

RESIDENT ADVISORS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF
IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING THREATENING BEHAVIORS

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Abstract

Threatening behavior is a cause for concern on college campuses. Even though solutions presented cannot completely prevent crime and violence, steps must be taken towards continuous improvement of violence prevention efforts. The purpose of this case study was to examine Resident Advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. Thirteen participants from Residence Life at a major Land Grant University served as the case study group. A qualitative approach guided the inquiry of the study and was represented through observations, document analysis, and participant interviews.

Analysis of the research questions supported the study's findings. Overall, students' exposure to violence prevention on campus is often through educational programs and resources, while Resident Advisors are also instrumental resources in sharing information with students. They suggest making more efforts in sharing violence prevention education with students. Because a wide range of issues face today's college students, they seek assistance from Resident Advisors, as well as peers, friends, and family. Building community through the residence halls provides a proactive approach in efforts to develop and provide students opportunities for growth, responsibility, and accountability to their communities. Finally, despite reporting systems in place and resources available, barriers still remain for students. The inconsistency between the views and perceptions of violence prevention education and barriers to reporting between Resident Advisors and administration in Residence Life indicates need for further

engagement between students and Institutions of Higher Education based upon policies, educational efforts, and reporting structures. Institutions have an obligation to engage students in the prevention of violence through sustained community-building measures and working with targeted peer groups, such as Resident Advisors.

Conclusions from this study were explained through the individual, information, and social background factors of The Reasoned Action Approach and guided the recommendations for practice and further research. Addressing the disconnect between the administration and Resident Advisors' perceptions is crucial in reducing barriers to reporting. A need remains for further engagement with peers, friends, family, Resident Advisors, and other influential groups to help shape students' understanding, awareness, and continued involvement in the identification and reporting of threatening behaviors.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On April 16, 2007, 32 students and faculty were killed, and 17 more were wounded in a tragedy that took place on the campus of Virginia Tech. This horrific tragedy brought a newfound focus and response to violence on college campuses across the nation and around world. With the recent shootings at both Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University, much has changed in campus safety programming on college campuses in the recent years (Janosik & Gregory, 2009). Serving as an example, the tragedy at Virginia Tech has been scrutinized and reviewed by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the United States Department of Education, organizations associated with higher education including the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrations, Inc., American College Counseling Association, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, state governments, individual institutions, and others.

Reports unveiled hindsight information relating to the intervention, monitoring, and preventable actions that could have been taken prior to that fateful day (Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger, 2010). However, with the lessons learned in Virginia Tech's response to the event and with new legislation regarding campus violence, other institutions of higher education (IHE) can create systems and procedures in order to prevent a similar tragedy.

The Research Problem

Threatening behavior is a cause for concern on college campuses. This can be in the form of a physical or verbal act, threat, or assault resulting in physical or emotional damage (University of California Berkeley, 2009). Threatening behavior is exemplified by behaviors, words, or actions that are threatening to oneself or others with the intention to instill fear, threaten, or harm mentally or physically. It is important to keep in mind that this behavior should be considered through the lens and interpretation of a reasonable person. If a reasonable person would perceive the behaviors, words, or actions to be potentially threatening, violent, or have the potential for violence causing another person to be concerned for their safety and or security, then further investigation and action should be taken (Arizona State, 2009).

A more specific list of threatening and concerning physical actions and behaviors is listed by the University of California Berkeley (2009), including direct or veiled threats (written, electronic, and verbal), destruction of property, outbursts of rage or anger causing intimidation, physically blocking or cornering someone, poor cooperation with others, blaming other for issues or problems, extreme or bizarre behavior, exhibiting low self-esteem, or handling criticism poorly. Other concerns include patterns of tardiness or absenteeism, depression, alcohol or drug use, experienced a recent loss, fixation on perceived injustices, prior history of violent behavior, interest or obsession with weapons, a loner who has little involvement with others, difficulty with authority, paranoia, panic, or perceiving the world is against him or her (University of California Berkeley, 2009).

The examples listed of threatening behaviors often signal and come as precursors to violence (University of California Berkeley, 2009). Therefore, prevention comes in

steps taken before violence is committed in the awareness and reporting of these threatening behaviors. The identified early warning signs and behaviors indicating potential for violence must be assessed with common sense and caution. When such behavior is demonstrated in single acts or as patterns, it becomes necessary for intervention before it escalates to violence. Because threatening behavior and violence are of concern on college campuses, the need exists for identification and reduction of these precursors to violence and threatening behavior (Marcus & Swett, 2003). By sharing information, examining cases through threat assessment, and intervening early in behavioral issues, IHE are working toward a culture of prevention (Jones, Haley, & Hemphill, 2010). Disclosing information about a concern or person's distress is needed when protecting the health or safety of a student or other individuals and it is imperative that both IHE and students understand this (Jones et al., 2010). In this new approach to addressing threatening behavior and the prevention of violence on college campuses, IHE and students are both accountable to come forward and share concerns.

Background to the problem. In response to the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007 and Northern Illinois in 2008, recent state legislation provides a framework for a proactive approach to violence prevention that has implications for the threat assessment process at IHE. Other states including Missouri, Oklahoma, New Jersey, Florida, Kentucky, New Mexico, and North Carolina realized a need for the proactive approach in violence prevention and thereby appointed task forces and implemented legislation and policies to follow the guidelines for threat assessment Virginia and Illinois proposed in the wake of their own tragedies.

The threat assessment process was first implemented by the Secret Service in efforts to help reduce violence and create safer school climates in partnership with the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2004). The process allows for an individual assessment of a person of concern based upon threatening or concerning behavior in lieu of a profiling of characteristics (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010). The process begins when threatening or concerning behavior is identified and reported to the threat assessment team. It does not occur because of certain traits or characteristics of the individual. Threat assessment is based on information gathered about behaviors and analyzing communications indicating intent. Additionally, the facts of a situation and about an individual are analyzed in order to determine the capability to follow through on an attack and other specific situations. The process focuses on the identification of underlying behaviors rather than the specific actions of violence in the prevention of targeted violence (Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008).

Within the higher education context, threat assessment works as a process in which students, faculty, or staff who may pose a danger to campus or themselves are identified for the purpose of providing assistance or resources (Deisinger et al., 2008). A team of trained individuals is needed in order to carry out the threat assessment process. The Threat Assessment and Management Team (TAM Team) is a “multidisciplinary team that is responsible for the careful and contextual identification and evaluation of behaviors that raise concern and that may precede violent activity on campus” (Deisinger et al., 2008, p.5).

Operational steps for a campus threat assessment and management team are outlined by Deisinger et al. (2008) to identify and evaluate both persons and situations that raise concern and intervene to assist and prevent harm. The first step, identification, states, “identify a student faculty member, or staff member who has engaged in threatening behaviors or done something that raised serious concern about their well-being, stability, or potential for violence or suicide” (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 47). The next step includes evaluation by conducting an initial screening of the person in question followed by the full inquiry in which more information is gathered. From this information, the team makes an assessment of the individual and the situation and thereby develops and implements the intervention plan (if needed). The plan often includes continual monitoring of the person and ends with either a referral to other services or other follow up as necessary (Deisinger et al., 2008).

The intention behind the threat assessment process places responsibility on students, faculty, staff, and others in the campus community to report these identified behaviors as they become aware or notice precursors and threatening behavior. It is also important to stress that the threat assessment process is an individual assessment. Each and every concern is evaluated separately in a case-by-case approach by a trained team who approaches each instance with a tailored effort asserting that no single response works for everyone (Marcus & Swett, 2003; McBain, 2008; Deisinger et al., 2008). Therefore, as the campus community is educated about this process, identification of these threatening behaviors is crucial, while also helping the community conceptualize the process and how reports are handled in a sensitive manner.

The threat assessment approach enhances primary prevention efforts identifying actions to be taken and requires all members of the campus population including students, faculty, staff, and others to be aware of, identify and communicate signs of concern and when necessary, report it to the system in place (Fox & Savage, 2009; Marcus & Swett, 2003; McBain, 2008). Because it necessitates the involvement of an entire campus community, the education and awareness of prevention and subsequent policies at IHE should entail a comprehensive plan for the campus. Educating the community on reporting of incidents to a centralized process and protocols for communication is a part of a comprehensive plan, which includes the threat assessment process (McBain, 2008).

Traditionally, campus safety and violence reduction has been a shared effort and responsibility of those in administration and campus law enforcement. However, this also includes the planning, guiding, and creation of programs and policies that include students, faculty, personnel, housing official, mental health staff, and local police in an effort for collaboration and a more comprehensive approach to these issues (Fossey & Smith, 1996; Fox & Savage, 2009; LaVant, 2001; Levin & Madfis, 2009). Each of these stakeholders in the campus community has a role and a responsibility and an importance is placed on the need for education and training for students, faculty, and other staff through orientations, trainings, and instruction (Fox & Savage, 2009).

As students maintain position as the most significant stakeholders within the campus community, they also serve as the target audience and play a crucial role in the efforts of violence prevention on campus (Fox & Savage, 2009; Levin & Madfis, 2009). Students typically have firsthand knowledge of potential violence and maintain the power and proximity to identify warning signs and threatening behaviors (Levin & Madfis,

2009; Sharkin, Plageman, & Mangold, 2003; Prothrow-Stith, 2007). It is crucial for students to learn their responsibility to come forward with information and report to the proper individuals so the threat assessment process can be utilized. Many times, violence is averted due to confidants revealing intentions of their peers to authorities (Levin & Madfis, 2009). This can continue as more students are made aware of avenues for support and the importance of reporting.

With students playing a primary role in the prevention of violence on college campuses, support, programming, and educational efforts need to reflect this expectation. Students are known to help their peers in times of trouble, distress, and other problems such as depression, academics, relationship issues, and substance abuse. Moreover, many choose to seek the consult of their peers or family rather than campus resources better equipped to assist them (Sharkin et al., 2003). The extent, nature of, and frequency of violence on campuses have been difficult to determine due to the inefficient diagnosis and underreporting. College student victims do not always report incidents or file official complaints and have the fear of retaliation and belief that nothing productive will come from stepping forward (Cockey, Sherrill, & Cave, 1989; Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger, 2001; Pezza, 1995; Pezza & Bellotti, 1995; Sloan, Fisher, & Cullen, 1997; Thompson, Sitterle, Clay, & Kingree, 2007).

How do support services, education, and awareness efforts bridge this gap between students and their peer relationships and getting the proper help they need in times of concern and crisis? Students need to understand how much power they actually have over their own environments and how to get help when needed (Sherrill, 1989). The need exists for primary prevention models, as part of the public health and ecological

models, to be applied in new approaches, programming, interventions, reporting structures, strategies, and research to improve reporting rates at IHE. Primary prevention aims to prevent violence before it occurs through interventions including education and training in social skills, empowerment, assertiveness, sexual decision-making, conflict resolution, and self-defense at the community and societal-level changes. These primary efforts should aim for intervention with multiple causes and aspects of violence while working within levels and various contexts (Krug et al., 2002; LaVant, 2001; Lee et al., 2007; & Nicholson et al., 1998).

Institutions of Higher Education should also strive to create a culture that is responsive and prepared to deal with campus violence while implementing prevention plans that give students an active role by engaging them in the planning and practice of skills for intervention against violence. Developing a responsive culture that provides timely and ongoing education, staff development, and skills designed to handle stress and cope with trauma needs to be developed and implemented by professionals on campuses (Fossey & Smith, 1996; LaVant, 2001; Stone, 1993). This continuing education can take form in educational programs created to fit the various needs of different community members on campus. Successful strides have been taken at some IHE in building a responsive culture through peer and bystander educational approaches to prevention of sexual and other forms of interpersonal violence (Berkowitz, 2003; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Foubert & Cowell, 2004; Foubert & La Voy, 2000; Katz, 1995; Lonsway & Kothari, 2000; Lonsway et al., 1998). These peer and bystander approaches serve as a primary source of prevention that allows every individual in the community the role of

preventing violence in a skill-building approach (Banyard et al., 2004; Banyard et al., 2007; Banyard et al., 2009; Banyard, Eckstein, & Moynihan, 2010).

The peer and bystander approaches are grounded in the environmental, social norms method of utilizing peers as educators to change attitudes in a peer or community group are more influential. This removes the focus from changing an individual's personal attitude and directs it toward the peer or community group. Social norms look at the individual's perception of the attitudes or behaviors of their peers and other community members being different from their own (Berkowitz, 2003; Perkins, 2003). When accurate information is disclosed, the reality of the environment and social norms can effectively reduce the individual problem behaviors while enhancing protective behaviors, thus the individual may feel compelled to share the dissatisfaction with the behavior (Berkowitz, 2003; Perkins, 2003). Once students realize the reality of what is going on in their peer community, they may be more inclined to change their behavior in a positive way.

