogerson, 2018).

2.4 Campus Threat Assessment

Identified threat requires a timely and prudent response, regardless of circumstance or location. Institutions of higher education are at an advantage, when compared to law enforcement in public settings, as institutions have greater flexibility to respond (Cameron, 2018). Recognizing this increased flexibility, IHEs should consider the responsibility they hold with respect to enacting a collaborative plan for the prevention of school-based violence. These two points, flexibility and responsibility, should be key considerations for safety planning on campus as acts of violence result not only in loss of life, but also profound psychological damage to the campus and the broader community in which the violence occurs (Bolante & Dykeman, 2015). As institutions respond to concerns regarding campus safety and security, it is essential to develop procedures and communication systems which prevent behaviors that place others at increased risk of harm (Borum et al., 1999). Zero-tolerance policies have led to an educational environment in which surveillance, security, and automatic long-term suspensions or expulsions are the response to violations of school safety rules as they relate to "some kind of" threatening behavior (Borum et al., 2009; King & Bracy, 2019; Paré & Collins, 2016). Therefore, institutions must identify and develop a means to benevolently assess behavior. Threat assessment is of integral importance in discerning serious threats from non-serious threats as it assists with providing effective, practical and less punitive alternatives to zero tolerance policy (Borum et al., 2009; Cornell, 2019). While the concept of threat assessment in the field of education is not ubiquitous (Borum et al., 2009), violence on campus is still considered a leading

issue in higher education (Dunkle et al., 2008). Understanding that threat operates on a continuum is fundamental for IHEs and should be the impetus for clearly defined threat assessment processes.

2.4.2 Campus Procedures and Policy

2.4.2a Canadian Law and Ontario Legislation

"Every institution of higher education, whether independent or governmentally affiliated, operates within the legal context of its nation, locality and possibly region or state" (Gregory, Broderick, and Doyle, 2020, p. 74). Rogerson (2018) explains "the individual institution's provincial legislation establishes scope and authority…[and] provincial and federal legal obligations within which institutions must operate serve as a key framework through which teams must consider their actions" (p. 201). Education, a provincial responsibility in Canada, presents itself with three quintessential Ontario Acts which must be acknowledged when developing threat assessment teams; 1) Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.31, 2) Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.O.1, and 3) Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.19, all of which are legislated by the Government of Ontario. Federally, the Government of Canada holds the Constitution Act 1867 and the Constitution Act, 1982 which "provides the fundamental rules and principles that govern a country and defines the powers of institutions and branches of government" (Government of Canada, 2017). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part 1 of the Constitution Act, 1982 being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), c 11, is a part of this constitution and as such "it is the most important law we have in Canada" (Government of Canada, 2017). To balance the needs of the campus community with the requirements listed in each of the aforementioned Acts and Law is no small feat for IHEs.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHS) legislates the requirement of employers to prepare a policy with respect to workplace violence, develop and maintain a program to address workplace violence, and assess the risks of workplace violence (Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2019). The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) has two main areas for consideration with the development of a threat assessment team: access to information under the control of the institution, and protection of the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves and to provide individuals with a right of access to that information held by the institution (Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, 2020). Though, FIPPA does have exceptions to the legislation for example, when the Act applies, meetings and the following deliberations that are held in the absence of the public may allow for the refusal of disclosure of the substance of the deliberations (Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act, 2020).

The *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act* (MTCU), regulates all IHEs in Ontario which receive regular and ongoing funds from the government, mandates said institutions create institution specific policies to address sexual violence on campus (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, 2020). This reference to sexual violence policy creation is the sole section within the MTCU Act that addresses violence, and threats at the post-secondary level. As a further matter of point, the Safe Schools Act, 2000, S.O. 2000, c.12 – Bill 81, which the Government of Ontario assented to in 2000, addresses disruptive and dangerous behavior at the elementary and secondary school level (Bill C-81: Safe Schools Act, 2000). The Safe Schools Act does not provide any regulations for post-secondary education (Randazzo & Cameron, 2012). Across Canada, each province and territory has been mandated to develop safe school legislation for the elementary and secondary school system, and those that have not

developed legislation have elected to adopt policies instead (Paré & Collins, 2016). An extensive review of each of the 10 provinces and three territories, ERIC, Primo, Omni, and google scholar did not identify any government directed legislation that would support IHEs in the manner of the Safe Schools Act.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part 1 of the *Constitution Act, 1982,* being Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982* (UK), 1982, c11, sets out the "rights and freedoms that Canadians believe are necessary in a free and democratic society" (Government of Canada, 2020). The Charter sets out to ensure that Canadians are free to create and express, their ideas as this is important to the success of a democratic society (Government of Canada, 2020). As it relates to threat assessment, the following areas are highlighted: Fundamental freedoms- section 2 includes "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; Legal rights - section 7 to 14 outlines Canadians rights when dealing with the justice system such as *Search or seizure*, *Self-crimination*, and *Arrest or detention*; Equality rights - Section 15 addresses "equality of individuals before and under law and equal protection and benefit of law (Government of Canada, 2020). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the supreme law of Canada however, the freedoms and rights outlined in the Charter are not absolute and may be limited to protect other rights or important national values (Government of Canada, 2020).

A reasonable expectation of privacy may be diminished in some circumstances. It is lower for students attending school then it would be in other circumstances because teachers and school authorities are responsible for providing a safe elementary and secondary school environment and maintaining order and discipline in the school. Students know that this may sometimes require searches of students and their personal effects and the seizure of prohibited items. A

legal precedent setting win for education administrators and safety in school communities occurred in 1998 Supreme Court Judgment (Cameron, 2018). The R. v. M. (M.R.), [1998] 3 S.C.R. 393 judgement found:

> A different standard should be applied to searches by school authorities. Teachers and principals are placed in a position of trust that carries the onerous responsibilities of teaching and of caring for the children's safety and well-being. In order to teach, school officials must provide an atmosphere that encourages learning. The possession of illicit drugs and dangerous weapons at school challenges the ability of school officials to fulfill their responsibility. Current conditions require that teachers and school administrators be provided with the flexibility needed to deal with discipline problems in schools and to be able to act quickly and effectively. One of the ways in which school authorities may be required to react reasonably is by conducting searches of students and seizing prohibited items" (R v M, 1998).

The Supreme Court of Canada, 1998 acknowledged school officials must be in a legal position in which they are able to effectually and swiftly react to safety concerns within the school environment (Cameron, 2018). This ruling is significant for IHEs as the legal precedent acknowledges that there may be times in which institutions need move outside the legal requirements of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in order to keep the campus community safe.

It is evident that in a country in which individuals are required to hold a license to purchase and possess a firearm (Dummett & Cherney, 2016), school shootings are extremely rare. Considering this, should Ontario IHEs look solely at the metrics related to school shootings, the lack of legislation may be a fitting focus. Threat assessment in higher education fortunately

focuses on the broad spectrum of students of concern and thus provincial legislation has the potential to provide a foundation of guidance by which IHEs can develop threat assessment policy that provide safety for the broader campus community and balance the rights and responsibilities afforded to both SOC and IHE.

2.4.2b Policy Development

Comprehensive literature regarding higher education administration's role in responding to crisis has been available for a number of years (Zdziarski, 2016), and is facile and easily accessible for all HE administration. Literature specifically relating to threat, threat assessment teams, and threat assessment management in higher education is relatively new, appearing only within the last ten years (Adams, 2020; Watt, 2017). To this end, without legislation or government directive, IHEs in Ontario must choose to create threat assessment policies and procedures without government guidance. Ultimately, policy created to outline the institution's response to threat will ensure that the campus is "physically safe and procedurally sound" (Deisinger et al., 2008 p.7). While there are exhaustive lists of policy available to institutional administration which make recommendations such as including the philosophy of the team, established protocols, and referral processes (Deisinger et al., 2008; NaBITA, n.d.; Rogerson, 2018; Watt 2017), Ontario IHEs need to discuss their unique needs regarding policy and procedures of threat assessment teams. Watt, (2017) in a study of *Threat Assessment Teams in Higher Education: The Canadian Landscape* found, "[n]eeds related to the implementation and procedures of the teams highlight how higher education institutions in Canada may benefit from guidelines or handbooks related to the establishment of these teams similar to those published in the United States" (p.54).

Government agencies and others analyzing issues connected to violence on post-secondary campuses recommend the creation of a threat assessment team to monitor and respond to SOC (Dunkle et al., 2008, NaBITA 2016, 2018). Rogerson (2018) additionally notes that a mandate that is clearly articulated provides guidance on operating within the intuition and, developing procedures and policies that are accessible and comprehensive establishes proper expectations for the entire campus (Pollack, Modzeleski & Rooney, 2008; Association for Student Conduct Administration, 2016). Beginning this process with a team mission statement that is publicly available (Bell, 2018; Deisinger et al., 2008; Van Brunt et al., 2012), and outlines the scope and focus of the threat assessment team (Bell, 2018; Van Brunt et al., 2012) is critical in identifying and intervening in problems that impact the well-being and safety of the entire campus community (Deisinger et al., 2008). Coupled with the *Incheon Declaration – Education 2030* (Ludeman, et al., 2020) which declares that globally, IHEs develop comprehensive, multi-faceted and cohesive policies to ensure schools are safe and free from violence (Ludeman, et al., 2020), it is imperative that strong policies are developed imminently.

2.4.1 Campus Threat Assessment Management

2.4.1.a Team Membership & Responsibility

A system that promotes strong decision making and strong communication is vital in keeping the community safe from targeted violence. While the dynamic nature of threat makes prevention efforts provisional, developing a well trained threat assessment team certainly aids in prevention efforts. All IHEs should have a system in place to respond to students of concern, whether the concern is harm to self or harm to others. The team approach to threat management in HE has proved most effective because it allows a comprehensive and dynamic response to a

complex and potentially dangerous situation (Bolante & Dykeman, 2015; Deisinger et al., 2014; Van Hasselt & Bourke, 2017; O'Toole, 1999; Watt, 2017).

Threat assessment teams (TAT), which are equally effective by any other name (Dunkle et al., 2008) should include key campus partners that are able to collect information and make appropriate administrative decisions (Eells & Rockland-Miller, p. 9, 2011). Teams should be multi-disciplinary with a focus on the assessment and management of SOC who pose risk to the health and safety of the campus community (Watt, 2017). Contemporary approaches to the assessment and management of threat is the development of a TAT which extends to include both institutional representatives and community officials (Bolante & Dykeman, 2015; Deisinger et al., 2014; O'Toole, 1999). This approach is especially pertinent for smaller institutions, IHEs with budget constraints, and institutions who do not have access to other resources needed to develop an internal TAT (Dunkle et al., 2008).

TATs provide a centralized method for working together to detect, track, and intervene with SOC "with the ultimate goal of reducing, if not completely avoiding, violence and tragedy on campus" (Dunkle et. al, p. 588, 2008). These TAT members work collaboratively to assess and mitigate the threat of violence from multiple perspectives. The responsibility of the TAT are multifold and the following three goals are adapted from *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams*: (a) engage in a collaborative process to develop the most appropriate policies and procedures governing the team; (b) determine the most appropriate systems for assessing students of concern and the necessary intervention; (c) educate and train campus community members about the role and purpose of the team so that faculty, staff, and students know how and when to bring an issue to the team's attention (Dunkle et al., 2008).

With these goals at the forefront of TAT responsibility, the following three sections will address student assessment, and campus awareness related to threat assessment in higher education.

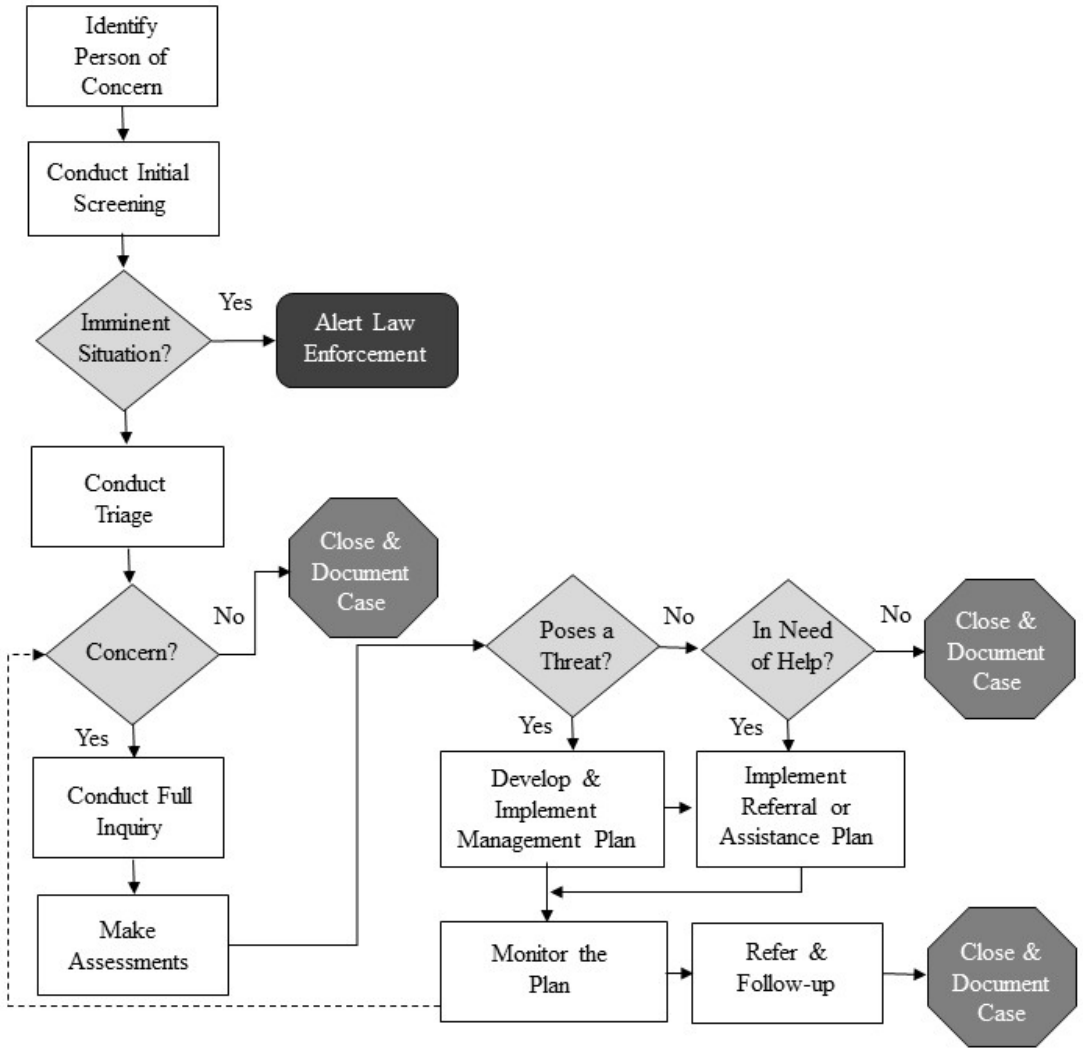
2.4.1.b The Threat Assessment Process

Threat assessment management (TAM) is an overarching term which includes the process of the specific threat assessment as well as the management of operational techniques used to identify, assess, and manage the posed threat (ATAP, 2006; Fein et al., 1995; Simons & Meloy, 2017). The TAT is the body responsible for the management of the threat assessment process. The TAT, being the body responsible for TAM, is tasked with a series of functions which can be linear but can also be cyclical as new information arises. Due to the dynamic nature of threat, the TAT may need to revisit earlier processes in order to evaluate the best outcome for the student and the broader community. These functions of the TAT can be further classified as: 1) identification of the student who may pose a threat; 2) gathering information on and assessing the likelihood of the threat being carried out; 3) developing an intervention and management plan and; 4) monitoring all students connected to the posed threat (Champagne, 2007; Deisinger et al., 2008; Fein et al. 1995; Kloeker- Webster, 2019; Langman, 2009; O'Toole, 1999).

Identify the posed threat. The central question to investigate in the threat assessment process is 'does the student of concern *pose* a threat?' commonly mistaken as 'has the student made a threat?' (Borum et al., 1999; Cornell & Scheithauer, 2011; Fein et al., 2004; Langman, 2009). Upon identification of the SOC, the context of the threat must be assessed. Not all threat pose the same consequences to the SOC and the campus. Factors such as the circumstance of the threat, the intent behind the threatening behavior, the capability of the SOC, and probability that it will be acted on must be included in the assessment in order to best identify appropriate interventions (Borum et. al, 1999; Cornell & Scheithauer, 2011; Gelles, 2016).

Figure 2.1

Threat Assessment and Management Flow Chart



Note. From "The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams" G. Deisinger, M. Randazzo, D. O'Neill, & J. Savage, 2008, MA: Applied Risk Management, p. 78. © 2008 by Deisinger et al.

Assess the threat. Threat assessments as noted by Van Brunt and Lewis (2014) ask contextual questions about threat and risk to determine a student's risk to the broader community. As Meloy et al., (2014) further explain "[T]he entire enterprise of threat assessment stands or falls on the ability to factually discern through intelligence gathering the warning behaviors that will precede the targeted violence by hours, days, weeks, or months, thus allowing for a considered determination of risk". Intelligence gathering is a collateral strategy that corroborates or discredits a threat. These collateral strategies may include, in-person interviews with the SOC, witness interviews, background checks, social media review, and other methods of data collection. It is evident that this process of data collection and assessment should be done proactively when possible as it establishes a student's baseline behavior, and deviations from those behaviors can be observed thus allowing the TAT to develop appropriate interventions (Sokolow et al., 2016). Once the SOC is brought to the TAT's attention, the threat assessment team can review the case "to determine what risk may be posed and how to manage this risk" (Watt, 2017, p. 51).

While it is clear that institutions perform threat assessments to determine dangerousness, what is less clear is the threat assessment approach or tool to utilize in the process. For a number of years, methods for assessing risk of violence have been utilized to determine what risk of violence, if any, does the individual pose (Borum et al., 1999; Simons & Meloy, 2017). There is a range of approaches, which have been broadly categorized as discretionary, non-discretionary, and structured professional judgement (Douglas, 2015; Keller et al., 2011; Reddy, et al., 2001; Watt, 2017). A 'discretionary approach' is commonly found amongst teams that wish to individualize each case (Watt, 2017). This type of unstructured judgement "is defined by a lack of systematic, validated structure" (Douglas, 2015). According to Watt (2017) this approach, in

which the team members share information and make a determination on risk based on experience, has been criticized for lacking accountability, lacking detail on the risk posed, and being unstable. The discretionary approach has shown to produce greater rates of inaccuracy than actuarial and structured professional judgements (Reddy, et al., 2001) and, "arguably….failing to use a structured, validated approach to violence risk assessment fails to meet the standard of care in the field of violence risk assessment" (Douglas, 2015, p. 2).

A non-discretionary approach reaches the other end of the spectrum in which actuarial tools and/or computer programs are used to determine level of threat (Reddy, at al., 2011). Watt, (2017) describes the non-discretionary approach as a method "in which information is weighted and combined using fixed and explicit rules….to come to conclusions about the likelihood the individual will be violent in the future" (p. 57).

Structured professional judgement (SPJ) is an approach that bridges the gap between the discretionary and non-discretionary approach (Government of Canada, 2015) and are traditionally conducted by mental health professionals (Reddy, et al., 2001; Government of Canada, 2015). SPJ has been shown to produce greater rates of accuracy in risk assessment than a discretionary approach (Reddy, et al., 2001; Government of Canada, 2015). This type of evaluation allows the "evaluator to gather all relevant data during the course of the interview with the individual and reviews of existing record (e.g., school, mental health, etc.)" (Redd,y et al., 2001). The goal of this type of evaluation is to appraise risk that is informed by current theoretical, professional, and empirical knowledge about violence (Reddy, et al., 2001; Government of Canada, 2015), and by "systematically identifying risk factors - particularly dynamic, or changeable, risk factors - relevant to a case, management strategies can be tailored to prevent violence" (Government of Canada, 2015).

Determining the seriousness of a threat is prudent to the health and safety of the campus community. Students of concern whose behaviors indicate the threat is concrete and imminent rightly so garner the greatest level of concern from the TAT (Borum et al, 1999; Sokolow et al., 2016). To this end, a TAT with dedicated and trained members who regularly monitor and evaluate information through this data collection and assessment process, will be most apt to respond to SOC and threat on campus (Weisenbach Keller, Hughes, and Hertz, 2011) .

Intervention. Subsequent to the student of concern's initial threat assessment, the TAT must operationalize the findings. An effective threat management strategy removes, reframes, or minimizes threat enhancing factors while simultaneously enhancing or amplifying protective and threat-mitigating factors, such as mental health care treatment (Van Hasselt & Bourke, 2007; Schiemann & Molnar, 2019; National Threat Assessment Centre, 2018). The individualized plan should be based upon information gathered in the threat assessment process, be tailored to meet skill deficits of the SOC as well as, aim to enhance the prosocial abilities (Deisinger et al., 2008; Warren et al., 2014). Resources both on- and off- campus, that address what is working for the SOC and areas that support the SOC moving away from threatening behavior should be included in the plan. Deisinger et al., (2008) identifies the following list, though not exhaustive, of strategies and resources to consider when developing an individualized plan: identify an ally, family notification, external law enforcement, mandated psychological assessment or hospitalization, options for separation from the institution, modification of the environment, and victim protective actions.

The most serious of threats requires the most extensive interventions (Cornell & Scheithauer, 2011) which may include non-permanent TAT members participating in the intervention in a support or consultation capacity (Sokolow et al., 2014). As all threats are not

created equal, transparency in gaps of information that may limit the finding must be communicated to stakeholders (Mohandie, 2014). All relevant parties, including the SOC, should be apprised of the recommended interventions, privacy laws consider. Ultimately, the individualized intervention plan should be viewed as a living document, re-evaluated as new information is received, and considered a part of the larger institutional threat management strategy.

Monitor. The responsibility of monitoring both the individual intervention plan and the SOC should be decided in the plan development phase. These specific members of the campus community (student wellness center, student conduct, case management, accessibility services) may be tasked with follow-up and monitoring of the SOC to provide resources and address concerns through their department mandates. However, the principal goal of this monitoring plan is not solely to resolve concerns related to specific threat, the monitoring plan should be viewed as method to "increase the likelihood that the student remains engaged in the resources and/or behavior that helped them reduce their risk and stay healthy (Schiemann & Molnar, 2019, p. 61). The SOC should continue to be monitored until such time they are reasonably deemed to no longer pose a threat (Deisinger et al., 2008) at which point the TAT can make one of three decisions: close the case, keep it active, or develop a new monitoring plan the meets the SOC and the institutions current needs (Schiemann & Molnar, 2019). Electing to engage in a long-term monitoring process can ensure that the student remains at a reduced risk of violence but it is important to note that the responsibility of monitoring and engaging the student lays with the institution and not with the student (Schiemann & Molnar, 2019).

2.4.1.c. Mental Health & Threat Assessment

It is no surprise the many IHEs have counselling centres on campus or agreements with local agencies to support students living and learning in the community as addressing student mental health concerns and crises continues to be a strong focus for IHEs. The broader mental health issues are taking a toll on students, as evidenced by their serious contemplation of suicide (16.4%) up from 7.2% in 2013 and attempts at suicide (2.8%), again, up from 1.1% in 2013 (American College Health Association, Spring 2019; Education Advisory Board, 2013). According to the *National College Health Assessment II* (NCHA) US reference group, 49.8% of students surveyed reported feeling hopeless in the last 12 months, and 85.1% of students indicated they were overwhelmed by all they had to do (American College Health Association, Spring 2016) . The Canadian reference group bore similar, yet elevated statistics with 59.6% of students reporting feeling hopeless in the last 12 months, and 89.5% of students indicating they were overwhelmed by all they had to do (ACHA, 2016). The 2019 NCHA Canadian mental health statistics continued this upward trend, indicating 63.6% of students surveyed felt things were hopeless (ACHA, 2019).

The NCHA research articulates that mental health concerns are impacting a large number of students which does not go unrecognized by institutional administration as 50% of Canadian BIT members described the prevalence of mental health issues as a challenge encountered in the work of the team (Rogerson, 2018). Recognizing this consistent upward trend in student mental health concerns must lead to strong consideration for the most appropriate systems for the assessment and intervention of SOCs (Dunkle et al., 2008) as even with an 11% increase in institutions that report having mental health services (NaBITA, 2018) students increasingly continue to struggle with their own mental health needs.

2.4.1.d Campus & Community Collaboration

Clearly articulated plans for assessment and intervention bear no weight if the TAT is not privy to information regarding potential future threat. For threat assessment to occur proactively, the appropriate communication channels must exist to report the concerning behavior (Bennett & Bates, 2015). Developing a culture of reporting on campus requires the creation of an educational campaign of initiatives and programs to empower students and staff alike and draws on current campus experts (O'Callaghan, 2007; Sokolow et al., 2014). Effective threat assessment teams recognize that issues of safety and the prevention of violence are community problems, requiring community collaboration and partnership (O'Callaghan, 2007; Warren et al., 2014). All employees and students in HE must be trained on what to look for and what to do when they gain knowledge of a potential threat (Association for Student Conduct Administration, 2016; Langman, 2009). Ensuring the campus knows who to report threat to, how to create a report, and how the report will be addressed by the TAT is critical in creating a culture of reporting (ASCA, 2016).

Depending upon the circumstances and the needs of the institution, the threat assessment team should consider extending training opportunities and partnerships to the broader off-campus community. Developing collaborative relationships with local law enforcement, mental health agencies, and other off-campus resources (Bolante & Dykeman, 2015; Dunkle et al., 2008) further supports the work of the TAT while ultimately building community trust and demonstrating the institutions commitment to it's student's health and safety.

2.6 Gaps in literature

There are major gaps in Canadian literature on threat assessment and threat assessment management in higher education. A review of the words threat, threat assessment, threat management, higher education, Canada, and campus safety in Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), OMNI, Google Scholar, published texts, library holdings, and a variety of journals revealed very limited Canadian-specific information on the development of threat assessment policy, threat assessment processes, and the experiences of threat assessment teams in higher education. Watt's (2017) study *Threat Assessment Teams in Higher Education: The Canadian Landscape* and Rogerson's (2018) doctoral dissertation, are the sole Canadian-specific research studies on threat assessment teams in higher education. Rogerson (2018) previously confirmed this finding noting "Despite the student populations of Canadian postsecondary institutions being at a greater risk of exposure to violence, there remains a lack of Canadian research to understand the likelihood or incidents of campus violence" (p. 20). More doctoral researchers in the US are focusing their dissertations on BIT/TAT which is adding to the growing body of knowledge in higher education. This research study will add to the growing body of research Canadian post-secondary institutions and will provide a deeper understanding of Ontario post-secondary institution's threat assessment teams' experiences with threat assessment policy.

2.7 Summary

Threat assessment is an ever evolving process in higher education. Clearly identified functions of the threat assessment team, approaches to threat assessment, and the assessment tools used by the team, while identified in the literature, are often discretionary. As threatening situations are dynamic, well informed swift responses are necessary to keep both the student who

may pose a threat and the campus community safe from harm. These decisions are often difficult to make and involve a balance of non-discriminatory outcomes, best practice in the field, and campus safety (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011). A literature of threat assessment and its related policy and procedures yielded many US sources and very limited Canadian peer reviewed research. As noted, there is little empirical Canadian higher education literature for consideration when developing policy. Thoughtful consideration on how to balance legislation, and unique institutional characteristics will continue to be a crucial challenge for threat assessment teams in higher education.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and answers the following research question: How do public Ontario post-secondary institutions' threat assessment teams experience threat assessment policies? As noted in Chapter 2, guidelines for multidisciplinary student of concern teams (Bennett & Bates, 2015; Deisinger et al, 2008; Van Hasselt & Bourke, 2017; Meloy & Hoffman, 2014; Sokolow et al., 2016; Vossekuil et al., 2002), as well as operating guidelines for school administrators tasked with preventing school-based violence (National Threat Assessment Centre, 2018;) have been developed and implemented in the United States.

In the Canadian context, we have yet to see unified and targeted approaches to the prevention of school-based violence at the post-secondary level. Efforts towards the prevention of violence in schools at the elementary and secondary education level has resulted in each province's own Safe Schools legislation. The circumstances of the development of these K-12 policies must be recognized in order to best understand their development and mandate. Paré & Collins (2016) describe three types of law and policies that have resulted in changes to provincial education legislation: responses to inappropriate behavior, equity, diversity, and anti-discrimination, and anti-bullying policies. While each provincial Ministry of Education has built legislation and policy focused on all members of the school community having the right to feel safe and be safe in their school communities, there exists no federal or provincial legislation that describes the administrative duties of threat assessment teams in the post-secondary context. Legislation that does address violence at a post-secondary level has been developed from an occupational health and safety lens. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

(2020) outlines that "[t]here are fourteen jurisdictions in Canada - one federal, ten provincial and three territorial - each having its own occupational health and safety legislation, outlining the general rights and responsibilities of the employer, the supervisor and the worker". While each of these jurisdictions may have legislation that addresses violence, the legislation has been designed to address violence perpetrated against employees in the workplace and does not articulate the role of threat assessment teams in the response to violence.

Without legislation to define the role of threat assessment teams in response to violence there can be no prescribed direction for the development of threat assessment policies in post-secondary institutions. According to Rogerson (2018), as many as 39.5% of Canadian institutions self-identified as having threat assessment teams. Deisinger et al. (2014) note that "some institutions have focused on the implementation of a multidisciplinary team without the foundation of a clear purpose or an effective systematic process" (p. 107). This act of creating threat assessment teams in response to the "high prevalence and serious nature" of violence in higher education (Watt, 2017, p.50) has not been met with the same alacritous response for mandating legislation at a post-secondary level. The creation of these threat assessment teams is driving the function of teams which results in multidisciplinary teams "that are unsure of their mission, purpose, operation, and utility". (Deisinger et al., 2014, p. 107). Bell (2017) calls for research of "threat assessment teams, the authority granted to them by their respective institutions and how they address different elements of a situation" (p. 88). Canadian research is needed to inform Canadian practices, as American research represents a different educational and societal landscape in which student behaviors manifest differently (Rogerson, 2018). Specifically, there is a critical need to investigate violence in HE and research the elements of violence prevention and intervention programs (Watt, 2017). With few empirical studies

focusing on violence in higher education in Canada it is imperative that ongoing research continues to focus on the experiences of threat assessment teams in higher education.

3.2 Research Method

As a social constructivist, I believe that "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 7). I strongly believe that threat assessment practitioners have developed subjective meanings of their experiences that deeply entwine their involvement with threat assessments and institutional threat assessment policies. Marshall & Rossman (2011) state "[r]esearch designs should include reflection's on one's own identity and one's sense of voice and perspectives, assumptions and sensitivities (p. 96). With this in mind, I reviewed a number of approaches to research in order to select a process that would provide me with a deep understanding of threat assessment teams' experiences with threat assessment policies. Cohen et al. (2000) state that the purpose of the research determines the methodology and design of the research. I sought to understand the experiences and meanings ascribed to threat assessment policies by understanding the threat assessment practitioner's ideologies, assumptions, and feelings of the threat assessment experience (Creswell, 2012). While qualitative data collection seemed like a natural pairing with understanding individuals lived experiences, it seemed prudent to include a quantitative research approach in order to enrich the data collection. This led me to use a mixed method approach to research, as "the usefulness of a mixed method approach is, in part, a function of the interconnectedness of the research methods" (Rogerson, 2018). The interconnectedness stems from collecting and analyzing data, integrating the findings, and drawing inferences from both the quantitative and the qualitative methods combined (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007).

Mixed method research is described as being able to address the how and why types of research questions and is driven by pragmatism which will produce "real answers for the real world" (Cohen et al., 2011). This study seeks to understand threat assessment team's experiences with threat assessment policies from the vantage point of the practitioner and therefore, it is determined that mixed method research is the ideal methodology. However, mixed method research has a number of designs; explanatory sequential design, exploratory sequential design, embedded design, transformative design, and multiple design (Creswell, 2012). When implementing a mixed method approach, sequencing of the quantitative and qualitative methods is the mechanism in which the depth or understanding and the richness of data is seen (Creswell, 2003). Explanatory sequential mixed method design is perhaps the most popular form of mixed method design in educational research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This method requires the use of a two-phase model in which quantitative data is collected first and then the qualitative data is collected to help elaborate on the quantitative results (Creswell, 2012). This type of mixed method provides a general illustration of the research problem in the first phase and through analysis of the qualitative data the second phase a more descriptive explanation of the findings is explored (Creswell, 2012). For these reasons and further explanations which will be included in this chapter, this study will utilize an explanatory sequential mixed method design (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006) to understand how Ontario threat assessment teams experience threat assessment policies.

3.3 Ethics

In November 2020, I applied for ethics approval from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland as this research included interviews with administrators in higher education. This application to the research

ethics board included the completed application, the Chief Student Affairs Officer Permission Form, the participant recruitment document, the phase one and phase two informed consent forms, the survey, and the list of semi-structured questions. Studying threat assessment in post-secondary institutions and in particular, policies developed within these institutions warrants ethical considerations regarding the sensitivity of information. It is for this reason that strict adherence to ethical standards for human research are adhered to in order to ensure the participant's rights were protected. To ensure the participants remained free from harm while discussing institutional policies and their lived experiences, participant information remained confidential (Cohen et al., 2011) and de-identified. Full ICEHR clearance was granted on May 25th, 2020 (Appendix A).

3.4 Research Design

This explanatory research is divided into a two-phase study, as is practice with explanatory sequential mixed method research design. The quantitative survey is phase one followed by phase two which is the interviewing component of the research (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This process of quantitative data collection prior to qualitative interviews is a key strength of this design as the intent is to follow-up on quantitative results and explore the results more in depth through interviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Further, this two-phase method allowed me to assess through interviews how the individuals' specific context influenced the outcomes of the quantitative survey (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.5 Phase One: Quantitative Survey

In phase one of this research study I sought to understand the demographic information of threat assessment teams in Canadian post-secondary institutions as well as there use of threat

assessment policies. An online survey was created to collect this information and was distributed to eight (8) Ontario universities.

3.5.1 Participants & Sampling

There are 22 publicly funded Ontario universities (MTCU, 2020). From this list of Ontario universities eight (n = 8) were selected based on a student population size of 20,000-50,000. This sample size was selected for two reasons: a) based on Rogerson's (2018) finding that 100% of Canadian institution's with a full-time student population of more than 10,000 reported having a team that dealt with problematic student behavior and; b) a small sampling size would allow for the protection of the confidentiality of both the institution participating and the identity of the threat assessment practitioner participating in the research. Currently, there are few Canadian studies that focus on violence in higher education outside published reviews on specific incidents of violence on campus. There are no known Ontario-specific studies concerning the specific experiences of threat assessment teams and the institutional threat assessment policies in Ontario. I used a purposive sampling technique to identify who the Ontario "knowledgeable people" (Cohen et al., 2011; Patton, 1990) are on threat assessment teams. Access to educational research is often an issue especially if access is controlled by gatekeepers who may have positions of power and authority over individuals participating in research (Munro et al., 2004). Researching institutional policies, especially those related to an area that has a high potential for litigation, is a sensitive matter (Cohen et al., 2011; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011). The recommendation for collecting information on sensitive subjects is to recruit 'behind the scenes' contacts through personal connections (Cohen et al., 2011). As a practitioner in the field of student conduct and threat assessment, I utilized a combination of my knowledge of HE in Ontario, practitioners engaged in threat assessment work, common rubrics used to assess threat, and the presence of

risk management practices on post-secondary campuses. To this end, I remotely contacted Ontario post-secondary institutions student affairs divisions (n = 8), with threat assessment teams, with an invitation to participate in this threat assessment research. Of those Chief Student Affairs Officers (CSAO) contacted, 87.5% (n = 7) agreed to provide permission for an institutional representative to participate in this study. Of that response, five (n = 5) institutions completed the phase one survey and four (n = 4) completed both phase one & two. Supporting Rogerson's (2018) finding, 100% (n = *5)* identified their institutions as having a threat assessment team.