Concentrating on peers as informal helpers in the context of roommates, friends, and other social situations where prevention efforts are needed is important in the larger scope of peer education models on college campuses (Banyard et al., 2009). However, more research is needed on peer influence and how the perceived social norms affect behavior. Others make the call for effective and current research on campus safety and violence in order to provide resources for campus administrators when they are looking to identify and reduce campus violence (Jackson et al., 2007; Marcus & Swett, 2003). Education focused on peers and peer influence can be used to address problems of distress and prevention efforts within a campus community, influence and alter campus

cultures, and is shown to improve knowledge, change attitudes, and promote self-efficacy (Choate, 2003; Hertzog & Yeilding, 2009; Katz, 1994; Kress et al., 2006; Lonsway et al., 1998; Schwartz, Griffin, Russell, & Frontaura-Duck, 2006; Sharkin, 2003; Stein, 2007).

If we are to address the new challenges in campus violence prevention through the lens of peer education and the role of students, members of the campus community can be identified to aid in this evolving process. Residence Life presents a unique and common context for many IHE. Within Residence Life programs, students maintain many of the supportive and leadership roles. Specifically, Resident Advisors (RAs) serve multiple roles on college campuses as they balance the function of role models, counselors, teachers, and students (Blimling, 1995). The expectation of an RA puts them in a unique position to assist students in need. They have responsibilities in helping to provide control for rules, regulations, and policies, establishing a healthy environment for students, assisting individual students who are in need, and providing information and referrals for students on a variety of issues related to prevention (Blimling, 1995).

Related to the issue presented by the creation of threat assessment policies and procedures, RAs provide a role in the direct intervention for students. Issues such as depression, behavior problems, or failure to meet social expectations can lead to a referral or other form of counsel to the student in distress (Blimling, 1995). Blimling (1993) also points out, “The RA may be the only person who recognizes a person is having difficulty and offers to help” (p.49). Therefore, RAs act as a helper and listen to student needs while providing information and referring them to others as a part of the helping process. They are positioned to serve as both fellow students and responsible parties for the identification and reporting of threatening behavior.

In order to work toward a culture of prevention, institutions and students must realize the importance of raising the issues and breaking the code of silence when a person is in distress by recognizing threatening behavior and precursors to violence (Jones et al., 2010). The implications of new procedures, such as the threat assessment process, provide opportunities for primary prevention programming utilizing bystander and peer education approaches. These educational approaches can assist in communicating the message about identifying precursors to violence and threatening behaviors to students so more can be done to help those in need, before violence occurs.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was to examine resident advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. Resident Advisors, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life professional staff serving at an institute of higher education served as the population for this study. Seven research questions guided this study:

1. How can Institutions of Higher Education enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment through the orientation and preparation process for Resident Advisors?
2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare Resident Advisors for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?
3. What is the perception of the Resident Advisors and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors?
4. What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?

5. What are the student's personal attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening behaviors?
6. What are student perceptions of others' attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors?
7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?

Importance of the Study

This study adds to the research by examining attitudes and beliefs surrounding the reporting of threatening behavior or other acts that may lead to violence. Asking questions of students may provide reason to the process they go through as they choose to or not to report. It may also provide discussion and insight to the role and influence of peers in this process and in their line of thinking and action. Institutions of Higher Education need more information on this issue as they seek answers to prevention efforts on their campuses and provide services to students in distress.

The threat assessment process, recently implemented at some IHE, provides a different lens and framework for a systematic approach to identify threatening behaviors and persons of concern. With any new process, the participants must be involved in the implementation. Not only is it important to educate the community, but also to engage them in discussions surrounding their perspectives, needs, and concerns. Therefore, students' insight is needed as administrators and educators aim to implement the threat assessment process at IHE where the identification of threatening behaviors and subsequent reporting are needed in order to bring forth concerning information and individuals.

Through this study, information on identifying and reporting provided implications for prevention programming at IHE. The importance lies in addressing the identification of threatening behaviors and how to get students to report incidents concerning campus safety and security. As more students are able to identify and share concerns about others, this allows for earlier intervention into issues that could become threatening of violent situations.

Context of this Study

The context of this study is central to understanding the research problem and questions as presented. Significant to this case is the institution and its background with issues of campus violence. A tragic event, hereby referred to as the “campus tragedy”, occurred on the campus of a large public Land Grant University in the south. This campus’s experience with handling the tragedy, the aftermath, and consequences stemming from this campus tragedy gives the participants of this study a unique perspective and lens from which they view behaviors of concern and issues of violence on their campus.

In the months and years that followed this campus’s tragedy, in which numerous victims, including students and faculty, lost their lives and many others were wounded, the institution was under intense scrutiny. This campus tragedy became a case in which other institutions across the nation followed and looked to for ways to increase safety measures and improve procedures in handling concerning behavior and issues of violence. After this campus tragedy, the state in which this institution was located provided new legislation for the mandate of threat assessment teams on college

campuses. As a result, this institution took measures to implement the process accordingly.

It is from this context the case study is based and from which participants draw their experiences with identifying concerning behavior and issues of violence. The researcher believes this case provides a distinctive outlook from which others can learn and provide insight into improving the identification and reporting of threats and behaviors through examining participants' attitudes and beliefs.

Personal Reflexivity

Working closely with violence prevention on this college campus, it was important for the researcher to examine her personal experiences and biases as related to college student development and violence prevention programming on college campuses. The researcher enrolled in her graduate program the semester following the campus tragedy at this institution. Working as a graduate research assistant in a Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention, she became directly involved in campus issues pertaining to the prevention of violence. While working in this capacity, she also served on several campus-wide committees and groups working toward education and awareness of violence prevention. As a founding member of the campus safety and violence prevention committee as the graduate student representative, she provided input from the student perspective during the development process. It was as a part of these groups, the researcher became further engaged in evaluating the current climate of the institution and issues of identifying behaviors of concern in the campus community.

She received training as an advocate for violence against women and as a trainer in a bystander program for violence prevention. Additionally, she served as a co-

president and worked closely with a group of students forming a students for non-violence club with the purpose to inform and educate others on nonviolence. In this role, she acted as a facilitator in the development process of the club's mission, vision, and goals. It was through these interactions and experiences she developed an understanding of the problems and issues facing college students while developing a theoretical-base of knowledge through the literature. Because of this campus tragedy and others that have followed, the researcher wishes to contribute to the research and literature base for IHE making decision about violence prevention on their campuses.

The researcher's personal epistemology is grounded in social constructivism. Drawing understanding from the world in which they live and work, individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Based in varied and multiple meanings toward objects or things, the researcher is guided by complexities of views brought to light through participants' views of the situation. Formed through interaction with others, cultural and historical norms, the social constructivist view takes into account the experiences of the participants. This is facilitated by asking open-ended questions as the researcher listens to what the participants "say or do in their life setting" (Creswell, 2007, p.21). Also important to this view are the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand their settings of their participants.

Definition of Terms

The following list provides definitions of key terms used throughout this research study.

Institutions of higher education (IHE): institutions that are accredited at the college level by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary, U.S. Department

of Education; these schools offer at least a one-year program of study creditable toward a degree and eligible for participation in Title IV Federal financial aid programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Precursors to violence: “individual factors (thoughts or behaviors) that increase the likelihood of violence” (Marcus & Swett, 2003, p. 554).

Resident Advisor: paraprofessional or student-staff responsible for a group of students in a residence unit within a residence hall community (Blimling, 1993; 1995)

Social norms: “approach to prevention based on data that reveal a disparity between the actual and perceived attitudinal or behavioral norms among college students and their peers” (Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2003, p. 106); The social norms approach provides a theory of human behavior stating,

"Behavior is influenced by incorrect perceptions of how other members of our social groups think and act. . . and predicts that overestimations of problem behavior will increase these problem behaviors while underestimations of healthy behaviors will discourage individuals from engaging in them. Thus, correcting misperceptions of group norms is likely to result in decreased problem behavior or increased prevalence of healthy behaviors" (Berkowitz, 2004, p. 5).

Threat Assessment: “process centered upon analysis of the facts and evidence of behavior in a given situation. . . involves identifying, assessing, and managing individuals who might pose a risk of violence to an identified or identifiable target” (Fein, et al., 2004, p.29-30).

Violence: World Health Organization definition of violence as, “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or

against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation” (Krug et al., 2002, p. 4).

Summary

The purpose of this case study was to examine resident advisors’ attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. This chapter provided the background and introduction to the research problem, the purpose and research questions that guided this study, the importance and context of the study, personal reflexivity, as well as the definition of key terms used. The following chapter includes a review of the relevant literature on the issues of violence on college campuses, implications for violence prevention including education and awareness approaches.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The purpose of this case study was to examine resident advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. Resident Advisors, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life professional staff serving at an institute of higher education served as the population for this study. In the review of the literature, the issue of violence is discussed as it relates to college campuses, related legislation, and categories of campus violence. Current approaches and implications for violence prevention at IHE are provided in addition to the education and awareness programming models. Finally, the theoretical framework for understanding of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors is presented in the reasoned action approach.

Introduction

When violence occurs on a college or university campus, it affects the entire community. Faculty, staff, students, and the surrounding area are all included in the inclusive definition of campus violence (Pezza, 1995). Violent behaviors and actions cause harm to the direct victims, and can lead to damaging the entire educational environment (LaVant, 2001). Pezza and Bellotti (1995) list the effects of violence as detrimental to the collegiate atmosphere including recruitment and retention of students as well as other economic impacts. Therefore, maximizing the safety of students, faculty, and other employees is crucial to making sure violence can be prevented and its impact reduced on all campus community members (Fox & Savage, 2009; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002).

Issue of violence

Violence has been identified as a preventable public health issue by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization. Homicides and suicides have consistently been among the leading causes of death in the United States since 1965 (Daglberg & Mercy, 2009). Due to these alarming numbers, in the 1979 report from the United States Surgeon General, control of stress and violent behavior were set as priority areas as violence was presented and identified as a public health issue (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2010).

In 1996, the World Health Assembly followed suit by declaring violence as a leading worldwide public health problem (Dahlberg & Mercy, 2009). So not only is violence an issue in the United States, but the world community also faces these issues. Since then, developments in the public health field have strived to address the behavioral challenges for addressing violence in hopes that it can be prevented. Even with violence on the rise in both the U.S. and around the world, organizations, governments, and scholars believe there is something that can be done to address this issue through preventative measures.

According to a report from the World Health Organization, “Violence is among the leading causes of death worldwide for people aged 15 to 44 years” (Krug et al., 2002, p. 3). In the United States alone, 50,000 deaths and 2.2 million injuries requiring medical attention result in violence as the leading cause of mortality and morbidity (Corso, Mercy, Simon, Finkelstein, & Mill, 2007). With astounding numbers such as 18,573 homicides in 2006, the facts are hard to ignore (CDC, 2010).

However, numbers alone cannot tell the story of violence. There are other factors indirectly and directly affected by acts of violence including secondary victims, health care costs, and others. Corso et al. (2007) researched the costs associated with violence in the United States and found in the year 2000; total costs of nonfatal injuries and deaths due to violence were over \$70 billion, stating \$64.4 billion was a result of productivity loss. They also report that with 2.5 million injuries due to violence, an estimated \$5.6 billion was spent on the medical care for these injuries.

The number of lives lost and affected, coupled with the personal and economic costs associated with recovery present a compelling argument for addressing the widespread issue of violence. The CDC and the World Health Assembly were right in calling the issue of violence to the forefront of discussion and attention. But the discussion must not stop with reporting of numbers. Efforts need to be taken at all levels within a community, state, national, and a global level to address violence before it happens.

Defining violence. Working from a widely used and broad-based definition, this paper will adopt the World Health Organization definition of violence as:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. (Krug et al., 2002, p. 4).

Others emphasize that violence encompasses physical actions, verbal words, symbolic actions, and visible or overt actions, such as threats (LaVant, 2001).

Violence has been presented as a preventable, public health issue affecting both the domestic and global communities. Organizations who have identified these issues and brought them to the forefront are also tracking trends and costs associated with violence. As the concept of violence is deconstructed and presented in a specific context, the argument remains the same. People, organizations, governments, education, and others have a role in the prevention of violence.