3.5.2 Online Survey

On May 25, 2020 I emailed eight Ontario university Chief Student Affairs Officers a Permission Form (Appendix B). The selection of the CSAOs entailed reviewing each institutions Student Affairs organization chart, and identifying the most senior member of the team who would be authorized to grant permission for this researcher to contact an employee of that institution. The permission form highlighted the purpose of the research, the approval I was seeking, the confidential nature of the research, and the option for the institutional participant to refuse to participate in the research. Authorization from the CSAO was indicated via signature on the form or an email response clearly indicating permission to contact a student affairs professional to receive an invitation to participate.

The student affairs professional received a Participant Letter of Invitation (Appendix C) via the institutional email provided by the CSAO. The letter of invitation contained a Qualtrics software link, which when selected brought potential participants to phase one, Informed Consent (Appendix D). The informed consent restated confidentiality, potential harms and benefits to participation, as well as a reminder that the participant was free to discontinue

participation at any time, and partial responses would not be saved or included in this research. To discontinue participation, the participant would need to close the survey or browser window. The online survey titled, *Threat on Campus: Ontario's Post-Secondary Threat Assessment Teams' Experiences with Threat Assessment Policy* (Appendix E) included, at the bottom of the survey, an invitation to participate in phase two of the study.

The survey was comprised of both open and closed questions. The closed questions were used to generate frequency of "response amenable to statistical treatment and analysis" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 382). The two open ended questions were used to provide the participant with an opportunity to provide URLs for public facing policy, and to provide the participant with an opportunity to share any additional information. All survey questions had an open-ended response option listed as 'other', as part of the multiple choice options as the possibilities for responses and the response to the question could not be predicted.

3.5.3 Data Analysis

Analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, which provided enumerations and organization (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) of the data. The survey's entailed 26 dichotomous, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Dichotomous and multiple choice questions were ideal for phase one as the nature of these questions allowed for quick coding and aggregation, providing frequency of response (Cohen et al., 2011), necessary for phase two. Open-ended questions were also on the survey as this was smaller scale research which invited the participant to provide open and honest answers in addition to 'ticking numbers and boxes' and put ownership of the data in the participant's hands (Cohen et al., 2011). Qualitative data from the surveys open-ended questions were themed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

3.6 Phase Two: Qualitative Interview

In phase two of this research study I sought to understand the experiences of threat assessment teams as it relates to their Ontario post-secondary institutional threat assessment policies. A semi-structured interview guide was developed and remote video conferencing interviews were arranged with participants who, following completion of phase one, agreed to be contacted to participate in phase two.

3.6.1 Participants & Sampling

The sampling of participants was predetermined in phase one of this study as participants indicated their consent to participate at the end of the phase one survey. Participants who provided informed consent to continue with phase two were provided an additional informed consent letter (Appendix F) as the nature of the remote interview is different from that of an online survey. In the one-on-one interview the participant was provide with an explanation of the procedures and their purpose, description of risks, description of benefits, disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures, an offer to answer questions, and instructions that they were free to withdraw at any time (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 78). As participants may disclose potentially sensitive, distressing, or information that contradicts good practice, confidentiality was of great importance (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2012; Glense & Peshkin, 1992). As the participant's identity could not be anonymous, I used a de-identification process to conceal the identity of the institution, the threat assessment practitioner, and the any other identifiers (i.e. team name). All participants were assigned participant numbers during the interviews in order to best conceal their identities, and identifiers are deleted to ensure confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2011; Glense & Peshkin, 1992).

3.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

Participants who completed phase one and indicated that they would be willing to participate in phase two were contacted via email. Dates and times were arranged to remotely interview each participant and conduct a semi-structured interview. Eight open-ended questions were developed for the *Phase Two: Interview Guide* (Appendix G) as follow-up to the quantitative data collection process in phase one. All questions were designed to put the ownership of response on the participants (Cohen et al., 2011), though prompts were used if the respondent was unsure what type of response the researcher was looking for. The researcher utilized techniques such as repeating the question, rephrasing the question, or summating a participant's previous response that had highlighted the area in which to elaborate. Any additional questions added to the interview, were approached by the researcher in a consistent manner.

One-on-one interviews were selected as the method of research as there exists a perceived need to avoid negative media and public attention and confidentiality is of extreme importance. Face-to-face interviews were the chosen means of interviewing, particularly so that sensitive questions could be asked in a format that allowed the researcher to use sub-questions and elicit a deeper meaning of experiences' in the participants own words (Creswell, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Initially, the researcher intended to hold the interviews in the physical presence of the threat assessment professional, but a world-wide pandemic required all research to be conducted remotely, as indicated in the ICEHR approval letter (Appendix A). The interview questions were open-ended as to allow the participants to best voice their experiences, unconstrained by any other perspectives (Creswell, 2012). The interviews were audiotaped, with a handheld digital voice recorder for later transcription and to ensure accurate data collection as

recording provided the researcher with the option to review the interview as needed. Additionally, the researcher took hand-written notes to ensure follow-up on questions that arose during the interview, and to utilize as a back-up to the recording in the event of audiotape failure.

3.6.3 Data Analysis

Extrapolating data from the interviews required the researcher to decide on an evaluative approach that would foster an in-depth understanding of the experiences of threat assessment professionals and their threat assessment policies. The researcher utilized the descriptive statistics from phase one which added to the pool of knowledge from phase two. Data from phase two was conducted using an three coding processes. Open coding, which generated categories (Cohen et al., 2011), was the first step in phase two data analysis. The open coding categories were: team composition, team awareness, rubrics and tools, procedures, and threat to self. The categories developed in the initial phase of analysis were recombined in new ways to group referents similar in meaning (Cohen et al., 2011) providing opportunity to tease out nuances. Selective coding was lastly utilized to identify the core themes in a way that was useful for my data analysis.

In ensuring internal validity I engaged in member checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) contacting all four participants and inviting them to review the transcribed interviews for verification of response and provide feedback. Three participants agreed to review the interview transcripts and all confirmed that the transcript aligned with their interview answers. Peer examination (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was also utilized as an internal validity check. A contemporary in the Master of Education Program at Memorial University of Newfoundland, as well as two student affairs professionals working in the field of threat assessment engaged in peer review of the data collection and analysis.

3.7 Researcher Bias and Conflict of Interest

As a researcher and practitioner in the field of threat assessment it is vital that I consider researcher bias in the context of this study. Although I have made every effort to ensure objectivity with the findings, my biases and lens will have shaped the way I interpreted the findings of this study. I have considered confirmation bias, culture bias, question-order bias, misperceptions and misunderstandings of what the respondent is saying, leading questions, wording bias, and the halo effect (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I've reviewed how my gender, culture history and socioeconomic origin have influenced my interpretations of the findings.

My lens as a practitioner in HE in Ontario, training on threat assessment rubrics and tools, and my personal philosophy for working with students were biases I bracketed (Cohen et al., 2011) to ensure I understood the participants experience outside of my own experience. As participants were selected based on my own knowledge of threat assessment practitioners in Ontario HE, I engaged in the member check process, with three participants reviewing and confirming the interview transcript, to further ensure the participants voices were heard.

3.8 Summary

The methodology was developed based on the goals of this study which was to explore Ontario post-secondary threat assessment teams and their experiences with threat assessment policies. Insight was gained into the experiences of threat assessment teams through an explanatory sequential mixed method research design. Phase one of this study surveyed threat assessment teams in an online survey format. Phase two of this study consisted of remote interviews with an individual from an Ontario post-secondary threat assessment team. This

research approach worked well both for the educational context in which it occurred and with my own reflexive inclinations (Creswell, 2012). Descriptive statistics describe the results from the dichotomous and multiple choice questions in the phase one survey. The open-ended survey questions as well as the interview questions from phase two were coded using open, axial and selective coding processes. This coding process provides both a broad view and detailed information about the experiences of threat assessment professionals and their threat assessment policies. Chapter four will explore the results of the research followed by discussion in Chapter five.

Chapter Four: Results

4.1 Overview

This chapter summarizes the results from the phase one-survey and phase two-interview with Ontario post-secondary institutions. Descriptive statistics from the survey, and the themes that emerged from the coding process used in the analysis of the interviews are the focus of this chapter. As this was an explanatory sequential mixed-method study, qualitative research from phase two was utilized to further explain and build upon phase one results. As such, the information from both phases will be presented together in this chapter. It is paramount that the voices of the participants be heard as their narratives provide a personal perspective on the experiences of threat assessment professionals.

Together, the interviews and the surveys revealed several themes which help to answer the overarching question, "How do public Ontario post-secondary institutions' threat assessment teams experience threat assessment policies?" The results are organized into four thematic categories: legal compliance, threat assessment team policy, threat assessment training, and rubrics and threat evaluation. The discussion and recommendations of the results will be discussed Chapter 5.

4.2 Legal Compliance

Legal compliance was an underlying theme, discussed by all phase two participants in this study (see Figure 4.1. for a list of legislation mentioned during interviews). Legislative compliance, for the purposes of this chapter, refers to legislation that originates external to the institution.

Table 4.1

Identified Ontario Legislation Impacting Threat Assessment Teams

Title of Legislation	Last Amendment
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11	2016, c. 5, Sched. 1.
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.31	2020, c. 11, Sched. 15, s. 54.
Free Speech Policy (enacted August 2018)	n/a
Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19	2020, c 11 Sched. 17, s. 6.
Mental Health Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.7	2015, c. 36, s. 1-16.
O.Reg. 131/16: Sexual Violence at college and universities under *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M. 19*	No amendment
Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1	2020, c. 18, Sched. 13.
Police Services Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P. 15	2020, c. 6, Sched. 5.

Note. Ontario legislation identified as impacting threat assessment teams

Research participants identified that knowledge of legal obligations was an essential responsibility of at least one member of the team, or identified they had an institutional representative responsible for identifying legislation that impacted the work of the threat assessment team. Knowledge of current legislation and obligations, balanced with the breadth of knowledge required to appropriately assess risk, was stated as a training must by research participants. Participants identified that there are litigious aspects of threat assessment processes and obtaining skills in this area was a "value add" to the team. Included in this awareness of legislation, was an identified need to understand the connection between actions performed by

the team, recommendations made by the team, and how these would impact the student, the campus community, and broadly all stakeholders with a connection to specific student incidents.

Participants identified a need to balance legal requirements with an understanding of best practice related to violence risk assessment and threat assessment. One participant discussed this breadth of knowledge necessary when considering the example of a campus ban:

> [If] limiting someone's freedom and ability on campus [is involved] this process there should be some understanding of what the legal consequences are, particularly because students can flip between different institutions and…with restrictions on information sharing [between institutions] in place you can end up with somebody else's [student of concern]. (Alex)

As this study focused on higher education in Ontario, a breadth of knowledge of Ontario legislation combined with externally defined best practices for threat assessment, was noted as necessary to effectively manage risk on campus as a member of the threat assessment team. Internal institutional policies were also identified as highly impacting procedures of the threat assessment team. For the purposes of this chapter, internal institutional policy refers to policy and procedures developed by the institution, required directly or indirectly by an external policy (i.e. OHSA) and does not include any policy developed by the threat assessment team. The participant's responses on institutional policy have been categorized into two areas based on frequency of response: campus security, and other institutional policies. These two areas have been defined as they hold their own unique policies that impact the work of the threat assessment team.

4.2.1 Campus Security

Campus security, which includes private security, city police, and Special Constable Services, were identified by 100% of survey participants as members of the threat assessment

team. In phase one, 80% of participants identified campus security as members of their threat assessment team who support the work of the threat assessment process through a variety of tasks (i.e. provide trespass notification). 20% of participants identified campus security as being the chair of the threat assessment team. Participants (100%) identified campus security as a safety resource for the threat assessment team, with the ability to review student's criminal histories, provide wellness checks, and enforce and monitor campus trespass orders. Campus security was also identified as a campus partner and resource for safety and security risks related to sexual violence. As previously mentioned at the beginning of this section, campus security takes numerous forms in Ontario IHEs and as such has different responsibilities related to campus safety, enforcement of provincial and municipal law, and standards for reporting safety and security risks to the campus and broader community.

Sexual violence, defined under the Ministry of Training. College and Universities Act, (R.S.O. 1990, c. M. 19) hereafter referred to as MTCU Act, as:

"sexual violence" means any sexual act or act targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person's consent, and includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism and sexual exploitation. 2016, c. 2, Sched. 3, s. 1.

While not the main focus of this research study, sexual violence was brought forward for discussion by 100% of research participants. Ontario IHEs, under Bill 132, Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act (Support Survivors and Challenging Sexual Violence and Harassment, 2016), amended the MTCU Act to mandate that every IHE that receives regular and ongoing operating funds from the government for the purposes of post-secondary

education…shall have a sexual violence policy". Mandated externally with a number of requirements under law, these internally developed policies contain specific considerations unique, to each institutions own campus community. The threat assessment team must consider the balance of the requirements of campus security to report to city police, with the MTCU Act affording the victim the right to not participate in any investigation that may occur (MTCU, 2/2, 4. 131/16, 20, 2016). Participants (25%) identified the weight of balancing the survivors request for privacy, with the threat assessment teams' duty to respond to accusations of threatening behavior, and the obligations of their campus security to elevate reports of sexual violence to City police stating:

> We recognize those tensions…they are alive and we need to acknowledge them. One of the things we work through is our obligation to report sexual violence and we sometimes wrestle with that. (Perry)

Interviews provided the opportunity for participants to provide an in-depth description of their experiences with threat assessment procedures and this operating framework must be considered as it relates to all other internal institutional policies. A number of institutional operating areas and their policies and procedures were brought forward during the interview by participants. These operating areas and their policies were cited as having a direct impact on the procedures of the threat assessment team. Human Resources was mentioned in two separate yet related facets: a) the responsibility of human resource employees on the TAT and; b) the job descriptions, or lack thereof, of institutional employees and the workload of the TAT (which will be explored in 4.4.2).

Human Resources employees were identified by 80% of participants as members of the TAT either as an 'inner circle' or 'outer circle' member. Inner circle members regularly attended meetings as part of the core TAT. Outer circle, relied on for their expertise in their institutional

operating area, did not attend regular meetings but were relied upon in specific threat assessment situations. Human resources employees were viewed as an integral component of the TAT by 50% of the participants for the knowledge they bring related to legislation and institutional policies. As described by one participant

> [T]he partnership with [human resources] is necessary more often than not as we find there is an intersection with our graduate students or work-study student, or a coach, or a Residence Life staff which is a student but also a staff members. Merging these two worlds has made all the difference. (Perry)

Human resources was viewed as both an integral piece to information gathering prior to and through the duration of the threat assessment as well as to the threat assessment team's creation of outcomes following the threat assessment.

Another institutional area identified as having policies that impacted the TAT were Residence Life policies. All participating IHEs (100%) identified having a residential student population of more than 1001 students residing in their buildings. Participants identified that residence life policies impacted the TAT in that there were internal policies that applied to both the staff working in residence and the students who live in the residence. Athletics and recreation was also identified as an area of the institution with its own internal and external policies which needed consideration throughout the threat assessment process. Student rights & responsibilities (including non-academic and academic misconduct), Human Rights (including Disability Services—as TATs increasingly process more self-directed violence, and diversity and inclusion offices), and Freedom of Expression policies were also discussed by participants as considerations for the collection of information throughout the threat assessment process.

4.3 Threat Assessment Team Policy

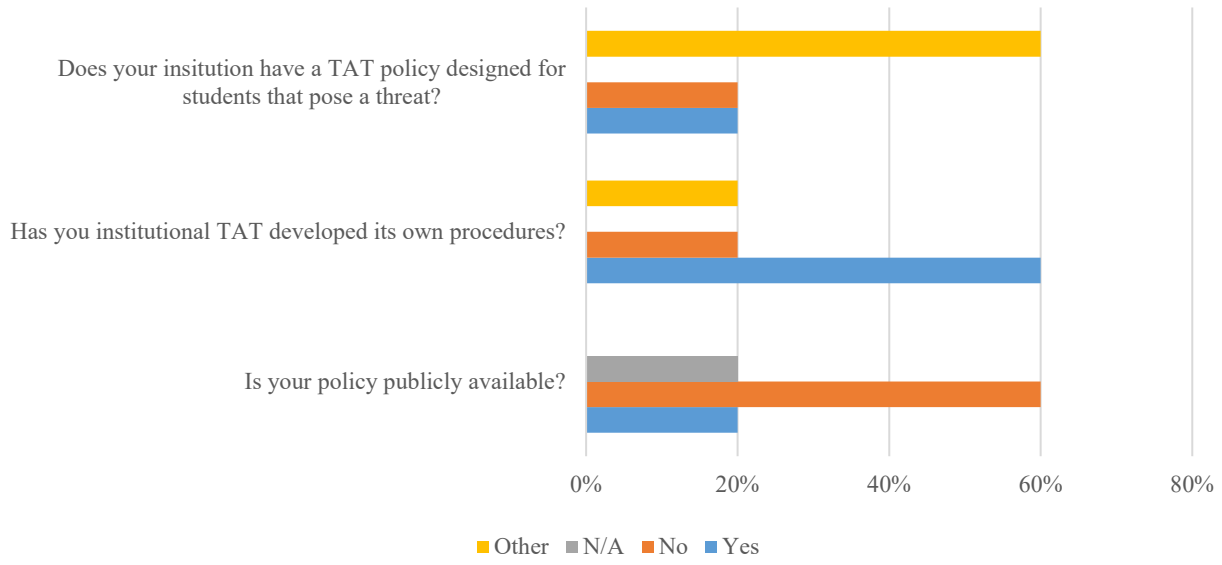
This research study focused on the experiences of threat assessment teams with their threat assessment procedures. Phase one focused on the collection of quantitative information and provided participants the opportunity to share their knowledge related to their institutional threat assessment procedures. The use of the language 'policy' throughout the survey encapsulates policies, procedures and process that contribute to the institutions developed structure of guidelines for the threat assessment team to refer once they had been made aware of a campus incident.

4.3.1 Team Demographics

A mission statement is typically used to communicate a concise explanation of the purpose of the team and therefore provide a foundation for threat assessment procedures. NaBITA (2016) recommends the creation of a mission statement as a basic action item for an institution as they begin to develop a team. Survey participants (20%) identified having developed an objective or mission statement for the TAT, and participants (20%) stated they had an objective or mission statement in development. Participants identified the use of procedures, terms of reference, and policy as documents that would be inclusive of the term 'policy' as these documents direct the threat assessment process. Figure 4.2 provides an overview of survey responses related to the development of threat assessment policy.