Violence on College Campuses

Over time, violence in American society has continued to increase. Consequently, the rate of violence on college campuses is not isolated from such issues (LaVant, 2001). As an extension of the larger society, the same crimes of abuse, assault, rape, harassment, and other destructive behaviors are mirrored on our University campuses. Therefore, crime and violence are of concern and a primary issue continuing to afflict IHE on many campuses across the nation (Jackson, Terrell, & Heard, 2007; LaVant, 2001). Reflected in the public health field, others identify campus violence as a college health issue (Carr & Ward, 2006). With various categories of violence and issues in collecting and reporting data, the review begins with a historical overview of violence on college and university campuses.

Historical timeline. College campuses are safer from crime than the surrounding cities, towns, and communities (Hemphill, & Hephner LaBanc, 2010; Nicoletti et al., 2010). Campuses tend to be removed from socioeconomic conditions like poverty and overcrowding that crime often stems from (Fossey & Smith, 1996). With protection from such elements, college campuses tend to remain “oases of calm and order in an increasingly dangerous world” (Fossey & Smith, p.1).

Historically, the American college campus was an unlikely setting for crime until the 1960s (Smith, 1988). Holding a tradition of independence and autonomy beyond traditional government authority allowed for a lack in reporting of crimes on campuses. Smith (1988) uses the term, “policing themselves”, implying student offenses were handled within an internal system of management rather than the external judicial system or law. Additionally, less anonymity was allowed as campuses were smaller in population and more students were full-time, making it more difficult for those who committed any violation. Whether it was a safe and protected community, smaller campus populations, or a lack of official reporting, it was generally understood that college campuses were safe and free from crime.

The lack of literature, documented information, and reported cases from higher education on violence suggests crime and violence were not considerable problems on campuses in the past (Smith, 1988). Protests from the Civil Rights and Vietnam eras brought change to this prior understanding as violence arrived into the public view. This resulted in more decision-making and participatory governance on behalf of the students while the administration looked for ways to reclaim control of their campuses (Smith, 1988). From this, the idea of college campuses as sanctuaries and safe havens from crime was soon left behind.

The historic timeline of campus violence begins with the 1966 shooting attacks at the University of Texas in Austin where 17 were killed, including the gunman, and 31 more were wounded. In May of 1970, anti-war protests at Kent State University led to four students killed and nine wounded by National Guard troops. The murder of Jeanne Clery in 1986 at Lehigh University brought to light the reporting of campus violence and

subsequent legislation through the “Student Right-To-Know and Campus Safety Act” or the “Jeanne Clery Act” (Nicoletti et al., 2010). The impact of hate crimes is illustrated through the death of Matthew Shepard, a University of Wyoming student, in 1998. Since these notable events, other attacks and incidents on college campuses have ensued.

Not until April 16, 2007, did the number of victims reach such levels to bring alarm and notice to campus violence. At Virginia Tech in 2007, the largest assault in the history of higher education took place with 32 people killed and 17 more injured (Ferraro & McHugh, 2010). The magnitude of this tragedy brought campus safety and security issues into the public spotlight.

Closely following the events at Virginia Tech there was an attack at Northern Illinois University where five students were killed and 21 others were wounded on February 14, 2008 (Ferraro & McHugh, 2010; Thrower et al., 2008).

Consequences from these recent attacks have significantly impacted the way in which we approach violence in the context of higher education and college campuses. New practices, policies, and programs have been established in order to be more proactive when it comes to addressing this concern. The use of technology in communication has become an important tool to send messages to the entire campus community. There have been additional changes made to individual school policies and state governments have implemented new processes for IHE. These most recent events bring attention to campus safety initiatives and further necessitate funding to provide solutions to IHE as they face the realities of crime and violence on their campuses.

Legislative timeline. To fully comprehend the development of violence prevention efforts at IHE, it is necessary to discuss the policy and laws relevant to

campus safety and security. Fossey and Smith (1996) overview reasons for IHE to address this growing concern. First, when students or others on campus are injured by a preventable crime, courts may hold colleges and universities liable for such incidents. Secondly, education is becoming more of a service for consumption by students, thus demanding quality protection, security, and enforcement against campus crime. Finally, federal legislation places requirements on colleges and universities to be held accountable for crimes on campus. Thus, policies and legislation have aided in providing a framework to deal with legal complexities of campus crime issues (Bromley, 1995).

Prior to 1990, the National Crime Survey (NCS) and the Federal Bureau of Information's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) were means of obtaining information based upon police reports for campus crime, but few of these statistics were reported, as campuses were not required to report such information (LaVant, 2001). However, in 1990, Congress enacted the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act, which amended the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA). This law was later amended in 1992, 1998, and 2000 and renamed the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act in memory of Jeanne Clery who was killed in her dorm room (United States Department of Education [USDE], 2005). Currently, all IHE participating in Title IV student financial aid programs are required by law to collect and report this information to all current students and employees. This information is also made available to prospective students and employees as they make decisions to attend or pursue employment. This reporting allows for a full revelation to all associated with IHE and by making this information public, holds them to accountable to campus constituents.

There are other requirements incorporated into the Act, such as the disclosure and publishing of campus crime statistics and security information, to give timely warnings of crimes that represent a threat to the safety of students or employees, offer crime prevention programming, develop policies and support services to address specific crime risks, and to make public their campus security policies (Carr & Ward, 2006; Dahlem, 1996; McMahon, 2008). With these policies in place, IHE are participating in the national effort to find solutions to crime on campus (Dahlem, 1996).

One implication of this legislation is that parents and students looking at prospective colleges and universities are able to use this information when making decisions to attend. With students as the consumers of education, IHE become the vendor of such services (Smith, 1988). The Clery Act is intended to provide these consumers of higher education with, “accurate, complete and timely information about safety on campus so that they can make informed decisions” (USDE, 2005, p. 3). Therefore, how IHE handle campus crime and communicate moves to the forefront as implications are on the recruitment of new students and faculty, retention of current students, alumni relations, and even possible legislative appropriations (Smith, 1988). Even with the accessibility to information, it is evident that few are utilizing it to make decisions about which colleges and universities to attend. In a study by Janosik and Gregory (2009), it was shown that a very small percentage of college applicants use crime statistics in making admission decisions. However the information is used, the Clery Act still provides categories and defining variables on campus crime to those working directly in the field.

Categories of campus violence. While it is known whom violence affects on college campuses, identifying and defining the variables related in campus violence can bring understanding to the scope and nature of violence that exists. Several categories of campus violence are represented in the literature. However, the Clery Act requires institutions to specifically organize their disclosures within arrests, criminal offenses, hate crimes, and disciplinary actions (USDE, 2005).

According to the USDE (2005), the reporting of crimes required by the Clery Act for IHE participating in Title IV student financial aid programs are broken down further into three categories. The first category of offense includes: murder and non-negligent manslaughter; negligent manslaughter; sex offenses including forcible and non-forcible; robbery; aggravated assault; burglary; motor vehicle theft; and arson. The second category includes arrests that must be reported including liquor law violations, drug abuse violations, and weapons possession. Hate crimes are the third category referring to those mentioned previously in the context of hate crimes. The latest reports compiled a summary of crime statistics for 2006-2008 from the USDE (2010) is represented in Table 1.

Summary crime statistics and data for 2006-2008 from the USDE are presented in four parts: arrests, criminal offenses, hate crimes, and disciplinary actions (USDE, 2010 website). These include aggregate data from all public and private institutions in the U.S.

Table 1

Crime Summary Statistics 2006-2008

Arrests	2006	2007	2008
Illegal weapons	2307	2276	2155
Drug arrests	22792	23224	24037
Liquor law violations	50824	50113	49353
Criminal Offenses	2006	2007	2008
Murder	25	66	55
Negligent manslaughter	0	8	5
Forcible sex offenses	3490	3482	3287
Nonforcible sex offenses	56	62	49
Robbery	4921	4985	4562
Aggravated assault	5472	5234	5026
Burglary	35124	33010	31851
Motor vehicle theft	9811	8744	7465
Arson	1086	915	825
Hate Crimes	2006	2007	2008
Forcible sex offenses	9	1	2
Robbery	6	1	1
Aggravated assault	35	15	21
Burglary	19	1	5
Motor vehicle theft	0	1	0
Arson	2	2	2
Bodily injury	19	28	26
Disciplinary actions	2006	2007	2008
Illegal weapon possessions	2153	1983	1805
Drug arrests	30011	31738	35909
Liquor law violations	199363	195406	192616

Also included within the literature on campus violence, several other groupings exist beyond the reports from the USDE. Sexual violence is one category commonly mentioned and includes areas such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence (Carr & Ward, 2006). Hazing is another that focuses on Greek organizations, athletic teams, and military organizations (Carr & Ward; Rund, 2002). Racial, ethnic, and gender-based violence and homophobic intimidation additionally impacts the safety and concern for students on many campuses.

Finally, the concern of attempted suicide, suicide, and other self-destructive behavior is presented as another issue for college campuses (Carr & Ward, 2006; Rund, 2002). As mentioned, officially IHE report crimes and violence based upon the guidelines from the Clery Act. However, when approaching these issues from a prevention perspective, the more informal categories and groupings are discussed in the research, literature, and programming that exists for college campuses as IHE work towards reducing the rates of violence committed.

Current approaches for prevention of violence on college campuses. Although categories of campus violence are identified and concrete, there are still new and emerging issues related violence on campuses that require attention. The recent shootings and concern related to mental health at IHE have led to actions taken by state governments to reexamine policies and laws affecting the safety of students. Current events have brought mental health to the forefront of discussion based at IHE and how to serve students facing these issues. Finally, threat assessment is a process that has been recently implemented in wake of the current culture and policies at IHE on violence prevention. These three approaches are discussed in the following sections.

State legislation. In the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings in April of 2007, the Governor of Virginia assembled a review panel to conduct an independent review of Virginia’s efforts in responding to the events that happened (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). In an effort to investigate and study changes that would reduce the risk of future violence on campus, this report presented several actions to be taken to ensure safer campuses. As a result, legislation enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 2008 required colleges and universities to develop both threat assessment teams and violence prevention committees. The legislation presented, provides, “Each public college or university shall have in place policies and procedures for the prevention of violence on campus, including assessment and intervention with individuals whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of the campus community” (Code of Virginia § 23-9.2:10). The law also includes specifics for administration on developing committee structures with the appropriate support services represented, and the charge to provide the necessary guidance to students, faculty, and staff for recognizing threatening behaviors, who and where to report behaviors of concern, and the policies and procedures to handle these cases (Code of Virginia § 23-9.2:10).

Following the shootings at Northern Illinois University, the state of Illinois enacted a similar legislation and recommendations in the Campus Security Enhancement Act of 2008 (Public Act 95-0881). Their law also states specifics of a campus violence prevention plan including, “The campus violence prevention plan shall include the development and implementation of a campus violence prevention committee and campus threat assessment team” (P.A. 95□881 § 110 ILCS 12/1).

Other states, realizing a need for the proactive approach in violence prevention, appointed task forces and implemented legislation and policies to follow the guidelines Virginia and Illinois had proposed in the wake of their own tragedies, including Missouri, Oklahoma, New Jersey, Florida, Kentucky, New Mexico, and North Carolina (Missouri Campus Security Task Force, 2007; Oklahoma Governors Task Force on Campus Life and Safety and Security, 2008; New Jersey Campus Security Task Force, 2007; State of Florida Gubernatorial Task Force for University Campus Safety, 2007; State of Illinois Campus Security Task Force, 2008; State of Kentucky Governor's Task Force on Campus Safety, 2007; State of New Mexico Governor's Task Force on Campus Safety, 2007; State of North Carolina Campus Safety Task Force, 2008).

The previous examples provide validation of this issue and its importance not only to the safety of an individual campus, but also to the entire state-wide higher education systems. This is one way states are instilling proactive measures to address current needs at IHE.

Mental health issues and awareness. The connection between mental health and violence on campus has been brought to attention in light of the shootings at both Virginia Tech and at Northern Illinois University as both shooters had a history of mental health problems (Knowles & Dungy, 2010). Mental health is a growing concern and issue within higher education. Legislation even outlines the relationships that should be established in order to expedite assessment and intervention with threat assessment team, law enforcement agencies, and mental health agencies (Code of Virginia § 23-9.2:10).

Suicide and mental illness awareness play an increasing role in the prevention of violence. Knowles and Dungy (2010) report an increase of students engaging in some

form of mental health treatment as an evolving trend in mental health problems on campuses. The predicted probability of violence increases with mental illness combined with substance abuse or dependence, therefore making college students at risk when taking these factors into account (Knowles & Dungy, 2010).