Figure 4.2

Threat Assessment Policy Development



Note. Threat assessment policy development in Ontario HE

Accountability for the TAT policy was identified as the responsibility of Campus Police (20%), Student Affairs (20%), and a comprehensive campus approach (20%). Phase one participants (40%) did not identify any areas as having accountability for the threat assessment team policy. Of respondents who did not identify an area of the institution overseeing accountability, 20% identified that another policy, such as a student conduct policy, employment policy or trespass policy would be the policy referenced during the threat assessment process, as that policy would address student behavior outcomes.

Participants self-identified as being members of the TAT for 0-1 years (40%), 1-3 years (20%), 3-5 years (20%), and 5 or more years (20%). Survey participants identified meeting frequency as weekly (20%), bi-weekly (40%), and as needed (40%). This meeting frequency was further expanded upon in phase two with 100% of participants identifying that their teams would meet if an incident arose but that they typically kept to an identified meeting schedule.

Participants identified that their TATs had been working together as a team for $n < 3$ years (60%), and $n > 3$ (40%). When cross tabulated, there was no correlation between years the team was together and the development of a standalone threat assessment policy.

4.3.2 Membership

"Having a multidisciplinary team means having representation from across an institution's various constituencies – administration, faculty, student life, and staff- and can also include departments such as buildings and grounds and/or food services, whose staff members are often in the position to see and hear things that faculty and administrators do not (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 35). Participants (100%) identified their institutional TAT as operating as a standalone committee (20%), a sub-committee of a behavioral intervention team (40%), or as having the same membership/acting as the team that responds to student threat (40%). A list of potential TAT members was provided to participants in the phase one survey (Appendix D). Participants were asked in three separate questions to identify, 1) the Chair or lead of the TAT, 2) select floaters, guests, or outer circle members, and 3) to identify core members of the TAT. The survey asked participants to identify these members of the TAT separately; for confidentiality purposes the membership review has been combined (see Table 4.1) as to not provide institutional identifies. Chair information is also being withheld due to clear identifiers in institutional TAT Chair selection.

Table 4.1

Threat Assessment Team Reported Membership

TAT Member Title	n
Case Management	5
Campus Security	5
Counselling & Medical	5
Housing	5
Student Conduct	5
Human Resources	4
Accessibility & Accommodations	3
Academic Advising	2
Faculty	2
Dean of Students	2
Health & Safety	1
Human Rights	1
Legal Counsel	1
Sexual Violence Response	1

Note. Specific member titles are not included to protect institutional identification

Participants (75%) identified a struggle as to who should be on the team identifying reasons as to why the team may be experiencing a challenge with defining the membership were: a) incidents did not always have a relevant connection to some individuals and therefore those members had little to no input on cases; b) an openness to having many voices at the table as more input meant a more well-rounded understanding of the student experience and the available outcome options

and; c) a desire to have decision makers at the table while acknowledging that workload of senior leadership does not always allow for them to attend.

Membership positions that participants were eager to discuss as they were identified as having a significant student success element were the addition of academic representation and human resources at the threat assessment table. Academic representation could include faculty from a particular program, an academic advisor, the registrar's office, or a position responsible for having in-depth knowledge of academic programs, and continuation/graduation options. This position was viewed as offering options that could speak to the 'humanitarian side' of threat assessment as outcomes not only focused on campus safety but also included a vital 'student success' lens. Human resources, as discussed previously, was viewed as an advantage to the team in that these team members not only had an understanding of employment legislation and employee contracts but could also provide further outcome options for addressing threating behavior. Institutional representation from the area of workplace violence and harassment, and occupational health and safety were also identified as having value at the table as there were very legal definitions of threat that were components of threat assessment in student-employee relationships and student to student incidents that occurred in the institutional workplace.

4.4 Threat Assessment Training

This research study was focused on the experiences of threat assessment teams and their procedures. Training on threat and threat assessment was a theme codified in the analysis and divided topically into two categories: campus awareness and training, and team member training.

4.4.1. Campus Awareness & Training

The International Association of Student Affairs and Servi (2020) addresses the complexity of the university environment for students who must negotiate issues such as drug addiction, infectious diseases, and mental health issues. Offering a variety of educational outreach programs that cater to the needs of the campus community, when done effectively, prepares IHEs to identify, report, and manage potentially threatening scenarios (Bennett & Bates, 2015). Campus awareness of and training on threat and threat assessment was discussed by 100% of participants in phase two. Participants discussed the role of campus training for the entire IHE community, viewing training as not only a significant factor in the success of the TAT but as an integral piece of the safety and security of the entire campus. Watt (2017) noted participants recommended overview training for staff or faculty, and violence triage training for staff or faculty. One participant succinctly stated the need to include the campus community in understanding threat assessment with the following statement:

> Threat assessment is only as effective as the information you have. (Perry)

Participants further identified that for the TAT to be effective the entire campus community needs to know about their responsibilities when it comes to identifying and reporting threat. One participant stated that the TAT should be responsible for:

> Globally changing how campus community members think about threats and disruption and what they should do with that information. (Taylor)

Participants (100%) discussed campus reporting pathways and the campus community having the capacity to identify threats as being integral to the swift response of the TAT. Reporting pathways were divided into two themed areas: direct referral and indirect referral. Indirect referral included areas of campus that are not typically viewed as being impacted by threat, the

library was provided as an example by participants, (25%) and therefore it was identified that such an area did not require their own process for referring students. Direct referral was described as an institutional process that collected reports of threat. One participant (20%) noted that early alert and warning systems support are structures that create an environment in which it is easy to reach out to the TAT. Direct referral was further sub-divided into two areas: personnel reporting and electronic reporting. Participants (100%) identified personnel reporting as institutional areas that accepted direct reports, such as campus security, human resources, sexual violence support, human rights, and conduct offices.

Electronic reporting included online forms, and reporting buttons on institutional webpages. Participants (20%) described hosting reporting buttons on public-facing webpages as benefiting the threat assessment team by allowing the broader community to become active partners in campus safety. This process of actively working to include the broader community in creating a safe environment was viewed by the participant as fundamental to removing threat from campus. While a safe and secure campus environment is undoubtedly one of the main goals of threat assessment management, a cohesive approach to campus safety and security was not seen across Ontario IHEs. Each phase two participant identified their institution as being in different stages of campus awareness and training. This aligns with Watt (2017) who found Canadian IHEs were at substantially different stages related to the implementation of their teams; some had not established a team, some were in the process, and some had been established for many years. When asking participants about training offered by the TAT to the campus community 20% stated they had some reporting and training systems in place but are seeking to do more; 20% stated they were happy with the campus training offered and the campus response

to the training and; 50% stated that the TAT is not currently in a position to offer any training to the campus.

Participants (20%) identified an institutional gap in campus awareness and training that needed to be addressed and felt it was currently overlooked as an institutional priority:

> The whole campus community should have a general idea of threat assessment and each member's individual expertise however, we are still in a phase of campus education where members of the campus community don't know where to report a threat. (Taylor)

Participants (100%) identified a number of areas for improvement in educating and training the campus community on their role in keeping the campus safe. Areas of improvement included marketing and promotion to the broader campus community that aims to provide both training on identifying threat, and training related to reporting processes and expected follow-up from the threat assessment team. Training included targeting both faculty, deans, administrators, and students. Participants (100%) identified a need to facilitate conversations during training that encouraged campus members to share information with the threat assessment team, recognizing that expected responses to threat from the TAT may be different than the response the campus community member demands:

> Other campus community members have different experiences with threat with foundations based in their own human experiences and view threats differently based on a multitude of factors. The TAT threshold of response may not align with the faculty members expected response. (Robin)

Participants (25%) discussed engaging in strategic conversations with the campus community as a vital part of triaging students of concern and managing allegations of threat noting that if information is shared in a timely manner, the TAT is able to have more robust conversations about students of concern. As part of these strategic conversations, participants (25%) explained a goal of training is to clarify the lack of knowledge or lack of understanding of how processes

on campus can interplay to create a safe and secure learning environment and how all campus community members have a vital role to play in creating safe and secure IHE campuses.

4.4.2 Team Member Training

The work of the TAT is specialized, requiring training of its members in order to best and most appropriately address students of concern and threats to campus. Rogerson (2018) found 72% of Canadian BIT members surveyed indicated they had received some form of training be that informal or formal violence risk assessment training. Watt (2017) found TAT members recommended foundational training and practice cases for the entire team. NaBITA (2020) found 26 % of participants indicated their BITs had little to no training. Participants (100%) described the reactive nature of threat assessment work and the need to respond quickly and continually during the threat assessment process. The additional workload of the team was discussed by participants (50%) indicating that for some members of the team, responding to student threat could take up to ¼ of their typical workload. This identified workload of the TAT, as described by participants included the following, but was not meant to be exhaustive: a review of the incident, initial processing and primary assessment, evaluation of the threat including updates to documents as new information is presented, managing the student and other stakeholders, following up with stakeholders, closing the case, and support for other members of the team.

Participants (100%) described varying degrees of participation in the threat assessment for certain members of the TAT. A description of the TAT process was described by one participant as:

> Incidents are triaged in my office first before they are brought to the [TAT], and after the [TAT] meets recommendation for outcomes are sent to [a more senior group of administrators] to make a final decision on actions. (Robin)

This particular description, while not unique, highlighted the process by which some, but not all members of the TAT, are involved in the triaging of cases. Depending on the specifics of the incident, some teams would be learning the specifics of the case for the first time at the table, while others would have substantial background on the incident in question prior to arriving at the table.

Participants spoke to the responsibility of the team being a balance of campus safety and student success. Included here is acknowledging the risk associated with threats as well as balancing mental wellness issues, managing chronic suicidality in a way that is respectful of the student's mental health and not denying them opportunity predicated solely on risk. Humanitarian aspects of the responsibility of the team was acknowledged by all research participants and considered to be a strength of the TAT. This aspect of threat assessment will be further discussed in section 4.5.3. Participants identified (100%) balancing humanitarian aspects of the case is important as all threat is not created equal. An incident could occur in which a student-employee must be placed on administrative leave from a paid working position, but will still be successful in the classroom, or perhaps the student of concern needs to be moved to another classroom but does not need a campus ban. This was identified as a strength of membership and responsivity of threat assessment team members. As one participant stated, the approaches to the outcome from different members of the team:

> [M]ay diverge but we are certainly talking about safety and we are trying to be coordinated in a safety response. (Perry)

Scope was identified as having great significance to the work and training needs of the threat assessment teams. Scope entailed direct scope the individual team member had, the scope

of the threat assessment team, and the scope of the institution. Participants (100%) identified that this type of member training was necessary as there was a pertinent need to understand the direct scope of the TAT. Watt (2017) noted debate amongst participants as to "whether the team should focus on behavioral problems generally versus violence risk specifically" (p. 56). This theme was prevalent in the interviews as 25% of participants described performing an extensive and continual re-evaluation process of the work of the team; (75%) discussed a need to re-evaluate the scope and function of the team. One participant (25%) asked in the interview:

> Should my team be using a BIT or Care model to assess and manage our students of concern? (Robin)

Participants (25%) noted the scope of the team also played a significant role in acquiring the correct type of training stating:

> [T]here is an intersection between having knowledge on laws and our obligations while also this breadth of knowledge on violence risk and it is a skill that requires certain training….[and] we need a comprehensive understanding of mental health. (Perry)

Mental health support was a strong theme with participants (100%) expressing a need for the team and the campus to receive ongoing training regarding student support. Individually, each team member has their own expertise and when this information is shared during the TAM, members need to recognize they should not overstep their individual area of expertise (Deisinger et al., 2008). While individual expertise is necessary and recognized for its ability to move through the TAM, participants (100%) described a need for common training in order to engage in more robust table conversations about the types of students the TAT is managing as common training among the threat assessment team brings a shared language and understanding for supporting students of concern.

4.5 Rubrics and Threat Evaluation

Assessment of an alleged threat is part of TAM and as Deisinger et al. (2008) describes answers the questions: 1) Does the person pose a threat of harm, to [themselves], to others, or both? That is, does the person's behavior suggest that [they] are on a pathway towards harm? and, 2) If the person does not pose a threat of harm, do [they] show a need for help or intervention, such as mental health care? (p. 69). Participants discussed, in depth, assessment processes of the TAT, highlighting reasons for the type of assessment chosen by the team to use in the threat evaluation process, pros and cons of such processes and tools available for the TAT.

Phase one participants selected from picklists responses to questions related to assessment processes of the TAT (Appendix D). Phase two participants expanded their survey answers on evaluative tools during the interview process providing a richness to the data collection. All participants (100%) identified that their teams had assessed students of concern within the last 12 months. Participants were asked to identify the type of threat assessment conducted by the TAT that most closely aligned with institutional practice. Participants selected, in order of descending response, threat assessments were conducted by an internal team (40%), by and internal team and an external team (40%), and one participant (20%) identified that they did not perform formal threat assessment but rather used a triage tool to assess level of threat and determine next steps.

When asked to speak to the number of students of concern assessed for threat monthly over the past 12 months, participant's responses fell into two categories. Participants (60%) identified more than five students ($n>5$) had been through the threat assessment process monthly in the last 12 months; 40% of participants identified less than 5 students ($n<5$) had been through a formal threat assessment process monthly within the last 12 months. As all phase one participants indicated their IHE engaged in threat assessments within the past 12 months, all participants

(100%) were able to answer the question "What threat assessment approach does your team use to determine level of threat? Participants had the opportunity to select more than one option from the choices below and the response was as follows:

40% responded - A decision is made based on the experience and expertise of individuals on the team

20% responded - A tool(s) is utilized to determine level of threat

40% responded - A combination of professional experience and a tool(s) is used to determine level of threat

20% responded - Other (please specify): We use a tool to triage.

Phase one and phase two data was merged and evaluative approaches to assessing threat was themed into three sub-categories: assessment rubrics, collateral strategies, and professional expertise.

4.5.1. Assessment Rubrics

Assessment rubrics provide threat assessment teams with a centralized system for inputting information the team has access to and are used to provide direction for next steps in the threat assessment process. Assessment rubrics are a tool used by the TAT to input and process information in order to provide the team with an unbiased/consistent approach to assessing risk and threat. "Without a rubric, or by using separate rubrics [for every case], or by using rubrics inconsistently, institutions run the risk of biased and inequitable services, which is problematic both ethically and legally (Schiemann & Molnar, 2019). Question 19 of the phase one survey expanded on the previous question about 'approach' and asked participants to identify the 'tool' used by their TAT to assess level of threat. As 40% of participants identified that their

institution did not use a tool or rubric to assess level of threat the remaining 60% of participants identified the specific evaluative tool their TAT utilizes in threat assessment. 60% of participants indicated using a tool which is supported by Rogerson (2018) who found 52.8% of team members reported using professional violence risk assessment tools. Specific assessment tools were described, all of which are professionally established and widely-used tools; the specific assessment tool name is not included in this report to maintain confidentiality of participants. Participants (25%) who identified their institution as using a combination of professional expertise and a tool described a process in which the tool is first used by the threat assessment team to evaluate the student and make recommendations and then those recommendations are passed to another decision making team who uses this report, and combination of their professional expertise to ultimately make a decision about the safety and security of campus. All participants (100%) described a process in which ultimately experience and expertise of the final decision maker was considered when determining the outcome of the threat assessment; participants who had previously not identified 'professional expertise' as having a role in the evaluation of the SOC in phase one, elaborated on the use of professional expertise in phase two. Participants (75%) further discussed tools and rubrics as being effective at providing guidance for the team but desired more tangible assessment rubrics and matrixes to help guide decision making. Participants (75%) further voiced apprehension to using US developed rubrics and other assessment tools as participants voiced a Canadian-specific lens to threat assessment evaluation.

4.5.2. Collateral Strategies

Phase two participants described the use of collateral strategies as a means to gather more information regarding the campus threat. Participants (75%) identified the following collateral

strategies utilized by their TAT for determining level of threat: interviewing the SOC, interviewing witnesses and reporting parties, reviewing SOC social media, independent medical review, third-party evaluation – independent medical review, forensic psychiatrist, CPIC (Canadian Police Information Centre). It was stated by participants (25%) that these types of collateral strategy review may not be performed by the threat assessment team themselves as the responsibility for the review may lay with another area of the institution (i.e. campus police requesting a CPIC review). One participant (n=1) that the threat assessment team does not engage in background checks or review social media and only utilize the information provided by the SOC in the threat assessment. The collection of information through multiple data points allows the TAT to use the collateral knowledge to assess the SOC in a well-informed manner. Collateral knowledge can be applied to assessment tools to create a 'live' threat assessment document that is continually re-evaluating the SOC as new information is presented. One participant (n=1) identified their TAT as applying collateral knowledge to assessment documents, and continuing to add new information as new information arises as it aids in the evaluation of next steps for the SOC.

4.5.3. Professional Expertise

Professional expertise, the lived and learned experience of the TAT is highly valued by members of the team. Deisinger et al. (2008) notes that the assessment process should be guided by human judgement and not rely too heavily on assessment tools. As stated earlier, the majority of participants (60%) indicated the use of professional tools as the evaluative choice for their TATs. NaBITAs (2020) most recent survey of BITs found 82% used a standardized risk rubric, 16% used subjective evaluation, and 2% identified as using no risk measurement. Phase two interviews found 100% of participants stated that the expertise in the room is utilized to

determine the outcome of the threat assessment. Participants (100%) spoke to the intention behind utilizing expertise with both positive and negative responses regarding working with and relying on professional expertise:

> I don't want to undermine the value of the people's lived experience but I think it's instead of being 100% of a puzzle we need it to be 60 or 50 percent and we need to round it out with other [assessment tools]. (Taylor)
>
> It is inconsistent across approaches; it doesn't always lead to consistent decisions because no two cases are the same (Alex)

Professional expertise was regarded as essential for input on decision making especially if the decisions had the potential for negative institutional outcomes. Participants (25%) identified the purpose behind the use of professional expertise was to bring institutional leadership into the decision-making process:

> There is great experience at the table. The [senior leaders] use their collective experience and expertise of the institution to make a decision on the outcome. [They] use their expertise and institutional knowledge to determine if the recommendations from the [TAT] are appropriate given the circumstances of the threat. (Robin)

75% of participants identified the process for determining next steps involved taking recommendations to another group of decision-makers. Participants (100%) described the intention behind the inclusion of professional expertise in assessment as it provides a humanitarian piece to the threat assessment process. Professional expertise supports the threat assessment by balancing the emotional pieces of support with the legal obligations of the institution. As stated:

> We have this tool but it doesn't talk about how you add the humanity to interactions with people who are at risk. They are a person with a story and who have experienced disenfranchisement maybe for most of their lives and found barriers in all sorts of places. (Perry)

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter summarized the findings from phase one survey and phase two interviews with select Ontario post-secondary institutions. Descriptive and inferential statistics from the survey, and the themes that emerged from the coding process used in the analysis of the interviews were the focus of this chapter. As this was an explanatory mixed-method study, qualitative research from phase two was utilized to be further explain phase one results. Together, the research question "How do Ontario post-secondary institutions' threat assessment teams experience threat assessment policy?" was answered. The results showcased the themes: legal compliance, threat assessment team policy, threat assessment training, and rubrics and threat evaluation. The discussion and recommendations of the results will be discussed Chapter 5.