Flynn & Heitzmann (2008) suggest attention should be given to the role and responsibility of the university counseling center in treating mental health issues in order to retain and treat students at risk while remaining well-positioned to respond to imminent threats. Additionally, compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provide university administrators with the ability and authority to contact parents or others, “when there is an emergency affecting safety to oneself or others” (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008, p.486). Other factors in consideration with regard to the role of mental health on campus include maintaining a psychologist on the threat assessment team, balancing the communication while still maintaining privacy and confidentiality in the wake of crisis prevention and management, and providing comprehensive data on college student mental health (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008).

The increasing interest, attention to, and role of mental health at IHE can be attributed to recent events of violence on college campuses. However, a full examination and explanation of this issue is beyond the scope of this study. Specific and focused research in this area is provided in the mental health and counseling field.

Threat assessment. With the dynamics of campus violence seeming more complex, it is difficult to get a clear diagnosis and reporting of violence. College administrators must handle this issue as they look at both the reporting structures and strategies for

incidents of violence as well as considering a new approach to reduce violence based upon research from their constituents.

Institutions of higher education have the responsibility to, “determine their boundaries and roles in accordance with geographic location and any violent actions that fall under their concern” (LaVant, 2001, p.73). Beyond requirements from national legislation, IHE still have the role to provide specific tools and processes to handle these concerns. The threat assessment model encompasses a new process and tool IHE can use towards the prevention of violence on their campuses. First seen as a model after the Columbine attack, there is now an increasing need and concern for such a model since the shootings at Virginia Tech in April 2007. The threat assessment model as a proactive approach to prevent targeted violence on campus has been widely advocated for use in higher education settings on federal and state levels (Hephner LaBanc, Krepel, Johnson, & Herrmann, 2010).

The threat assessment process was first implemented by the Secret Service in efforts to help reduce violence and create safer school climates in partnership with the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2004). It focuses on the identification of underlying behaviors rather than the specific actions of violence in the prevention of targeted violence. This requires the entire community to become responsible to notice, observe, and identify any actions or behaviors that are of concern. Instead of reacting to a situation that has already happened, the threat assessment process takes a more proactive approach to stop violence before it begins. Within the higher education context, threat assessment works as a process in which students, faculty, or staff who may

pose a danger to campus or themselves are identified for the purpose of providing assistance or resources (Deisinger et al., 2008).

When the threat assessment process is applied, the facts are carefully analyzed through a gathering of information about behaviors and specific situations. It relies on others in the campus community to come forth with factual evidence about a person(s) of concern who have exhibited threatening behaviors. The threat assessment processes does not focus on profiling certain traits of a student or whether or not they did it, but instead approaches it from an angle that examines the behaviors and communications indicating intent and capability to follow through on an attack (USDE, 2002). Working from the intention for individual assessment, each concern and situation is evaluated separately. Therefore, this case-by-case approach allows the team to work on an individual basis based upon concerning behaviors, asserting no single response works for everyone (Fox & Savage, 2009; Marcus & Swett, 2003).

The operational steps for a campus threat assessment and management team are outlined by Deisinger et al. (2008) to identify and evaluate both persons and situations that raise concern and intervene to assist and prevent harm. The first step, identification, states, “identify a student faculty member, or staff member who has engaged in threatening behaviors or done something that raised serious concern about their well-being, stability, or potential for violence or suicide” (Deisinger, et al., 2008, p.47). The next step includes evaluation by conducting an initial screening of the person in question followed by the full inquiry in which more information is gathered from numerous sources. From this information, the team makes an assessment and thereby develops and implements the intervention plan. The plan often includes continual monitoring of the

person and ends with either a referral or other follow up as necessary (Deisinger et al., 2008).

The Threat Assessment and Management Team (TAM Team) is a “multidisciplinary team that is responsible for the careful and contextual identification and evaluation of behaviors that raise concern and that may precede violent activity on campus” (Deisinger et al., 2008, p.5). Recommendations have been made in regards to who should be represented on an institutional threat assessment team. The team should consist of representatives from law enforcement, human resources, student services and academic affairs, legal counsel, and mental health services (International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators [IACLEA], 2008; McBain, 2008). Such a team centralizes the process of evaluating threats or behaviors while providing all possible resources on campus to further communicate and develop the most effective plan to help the individuals of concern (McBain, 2008). By centralizing the process, the team approach aims to prevent anyone from falling through the cracks of the system.

As part of the comprehensive plan of primary prevention on campus, the threat assessment team should not be the only method of violence prevention utilized by an institution, but part of the entire comprehensive prevention program (Fox & Savage, 2009).

Primary prevention begins with education and awareness. Therefore, training and dissemination of information should be implemented on all levels of the campus. Faculty, staff, and students can be informed on how to respond to a variety and range of emergencies and issues (IACLEA, 2008). Educational awareness and training can be

delivered in an array of formats and tailored to specific audiences from in-person presentations to internet-based delivery and documents (IACLEA, 2008).

Another component of the comprehensive prevention is the policies in place to address unacceptable student behavior. These policies should be made clear in the communication and education for reporting incidents and shared with the entire campus community (McBain, 2008). The communication of efforts brings the referral of incidents to a centralized process for early identification and protocol for communication clearly outlined and, if needed, involvement of the threat assessment team.

With many institutions of higher education already having emergency response plans, communication alert systems, and other forms of notification, the identification of a threat assessment team adds to the efforts to prevent negative outcomes on campus ranging from suicide to alcohol and drug abuse (Fox & Savage, 2009; McBain, 2008). Combining the process that focuses on assessment rather than profiling along with identifying the nature of emergencies and actions to be taken is an effective way to enhance the primary prevention efforts.

Implications from current issues in violence prevention. Institutions of Higher Education want to make sure parents and students believe the campus is safe while also having the role and responsibility to make sure a campus is safe. As identified earlier, there are several factors and possible approaches to be considered including the size and nature of the institution. Additionally, addressing who is involved, from all campus community members as both victims and perpetrators are first and foremost (Sherrill, 1989). Having protocols to assist victims, policies to handle the perpetrator, and addressing the people involved in these incidents are an important piece to campus

violence prevention. Fox and Savage (2009) note what works for violence prevention for some campuses may not be applicable to others. There are so many differences in campuses across the U.S. ranging from those with multiple buildings, grounds, and more complex factors to those with much less space to manage. College and university administrators need to be cautious and purposeful in adopting preventative measures that are proven effective at lower levels, too. What works for smaller institutions, may not be valid for those with larger populations.

Effective violence prevention and the problem of campus violence is the responsibility of everyone involved at in the community. The literature suggests effective prevention must be taken up at all levels on campus (Fossey & Smith, 1996; LaVant, 2001; Sherrill, 1989). This responsibility must be a shared effort in the planning, guiding, and creating of programming from administration and campus law enforcement. Students, faculty, personnel, housing officials, mental health staff, and local police should all be involved in a collaborative and comprehensive approach (Fossey & Smith, 1996; Fox & Savage, 2009; Levin & Madfis, 2009; Marcus & Swett, 2003; Pezza & Bellotti, 1995). With such collaborative efforts, there is an importance placed on the need for education and training for students, faculty, and staff (Fox & Savage, 2009). Each stakeholder in the campus community has a role and responsibility in the prevention efforts on campus. This can be accomplished through means such as student orientations, faculty and staff trainings, and survival skills instruction (Fox & Savage, 2009).

From administrative responsibilities to a community effort, the primary audience and target for campus violence prevention continues to be students. Recent research indicates a focus on student-centeredness as part of the campus violence prevention effort

(Fox & Savage, 2009; Levin & Madfis, 2009). Student services, faculty, and administrators can promote effective interactions with students by not abusing their power over the lives and careers of students (Fox & Savage, 2009). IHE can bring students to the forefront of efforts, giving them a role, autonomy, and ownership over initiatives to prevent violence on campus.

Students have the power to break the culture of silence, identify threats, and come forward with information through reporting. Sharkin et al. (2003) present, “Students themselves are often the first to deal with troubled students on campus” (p.691). Because these students are the direct line to firsthand knowledge, they often know of students having problems before anyone else on campus. It has been shown that violent acts have been narrowly averted because confidants revealed the dangerous intentions of their peers to authorities (Levin & Madfis, 2009).

By simply coming forward and sharing information, students are able to not only prevent something violent from happening, but also help a fellow peer get the help they need. When they identify important warning signs, students can reduce the strains on students who may turn violent (Levin & Madfis, 2009). Prothrow-Stith (2007) makes the argument for identifying these warnings as, “We’ve got to get better at identifying them, and sometimes it is the very behavior that we want to punish that is the signal that they need something from us. We need to become better at understanding that” (p. 300). Both those in a supporting role for students and students themselves need to improve their knowledge of identifying the warnings to violence in order to help students in need.

Using students as peer helpers has reinforced the principle and strength of college students’ role as first responders to many incidents that happen on campus (Sharkin et al.,

2003). Involving students in the implementation of peer education and bystander approaches can lead to significant implications on long-term violence prevention (LaVant, 2001; Levin & Madfis, 2009; Pollard & Whitaker, 1993). In line with other research presented on peer education and bystander program, students can be recruited to serve in a variety of issues facing college students.

Sharkin et al. (2003) found students help peers with problems such as depression, academics, relationship issues, and substance abuse. They choose to consult with another student or family member rather than taking advantage of campus resources or others who are more informed and better equipped to assist. Their study reports that 94% of students chose not to contact campus counseling regarding their peer disclosure, while 40% did not think it was serious enough to report the issue to counseling (Sharkin et al., 2003). With these findings, it is understood that students are willing to help their peers in times of trouble and distress. However, further study might be needed to uncover the process they go through in deciding how to best help a peer. Understanding their processes, motives, and actions students take in deciding to help a peer will better enable those in roles assisting students to better serve their needs.

Therefore, why not approach the prevention of violence on college and university campuses from a student development perspective? Sherrill (1989) states, "Helping students to understand how much power they actually have over their own environment is fundamental to building community" (p. 87). They may not realize their proximity to their peers gives them influence into how their living situations, classrooms, and campus climate can be affected by their own choices, behaviors, and actions. Plus, students know far more than administrators about how much violence exists on campus (Cockey,

Sherrill, & Cave, 1989). Consequently, they should have more to say about stopping it and the power to do so. Sherrill also states the questions, “What can you, the administration, do to keep me safe?” yet, more accurately, “What can we all do to keep each other safe?” (Sherrill, 1989, p.87). More support, communication, and awareness are needed in order to help students understand how much control they actually have over their own environment. Students have knowledge about violence on campus; therefore they should also have more to say about how to best prevent it from happening (Sherrill, 1989).

Issue of under-reporting. The extent, nature of, and frequency of violence on campus have still been difficult to determine, even with the defined categories of violence and reporting measures already in place (Pezza, 1995; Pezza & Bellotti, 1995; Cockey et al., 1989). This is because much of the problem lies in the diagnosis and reporting of violence. Inefficient and underestimated reporting is due to the fact that victims who are college students do not always report incidents or offenses or file official complaints (Pezza & Bellotti, 1995; Cockey et al., 1989; Nicoletti et al., 2010; Sloan, Fisher, & Cullen, 1997; Thompson et al., 2007). If students do not come forward with reports, there is no way for IHE to be able to accurately realize the scope and types of violence being committed on their campuses and therefore, not able to provide services to those who choose not to seek help.

Under compliance for legislative acts, numbers have shown that college campuses are generally safer than their surrounding communities. Even though lawsuits and other tragic cases have brought a change in the view of college campuses, they are still generally seen as a safe haven free from crime (Lowery, 2007). Even so, the issue of

reporting and recording may be significant to the study of campus violence because of the multitude of data handling methods and the common doubting of the reliability and validity of these statistics (Cockey, et al., 1989). Additionally, the specifics of the Clery act exclude offenses such as larceny, theft, threats, harassment, and vandalism. Even so, those in the college health profession understand the victimization patterns seen on many campuses are not included in any official statistics reported in compliance with laws (Carr & Ward, 2006). Therefore, it is up to IHE to move outside the realm of the current legislation to address this problem of reporting violence and threatening behaviors on all levels.

Campus crime statistics are flawed, due to significant underreporting among victims (Sloan, et al., 1997; Thompson, et al., 2007). In two different studies researchers sought the reasons for not reporting crimes. In Sloan et al. (1997) across all offenses, only 25% of campus crimes were reported to any authority. Reasons for not reporting ranged from the crimes being too minor, of a private matter, or not being clear it was a crime. Thompson et al. (2007) also reports, “The most frequently cited reason for both sexual and physical victimizations was that the incident was not serious enough” (p.279). This clearly sends the message that students are not aware of what constitutes a crime.

Other reasons stated for not reporting included not wanting anyone to know, not wanting the police involved, being ashamed or embarrassed, and not wanting to get the offender in trouble (Thompson et al., 2007). Students also reported a fear of being partly to blame, a fear of retaliation, and a belief that nothing productive will come from stepping forward (Nicoletti et al., 2010). Therefore fear and concern control much of the decision when students are faced with a situation or crime and their choice

With these previous reasons listed, Thompson et al. (2007) note several implications as a result of this issue. First, offenders are not likely to be apprehended if victims do not make reports to law enforcement officials. Next, there are services for health, social, and legal aspects available for victims if they report. Victims often feel overwhelmed and need a great amount of support and if they do not sense that this support is there, they will be less likely to report and seek help (Sloan et al., 1997). Studies have shown the psychological recovery of victims who report is better for those who do not (Sloan et al., 1997). Consequently, we need to encourage students to report. If they do not, they cannot get help.

These study results point toward a need for programming, interventions, strategies, and research that help improve the reporting rates among victims. In order to encourage reporting, Pezza (1995) suggests institutions can promote the recognition, acknowledgement, and communication surrounding these incidents. Thompson et al. (2007) states that students need to be educated about what constitutes violence and how the legal code defines certain victimizing behaviors as crimes. There is also a need for effective research-based methodologies and current research and statistics on campus safety and violence. Such research could provide resources for campus administrators when they are looking to identify and reduce campus violence (Jackson, Terrell, & Heard, 2007; Marcus & Swett, 2003).

Institutions of Higher Education need to realize the scope of this issue while examining the nature of these acts of violence on campuses. The nature and issue of underreporting can be addressed through attention to reporting structures to make it more

available, conducive, and safe for students to report acts of violence. New strategies and approaches should be pursued that reflect needs and concerns of students.

Identifying precursors to violence. Indicators for violence come in the form of threats, past interests and conduct, and current verbal and physical behavior (Nicoletti et al., 2010). Understanding and having a basic knowledge of such indicators is imperative for violence prevention. When discussing the precursors to violence and such behaviors that research focuses on the connections between aggressive and violent behavior and antisocial behavior or social withdrawal (Serbin, Moskowitz, Schwartzman, & Ledingham, 1991). Studying antisocial and deviant behavior in children to adulthood has led to the conclusion that the causes of aggression and violence are related to the causes of extreme and persistent antisocial, delinquent, and criminal behavior (Farrington, 1991).

Before these behaviors become violent, there are indicators and precursors one can identify in hopes to prevent any further harm. The American Psychological Association presents warning signs for violence including:

“loss of temper on a daily basis, frequent physical fighting, significant vandalism or property damage, increase in use of drugs or alcohol, increase in risk-taking behavior, detailed plans to commit acts of violence, announcing threats or plans for hurting others, enjoying hurting animals, and carrying a weapon” (2010).

Within an educational context, organizations and schools can identify signs a person is at risk for committing violence as a part of the early behavioral and emotional assessment.

In a publication for the USDE, Dwyer, Osher, & Warger (1998) present the following warning signs as,

“Social withdrawal, excessive feelings of isolation and being alone, excessive feelings of rejection, being a victim of violence, feelings of being picked on and/or persecuted, low school interest and poor academic performance, expression of violence in writings and drawings, uncontrolled anger, patterns of impulsive hitting and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors, history of discipline problems, past history of violent and aggressive behavior, intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes, drug and alcohol use, affiliation with gangs, inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms, serious threats of violence”.

Taken from a different context and adding to the understanding of college students as adults, literature from workplace violence suggests that the sources of violent behavior lie in the three factors of personality, stress, and the setting or social context (Denenberg & Braverman, 1999). By looking at the person’s ability to handle stress while finding ways to deal with the conflict will help assess the risk of violence or self-destructive behavior through behaviors, the ability to take responsibility, control of impulses, history of violent behavior, and attitude of the acceptability of violence (Denenberg & Braverman, 1999). Stress can also increase the risk of violence in an individual who is predisposed to violent behaviors.

When combining a personal disposition and stress-related environment for an individual, the elements are present for violent behavior. However, the third source, the setting, provides an opportunity for intervention in recognizing the signs of stress and the ability to interrupt or slow the process (Denenberg & Braverman, 1999). These authors

emphasize the ability of the organization to recognize warning signs to attempt to intercede in a stressful situation for an individual at risk.

With an understanding and awareness of warning signs and behaviors, as well as taking into account the three elements of personality, stress, and context, both students and those in authority can begin to bridge the gap that exists in communication between the two. This gap perpetuates common knowledge often shared by students and what figures of authority learn when it comes to violence and other threatening behaviors. The cornerstone of violence prevention is in the reporting of threats and students should be encouraged to report menacing remarks or behavior (Denenberg & Braverman, 1999).

There are behaviors and actions that can be identified prior to violence, known as precursors to violence. Ranging from aggression to poor performance, these specific behaviors can serve as warning signs in a youth or adult or in the context of school or work. By having knowledge of and the understanding of these precursors, those working at IHE can recognize and address them before it becomes a bigger issue or problem while getting the individual the help and assistance they need.

Violence prevention on college campuses. The scope and nature of violence at institutions of higher education have been identified and discussed. The reporting of such incidents only focuses on the incident once it has been committed. Prevention of violence through the framework of the public health and ecological models will be the focus in the remainder of the review.

Models for prevention. Two models will be examined as the guiding frameworks for which violence prevention has been studied and applied in many situations.

Public health model. The traditional approach to violence prevention is identified in three parts as education, regulation, and treatment of the individual. This approach is commonly recognized as the public health approach to prevention that gives attention to care for the victim while emphasizing educational components focusing on violence reduction in the first level and part of the model (Lee et al, 2007; Potter & Krider, 2000). These parts and levels of the model are more specifically recognized as the primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention efforts in place as approaches and frameworks for campus violence prevention (Nicholson et al., 1998; LaVant, 2001; Pezza & Bellotti, 1995).

Working from the three types of prevention: primary, secondary, and tertiary, Potter and Krider (2000) believe a model for deterrence and positive rewards for appropriate behavior encompasses an interdisciplinary model. With this tri-level approach, the public health model speaks to audiences in IHE as they prepare educational programming, develop policies and procedures for handling the situation, and also how to treat those involved. This model and approach is created in effort to build community where the individual is not exploited, power is not abused, and every member is involved (Pezza & Bellotti, 1995).

Prevention at the primary level is defined as, “approaches that aim to prevent violence before it occurs” (Krug, et al., 2002, p. 15). Primary prevention involves reducing the risk of violence to victims by perpetrators through the physical environment (Pezza & Bellotti, 1995). More specifically, these can be interventions that reduce risk through education and training in social skills, empowerment, assertiveness, sexual decision-making, conflict resolution, and self-defense (Nicholson et al., 1998; LaVant,

2001). Primary prevention is identified as developing strategies for the prevention of violence before perpetration or victimization occurs involving those on the community and society-level changes (Lee et al., 2007). Support services at IHE can focus on the primary prevention level as they develop and deliver awareness and education covering a variety of skill-building topics. The primary level is also the level within IHE that aims to reach all members of the campus community.

The secondary level of prevention is described as, “approaches that focus on the more immediate responses to violence” (Krug, et al., 2002, p.15). Secondary prevention focuses on raising awareness, establishing consequences and guidelines of campus violence (Nicholson et al., 1998; LaVant, 2001; Pezza & Bellotti, 1995). The communication component of this prevention is key as acceptable and unacceptable behaviors are shared as part of secondary prevention. Whereas primary prevention focuses on education and skills to prevent, the secondary level is more concentrated on the reaction and response to what happens if violence is committed. Students are made aware of the outcomes and effects of violence in the secondary level.

Tertiary prevention is identified as, “approaches that focus on long-term care in the wake of violence” (Krug et al., 2002, p.15). This third component involves those directly involved in violent incidents and the intervention that takes place accordingly (Pezza & Bellotti, 1995). This can take form in the direct servicing of both victims and perpetrators through medical care, protection, counseling, and legal advice (Nicholson et al., 1998; LaVant, 2001; Pezza & Bellotti, 1995). Even more concentrated on the personal level, this level of prevention centers on providing support and care for the victim and finding the proper method and treatment for the perpetrator in the situation.

IHE may deal with this level directly through campus police, women's centers, offices of conduct, and others. They may also include the local law enforcement, medical treatment, and other community resources.

Ecological model. Based upon individual, relationship, social, cultural, and environmental factors, the ecological model brings understanding and attempts to describe that the nature of violence is multidimensional and a complex combination of all of these (Krug et al., 2002). This model has been applied to other types of violence such as child abuse, youth violence, and partner violence where it examines the contextual and individual factors of violence as a result of multiple influences on behaviors (Krug, et al., 2002). The Ecological Model is commonly used to explain the prevention strategies for violence prevention based upon the four levels of individual, relationship, community, and societal (Lee et al., 2007).

In the World Report on Violence and Health, Krug et al. (2002) offer the descriptions of each level within the Ecological Model. Beginning on the individual level, this includes both biological and personal characteristics/factors to behavior that contribute to violence as either the victim or the perpetrator. Relationship factors are the second level, which include social relationships with peers, partners, and families. These relationships influence an individual's behavior and experience and can put them at increased risk for violence. The third level is the community context such as schools, neighborhoods, and other characteristics of the setting that often, social relationships are rooted. High levels of mobility, highly diverse populations, and high population densities are contributing factors associated with violence at the community level. The final level is the societal factors that encompass the acceptable climate for violence, cultural norms

that support violence, and disparity between segments of society, or even those aiming to reduce inhibitions against violence.

Working from this model combined with the levels of prevention strategies, primary efforts should aim for intervention with the multiple causes and aspects of violence while working within levels and the various contexts (Krug et al., 2002; Lee et al., 2007). Applying this model in the context of IHE allows for the application of prevention at multiple levels of how individuals interact with society. It also provides a framework for understanding violence at all levels of relations. A combination of both the public health and the ecological model presents a complete and inclusive approach to violence prevention at IHE allowing for a connection to all levels of the campus community.

Education and awareness. Working from the primary and secondary frameworks from the public health model, education and awareness of violence and crime takes place on college campuses in many forms. Prevention requires ongoing awareness programs for students and employees (Fossey & Smith, 1996). Professionals on campus can develop and implement timely and ongoing education, staff development, skill-building designed to handle stress, and how to cope with trauma. This programming aids in the development of a responsive culture at IHE (LaVant, 2001). Such an intervention plan calls for responsible action by campuses to create a culture that is proactive and prepared to deal with campus violence and crime (LaVant, 2001; Stone, 1993).

Suggestions for various prevention and training programs should include rape prevention, sexual decision-making, conflict resolution and communication skills, substance abuse awareness, public safety, relationship of violence to alcohol and other

drugs, as well as self-defense strategies (LaVant, 2001; Sherrill, 1989). However, this should not be limited to the previous list; other prevention programming can involve raising awareness of campus violence, outlining the consequences for acceptable and unacceptable behavior to all students. Rund (2002) suggests for campus safety and student affairs, “Development of educational programs that inform and prepare students about personal safety on campus and beyond it” (p. 8). This type of programming can prepare students for safety and violence issues on campus while also giving them skills and perspective they will utilize for years to come. However, it is important to note that IHE and campus support services providing this education should approach these topics carefully. Fox and Savage (2009) acknowledge potential negative effects of such education and programs. They note, “It is critical not to promote fear and anxiety while attempting to reduce risk” (p.1474). A balance must be found to create an aware campus community while providing necessary and purposeful knowledge and skills for the safety of everyone.

As education and awareness approaches are discussed in the literature, much of the application for college students is in the context of sexual violence and substance abuse prevention. These methods begin with the framework for education through the social norms approach to educating students about the dangers of sexual violence, substance abuse, and other issues facing this population.

Social norms approach. Several studies and programs support the social norms approach to education and awareness for the college students (Berkowitz, 2003; Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenback, & Stark, 2003; Hong, 2000; Perkins, 2003). With a basis in an environmental model, Perkins (2003) removes the focus from changing an

individual's personal attitude and directs it toward the peer or community group. This concentration on peers is the underlying and basic understanding of social norms. At the heart of social norms lies the social environment, which strongly influences people's actions and intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). As further described by Berkowitz (2003), the social norms theory is described as an individual's perception of the attitudes or behaviors of their peers and other community members being different from their own.