Chapter Five: Discussion & Implications

5.1 Overview

This chapter will discuss the results of this study, taking each sub-research question, addressing it through the data gathered and, applying insight collected from the relevant literature. This research used a multi-stage mixed methods approach to answer the question, "How do public Ontario post-secondary institutions' threat assessment teams experience threat assessment policy?" The discussion that answers the sub-research questions is followed by sections on implications for practice, research limitations, future of Canadian threat assessment, and finally the conclusion.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings describes the significance of research results by combining the thematic data in Chapter 4, current understanding of the experiences of threat assessment teams with their threat assessment policies, and critically examines how this combination further advances research on threat assessment in Ontario higher ed. The discussion is an opportunity for gaps in current threat assessment literature to be filled.

5.2.1. What is current policy in Canadian post-secondary institutions related to student threat assessment?

This section explores current policy within the institution that participants identified as having an impact on threat assessment policy. Institutional policy is influenced by legal obligations which dictate institutional involvement in certain facets of Canadian, and specifically Ontario law. Rogerson (2018) described the demanding work of threat assessment professionals, noting that balancing the complex and competing legal obligations of each student incident

posed a significant financial risk to the institution, especially when not addressed. NaBITA, attempts to fill this legal knowledge gap through training opportunities for its members (National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment, n.d.), however this is a US based organization with different legal and education systems. Canadian-specific, and in particular, Ontario-specific training materials on the legal aspects of threat assessment such as: Canadian legal context, relevant case law, privacy law, employment related law, human rights, and disability law (Rogerson, 2018) would be beneficial training for the Ontario based TAT.

External legislation, although originating by an external governing body, was explored as externally created policy provided direct legislation regarding certain actions (i.e. human rights), mandated the creation of an internal policy (i.e. sexual violence), and/or had a direct link to the creation, or lack thereof of threat assessment policy (i.e. campus police). Figure 4.1 identified Ontario legislation impacting threat assessment teams and listed eight participant-identified external policies. This list was not meant to be exhaustive but rather provide foundational blocks with which to begin to explore the complex nature of the development of internal institutional policy. As this sub-question focused on current policy related to student threat assessment, we explore the connections between external legislation and the direct work of the TAT. Of note, 50% of participants identified the Occupational Health and Safety Act, (1990) as legislation that impacted the procedures of the TAT. This related to both the work of the members of the TAT and, impacts on student employment; here the heavy emphasis on threat assessment outcomes for students that were working on campus is explored. The impacts of the OHS, and the responsibilities of the TAT will be discussed in section 5.2.3.

When developing threat assessment outcomes for students currently working on campus the OHS, must be considered. Of specific consideration with the OHS, was outcomes that may

result in a termination of the student's employment for behavior that posed no risk in the work environment. The Occupational Health and Safety Act, (1990) describes the duty of the employer to assess the risk of violence in section *32.0.3 (1) An employer shall assess the risk of workplace violence that may arise from the nature of the workplace, the type of work or the conditions of work.* The employer must "take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker" (OHS, 1990). Consideration must be made for the specifics of the threat and the outcomes associated with the evaluation. In the circumstance of assessing students employed on campus, the TAT policy plays a very large role in the outcome. TATs that do not have established policy concerning threat assessment for institutional employees must now consider the implications for sharing student information under both the OHS and FIPPA. TATs that have Human Resources, and/or Human Rights members on the team may be better positioned to determine best practice for sharing information. TATs that do not have a policy related to threat assessment outcomes that may impact student's employment must now operate on a case by case basis; determining who will share what specific information with whom and developing justification as to why this possible breach of external legislation is warranted. As well, OHS, considerations for faculty and instructors in the classroom environment must be considered. Aiming to support the student in a threat assessment process must be a balance of understanding where the privacy needs and rights of the student, intersects with the rights of HE employees to work in a harassment and violence free workplace.

A student that poses a threat in a specific area may pose little or no risk in other circumstances. Threat may be identified as impacting the specific duties of the student staffing role or the work environment, conversely the student may be identified as posing a threat in a specific learning environment but pose no risk in their employment duties. We go in circles here

with what are reasonable outcomes; student outcomes cannot be evaluated in a vacuum and removing employment opportunities can hinder student success. Removing the student from their campus employment opportunity could result in immediate housing or financial strain, replacing one student crisis or threat with another. As noted:

> [It is] important to account for all foreseeable factors that may impact a student's success rate with regard to the outcome of a threat assessment. (Alex)

Bans or trespass from campus, another potential threat assessment outcome, were discussed by100% of participants as often times, removal of a student who may pose an immediate safety and security risk to campus was an interim or long-term solution to the prevention of campus violence. Campus trespass orders administered by campus police were administered in situations where the student was identified as posing an immediate safety concern to the campus community. NaBITA (2019) noted that trespass orders were first and foremost directed at establishing campus safety as students who pose an immediate threat need to be, at least temporarily separated from the institution. Kyle, Schafer, Burruss, and Giblin, (2017) found that "incidents of campus-based violence have resulted in consideration of how institutions manage facility access" (p. 648), which is significant as TATs must work with trespass issuing bodies, be that campus police or local police, to ensure that campus access restrictions are working towards eliminating or reducing the threat and are not purely punitive. As discussed earlier, TATs must now consider which campus partners need to know about a student's trespass as TATs do not want to cause further harm to the SOC or the campus community.

Bennett & Bates (2015) further support the argument that campus trespass is not a means to an end of eliminating threat on campus noting that just because a person who poses a threat has been separated from an institution (whether suspended/expelled through the student conduct process, termination of employment, or a no trespass order issued by law enforcement), it does

not mean the threat is necessarily mitigated. In fact, such a separation can serve as a trigger for action, which requires institutions to develop policies and procedures that may go beyond the institution's boundaries (p.8). Kyle et al. (2017) further note that it is understandable that institutions feel compelled to enact campus safety recommendations but there still remains a lack of strong empirical validation for these dominant campus practices. Participants (25%) discussed the challenge of balancing individual privacy needs, and legislative privacy requirements with the support needed to ensure student success:

> Privacy is of consideration but what if a student's loved ones, parents, and partners ask about our decisions? We need to be challenged on our processes to get better at them but currently institutions are very tightlipped in this area. We need to connect the student while also setting limits. Empowering families to set limits with the students is another way we can keep our community safe. (Perry)

Wrap-around support for a SOC is idyllic but difficult without the full cooperation and consent of the student. Often, to ensure the student has access to supports, the TAT asks the student to permit the sharing of private information between parties that normally would not receive information due to external legislation. Strong TAT policy allows for the process of information to occur smoothly, minimizing potentially negative legal consequences. While only 20% of research participants identified having a standalone policy for student threat assessment, 100% of participants were able to describe some sort of agreed upon procedures for conducting threat assessment. These procedures came in many forms: written documents, verbal-historical information sharing, and/or policy or procedures conducted by another campus partner (i.e. human rights, student conduct, disability services, case management, residence, sexual violence, academic advising, and human resources). One participant described their TAT policy being imbedded in other policies explaining that campus trespass policy is located in one area of the institution, and threat assessment is located in policy in a separate area of the institution. These

explanations for the lack of standalone policy for the TAT were described as campuses engaging in the creation of formal or informal memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs). While MOUs and SOPs can create exceptional working agreements between two or more campus partners, MOUs and SOPs if they are agreed upon by the institution, should be codified into policy. Threat assessment teams need their own standalone policy; policy which balances the requirements and mandates of external legislation, institutional policies, and creates space for institutional models of student success. These threat assessment policies support the work of safe and healthy campuses and provide the decision makers with the power and authority to make decisions. TAT policies developed at an institutional level are campus specific, recognize the special legal obligations related to violence risk and information sharing (Hart, 2015, as cited in Watt, 2017) and take into account institutional history and processes that must be integrated into the current and future work of the TAT.

5.2.2 To what degree are post-secondary institutions involved in student threat assessment?

The analysis of the research data identified the central topic of institutional involvement akin to institutional investment; specifically investment in the TAT employee through clearly articulated job descriptions and, via TAT member and campus training. Threat assessment teams require regular, ongoing and topical training (NaBITA, 2018) as the cycle for managing crises involves planning, prevention, response, recovery, learning, and training (Ulmer, 2017). Bell, (2018) identified that 51.38% of participants stated there was no training or professional development conducted related to the functions of their team. This research study found 75% of participants indicated they and/or their team needed additional professional development to perform their TAT responsibilities at the capacity in which the work is intended. Participants

(100%) described a number of different training needs for each member of the TAT; principles of threat assessment, process training, records and data management, mental health, policy, legal obligations, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and assessment and evaluative tool training. This list clearly articulates the vast skill and knowledge base required to run an effective team, recognizing that this level of training requires a substantial financial investment from the TAT's institution. TATs identified that institutions need to secure funds for training and tools, establish training protocols within their operational structure, provide more time to conduct assessments, and reduce regular job duties for members of the TAT as it is imperative for team effectiveness (Rogerson, 2018; Watt, 2017).

The litigious nature of the TAT was discussed by 75% of participants with reference to ensuring legal obligations were met and/or known to the team. TATs must receive training on the legal implications of their practice, including the scope of their practice to best ensure that legal obligations are met throughout the threat assessment process. Institutions must provide adequate funds and time for such training, particularly as earlier noted by Rogerson (2018), Canadian institutions do not currently have access to pre-developed legal training packages such as the educational opportunities afforded to our US counterparts. One participant explained the balance of responsibilities with an explanation as to why training is necessary:

> We didn't study threat assessment in school, it wasn't even a chapter but the work of the TAT requires comprehensive knowledge of mental health, laws and legal obligations, direct scope of the individual team member, the scope of the institution, combined with a breadth of knowledge on risk. (Perry)

It is clear that the work of the effective threat assessment team requires extensive institutional investment, both for the cost of training and in recognition of the time required to complete effective training. While TATs can continue to grow their knowledge base with training, the

institution must demonstrate its investment in the TAT by codifying the responsibilities of the TAT member within their job description. As Canadian TATs have been developed heterogeneously (Warren, 2017), job descriptions may differ for different TAT members working in different areas of a singular institutions and, are likely to vary between institutions. Specific job descriptions of the TAT is a variable that needs further exploration. Rogerson (2018) found 62.5% of interviewed participants indicated stress and fear was the result of pressure to make decisions regarding situations with risk to others and, described teams seeking training in self-care strategies such as team debriefing, training on compassion fatigue, and strategies to avoid burnout. This type of self-care training is highly beneficial as the time commitment of the TAT is significant which, and if not aligned with institutionally developed job descriptions, can leave the TAT member overworked and burnt-out.

The combination of knowledge base, skills, and humanitarian sensibilities must be recognized by the institution. If institutions want well-trained, effective TATs that provide students with the best possible outcomes while balancing the safety and security needs of the campus, a substantial investment must be made. Rogerson (2018) recommended that institutions further establish training protocols within their operational structure as it is an essential step in establishing effective teams. It is not surprising that NaBITA (2020) found a lack of budget and time for training was commonly reported as a weakness for teams. Institutions must be prepared to allocate training budgets, formalized job descriptions to accurately reflect the work of the TAT, and recognize the additional psychological and emotional work of preventing campus tragedy.

The broader campus community, and often the larger community must also be well trained in order to best respond to SOC. This concept was explored and the results underscored the

overarching theme of creating a culture of reporting within the campus community. Research participants (100%) identified training the campus community as an integral component of the TA process. Campus threat assessment training needs to go beyond the boundary of instruction on the principles and mechanics of threat assessment. Training must capture the specifics of threat assessment and the responsibilities of TAM while broadly aiming to create a culture of reporting on campus. As Sokolow, (2010) explains, a reporting culture works on a macro level, transcending severity, proactivity and trust relationships and gets the right information to the right people in real time. A reporting culture has internalized interconnectedness of the community, recognizes concerning behavior, can support students during critical incidents and, understands their responsibility in creating a safe and secure community (Sokolow, 2010; Ulmer, 2017). Institutional administration must support educating and training the campus community about the types of concerns or behaviors that may warrant reporting to the TAT.

93% of teams use marketing and advertising to make their communities aware of the team and, use marketing campaigns, websites, logos, and educational sessions to train the campus community on how and what to report to the TAT (NaBITA 2018; 2020) . Participants discussed a number of methods used to educate their campus communities, with a strong focus on campus referral training, and marketing and promotion of the TAT. Educational sessions should move beyond simple reporting and work towards breaking down campus silos by providing training on FIPPA, confidentiality, and other legal components of the TAT (Deisinger et al., 2008; Sokolow, 2010). An important point to note was brought forward by participants (25%) regarding clarity on information sharing and campus partners:

> Campus partners need clear information, disseminated to all the parties that have been articulated in the response strategy but they do not need all the information; they need enough information to do their jobs. (Perry)

50% of participants identified a need to focus campus training on the threat assessment process itself as well as educating the campus community on the teams' expertise and portfolios:

> Our training and marketing needs extensive development. We need to get out into the community and start advertising and training with professors and Deans, with the academic side as there is a lack of knowledge or a lack of understanding of how processes on campus can interplay so I think doing training and education and being able to market and brand what we do is my goal, but more strategic conversations need to happen before that. (Taylor)

> We recognize we need to promote the team and provide training on campus and, this will happen once we decide who should be on the team and what the teams mandate should be. We are still trying to decide if we should offer more of a Care model or a BIT model. (Robin)

Participants (75%) described a need to develop training for the campus related to perceived issues of safety and concrete issues of safety. Participants described working with campus partners, in particular those with concerns that fall under OHS:

> How do we tell staff and faculty that what they perceive as a threat is not a threat? How do we keep the privacy of SOCs that are known to us, sometimes quite frequently, and explain to those with concerns that we work with this student all the time and this is their typical behavior? Those that support the student do not view their behavior as an elevated concern. (Robin)

25% of participants identified that they currently offer opportunities for the campus community to come learn and share concerns and offer consultations with campus partners so that the campus community can ask questions about their experiences and talk about options for addressing their concerns. Ulmer, (2017) listed additional topical considerations for campus training including: training on supporting students who have been hospitalized, self-injurious behaviors, suicide prevention, bystander intervention training, sexual misconduct reporting responsibilities, and conflict resolution. Mental health, an additional topic identified for campus training will be discussed in 5.2.4

Another manner in which IHEs can demonstrate their desire to create a culture of reporting is to clearly identify for the campus community how to share information with the TAT. Reporting pathways for incidents on campus and SOC was discussed in phase two interviews. Participants (100%) identified processes for reporting SOC that were unique to their own institution. Campuses with the most robust reporting systems involved many different areas of the campus community. Staff, students, and faculty alike had knowledge of and access to options for reporting SOC. Participants, regardless of where they identified their institution in the process of creating a culture of reporting, described a desire for their campus community to recognize and identify more than one reporting pathway. Institutions that had pre-developed reporting forms described the greatest number of reporting pathways. Participants (25%) commented on the difficulty of discovering, outside of contacting campus security, who on campus could/should collect information about SOC and what would happen with that information when reported. 25% of participants identified trying to re-imagining reporting pathways, as institutionally they were looking to start new processes within an already developed institutional system. Participants (50%) identified that institutionally they had a number of reporting pathways, including different offices, and different methods (electronic, in-person) and that systems were available for any members of the campus community to report threat as well as opportunity for the broader community to report perceived threating behavior. Reporting links on multiple campus pages was also a resource described by participants as a system piece that is working towards a culture of reporting on campus.

TATs have the responsibility to support the creation and maintenance of safe and secure campus communities. Ludeman et al. (2020) identified a growing international movement which advocates for a whole university approach and 'healthy university' programs. A shared language

on the types of student concerns, the work and scope of the TAT, and key concepts or items to highlight when making a report are all outcomes of effective campus training programs. Creating a culture of reporting ensures TATs receive reliable, and timely information about campus incidents and SOC which ultimately creates the safest campus experiences for everyone.

5.2.3 What institutional variables may influence assessment practices?

This sub-research question was not answered by this research study. Due to the small scale design of this study, analyzed data did not clearly articulate if variables such as institutional student population, location, satellite campuses, number of years of operation of the TAT, number of years of membership on the TAT, TAT Chair, or internal location of TAT policy influenced the practices of the team. It is recommended that further Canadian research explore the relationship between institutional variables and how these variables influence threat assessment practices.

5.2.4 Which areas of the institution are most involved in assessing student threat level?

Guidance exists in current literature regarding the institutional areas to include in the formation of teams which address students of concern. As participants (100%) identified the institutional areas to include on the team, and areas in addition to the current literature were not identified, this question is addressed through participant identified institutional areas that could create the strongest Ontario HE threat assessment teams. A list of institutional positions with the membership of research participants' threat assessment team was identified in Table 4.1. Although this list aligns with recommendations for membership (Deisinger et al., 2008; NaBITA 2016), participants (75%) identified that they struggled with who to put on the team and that their TAT membership required reconsideration.