A misperception occurs from the overestimation of a healthy behavior or an underestimation of a protective behavior, resulting in an individual changing his or her own behavior to best fit the misperceived norm. Based in research from exaggerated perceptions of norms for substance abuse, this can also be explained as when the perception outweighs the reality of a situation in which individuals feel pressured to follow their peers or conform to the group in subsequent problem behaviors (Perkins, 2003). Berkowitz (2003) explains this further stating the individual chooses not to address the problem behavior of others or avoids communicating uneasiness due to the assumption that their peer group accepts the behavior. When accurate information is disclosed, the reality of the environment and social norms can effectively reduce the individual problem behaviors while enhancing protective behaviors, thus the individual may feel compelled to share the dissatisfaction with the behavior (Berkowitz, 2003; Perkins, 2003). This error or misinterpretation of peer acceptance can greatly affect an individual's own behavior. Therefore, education based in social norms must address this gap in perception and find ways to communicate reality.

One application of social norms is within the context of sexual violence prevention and gendered nature of violence. Programs target men and focus on changing

cultural and peer reference group norms instead of the individual or interpersonal (Hong, 2000). This takes the accountability of gendered violence to another level by focusing on a broader, more cultural implication. These programs focused on men challenge the misperceptions of violence against women by engaging men in the discussion, thus taking on the social norms (Berkowitz, 2003).

Fabiano et al. (2003) suggest several considerations for the use of a social norms approach. First, the dominant culture of safety and respect must be strengthened. The next step involves taking the extreme behaviors of the minority and reducing the effect of any norms misperception. Third, a variety of communication strategies must be utilized to strengthen the correct and accurate norms on campus. Finally, the silent majority must have a voice that is heard. With the support for these programs, findings indicate men are more likely to intervene in problem behaviors of their peer (other men) and change the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of men and their foundational views of manhood (Fabiano et al., 2003; Hong, 2000).

This approach can be applied and expanded working from the lens in which campus violence is seen as a product of culture and environment. Pezza and Bellotti (1995) present a comprehensive model enabling solutions from students, faculty, staff, and administration. Steps taken in this model begin with decentralized authority, then empowering students, which leads to the promotion of civility (Pezza & Bellotti, 1995). The applications of social norms give students a broader understanding of issues facing their community while providing discussion and solutions to create change.

Sexual violence prevention models. Within the study and field of sexual violence prevention, there are two frameworks this review presents for discussion. Bystander and

peer education approaches are the two most prevalent models represented in the literature.

Bystander. With a connection to the overall issue of norms regarding violence, research has shown the encouragement of bystander intervention programs can be successful when presented in the context of an overall discussion about norms regarding sexual violence (Brown & Messman-Moore, 2010). As part of education and awareness programs at IHE, the topic of sexual violence is presented in the framework of social norms combined through the lens of college students as bystanders. College student development and related literature provide research from interpersonal and sexual violence and bystander approaches. These have been utilized as a primary source of prevention programming (Berkowitz, 2003; Banyard et al., 2004; Banyard et al., 2007; Banyard et al., 2009; Banyard et al., 2010; Foubert & La Voy, 2000; Foubert & Cowell, 2004; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Katz, 1994).

Banyard et al (2007) present their approach based in the findings of community norms and attitudes as factors for sexual violence on college campuses. Utilizing a bystander model and approach, their program, *Bringing in the Bystander*, addresses these norms from both an individual and community level. This topic of reducing sexual violence on college campuses by utilizing a bystander-focused program has been covered extensively by the work of Banyard and her colleagues (Banyard et al., 2004; Banyard et al., 2007; Banyard et al., 2009; Banyard et al., 2010).

The concept of bystander education and research allows every individual in the community the role of preventing violence through a skill-building approach (Banyard et al., 2004). When Banyard et al. (2004) began their study with teaching skills of

intervention, one important aspect was to connect the larger community beyond special groups to apply prevention efforts at all levels of the ecological model. For a successful bystander intervention, they identify five predictors as, “group size, recognizing a situation as a problem, being asked to intervene, witnessing interventions by role models, and possessing skills to intervene” (p.73). Berkowitz (2003) adds to this process of intervention as first, noticing the event, followed by interpreting the event as a problem, feeling responsible for the solution, possessing the skills to take action, and finally, intervention. Therefore, the educational sessions are subsequently based upon these predictors and provide a unique approach where the individual is identified as a potential bystander and part of the community rather than focusing on victimization or perpetration (Banyard et al., 2007).

Peer education. Peer education is another model that presents effective methods of delivering messages about accurate positive norms through a peer or bystander model to share the actual and misperceived norms. As an outcome and direct link to this bystander approach is the focus on utilizing student leaders and peers as bystanders. Students are viewed as engaging, informal helpers who have a powerful role in both preventing victimization and assisting survivors (Banyard et al., 2009). In addition, peer educators are used to create awareness and support healthy lifestyle choices (Nicoletti et al., 2010).

Concentrating on these informal helpers in the context of roommates, friends, and other social situations where prevention efforts are needed is important in the larger scope of peer education models on college campuses (Banyard et al., 2009). Therefore, as an outcome of the bystander literature, there is a discussion on the use of peers as leaders and role models (Banyard et al., 2004; Banyard et al., 2007; Banyard et al., 2009;

Banyard et al., 2010). This slightly distinguishes peer education apart from the bystander approach in its attention given to peers as empowered leaders to create change.

Others also address the role of peers, using peer teams, and peer education to address problems of distress and prevention efforts within a campus community (Choate, 2003; Hertzog & Yeilding, 2009; Katz, 1994; Kress et al., 2006; Lonsway et al., 1998; Schwartz et al., 2006; Sharkin, 2003; Stein, 2007). Such programming ranges from a semester-long course training peers to facilitate workshop on Campus Acquaintance Rape Education (CARE) (Lonsway et al., 1998) to formats using peer theater and peer facilitation in using student resources to change rape myth attitudes (Kress et al., 2006). Katz (1994) developed a program, Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), encouraging students to use their status among peers to promote healthy attitudes and behaviors towards women.

Additionally, an all-male peer education program, The Men's Program, focuses on rape prevention and was found to change attitudes and behaviors by increasing awareness and rape sensitivity (Foubert & La Voy, 2000; Foubert & Cowell, 2004; Foubert & Newberry, 2006). Peers have also been utilized in education when peer leaders are given the autonomy to address dating violence in a program where peers lead discussion and participants ask questions (Schwartz et al., 2006). This allows the leaders to be role models and give referrals and appropriate intervention sources.

From the success of these previously listed programs in peer educational formats, it is understood peer initiatives are very effective. Compared to other forms, peer education is shown to improve knowledge, change attitudes, and promote self-efficacy (Schwartz et al., 2006). Peer educators report gaining new information, changing an

attitude, creating positive behavior change, and confronting risky behaviors (Nicoletti et al., 2010).

Stein (2007) suggests using peer educators both to influence and alter campus cultures through training programs with peers. Educators on college campuses should consider programs that move beyond a traditional lecture format to give students an active role in prevention by engaging them in the planning and practice of skills for intervention against violence (Banyard et al., 2007). Stein also notes, “The peer group has been determined to be one of the most powerful sources of influence on college students” (p. 86).

Sexual violence prevention research and literature have provided models for prevention at IHE. Educators must continue to develop additional violence-related programs based in the prevention models of bystander and peer education. Utilizing the influence of peers in prevention efforts on campus has proven to be affective.

Educational and awareness targeting violence and related issues on college campuses should be considered from the perspective of social norms. Examples within sexual violence prevention programming have illustrated the success of involving bystanders and peers as leaders in creating change at IHE. Consequently, future efforts in the prevention of violence on college campuses encompass such views.

In review, the understanding and view of campus safety has been affected by previous events, resulting in subsequent legislation and initiatives. This reaction has provided study and categorization of violence in order to better understand and prevent violence at IHE in the future. Thus, the climate is reflected in current approaches with the implementation of threat assessment procedures, attention given to mental health

issues, consideration of underreporting, and identifying of precursors and threatening behavior that leads to violence. Possible solutions are presented through education and awareness in the frameworks of the public health and ecological models. These programs deliver primary education to the campus community in social norms, bystander, and peer education contexts.

Theoretical Framework

Many approaches and models have been presented to prevent violence at institutions of higher education. Presenting similarities in the social norms approach through peer and bystander education brings continuity to research in this field. However, further research is needed on peer influence and how perceived norms affect behavior. Perkins (2003) makes the argument stating more research is needed in, “what peers actually believe is the right thing to do and how they behave, or from what young people think their peers believe is right and how they think most others behave” (p.8).

The Reasoned Action Approach. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) provide the theoretical framework for this study based in behavioral prediction called the reasoned action approach. It encompasses years of work by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975; 1980; 2010) in predicting and changing behavior. Utilized in many studies on behavior, this theory provides an outline for research in organizational behavior measuring job performance and turnover to gauging political behavior through voting participation, turnout, and voting choice. It also has served as a foundation for work in understanding discriminatory behavior. With many applications in various domains, the overarching goal of this approach is to gain knowledge about the determinants of human behavior in attempt to provide solutions to personal and social problems (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

The concept of this theory is to design effective interventions in order to address social problems through understanding factors of human behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The theory is historically based in the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) combining behavioral and normative beliefs to measure the theory and how it influences behavior. Ajzen (1985; 1988) extended the understanding of the previous theory by including the theory of planned behavior (TPB) in which behavioral control was a function of beliefs weighted by factors of power of control. As the theory has continued to evolve, its current form serves as the basis for a theoretical understanding for this problem.

This approach adds to the assumption that behavior is a result of information or beliefs individuals hold about the behavior under consideration (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The theory builds upon intention as a predictor of behavior taking into consideration skills, abilities, and environmental factors in the situation. The understanding of this theory is based upon the action of an individual performing a behavior because he or she intends to do so. This is in part due to the skills and abilities of the individual and the lack of environmental constraints, which may hinder the intentions of carrying out the behavior.

Figure 1 presents a visual model of the reasoned action approach. Before beliefs or attitudes are addressed in the model, Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) offer an explanation of the origins of beliefs as background factors. These are explained through numerous variables based in individual, social, and informational factors. These include demographic information, personal dispositions, knowledge, moods and emotions, and

the social environment. These background factors are not necessarily connected to beliefs, but may have an influence on behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

The second and third levels of the model are based in beliefs. Fishbein and Ajzen identify three different types of beliefs that leading to resulting attitudes or perceptions (2010). The first is identified as behavioral beliefs or outcome expectancies, which in turn affect an individual's attitude toward performing that behavior. The second type of belief is the injunctive and descriptive normative beliefs, which produce the perceived norm or social pressure to choose to engage or not engage in the behavior. The final type of belief is the control beliefs resulting from self-efficacy or perceived behavioral control. Stemming from these three types of beliefs and their results lead to the fourth piece of the model as behavioral intention or the readiness to perform the behavior. The authors suggest when the attitude is positive and the perceived norm and behavioral control is great, the stronger the intention will be to perform the behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The fourth level within the model, intention, leads to the determination of the actual performance of the behavior. Following the same assumptions as before, the stronger the intention, the greater chance the individual will follow through on the behavior.

An additional piece to the model is represented through actual control. Actual control can affect the behavior through skills, abilities and environmental factors, which are often not available to measure (Fishbein, & Ajzen, 2010). It also plays a part in the perceived behavioral control to in turn, reflect the actual control to improve upon behavioral prediction.

Figure 1. The Reasoned Action Approach

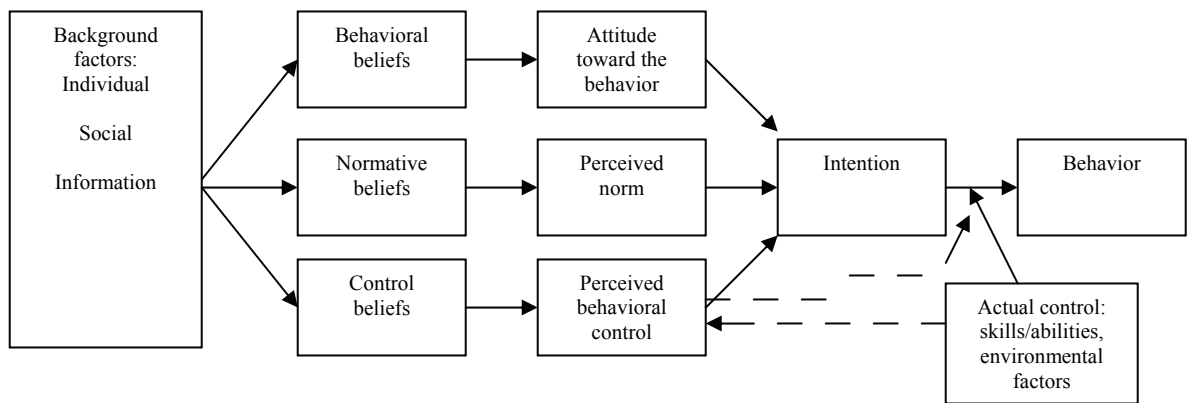


Figure 1. Adapted from “The Reasoned Action Approach,” by Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010.

To begin a study framed with this theory, Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) assert the first step is to define the behavior of interest. This behavior is identified for this study is the reporting of threats and threatening behaviors. With this clear identification, it guides how the behavior is assessed and measured. They propose a behavior is comprised of four elements: action, target, context, and time (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). First, the action performed is followed by the target at which the action is directed. This leads to the context in which the action is performed and the time is occurs.

Once the behavior is identified, the theory and approach can be applied to the understanding of an individual student’s behavior as a result of peer norms. Prior to the action of performing a behavior, the underlying factors behind the intentions based upon attitudes and perceived norms are identified (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). At the basic level lies the identification of the three types of beliefs at which this study will focus attention to determine the considerations that guide student’s decisions to perform or not to perform a behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen). It is the goal of this study to examine and gain insight into how students think about reporting of threatening behavior and its

consequences, the demands placed on them by others, as well as resources available, barriers, and other issues of control (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). From this information, effective interventions for behavior change can be developed to target reporting behaviors in college students.

Summary

The dynamics of campus safety and violence prevention are changing. Approaches to campus safety and violence prevention through the higher education system are changing as a result of the events at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007 and at Northern Illinois University in February of 2008. Even with laws in place, under-reporting on campuses across the nation is still an issue, as students do not bring forth information for a variety of reasons. Models based on primary prevention, targeting social norms, and changing attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors associated with violence have been implemented on college campuses.

Methodologically, those programs implementing education through peer-led programs have proven to be successful. Therefore, as the campus climate for violence prevention is facing changes, implications from this have taken form in new state legislation, the implementation of the threat assessment process, and attention given to mental health issues. With threat assessment being implemented on college campuses to identify underlying threatening behaviors of individuals, little is understood about the process students go through when deciding to report or not report threatening behaviors or acts that could be determined as precursors to violence. Using the reasoned action approach as a theoretical framework, this knowledge could provide suggestions for the approach practitioners' use for education and awareness of this process with students.

The purpose of this case study was to examine resident advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. Resident Advisors, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life professional staff serving at an institution of higher education served as the population for this study. Seven research questions guided this study:

1. How can Institutions of Higher Education enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment through the orientation and preparation process for Resident Advisors?
2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare Resident Advisors for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?
3. What is the perception of the Resident Advisor and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors?
4. What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?
5. What are the student's personal attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening behaviors?
6. What are student perceptions of others' attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors?
7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this case study was to examine resident advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. Resident Advisors, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life professional staff serving at an institute of higher education served as the population for this study. Seven research questions guided this study:

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4. What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?
5. What are the student's personal attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening behaviors?
6. What are student perceptions of others' attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors?
7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?

Rationale for qualitative design. A qualitative approach guided the inquiry for this study using a theoretical lens to study this research problem exploring the meaning individuals or groups give to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). Reasoning for a qualitative method included allowing for data collection in a natural setting and analyzing data inductively to establish patterns and themes while the voice of participants is heard. Such an approach gives description and interpretation of a problem in a way that adds to the literature and provides for a call to action (Creswell, 2007).

A single case study method was chosen for this study as it represented a unique case and circumstance. Creswell (2007) identifies case study research as, “the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p.73). When the research questions are related to a contemporary set of events in which the investigator has little or no control, the case study approach is appropriate (Yin, 2003). Exploration of a case using multiple sources of information can be used in the study of social science. This methodology allowed the study to focus on an issue of concern while selecting one bounded case to illustrate the issue (Creswell, 2007).

This specific case also served as a test of existing theory (Yin, 2003). The reasoned action approach provided the theoretical framework for this study linking the theory to the research questions. Utilizing theory in the research design addressed external validity as Yin (2003) states, “it establishes the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized” (p.34). Utilizing theory in a qualitative approach to research served as a justification or guiding approach to the study that can increase the depth, breadth, and level of conceptualization for the theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The research design. The research design selected for this case study was illustrated by the establishment of a chain of evidence for the data collection process (Yin, 2003). Collecting multiple sources of evidence for this case addressed construct validity by means of evidence through 1) observations of RA training, 2) document analysis of literature dispersed during RA training and other resources made available online, 3) individual interviews with RAs and 3) focus group session with the participants to validate themes and data collected in the individual interviews (Yin, 2003). The data collection timeline is provided in Table 2 to illustrate the steps in the research process.

Table 2:

Data Collection Timeline

Date	Data Collection Activity
May 14, 2010	Initial contact and meeting with Director of Residence Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Requested permission to observe training and conduct interviews
August, 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Submit and receive IRB approval ○ Observation of RA training
October, 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pilot interview of interview protocols ○ Extend invitation to experienced/returning RA's
October-December, 2010	Conduct one-on-one interviews with RA's, Residence Life supervisory staff, and Residence Life professional staff
February, 2011	Conduct focus group with those who participated in the study

Preliminary work. In the development of this study, a set of a priori propositions (Table 3) illustrated how the research questions aligned with the theoretical framework and supporting literature. These propositions guided the preparation for the observational and interview protocols.

Table 3:

a priori Propositions

Proposition	Supporting Literature	Research Question(s)
Prevention comes in steps taken before violence is committed	<p>Prevention and mitigation comes in information sharing, examining threat assessment, and intervening early in behavioral issues (Jones et al., 2010).</p> <p>In order to work toward a culture of prevention, institutions and students both must realize the importance of raising this issues and breaking the code of silence when a person is in distress (Jones et al., 2010).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can IHE enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment? 2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare RAs for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?
New state legislation provides implications for threat assessment at IHE	<p>The threat assessment process allows for facts to be analyzed through gathering of information about behaviors, communications indicating intent, capability to follow through on an attack, and specific situations. Based as an individual assessment, each concern and situation is evaluated separately in a case-by-case approach from a team asserting no single response works for everyone. This approach enhances primary prevention efforts identifying actions to be taken (Fox & Savage, 2009; Marcus & Swett, 2003; McBain, 2008, Deisinger et al., 2008).</p> <p>Other states, realizing a need for the proactive approach in violence prevention, appointed task forces and implemented legislation and policies to follow the guidelines Virginia and Illinois had proposed in the wake of their own tragedies. Such states include Missouri, Oklahoma, New Jersey, Florida, Kentucky, New Mexico, and North Carolina.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can IHE enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment? 2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare RAs for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors? 4. What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?
Primary prevention	Effective prevention must be taken	1. How can IHE enhance

<p>and policies at IHE should entail a comprehensive plan beyond threat assessment</p>	<p>up at all levels on campus and target the entire community. This includes policies addressing unacceptable student behavior and the subsequent education for reporting of incidents, bringing the referrals to a centralized process for early identification, and protocols for communication (McBain, 2008).</p> <p>Campus violence reduction and effective prevention is a responsibility and shared effort in the planning, guiding, and creating of programming and policies from administration and campus law enforcement, but also students, faculty, personnel, housing officials, mental health staff, and local police in a collaborative, comprehensive approach (Fossey & Smith, 1996; Fox & Savage, 2009; LaVant, 2001; Levin & Madfis, 2009; Marcus & Swett, 2003; Pezza & Bellotti, 1995; Sherrill, 1989).</p> <p>In collaborative efforts, each stakeholder has a role and responsibility and there is an importance placed on the need for education and training for students, faculty, and staff through orientations, trainings, and other instruction (Fox & Savage, 2009).</p>	<p>the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment?</p> <p>2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare RAs for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?</p> <p>4. What are the processes students use to identify and report or not to report potential threatening behaviors?</p>
<p>Students serve as the target audience and play a crucial role in the efforts of violence prevention on campus</p>	<p>Students remain the primary audience and target for campus violence prevention efforts (Fox & Savage, 2009; Levin & Madfis, 2009).</p> <p>Students are the firsthand knowledge of potential violence, they also have the power and proximity to identify warning signs and threats and come forward with information through reporting. (Levin & Madfis, 2009;</p>	<p>2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare RAs for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?</p> <p>3. What is the perception of the RA and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors?</p> <p>4. What are the processes students use to identify and</p>

	Sharkin et al., 2003; Prothrow-Stith, 2007). Violence has been averted due to confidants revealing intentions of their peers to authorities (Levin & Madfis, 2009).	report or not to report potential threatening behaviors? 7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?
Students help peers in times of trouble and distress	Students help peers with problems such as depression, academics, relationship issues, and substance abuse. They choose to consult with another student or family member rather than taking advantage of campus resources or others who are more informed and better equipped to assist. 94% of students choose not to contact campus counseling regarding their peer disclosure, while 40% did not think it was serious enough to report the issue to counseling (Sharkin et al., 2003).	3. What is the perception of the RA and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors? 5. What are the student's personal attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening behaviors? 6. What are student perceptions of others' attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors? 7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?
Support is needed in order to help students understand how much power they actually have over their own environment	Students have knowledge about violence on campus; therefore they should have more say in preventing it (Sherrill, 1989). Approaching violence prevention from a student development perspective can help students understand the power they have over their environment and building their community.	1. How can IHE enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment? 2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare RAs for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?
Underreporting of threatening behavior and incidents of violence by students is an issue for an accurate understanding of campus violence	The extent, nature of, and frequency of violence on campus have been difficult to determine due the inefficient diagnosis and underreporting of violence. College student victims do not always report incidents or file official complaints and have the fear of retaliation and belief that nothing productive will	4. What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors? 5. What are the student's personal attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening

	<p>come from stepping forward (Cockey et al., 1989; Nicoletti et al., 2001; Pezza, 1995; Pezza & Bellotti, 1995; Sloan et al., 1997; Thompson et al., 2007).</p> <p>Only 25% of campus crimes were reported to any authority. Reasons for not reporting ranged from the crimes being too minor or not serious enough, of a private matter/not wanting anyone to know, not being clear it was a crime, not wanting the police involved, being ashamed or embarrassed, and not wanting to get the offender in trouble (Sloan et al., 1997; Thompson et al., 2007).</p>	<p>behaviors?</p> <p>6. What are student perceptions of others' attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors?</p>
<p>The need exists for primary prevention models to be applied in new approaches, programming, interventions, reporting structures, strategies, and research to improve reporting rates at IHE</p>	<p>Primary prevention, as part of the public health and ecological models, aims to prevent violence before it occurs through interventions including education and training in social skills, empowerment, assertiveness, sexual decision-making, conflict resolution, and self-defense at the community and societal-level changes. These primary efforts should aim for intervention with multiple causes and aspects of violence while working within levels and various contexts (Krug et al., 2002; LaVant, 2001; Lee et al., 2007; & Nicholson et al., 1998). Those in the college health profession understand the victimization patterns seen on many campuses are not included in any official statistics reported in compliance with laws (Carr & Ward, 2006).</p> <p>Students need to be educated about what constitutes violence and the legal definitions (Pezza, 1995; Thompson et al., 2007)</p>	<p>1. How can IHE enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment?</p> <p>2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare RAs for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?</p> <p>4. What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?</p> <p>5. What are the student's personal attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening behaviors?</p> <p>6. What are student perceptions of others' attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors?</p>

	<p>There is also a need for effective research-based methodologies and current research and statistics on campus safety and violence to provide resources for campus administrators when they are looking to identify and reduce campus violence (Jackson et al., 2007; Marcus & Swett, 2003).</p>	
<p>IHE should create a culture that is responsive and prepared to deal with campus violence while implementing prevention plans that give students an active role by engaging them in the planning and practice of skills for intervention against violence</p>	<p>Prevention requires ongoing awareness programs for students and employees. Developing a responsive culture that provides timely and ongoing education, staff development, and skills designed how to handle stress and cope with the trauma needs to be developed and implemented by professionals on campuses (Fossey & Smith, 1996; LaVant, 2001; Stone, 1993).</p> <p>Peer and bystander education approaches have been utilized as a primary source of prevention and research in the forms of interpersonal violence in the literature based on college students. (Berkowitz, 2003; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Foubert & Cowell, 2004; Foubert & La Voy, 2000; Katz, 1995; Lonsway & Kothari, 2000; Lonsway et al., 1998)</p> <p>Stein (2007)also notes, “The peer group has been determined to be one of the most powerful sources of influence on college students” (p.86).</p> <p>These approaches allow every individual in the community the role of preventing violence through a skill-building approach. (Banyard et al., 2004; Banyard et al., 2007; Banyard et al., 2009; Banyard et al., 2010).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can IHE enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment? 2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare RAs for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors? 3. What is the perception of the RA and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors? 6. What are student perceptions of others’ attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors? 7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?
<p>Social norms</p>	<p>Based in an environmental approach,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can IHE enhance