Inter-disciplinary threat assessment teams are responsible for monitoring SOCs, managing the flow of information (Dunkle et. al, 2008, p. 588) and ultimately supporting student success. Participants identified the strength of core membership:

> There may be times that the registrar's office provides options for graduation for students that may be on that decline, as well as campus safety has insight on previous dealings with the student and, then counselling is necessary for any sort of information they are able to provide. (Alex)
>
> The TAT as a whole is able to provide guidance in a manner that is beyond the capacity of a single employee or area of the institution. (Taylor)

Clearly, a well-rounded team can support the most appropriate outcomes for the SOC and the campus community. However, all participants (100%) identified that the high number of SOCs with mental health issues impacted the work of the TAT. As IHEs continue to face increasing demands on resources that support students living with mental health issues (Bell, 2018; Gallagher, 2014; Harper & Wilson, 2010; Ludeman, et al., 2020) TATs must acknowledge that students living with mental health issues have the potential to affect other students, staff, and faculty on campus (Bell, 2018; Rogerson, 2018). In recent years IHEs have witnessed more students enrolling that have severe mental health issues which are obstacles to engagement yet they expect they will be provided with specialized care and individual support from the institution (Ludeman, et al., 2020). NaBITA (2020) noted that SOC referrals were connected to: student conduct (11%), alcohol and drugs (2%), general well-being (26%) and psychological including depression, anxiety, suicide, Asperberger's, and psychosis (61%). Rogerson, (2018) found "8% of SSAOs and 50.0% of BIT members interviewed described the prevalence of mental health issues as a challenge facing the work of teams" (p. 138). One of these challenges identified by research participants was the creation of policy which balances the needs of SOC, the campus community, and external legislation. Bell, (2018), noted when drafting policy,

administrators must have knowledge of disability laws that protect students to best avoid creating policy with discriminatory practices. It is recommended to include mental health professionals as key campus partners engaged in the process of TAT policy creation to ensure students living with mental health issues are appropriately addressed in the threat assessment process. One participant described the role of the TAT mental health professional:

> [They] are going to be helpful to sensitize people to the reality that there are other reasons that may be contributing to student's behavior and that we have to split into a totally different approach to support a person in crisis. (Perry)

A further recommendation is to have the mental health TAT team member(s) provide direct training to the campus on areas such as referring a student to the TAT without requesting the student to disclose a disability, supporting students who are open about their medication, counselling, accommodations (Sokolow, 2010), and, educating the campus community on the TAT's process for addressing students with mental health issues. Participants described campus partners working in mental health as being instrumental in making appropriate and effective decisions throughout the threat assessment process.

Participants (100%) identified that they required positions that had the institutional knowledge to and the authority to enact recommended outcomes of the TAT. Who to put on the team did not stem from a lack of training on which institutional positions are recommended for membership but rather teams were developed based on institutionally-specific cultural variables. Each participant articulated a different structure, membership, and triage and assessment process for their SOCs. Participants described the membership of the TAT and each participant expressed reasons for why the TAT structure worked well or not well within their own institutional framework. For example, each participant identified a different institutional position as the TAT Chair. The TAT Chair, or co-chair in some cases, included institutional

positions in security, registrar's office, case management, student conduct, SSAOs, and human resources. With such variety of TAT Chairs, reporting into different institutional areas it is ever more apparent that further research into Canadian threat assessment is needed to identify which models of TAM provides the strongest support to students and creates the safest campus communities. The TAT Chair's position within the institution will influence policy creation and the model used to assess student threat as well as the creation of TAT policy. Policy should ultimately provide guidance on the structure of the TAT.

60% of total participants identified their institutional TAT as having developed or currently developing their own team procedures. However, when participants were asked if their institutions had policy designed for students that pose a threat the answer became more complex and more difficult to accurately place in dichotomous categories. Chapter 2 identified the definition of policy as "existing to ensure the University's processes and practices align with the University's vison, mission, and values, regulatory and governance environment…[p]rocedures for implementation, communication and compliance monitoring should be developed for each policy" (MUN, 2021). Referring to this policy definition, this study found 20% of participants had a policy that supported the work of the TAT. Institutional policies ensure TAT processes are aligned in a manner that fulfils legal obligations for operating a safe campus, maintaining a safe workplace and, adhering to mental health legislation (Pochini, 2008 ascited in Rogerson, 2018). 75% of participants further explained the specific type of document that was used by the team to guide decision making or described other institutional policies that have the potential to have jurisdiction over a threat assessment team policy.

This lack of consistent framework for TAT policy is not unique to threat assessment but rather aligns with a lack of coordinated legislative approaches to collect information on student

conduct as a whole. There exists a lack of unified approaches to collecting data and, reporting criteria not only between Ontario IHEs but sometimes within the institution. This is supported by Rogerson (2018) who noted that while the US Clery Act requires all IHEs to report campus crime statistics, in Canada there are no provincial or federal requirements or standard for reviewing campus violence and disruption. The evidence suggest that TAT data collection in Ontario IHEs is organized by each institution and to compare between Ontario IHEs is rather difficult as there is currently exists no common language or guidance on how and what to report. Participants (100%) described multiple reporting pathways for the campus community, multiple processes for assessing and evaluating the SOC, multiple institutional areas keeping records, and differing membership and chairs. IHEs in Ontario that felt their processes worked smoothly noted that evaluation and re-evaluation of the model of the team and the tools used have made a commitment to continue to evaluate the TAT as it is a necessary process, the result of which is a high functioning TAT.

5.2.5 How is threat assessed?

The discussion on threat assessment must include mention of the structure in which the assessment takes place as participants identified that the structure of the team informed the assessment of the SOC. Participants each described a unique threat assessment model, and TAM process that supported the currently developed policy within their IHE. The process of the threat assessment investigates and evaluates the SOC's threatening or concerning behavior(s) and, typically relies on dynamic variables when evaluating the level of risk (Borum et al., 2009; Meloy et al., 2014; O'Toole, 1999; Randazzo et al., 2012). Deisinger et al., (2008) identified that a key aspect of the threat assessment process is to look ahead in the SOCs life and see if there is any potential for changing situations which may affect the likelihood of violence.

Violence risk was discussed by participants (100%) and each participant described the evaluation, or lack thereof, of the SOC's risk of violence. Participants described assessing behavior that aligns with Meloy et al, (2014) definition of violence which is as any actual, attempted, or planned injury of other people that is intentional, nonconsenting, and without lawful authority. However, when discussing the types of SOCs the TAT was supporting, participants described SOC behavior that more closely aligns with the World Health Organization's, (2020) definition of violence; any threatened or actual use of physical force or power, against oneself or others that has the likelihood of resulting in harm. Participants (25%) had a clear path and within their threat assessment process that supported the evaluation of violence risk. Of note, 75% of participants (75%) described a struggle with defining threat and SOC risk in relation to evidenced-based risk rubrics developed in the US:

> It's my hope that we are starting to integrate more tangible assessment rubrics and matrixes to help guide our decision making. (Taylor)
>
> We found that the HCR-20 context is different from what we are dealing with and is very specific. The NaBITA context is correct, within higher education, but the threshold for threat is difficult to reach as we are not seeing the types of traditional threats that the United States is seeing. We are seeing lots of suicidality and harm to self, a lot more of the Care portfolio and case management work. We are using the NaBITA tool right now as it is working for us to triage risk of violence and provides recommendations for steps for the team. (Robin)

ATAP (2006), identified that regardless of the specific tool utilized in a TA, the following should be considered:

- Assessor must avoid sole reliance on checklist/instrument/tool
- Assessor must be trained and qualified on the relevant instrument or tool
- Instrumentation utilized must be reliable and valid as well as appropriate for the current issue
- Assessor must be aware of the limitation of any instrumentation utilized

- Assessor must stay current with new developments and outdated versions (p.8).

Participants identified threat assessment tools as only being part of the equation when it came to assessing threat. 60% of participants identified the use of professional expertise in combination with a TA tool as their preferred SOC evaluative method. 40% of participants described using only professional expertise at the table for one or more stages of their institutional threat assessment process. One participant (20%) identified the use of a tool and professional expertise but stated that institutionally they utilize risk mitigation tools instead of threat assessment tools. The language used to describe threat assessment and the process in which threat is assessed varied from institution to institution. Who to include in the threat assessment process, and how to select a method to evaluate threat are questions that require further study in the Ontario context.

When asked of participants how they came to select their threat assessment process responses highlighted the unique needs of each IHE. Responses included: the cost of training, the location of training (local), the process had always been conducted this way, this is what worked for specific institutional needs, and after extensive evaluative process the currently TA process and tool are what works best for the campus community. The institutional structure, unique to each institution as noted by the researcher during the SSAO search phase of this study, informed the flow of TA information and decision making. An example of this institutionally specific structure and it's relation to the TA process came from participant statements:

> The [senior decision makers] rely on the threat assessment performed by the [TAT] who uses [redacted] tool. The recommendations from the [TAT] are reviewed by the [senior decision makers] who use their collective experience and expertise of the institution to make a decision on the outcome. (Robin)

Rogerson (2018) noted that expertise and the background of the team members has a large influence on the "structures of violence prevention work in postsecondary campuses" further stating that until more Canadian research is conducted in this area, teams should ensure expertise is available to make the most appropriate decisions (p. 181). Campus process and institutional strategy experts must be included in the TA process. Participants identified that expertise at the TA table was valuable as even with the use of a tool and consistent approaches, the decisions were not always consistent because each SOC case is unique. Participants (25%) described this variation or inability to provide a 'one-size fits all' threat assessment as concern related to opening up the institution to potential liability. Having experts engaged in the decision-making process was expressed as a way to potentially mitigate any legal risk. As Deisinger et al., (2008) note that in circumstances where the individual TAT member or the team as whole does not have authority to move forward with recommendations, the team needs access to senior administrators who do. The value of the TA tool was found in its ability to support decision making of the team and was in the best interest of the SOC *and* the institution.

Sole reliance on TA tools was expressed as a concern by participants (100%) in connection to mental health support for SOCs. Dunkle et al., (2008) noted "while detecting and monitoring potentially violent students is an important role of threat assessment teams, these teams can also be used to monitor other students who may be troubled or troubling in other ways (e.g., suicidal students, students with substance abuse problems, and students with eating disorders) (p. 589). Participants described working with chronic suicidality and managing the SOC in a manner that is respectful of their mental health and does not deny them opportunities predicated solely on risk. Participants (25%) described using [redacted] tool and noting that the tool didn't talk to the emotional piece to providing support or how to add humanity to the interactions with SOC.

Mental health concerns are overwhelming campuses and evaluative tools need to be more closely aligned with this identified Ontario need.

Campus communities must be involved and educated about the TA process to ensure they know what to look for, how to report, and how TA outcomes take shape within the campus community. This inclusion of the campus community is essential in the TA process as the campus community needs to have the knowledge that the TA process aims to support student success, which often means balancing safety needs with student success needs; keeping the SOC engaged in the campus community rather than severing relationships. The tool, professional expertise, the combination of the TA process varied at each participating institution. Although varied in TAM process, all participants agreed that evaluative tools are only as good as the information the TAT has. The threat assessment process requires further study, but it is evident that the tools used by these teams need to align more closely with Ontario's needs for supporting students.

5.3 Future Practice and Research Direction

Current practices in Ontario post-secondary threat assessment provides great opportunity for continued advancement and the exploration of threat assessment team best practice through a Canadian lens.

What is current policy in Canadian post-secondary institutions related to student threat assessment? Recognition of the significance of the interplay between external legislation and the TAM process is imperative as the TAT must operate within the confines of externally created and directed legislation. Warren et al., (2017) notes that TAMs has been developed in ways that varies with the needs of the specific region, the resources made available in these areas, and the

policies and legislation that have been written. Litigation, for TAT processes that contravene external legislation is a concern for TA practitioners in Ontario. As earlier identified, Ontario-specific legal framework training is a must for TATs, who must both develop institutional TAT policies and perform high-risk assessments in a litigious environment. Randazzo & Cameron, (2012) stated that evidence of Governments articulating support for the development of threat assessment protocols has been demonstrated, for example, by the MTCU which developed funding initiatives which would have all post-secondary personnel trained in threat assessment. Ontario IHEs should engage the Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities in conversation to better understand the institutional expectations related to campus threat assessment. As all publicly-funded Ontario IHEs must adhere to the same legislation, it is vital that conversations with the MTCU discuss how legislation can support the work of the TAT, and further, how information can be shared between intuitions as this ultimately will allow IHEs to focus on the success and safety of all members of the campus and broader community. The work is challenging, and TATs need spaces created that allow for policy development support, discussions on structure and TA models, and allows for resource sharing, in an open and transparent environment.

This study found that the threat assessment management process is dictated both formally and informally to the TAT through verbal instruction and through participant identified documents. Each participating institution had a different type of document and method of communicating the mission of the TAT. Institutions that held a policy, a document that met the definition of policy, were in the minority. Participants without a TAT policy identified that a process was in place that they would identify, for all intents and purposes, as directing the work of the TAT in the manner a policy would. The literature review identified the "authority for such

a team should be clearly addressed through institutional policy and procedures and support of senior administration" (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 81). It is recommended that future research involve document analysis of currently developed Ontario threat assessment teams' *policies* to provide further voice to the experiences of threat assessment teams and their threat assessment policies. Document analysis research will help direct the creation of Ontario-specific threat assessment policies.

To what degree are post-secondary institutions involved in student threat assessment? Institutional support for the work of the TAT was a need expressed in this study by participants. Areas of institutional support were identified related to the specifics of the TAM process and, to support for the individual employee. Resources, including training and training budgets for the team as well as the broader campus, and job descriptions that included the work of the TAT were an identified need. This finding is supported by Rogerson, (2018) who found that team members felt pressure to do the work "without additional funding for training or team support that would alleviate the increase in workload for individuals members" (p. 130). Participants identified that a significant amount of their workload related to the work of the TAT and wondered how other institutions identified the workload within job descriptions for comparable positions.

The implications of these findings provides a foundation for many future research studies related to threat assessment resource allocation as well as the development of job descriptions for members of the TAT. Research questions should focus on aspects of job descriptions such as academic and career expertise required, trajectory of the TAT role, evaluation of competencies and the relationship to pay scale, workload and its relationship to burnout, and hours dedicated to specific TAT responsibilities. Resource allocation for staff development training in higher ed.

should also be studied in terms of it's relationship to institutional policies that articulate staff development and make mention of threat assessment training.

What institutional variables may influence assessment practices? This study focused on the experiences of the threat assessment teams and their policies. Phase one focused on identifying institutional variables which may impact TA policy; variable which are easily metriced such as number of students living on campus, FTE, TAT membership size, and years of membership on the TAT. The intent of collection was to compare variable metrics between IHEs; due to the small-scale design of this study, analysis of this variable data did not provide conclusive variable connections. Larger scale mixed-method explanatory studies are needed to collect these types of institutional metrics in order to best develop data on the variables that influence assessment practices. Areas for further variable research include the connection between physical location of the IHE and TAM model and, choice of TAT Chair and its impact on the threat assessment model. Other concepts to explore include expertise at the TAT table and the implications for practice. The relationship between professional expertise and TAT policies such as, are members of the TAT and their expertise influencing the TAM process, or is the process identified in policy dictating the expertise required at the table? Further, this study indicated that each institution had a different area accountable for the policy (i.e. campus police, conduct located in the Dean of Students office, multi-department reporting, student affairs). An inclusion of the identification of TATs that triage threats from the campus community, including staff, faculty and, students and the connection to area of accountability would provide guidance on Ontario TAT best practice. This variable, policy accountability, would make for great graduate research as areas of the institution that have the breadth of knowledge and the authority to act on threat may impact the types of policies developed for TAM and the mission of the TAT.

Which area of the institution are most involved in assessing student threat level? This study utilized a purposive sampling technique and as such the participants worked within IHEs who currently triage student threat. As such, this data does not include information from a randomized sample which would provide a broader understanding of institutional areas involved in threat assessment. Participants identified that mental health concerns were overwhelming their TATs and that they required mental health expertise to best create success plans and to triage threat appropriately within the campus community. Mental health professionals were identified as a must during the threat assessment process as they brought a specific type of professional expertise needed to best understand a SOCs strengths and limitations. Professional expertise extended beyond mental health professionals and included positions within the institution that had the experience and the power to enact outcomes that aligned with the mission and vision of the university and supported student success.

Areas of the institution most involved in threat moves beyond the membership of the TAT and includes the involvement of the campus community. Kyle et al., (2017) suggested that the opinions of campus community members, should be considered when creating campus safety initiatives. Campus training, including training of the TAT, is necessary to create a culture of reporting as it provides foundational threat assessment knowledge to the community who in turn, reports back to the TAT, furthering the TATs ability to triage SOCs. Participants that identified they marketed to and provided training to the campus community reported more institutional areas engaged in the basics of threat assessment. These campuses offered more reporting touch-points than IHEs that currently did not offer training to the greater campus community. Future research studies should focus on TAT policies and the connection to the campus community. Do TAT policies articulate these relationships with campuses partners that act as reporting

touchpoints? How do these TAT policies differ based on the unique campus needs? Further, what is the relationship between number of reporting touchpoints and early detection of campus threat? Do more reporting touchpoints increase the likelihood SOCs will be referred earlier and ultimately curtail incidents of campus threat? How do campus communities currently engage in supporting SOCs? Research in these areas will further the Canadian discourse on best practice for team membership, training, and TAT policy development.

How is threat assessed? Threat assessment, as described in Chapter 2 involves the evaluation of disruptive or concerning behaviors in order to ascertain if the SOC is a threat to the campus and, to determine imminence of the threat. This process of threat assessment was discussed at length by participants, each of whom had a different institutional experience with *threat*. Threat, although defined, was described by participants in a variety of ways. Participants described threat as students violating trespass orders, students involved in intimate partner violence, students experiencing a mental health crisis, faculty expressing perceived threatening behavior, etc. This is significance as a prevalent theme in this study was a lack of common language, and definitions. In fact, when it came to assessing threat, participants (25%) expressed that they did not perform threat assessments as they are defined. The majority of participants expressed a need to evaluate what model of TAT would best support their mission, (behavioral intervention model, violence risk model, care, or a hybrid of multiple models) and noted that a determination of model will dictate how threat is assessed. Best practice for type of TAM model Ontario-based TATs should use is an area for exploration in future studies

The majority of participants identified that they were seeking TA tools that supported the triaging of student threat, as it relates to mental health, within the Ontario post-secondary context as it was noted that threat to self can cause a whole range of necessary responses. Participants

felt the assessment of threat and the process would dictate who should be on the TAT and what type of team they would ultimately be. TAT training was an identified need within a Canadian context as participants identified that assessing threat and the categorization of threat required expanded understandings of threat and violence as participants described engaging with a very limited number of SOCs traditionally understood to be a threat. A multidisciplinary team that acts as a central triage point (Rogerson, 2018) for SOCs may be a better fit for teams who wish to engage in preventative or proactive work, a goal of the TAT expressed by all participants. This heterogeneous approach to the development of TATs has had its practical approach rooted in a need to address threat on campus rather than through scientifically rigorous methods (Warren et al., 2017). Future research should explore the reasoning behind the genesis of the TAT and the connection to its mission and design.

Assessing threat involved the use of US developed tools, customized tools specific to the institution, and the use of professional expertise. It is evident that in relation to identified Ontario-based TAT needs, further exploration of the efficacy of currently utilized threat assessment tools, and teams solely utilizing professional expertise is prudent. However, it is paramount that Ontario, if not all Canadian IHEs develop a common language for how we describe these teams, how we define key concepts, and how we manage and evaluate the threat assessment process. There is a need to assess threat in a manner that speaks to the experiences of Ontario threat assessment teams.

5.4 Limitations

There are a number of limitations to note on this research study. I chose eight public Ontario post-secondary institutions for this study based on their FTE student population of 20,000 – 40,000, combined with practitioner knowledge of institutions with threat and crisis

response teams. The number of participants in phase one was five and the number of participants in phase two was four, the result of a small participant pool. The majority (80%) of the participants were selected by the CSAO to participate. While all participants indicated they had a leadership role within the team, and were mid-level student affairs professionals, all participants held different types of positions within the institution. CSAO selection was based on the researcher reviewing each institutions website and organization chart to determine who the CSAO was. CSAO's, by selecting institutional representatives, acted as gatekeepers, thus determining who could act as research participants for this study and limiting outreach to other TAT members.

As a practitioner in the field of threat assessment I bring my own worldview and interpretation of findings to the research. Bias is always a consideration in research and I integrated my bias into the interviews with the additional questions and follow-up. These additional data points may not have been provided if the researcher was unfamiliar with the work of the threat assessment practitioner. I attempted to mitigate the bias by corroborating the findings through consultation with other researchers and with the current literature.

The body of research knowledge is very limited within the Canadian context and the researcher could not locate any peer reviewed research specific to Ontario. Peer reviewed research from Watt (2017) and Rogerson (2018) was relied on heavily to provide a Canadian higher education threat assessment lens. Application of these findings outside of these specific IHE demographics needs further exploration. The results may not be generalizable to colleges, private institutions, or international IHEs. This study sought to understand the threat assessment teams' experiences with threat assessment procedures and not the campus violence itself. The design of this study sets the stage for future research on threat assessment within the Canadian

context. More research is needed through a Canadian lens to further develop the Canadian higher education threat assessment field.

5.6 Conclusion

Rogerson's (2018) groundbreaking research on behavioral intervention teams in Canada laid the foundation for future research on threat assessment teams in Canada, as the research indicated that 39.5% of teams used the term threat assessment in their name. These threat assessment teams funtioned as reactionary teams responding to threats on campus and the function of these teams did not align with proactive best practice for addressing students of concern (Rogerson, 2018). This research study aimed to understanding the experiences of threat assessment teams' with their threat assessment policies. In practitioner conversations, I became aware that different post-secondary institutions were choosing to support different models of threat assessment management (TAM). These different models included all aspects of violence prevention from team member selection, to policy and procedure development, to the tool used to determine level of risk. With the threat of litigation on the minds of so many administrators in higher education, particularly those that work with students engaged in threat assessment processes, it was prudent to expand the Canadian literature focused on the experiences of HE professionals working in threat assessment. This study utilized a mixed method approach of confidential, surveys and remote interviews which provided a platform for discussing Ontario post-secondary threat assessment teams' experiences with threat assessment policies.

Gun violence and the images associated with its devastation, come to mind readily when discussing threat assessment. Following targeted peer violence attacks at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Northern Illinois University, École Polytechnic and, Concordia University threat assessment teams began to appear on post secondary campuses. However, there has been a

relatively small number of mass shootings and threats of gun violence in the Canadian post-secondary landscape. To this end gun violence should not be the sole concern for consideration of a threat assessment as it is not the only form of targeted violence on campuses that institutions are confronted with. As Watt (2017) explains, violence occurs in higher education in a diverse manner, which may include intimate partner violence, stalking, general violence, sexual violence and on occasion group-based or honour violence. With such a high potential for violence to occur on campus, threat assessment teams must have strong policy in place to ensure all types of campus threat are explored.

Gatekeeping, complex hierarchical systems, and a lack of consistency in positions between IHEs has lessened the opportunity for threat assessment research in the field of HE. Prior to Rogerson's (2018) dissertation, there was no centralized repository of the number of institutions performing this type of student support in Canadian HE. This lack of research spawned the genesis of this research study. While most students will never have school violence affect them directly (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski & Reddy, 2004), there exists pressures from government bodies and parents to demonstrate that administrative measures exist to keep students safe (Perotti, 2007). Institutions must continue to develop strategies for preventing campus threats with effective prevention and proactive approaches to campus safety that must be viewed as a top priority for post-secondary institutions. Early identification of SOCs is for naught if there is no system in place to collect this information and evaluate the nature of the report. In the words of one research participant:

> A single evaluator can use the best violence risk assessment tool (or checklist) out there, but no risk assessment tool is worth squat unless you have good data to put into it and, a multi-disciplinary [redacted] Team can collect more data and in a more timely fashion than any one professional can trying to it on their own. (Alex)

Some of the arguments of focusing on behavioral problems generally are to maintain a broad focus on multiple problems (e.g., related to mental health, substance use, suicide, self-harm, violence), to focus on prevention of escalation and early detection of problems, and to increase communication and collaboration among diverse professionals (Sokolow et al., 2016; Watt, 2017). The consideration for early identification of threat requires IHEs to utilize processes whose scope includes the assessment of all types of threat on campus. This common goal of institutions in this study was to provide the most appropriate level and type of student support for all impacted parties while balancing this with maintaining safe and secure campus communities. This ultimate mission of supporting student success highlights the need for a multi-disciplinary team that includes campus partners that work towards this common goal with the student. Institutions highlighted the need to include human resources positions as this was pertinent for addressing SOCs with on-campus employment. Human resources personnel were also highly sought after for team membership due to their training and understanding of external legislation, such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Mental health professionals, both for their work on the TAT but as well as the training they can provide to the campus community was another position that participants described as being essential to the work of the TAT. Senior administration, another example of professional experitse that participants identified as essential for successful TAM was highly sought after for their insitutional knowledge and their ability to enact appropriate outcomes.

While professional expertise is highly desired and regarded at the table, tools for consistent evaluation are wanted by the team. Tools need to speak to the evaluative needs of the Ontario-based TAT. This study, while small in sample, highlights the Ontario HE need for evaluative tools focused more on self-harm and other harm such as gendered and sexual violence, with less

focus on highly regarded and commonly utilized US developed tools, which have been developed with gun violence as a focal forefront. Although there is nuance to assessing each new case, even those cases involving the SOCs we see most regularly, there is a need for threat assessment tools that speak more broadly to the specific types of threats that Ontario IHEs are processing.

Legal obligations and training on legal obligations were a consistent theme in this research study. Participants identified that there was a lack of pre-packaged and easily accessed training for TATs. Legal concerns were not only discussed due to the potential grave consequences of conducting threat assessments without legislative knowledge, but it was brought forward that there was a general lack of legal training for administrators in HE. This was a topical concern for specific items such as the long-term impacts of issuing campus trespass orders but it was mainly discussed due to its relationship with the creation of TAT policy. It is small wonder that policy specific to the work of the TAT was reported by only 25% of participating institutions. Without the knowledge-base or understanding of the interplay of external legislation on threat assessment work, as well as a lack of standardized guidelines from the MTCU on the development of threat assessment policy, it seems to contravene common sense that the majority of IHEs would have TAT policy in place. Legal training for HE administrators and, in particular those that work threat assessment is crucial as more and more institutions must take on the work of supporting our most vulnerable students.

Further to the conversation of training, it is crucial for IHEs to invest in training both the TAT and, the campus community. TATs must be kept abreast of current literature, law, best practice and, other areas necessary to effectively engage in the responsibilities of the TAT. Minimally, the campus community must be aware of the TAT, its mission or purpose, how to

report SOCs and, how to safely and appropriately engage with SOCs. The responsibility of the IHE does not stop with training. Institutions must recognize the specific skills necessary to perform the responsibilities of the TAT by creating job descriptions that identify the professional and academic expertise required for the work as well as compensate accordingly both for skillset and for the time it takes to perform the work of the TAT. Without institutional support and recognition of the commitment needed to be an effective TAT member, IHEs will most certainly be trodden with burnout.

The transition to post-secondary studies can be a time of exploration and success for many students who encounter new challenges such as an increase in academic work and new social engagements. Campus culture will not be experienced the same for a small number of students. For any number of reasons these students present a safety risk to the campus through the threat of harm. Threat assessment teams that provide training and resources to the campus community act as institutional pillars, promoting an environment in which student safety and student success are seen as an integral part of the student experience. An experience in which struggling students feel no shame or fear in seeking support and in which the work of the TAT is seen as valuable to not only students, staff and faculty, but to the institution as a whole.

This study sought to understand threat assessment teams' experiences with threat assessment policy. Policy, and in particular TAT policy, is created to fill gaps in institutional areas that do not provide direction on the responsibilities of the TAT and, provides a standardized foundation from which to build. Institutional policies from all areas of the institution need to align with and be understood in the context of the work of the threat assessment team. TAT policies cannot be viewed as standalone policies. These policies cannot be developed without input from all institutional partners, including the students. Threat

assessment professionals in HE must understand the legal obligations of TATs and IHEs, as these obligations will influence the boundaries of such policies.

Future research must continue to push the boundaries of institutional gatekeeping, allowing access to TA practitioners to further understand the experiences of threat assessment teams and their threat assessment policies. Far too often, IHEs require conversations related to perceived student threat to occur out of the public eye. This study analyzed data collected from Ontario IHEs and in particular, from practitioners supporting students requiring elevated levels of support. There is much research to be conducted in the area of threat assessment within the Canadian HE context. Further, Ontario-based studies can expand on this studies research question concerning the experiences of threat assessment professionals. Research into job descriptions, campus violence trends, training and, threat assessment tools are just a few of the areas with which to build future research from. However, IHEs must first develop common language with which to discuss these topics and with which to define the parameters of measuring them by. As participant 'Alex' asserted, "it would be hepful [around the table] for everyone to have general training around the principles of assessment and the legal obligations in some form of standardized training for the Canadian context". It is vital that we continue to seek further understanding in the field of threat assessment in higher education as student threat, school violence, and safety concerns are unlikely to leave our campus communities in the near future.

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Appendix A: ICEHR approval letter

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

ICEHR Number:	**20201372-ED**
Approval Period:	May 21, 2020 – May 31, 2021 **REMOTE METHODS ONLY**
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Robert Shea Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	*An exploratory study of threat assessment team procedures in one province's post-secondary institutions*

May 21, 2020

Mrs. Melissa Dileo
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mrs. Dileo:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. **However, no recruitment or data collection involving in-person contact can proceed during the public health emergency. Only the remote methods in the approved protocol can be used at this time. Recruitment or data collection involving in-person contact, using the approved protocol, can begin when restrictions are lifted.**

In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to May 31, 2021. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before May 31, 2021. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. If you need to make changes during the project which may raise ethical concerns, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes for the Committee's consideration prior to implementation. If funding is obtained subsequent to approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR before this clearance can be linked to your award.

All post-approval event forms noted above can be submitted from your Researcher Portal account by clicking the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Kelly Blidook, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

KB/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Robert Shea, Faculty of Education

Appendix B: Chief Student Affairs Officer - Permission Form

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Education

St. John's, NL Canada A1B 3X8
Tel: 709 864 3402 Fax: 709 864 4379
www.mun.ca/educ

Date, 2020

Good Morning CSAO name,

In the coming weeks, I, Melissa DiLeo, a Master's student in the Post Secondary Studies program in the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland will be administering a research study on threat assessment team experiences with institutional threat assessment policies. This research study survey is being distributed to a number of Canadian post-secondary institutions in Ontario.

Your institution has been selected to confidentially participate in this research and I am seeking approval:

- to survey and interview a chair, director, or coordinator of your student affairs team that supports students of concern;
- This project will make every reasonable effort to ensure confidentiality and has met the guidelines of the *Tri Council Policy Statement: Ethical Research Involving Humans;*
- This project has approval from the *Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICHER) at Memorial University of Newfoundland* REB# 20201372-ED;
- The student affairs employee that I will be contacting has the right to refuse to participate in some or all of the research.

Dr. Chris Rogerson's 2018 dissertation, Use and Perceived Effectiveness of Multidisciplinary Teams to Address Problematic Student Behaviour to Prevent Campus Violence in Canadian Higher Education, was the first study of post-secondary Behavioural Intervention Teams in Canada. I aim to add new knowledge to the Canadian field of research. Your employee's responses will directly contribute towards the Canadian state of scholarship within post-secondary threat assessment administration, and the lived experiences of those working with institutional threat assessment policies.

If you are in agreement with participating in this **confidential** research study please sign the attached form.

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Education

St. John's, NL Canada A1B 3X8
Tel: 709 864 3402 Fax: 709 864 4379
www.mun.ca/educ

Questions or concerns about this survey can be directed to Melissa DiLeo, msdileo@mun,ca or Dr. Rob Shea, Robert.Shea@mi.mun.ca@mun.ca

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland (REB# 20201372-ED). Should you have any question related research ethics, privacy, confidentiality or survey approval please use REB #20201372-ED when contacting Dr. Russel Adams, ICEHR Chair, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 709.864.2513or icehr@mun.ca

Thank you!

Melissa DiLeo
Memorial University of Newfoundland
M.Ed Candidate, Post Secondary Studies
Faculty of Education
msdileo@wlu.ca

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Education

St. John's, NL Canada A1B 3X8
Tel: 709 864 3402 Fax: 709 864 4379
www.mun.ca/educ

Date, 2020

I have read the letter from Mrs. Melissa DiLeo, a Masters student in the Faculty of Education who is conducting a research study on threat assessment team experiences with institutional threat assessment policies as part of her masters thesis. I understand that this research has been approved by the Tri Council Policy Statement: Ethical Research Involving Humans and the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland REB # 20201372-ED I support and provide approval for this research to be conducted on my campus.

Name: _____

Institution: _____ Date: _____

Signature line: _____

Appendix C: Recruitment - Participant letter of invitation

Subject: Confidential – Research Participation Request

Hello research participant

In the coming weeks, I, Melissa DiLeo will be administering a research study on **Threat Assessment Team Experiences with Institutional Threat Assessment Policy**. This research study survey is being distributed to a number of Ontario post-secondary institutions in one province. You have been selected to receive an invitation to participate in this research and I have included a link to the survey and informed consent letter.

Your responses will directly contribute towards the Canadian state of scholarship within post-secondary threat assessment administration, and the lived experiences of those working with institutional threat assessment policy. As a staff member working with threat assessment, I encourage you to share your experiences and opinions.

Please participate in this confidential research study. Please select the link to the 26-question survey to review the informed consent letter prior to participation in this research.

The survey should take 20 minutes to complete and will be open for two weeks.

Questions or concerns about this survey can be directed to Dr. Robert Shea, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, 709.684.6926 or Robert.Shea@mi.mun.ca

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland (REB#20201372-ED). Should you have any question related research ethics, privacy, confidentiality or survey approval please use REB #20201372-ED when contacting Dr. Russel Adams, ICEHR Chair, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 709.864.2513or icehr@mun.ca

Thank you!

Melissa DiLeo
Memorial University of Newfoundland
M.Ed Candidate, Post Secondary Studies Faculty of Education
msdileo@wlu.ca

Follow this link to take the Survey:
Take the Survey

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
https://mun.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aXGKyCsS4dsOjB3?Q_DL=zgzqjAwOFaHOJbl_aXGKyCsS4dsOjB3_MLRP_6mLwfgUp9D4k01D&Q_CHL=email

Appendix D: Phase One – Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Phase One - Threat on Campus: Ontario's Post-Secondary Threat Assessment Teams' Experiences with Threat Assessment Policy

Letter of Information/Consent for Participation (ICEHR#20201372-ED)

Researcher: Melissa DiLeo, M.Ed. Candidate, Post-Secondary Studies, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, msdileo@mun.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Robert Shea, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Associate VP Academic, Student Affairs and Research, Fisheries and Marine Institutie of Memorial University of Newfoundland, 709.684.6926, Robert.Shea@mi.mun.ca

You are invited to take part in Phase One of a research project entitled "Threat on Campus: Ontario's Post-Secondary Threat Assessment Team's Experiences with Threat Assessment."

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It will provide the basic premise of the research and what your participation will involve. This form will also describe your right to withdraw from the study at any time. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. Please contact the researcher, Melissa DiLeo (Information noted above) if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there are no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:

In order to advance the Canadian state of scholarship within post-secondary threat assessment administration, we must understand threat assessment teams lived experiences with institutional threat assessment policies.

With limited Canadian research in the areas of student conduct, behavioural intervention teams, and threat assessment, conducting a key informant analysis of threat assessment teams' experiences with their institution threat assessment policy is essential for creating the most promising practices for addressing campus threats. This research is part of my Master's thesis in the Post-Secondary Studies, Faculty of Education, at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

This study seeks to understand (i) current policy in Canadian post-secondary institutions related to student threat assessment (ii) to what degree are post-secondary institutions involved in student threat assessment (iii) what institutional variables may influence assessment practices (iv) which areas of the institution are most involved in assessing student threat level and (v) how is threat assessed?

Purpose of Study:

The objective of this research study is to develop an understanding of Ontario's post-secondary threat assessment teams experience with threat assessment policy. For the purposes of this research the following definition are provided:

policy- a plan or set of ideas that are officially agreed upon and denote what to do in a particular situation (Cambridge University Press, 2019);

student-focused- policy specifically relating to threat assessment support for students, does not focus on administrative staff/faculty threat assessment;

threat- the perceived possibility of harm; potential danger (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014);

threat assessment- the process of gathering information related to threat for decision making (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014);

threat assessment team- a multidisciplinary team that reviews and discusses students that have raised concerns, significantly disrupt others, and/or may be at risk of harming themselves or others (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008).

What You Will Do in this Study:

As a key informant in post-secondary threat assessment, you have been invited to participate in a research study involving two phases. Phase One: In this phase the participant is invited to complete a 26 question on-line survey. After the final question of the survey there is an invitation to complete Phase Two: a one-on-one interview process with the principal investigator. While participation in both phases is optional, to participate in Phase Two, one must agree to participate in Phase One. The identity of the survey and interview respondent will be known to the researcher. Participation in this research is confidential. Your confidentiality will be maintained through the use of unidentified quotations in the final report. All notes and survey results will be kept for a period of five years, under a password-protected hard drive, in accordance with Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research.

Length of Time:

Phase One: The 26 question on-line survey should take the approximately 20 minutes to answer.

Withdrawal from the Study:

All of the questions asked provide answers from which you can select from as well as, an opportunity for you provide your own written response. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any point with no penalty. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer. All incomplete surveys will be eliminated from the data pool.

You can request your data be removed from the study after your participation has ended by requesting the removal of your survey. This request can be processed prior to the data being aggregated. Requests for removal of data can be made in writing to the researcher at msdileo@mu.ca prior to June 15, 2020.

Possible Benefits:

There has been significant growth on college and university campuses in the area of threat assessment. This study will benefit the Canadian research community by adding to the empirical research in the area of post- secondary education and threat assessment. This study with provide post -secondary education administrators with benchmarks for current threat assessment policies, current threat assessment teams experience's with those policies, and, provide recommendations for further research.

Possible Risks:

There are no physical risks associated with participation in this study. There are no expected or known psychological or emotional risks associated with this study. This study is limited to post-secondary institutions in Ontario, which could have some negative professional consequences should informed observers infer your participation and responses. Participation in this study is confidential and all data will be de-identified in any publications emanating from the research.

Confidentiality:

The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and responses will remain confidential.
The consent forms will be stored separately from the survey so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses. Please do not put your name or other identifying information on the survey. Although the data from this research project will be published and presented at conferences, the data will be reported in aggregate form, ensuing that every reasonable effort is made to protect confidentiality.

Anonymity:

Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance. The participant will be known to the researcher. All information collected from the survey will be coded as to protect the identity of the participant.
You are not required to complete all answers on the on-line survey if you so choose. Survey data will be analyzed and reported as a summary to ensure that every reasonable effort is made to protect the identity of the institutions and individuals who participate in this research. You will not be asked to provide names of other individuals within your institution. Your confidentiality will be maintained through the use of unidentified quotations in the final report. The information resulting from this research may be used in future publications, and presentations. All identifying information will be removed prior to publication or presentations.

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. You will not be identified in publications without your explicit permission.

Recording of Data:

Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. Survey answers will be linked to Qualtrics database which meets the security standards and ethical responsibilities required by the Tri-Council Ethical Guidelines.

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:

All data collected will be stored on a password-protected hard drive, in password-protected files. My supervisor, Dr. Robert Shea, will have access to surveys, consent forms, interview recordings, and transcriptions of these interviews but all data will be stored by the researcher.

Third-Party Data Collection and Storage:

Data collected from you as part of your participation in this project will be hosted and/or stored electronically by Qualtrics and is subject to their privacy policy, and to any relevant laws of the country in which their servers are located. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality of data may not be guaranteed in the rare instance, for example, that government agencies obtain a court order compelling the provider to grant access to specific data stored on their servers. If you have questions or concerns about how your data will be collected or stored, please contact the researcher and/or visit the provider's website for more information before participating. The privacy and security policy of the third-party hosting data collection and/or storing data can be found at https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/

Reporting of Results:

The data from this research project has the potential to be published and presented at conferences.
The data will be reported in a summarized form and de-identified prior to publication and presentation. Direct quotations from the survey and interview may be presented or appear in publication. Quotations will be de-identified prior to publication. Upon completion, my thesis will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, and can be accessed online
at: http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses

Sharing of Results with Participants:

Following the conclusion of the research project, at the request of participating institutions, a summary report will be available for review.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Melissa DiLeo, msdileo@mun.ca and/or Dr. Robert Shea, Robert.Shea@mi.mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861 and reference application ICEHR#20201372-ED

Consent:

By completing this survey you agree that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been advised that you may ask questions about this study and receive answers prior to continuing.
- You are satisfied that any questions you had have been addressed.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw your participation from the study by closing your browser window or navigating away from this page, without having to give a reason.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw, you may request that your data will be removed from the study by contacting the researcher before June 15, 2020.

By consenting to this online survey, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Please retain a copy of this consent information for your records.

Clicking YES **below and submitting this survey constitutes consent and implies your agreement to the above statements.**

Consent to participate

- ○ Yes, I consent to participating in Phase One of this study.
- ○ No, I do not provide consent.

Appendix E: Phase One - Online Survey

English

Phase One - Threat on Campus: Ontario's Post-Secondary Threat Assessment Teams' Experiences with Threat Assessment Policy

Demographics

Q1: How many years have you worked at this institution?

○ Please answer below

Q2: In which area of your institution do you work?

- ☐ Dean of Students
- ☐ Counselling
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Campus Security
- ☐ Health & Safety
- ☐ Accessibility & Accommodations
- ☐ Academic Advising
- ☐ Case Management
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Faculty
- ☐ Student Conduct

- ○ 26,001-28,000
- ○ 28,001-30,000
- ○ More than 30,001

Q4: How many students are enrolled full-time (FTE)?

- ○ Less than 15000
- ○ 15001-20000
- ○ 20001-25000
- ○ 250001-30000
- ○ More than 30001

Q5: Do you have a Residential student population?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q6: What is your Residential student population size?

- ○ Less than 100
- ○ 101-250
- ○ 251-500
- ○ 501-750
- ○ 751-1000
- ○ More than 1001

Q7: Does your institution have a threat assessment team?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

- ○ Unsure
- ○ Other (please explain) _____

Q8: Does your institution have more than one campus?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q9: If yes, does your institution have a separate threat assessment team on each campus?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure
- ○ Other (please explain) _____

Q10: How many years has your institution had a threat assessment team?

- ○ 0-1
- ○ 1-3
- ○ 3-5
- ○ 5 or more
- ○ Other (please explain) _____

Q11: How many years have you been a member of your threat assessment team?

- ○ 0-1
- ○ 1-3

- ○ 3-5
- ○ 5 or more
- ○ Other (please explain) _____

Threat Assessment Team Information

Q:12 Please describe your threat assessment team.

- ○ We do not have a specific threat assessment team as threat assessment is a function of someone's job (i.e. conduct office, campus police).
- ○ We have a threat assessment team that is a sub-committee within our behavioural intervention/ care team.
- ○ We have a threat assessment team that is a separate, stand-alone team from our behavioural intervention/ care team.
- ○ Other (please explain) _____

Q13: Is threat assessment at your institution conducted by an internal team or an external agency? Please select the answer that most closely aligns with your institutional practice.

- ○ Yes, our threat assessment team performs internal threat assessments as needed.
- ○ Yes, we bring in an external agency not-affiliated with the institution to perform threat assessments as needed.
- ○ Yes, we utilize both our internal team and an external organization to perform threat assessments as needed.
- ○ No we do not perform formal threat assessments.

Q14b: Please select all options that apply to floaters, guests, or outer circles of your threat assessment team.

- ☐ Dean of Students

- [ ] Counselling
- [ ] Housing
- [ ] Campus Security
- [ ] Health & Safety
- [ ] Accessibility & Accommodations
- [ ] Academic Advising
- [ ] Case Manager
- [ ] Human Resources
- [ ] Faculty
- [ ] Student Conduct
- [ ] Sexual Violence Response Coordinator
- [ ] Other (please specify)

Q14a: Please select all options that apply to the membership of your threat assessment team.

- [ ] Dean of Students
- [ ] Counselling
- [ ] Housing
- [ ] Campus Security
- [ ] Health & Safety
- [ ] Accessibility & Accommodations
- [ ] Academic Advising
- [ ] Case Manager
- [ ] Human Resources
- [ ] Faculty
- [ ] Student Conduct
- [ ] Sexual Violence Response

☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q15: Who is the Chair or lead of your threat assessment team?

☐ Vice President of Student Affairs
☐ Dean of Students
☐ Director of Housing or Residence Life
☐ Director of Campus Security
☐ Director of Health & Safety
☐ Director of Academic Advising
☐ Case Manager
☐ Director of Human Resources
☐ Faculty Representative
☐ Director of Student Conduct
☐ Director of Counselling Services
☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q16: Does your threat assessment team meet regularly? Please select all that apply.

☐ We meet on an as needed basis.
☐ We meet as a function of our behavioural intervention team.
☐ Yes, we meet weekly.
☐ Yes, we meet bi-weekly.
☐ Yes, we meet monthly.
☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q17: Consider the last 12 months. On average, how many students were assessed for threat monthly by your team?

- ○ 0
- ○ 1-3
- ○ 3-5
- ○ 5 or more

Q18: What threat assessment approach does your team use to determine level of threat?

- ☐ A decision is made based on the experience and expertise of individuals on the team.
- ☐ A tool(s) is utilized to determine level of threat.
- ☐ A combination of professional experience and a tool(s) is used to determine level of threat.
- ☐ We do not have a systematic approach for determining level of threat.
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q19: Referring to Q18, what tool(s) does your team utilize to assess level of threat?

- ☐ Historical Clinical Risk Management (HCR-20)
- ☐ National Behavioral Intervention Team Risk Rubric (NaBITA Risk Rubric)
- ☐ Structured Clinical Judgement
- ☐ Structured Interview for Violence Risk Assessment (SIVRA-35)
- ☐ Violence Reduction Assessment Tool (VRAT)
- ☐ We do not use a tool
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Institutional Procedures

Q20: Has your institutional threat assessment team developed its own threat assessment procedures?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure
- ○ Other (please specify)

Q21: If your threat assessment team has developed an objective or mission statement please share the statement below. All identifying information will be removed.

Q22: Does your institution have a threat assessment policy designed for students that pose a threat?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure
- ○ Other (please specify)

Q23: Which area of your institution is accountable for the student-focused threat assessment policy?

Q24: Is your institutional student-focused threat assessment policy publicly available?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure
- ○ Other (please specify)

Q25: If your student-focused threat assessment policy is publicly available, please provide the URL.

Q26: Is there any other information you would like to provide today?

Phase two of this research study involves a one-hour confidential in-depth interview. By clicking yes, you will receive an informed consent letter via email. Participation in phase two is strictly voluntary. You can withdraw consent at any time.

- ○ Yes, I would like to participate in Phase Two of this research study.
- ○ No, I do not give consent to participate in Phase Two of this research study.

Appendix F: Phase Two - Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form (Phase Two)

Title:	Threat on Campus: Ontario's Post-Secondary Threat Assessment Teams' Experiences with Threat Assessment Policy
Researcher(s):	Melissa DiLeo, M.Ed Candidate, Post-Secondary Studies, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, msdileo@mun.ca
Supervisor(s):	Dr. Robert Shea, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Associate VP Academic, Student Affairs and Research, Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland, 709.684.6926, Robert.Shea@mi.mun.ca

You are invited to take part in Phase Two of a research project entitled "Threat on Campus: Ontario's Post-Secondary Threat Assessment Teams' Experiences with Threat Assessment."

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It will provide the basic premise of the research and what your participation will involve. This form will also describe your right to withdraw from the study at any time. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision.. Please contact the researcher, Melissa DiLeo (Information noted above) if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there are no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:
In order to advance the Canadian state of scholarship within post-secondary threat assessment administration, we must understand threat assessment teams lived experiences with institutional threat assessment policies.

With limited Canadian research in the areas of student conduct, behavioural intervention teams, and threat assessment, conducting a key informant analysis of threat assessment teams' experiences with their institutions threat assessment policy is essential for creating the most promising practices for addressing campus threats. This research is part of my Master's thesis in Post-Secondary Studies, Faculty of Education, at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

This study seeks to understand (i) current policy in Canadian post-secondary institutions related to student threat assessment (ii) to what degree are post-secondary institutions involved in student threat assessment (iii) what institutional variables may influence assessment practices (iv) which areas of the institution are most involved in assessing student threat level and (v) how is threat assessed?

Purpose of Study:
The objective of this research study is to develop an understanding of Ontario's post-secondary threat assessment teams experience with threat assessment policy. For the purposes of this research the following definitions are provided:

policy- a plan or set of ideas that are officially agreed upon and denote what to do in a particular situation (Cambridge University Press, 2019);

student-focused- policy specifically relating to threat assessment support for students, does not focus on administrative staff/faculty threat assessment;

threat- the perceived possibility of harm; potential danger (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014);

threat assessment- the process of gathering information related to threat for decision making (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014);

threat assessment team- a multidisciplinary team that reviews and discusses students that have raised concerns, significantly disrupt others, and/or may be at risk of harming themselves or others (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008).

What You Will Do in this Study:
In this phase of the research the participant is invited to participate in a one-on-one interview process with the principal researcher. This interview questions aims to understand the procedures and the experiences of your campus threat assessment team. The questions are designed as a guide for the principal researcher to use throughout the interview process. However, sub-questions may arise during the interview as a response to information brought forward to the researcher. These sub-questions may be added to the interview or brought forward at the end.

This interview will be conducted via a password protected online video platform. Zoom will be the platform used to interview participants. Video technology will be utilized to maintain eye contact and substitute for an in-person interview. Video will not be recorded. Audio data will be recorded on a tape recorder by the researcher, in place of handwritten notes.

Length of Time:
The interview with the principal investigator and the participant will be maximum one hour in length and conducted via a password protected online video platform.

Withdrawal from the Study:
You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any point. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer. Should you choose to withdraw from the study during the interview, your interview answers will be eliminated from the data pool.

You can request your data be removed from the study after your participation has ended. This request can be processed prior to the data being aggregated. Requests for removal of data can be made in writing to the researcher at msdileo@mu.ca prior to June 1, 2020.

Possible Benefits:
There has been significant growth on college and university campuses in the area of threat assessment. This study will benefit the Canadian research community by adding to the empirical research in the area of post- secondary education and threat assessment. This study with provide post -secondary education administrators with benchmarks for current threat assessment policies, current threat assessment teams experience's with those policies, and, provide recommendations for further research.

Possible Risks:
There are no physical risks associated with participation in this study. There are no expected or known psychological or emotional risks associated with this study. This study is limited to post-secondary institutions in Ontario, which could have some negative professional consequences should informed observers infer your participation and responses. Participation in this study is confidential and all data will be de-identifiable in any publications emanating from the research.

Confidentiality:
The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and responses will remain confidential.

Although the data from this research project will be published and presented at conferences, the data will be reported in aggregate form, so that it will not be possible to identify individuals. Moreover, the consent forms will be stored separately from the interview data so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses.

Anonymity:
Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance. The participant will be known to the researcher. All information collected from the interview will be coded to protect the identity of the participant.

You are not required to complete all interview questions if you so choose. Interview data will be analyzed and reported as a summary to ensure that every reasonable effort is made to protect the identity of the institutions and individuals who have participate in this research. You will not be asked to provide names of other individuals within your institution. Your confidentiality will be maintained through the use of unidentified quotations in the final report. The information resulting from this research may be used in future publications, and presentations. All identifying information will be removed prior to publication or presentations unless consent to reveal your identity has been provided.

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. You will not be identified in publications.

Recording of Data:
Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research.

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:
All data collected will be stored on a password-protected hard drive, in password-protected files. My supervisor, Dr. Robert Shea, will have access to consent forms, interview recordings, and transcriptions of these interviews but all data will be stored by the researcher.

Data Collection Storage:

Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. Interviews will be audio recorded and kept in a password-protected file which meets the security standards and ethical responsibilities required by the Tri-Council Ethical Guidelines.

If you have questions or concerns about how your data will be collected or stored, please contact the researcher for more information before participating.

Reporting of Results:
The data from this research project has the potential to be published and presented at conferences.

The data will be reported in a summarized form and de-identified prior to publication and presentation. Direct quotations from the survey and interview may be presented or appear in publication. Quotations will be de-identified prior to publication.

Upon completion, my thesis will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, and can be accessed online at: http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses

Sharing of Results with Participants:
Following the conclusion of the research project, at the request of participating institutions, a summary report will be available for review.

Questions:
You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Melissa DiLeo, msdileo@mun.ca and/or Dr. Robert Shea, Robert.Shea@mi.mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861 and reference application ICEHR#20201372-ED.

Consent:
By completing this interview you agree that:

- You have read the information about the research.

- You have been advised that you may ask questions about this study and receive answers prior to continuing.
- You are satisfied that any questions you had have been addressed.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw your participation from the study by closing your browser window or navigating away from this page, without having to give a reason.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw, you may request that your data will be removed from the study by contacting the researcher before June 12, 2020.

By consenting to this online interview, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Please retain a copy of this consent information for your records.

Prior to the interview the following with be read aloud to the participant:

"I, Melissa DiLeo, have read and explained this consent form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it."

Signature Date

Appendix G: Phase Two – Interview Guide

Phase Two Interview Guide- ICEHR- 20201372-ED

Title: Threat on Campus: Ontario's Post-Secondary Threat Assessment Team's Experiences with Threat Assessment Policy

Researcher: Melissa DiLeo, M.Ed. Candidate, Post-Secondary Studies, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, msdileo@mun.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Robert Shea, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Associate VP Academic, Student Affairs and Research, Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland, 709.684.6926,
Robert.Shea@mi.mun.ca

1. What pathways currently exist for individuals to report threats, perceived or actual, to your institution?

2. Can you describe the structure of the team or individual(s) responsible for managing a reported threat?

3. What is the function of the assessment team with regard to reported threatening behaviour? How is the reported threat managed by your team?

4. Can you describe the process used by your team to determine level of threat?

5. What other types of collateral strategies does your team employ when determining level of threat? (in-person interviews with the student, witnesses, potential victims, background check, social media review, etc.)

6. How did your threat assessment team decide to use this assessment strategy?

7. Can you discuss any room for improvement regarding the work of the threat assessment team?

8. Is there any other information related to the topic of threat assessment management that you would like to share with me today?