<p>approaches utilizing peers as educators to change attitudes in a peer or community group is more influential</p>	<p>social norms removes the focus from changing an individual’s personal attitude and directs it toward the peer or community group and the individual’s perception of the attitudes or behaviors of their peer and other community members being different from their own. When accurate information is disclosed, the reality of the environment and social norms can effectively reduce the individual problem behaviors while enhancing protective behaviors, thus the individual may feel compelled to share the dissatisfaction with the behavior (Berkowitz, 2003; Perkins, 2003).</p> <p>Concentrating on peers as informal helpers in the context of roommates, friends, and other social situations where prevention efforts are needed is important in the larger scope of peer education models on college campuses (Banyard et al., 2009). Peer education uses the role of peers and uses peer teams to address problems of distress and prevention efforts within a campus community, influence and alter campus cultures, and is shown to improve knowledge, change attitudes, and promote self-efficacy (Choate, 2003; Hertzog & Yeilding, 2009; Katz, 1994; Kress et al., 2006; Lonsway et al., 1998; Schwartz et al., 2006; Sharkin, 2003; Stein, 2007).</p>	<p>the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment?</p> <p>6. What are student perceptions of others’ attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors?</p> <p>7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?</p>
<p>Research is needed on peer influence and how perceived norms affect behavior</p>	<p>Presenting similarities in the social norms approach through peer and bystander education brings continuity to research in this field. More research is needed in, “what peers actually believe is the right thing to do and how they behave, or from what young people think their</p>	<p>1. How can IHE enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment?</p> <p>6. What are student perceptions of others’ attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying</p>

	peers believe is right and how they think most others behave” (Perkins, 2003, p.8).	and reporting of threatening behaviors? 7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?
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Pilot interview. In preparation for data collection a pilot interview was conducted in order to help refine plans and procedures. The pilot interview demonstrated how the data collection procedures could be repeated establishing reliability for the study (Yin, 2003). Aligning the propositions, literature, and research questions with a series of interview questions created the interview guide and protocol. The interview guide was pilot tested in order to gain feedback and make necessary modifications for the initial data collection.

Sampling and selection of participants. A purposeful sample of students serving as RAs in the campus residence halls, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life professional staff were selected for this case study as they purposefully inform the understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2007).

In this study, RAs were chosen because of the multiple roles they serve on campus, that include serving as role models, counselors, teachers, and members of the campus community (Blimling, 1995). The expectations of an RA put them in an unique position to assist students in need. RAs have responsibilities in helping provide control for rules, regulations, and policies, establishing a healthy environment for students, assisting individual students who are in need, and providing information and referrals for students on a variety of issues related to prevention (Blimling, 1995). Blimling (1995) also outlines the knowledge and skills necessary for RAs such as conceptual application,

counseling, basic information, administrative skills, teaching, leadership, crisis management, and human relation skills.

Specifically related to the research problem in this study, RAs provide a role in the direct intervention, such as counseling, for students. Issues such as depression, behavior problems, or failure to meet social expectations can lead to a referral or other form of counsel to the student in distress (Blimling, 1995). Blimling (1993) also points out, “The RA may be the only person who recognizes a person is having difficulty and offers to help” (p.49). Therefore, RAs act as a helper and listen to student needs while providing information and referring them to others as a part of the helping process.

The selection of RAs as participants in this case study was based in their roles as students and responsible parties for the identification and reporting of threatening behavior. Grounded in training, knowledge of violence prevention, and awareness of the threat assessment process, this purposeful sample brought a firsthand perspective on the problems facing students and how to get assistance.

The case study group consisted of seven RAs, three graduate hall directors, and three Residence Life professional staff who are currently serving and have previous experience with the role of an RA. The RA participants were selected based upon a mix of possible participants based on gender, type of residence community, and years of experience as a RA. From these selection criteria, four females and three males were represented in the RA study group. Three graduate hall directors, two male and one female, were represented in the study. These graduate hall directors were also all students studying higher education in a graduate program at the institution. The final

participants included three male Residence Life professional staff with experience at the institution since the campus tragedy occurred.

Data collection. Initial contact was made with the Director of Residence Life to inquire about the RA training process and possibility of using RAs as subjects for the study. The researcher met with Residence Life professional staff to learn more about the Residence Life department and training process for this institution and provide a general overview of the case study. When IRB approval was received (Appendix A), the researcher met again with the Director of Residence Life to discuss participant access and selection for the case study and review drafts of the recruitment email (Appendix B, C, D) and consent form (Appendix E). Once permission was obtained, emails to the participants (Appendix B, C, D) and consent forms (Appendix E) were sent to selected participants based upon selection criteria in the previous section.

Following Yin's (2003) principles of data collection in case studies, the validity and reliability of this case study was strengthened. Yin (2003) argues using multiple sources of evidence as a principle of triangulation strengthens case study data collection through a wider range of issues and the converging lines of inquiry. This evidence for this case study was collected from several sources such as, observations of RA training, document analysis, individual participant interviews, and a focus group interview, increasing the accuracy and credibility of the case study. Triangulation was addressed through data triangulation when multiple measures are used for the same phenomenon, hence addressing issues of construct validity (Yin, 2003).

The second principle of data collection included creating a case study database with the organization and documentation of both the data and the report of the researcher

(Yin, 2003). When data were collected, all interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. These transcripts and other documents associated with the case study comprised the case study database.

The third principle of data collection Yin (2003) suggests is to maintain a chain of evidence in order to increase the reliability of the study. Creating a chain of evidence allowed others to follow the research process from the questions to the resulting evidence and conclusions. This process began by linking the theory and literature with the research questions for the case study. This was followed by an interview protocol that connected the research questions to those questions asked to the participants. The resulting pieces of evidence were linked to those in the case study database and finally to the case study report (Yin, 2003).

Observation. Utilizing participant-observation for a source of data in this case study was demonstrated through the observation of RA training on identification and reporting of threatening behaviors. Observations can aid the researcher by gathering field notes by observing training, not as a participant, but to seek understanding to the setting by designing an observational protocol for recording notes in the field while capturing both descriptive and reflective notes (Creswell, 2007). The observational protocol was based on the research questions and propositions (Appendix F). The observation of training did not focus on individual participants nor the instructors, rather in what information was being shared, how it was distributed, and the context of the training environment. The use of observation added to the evidence collected for the study and gave the researcher additional insight and understanding to the context and participants of the study.

Document analysis. In case studies, documents are useful in providing specific details that corroborate and augment evidence from other sources (Yin, 2003). In this study, documents, reference materials, and other print resources (Appendix G) were examined to provide an additional source of information relevant to the purpose and research question. Such analysis aided the data collection and provided added sources to address questions in the study (Yin, 2003). By examining the documents utilized in the training and reference of RAs, this further reflected the communication within the organization and how documents are used for this purpose.

Individual interviews with Resident Advisors, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life professional staff. The primary source of data for this study was from individual, in-depth interviews with the study participants. As those who were currently serving as RAs or had intimate contact with RAs in their current positions, these participants provided the researcher in a greater understanding of the role and experiences of the RA. The purpose of the focused interview was to follow a certain set of questions from the protocol while still maintaining an open-ended, conversational discussion (Yin, 2003). The interview protocol was based on propositions and research questions from the study (Appendix H, I). Participants were sent the consent form ahead of the scheduled interview times. Prior to beginning each interview, the researcher further explained the consent form and answered any questions regarding the research project. Semi-structured, open-ended, individual interviews were conducted with the study participants. The interviews were audio-recorded allowing the researcher to give participants full her attention. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher for further analysis and copies of the transcription were sent to each participant for member checks.

Focus group session. A focus group was used to listen and gather information in order to understand how people feel or think about an issue, in this case the study's findings (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The intent of utilizing focus groups as a method of data collection in this study was to validate themes from individual interviews conducted with participants in the study. The protocol for the focus group was based upon the themes that emerged from the analysis (Appendix J).

Typically focus groups involve 7 to 10 people (Greenbaum, 2000) or 6 to 8 people (Krueger & Casey, 2000) people who share similarities. The similarities between these participants were their role as RAs and their participation in the interviews conducted for this study. As a qualitative research technique, the goal of the focus group was to discuss attitudes and feelings about the themes, which emerged from the data analysis and facilitate interaction between participants to improve the quality of the output (Greenbaum, 2000). This method was strengthened by the ability for individuals to share their views in a safe and nonthreatening environment as the themes from the individual interviews were shared and discussed for accuracy (Greenbaum, 2000). Because the researcher felt having the Residence Life professional staff would inhibit this environment for open sharing and discussion, she offered the opportunity to meet individually with them. The focus group session in this study was used to help validate information and data by sharing the themes from the individual interviews while aiding the verification of accuracy insured by the individual interviews. The focus group session was recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Data analysis procedures. Analysis brings meaning to the data through, “the process of generating, developing, and verifying concepts” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008,

p.57). The analysis leading to the findings in this study followed a chain of evidence, in order to increase the reliability of the case study and serve as a basis for the conclusions (Yin, 2003). Propositions from the theoretical base, The Reasoned Action Approach (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), and supported by literature guided the research questions and protocol and therefore helped guide and organize the analysis by focusing attention on certain data (Yin, 2003).

Beginning with the existing literature, propositions were made from the needs supported by other authors, studies, and previous works within the field. The propositions provided overall statements, conceptualizing related literature, from which the research questions were formulated to focus on the issues and needs addressed in the literature. The research questions then guided the methodology and data collection procedures. Based upon the research questions the data collection procedures were determined, including the interview and observational protocols.

The first component of data collection was the observational protocol (Appendix F) of RA training. The research questions provided the structure and set the context for the remainder of the study and data collection. Specifically, research question one, “How can Institutions of Higher Education enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment through the orientation and preparation process for Resident Advisors?”, and research question two, “What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?”, guided the observation protocol. By concentrating the observations on elements within these two questions, the researcher was able to focus attention on purposeful and directed components of the training.

The next piece within the chain of evidence is supported by the interview protocol. Within the interview protocol, each interview question is designated and assigned to address one or more of the study's research questions (see Appendix H, I). As the researcher formulated interview questions based upon the study's research questions, they were then placed within the protocol allowing for flow and progression of questions ranging from more simple to complex issues.

Analysis of documents followed the research questions addressing the elements of this study not referring to attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions of students. Basic information presented through documents in a straightforward manner is represented in publications, websites, and other means of print and online material (Appendix G). The document analysis portion of this study was derived from three research questions.

First, documents from campus resources and offices were analyzed addressing the first research question, "How can Institutions of Higher Education enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment through the orientation and preparation process for Resident Advisors?". Based upon print and online material provided from entities within the institution, the analysis focused on those resources directed at the student's role in the reporting process. The second set of documents for analysis was provided by Residence Life and addressed the second research question, "What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare Resident Advisors for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?" Taken from resources and documents provided by Residence Life and to RAs during their training, these documents were aimed at the RAs and their preparation and access to resources related to identification. The fourth research question, "What are the processes students use to

identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?”, was presented through analysis of material obtained through both campus resources and Residence Life documents from training targeted at the processes and protocols for identification and reporting.

Conceptually, analysis began with asking questions at each stage of analysis in order to become familiar with the data, connect it to the theory, or guide further analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Each element of data from observations, the 13 interview transcripts, and the documents all provided the case study database. The software, Atlas ti©, was used as the case study database to store the transcription documents, and other related documents from the observations and document analysis. From this database, concepts and themes were developed and derived from the data and served as the basis for analysis in qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These themes were drawn from the words, experiences, interaction, and issues from the participants as understood by the researcher.

More specifically, the data took form in codes that come from the words of participants or from observations and documents and involved taking the raw data and bringing it to a more conceptual level (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Coding began after the observation and transcription in order to build a foundation for the future data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Two types of coding were used, open and axial coding. Open coding involved breaking down the data and separating the concepts for larger pieces of the raw data and axial coding involves relating concepts to each other (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Within the software program of the case study database, the triangulation and analysis of the data were accomplished through coding. Therefore, through reflection and memos, the lists of codes generated categories that guided and integrated the analysis utilizing quotes and excerpts from the interviews, which were representative of the data. The codes (Appendix K) served as the initial categories leading to the overall themes that emerged from the codes, setting the path for the data analysis. Thus, this completed the chain of evidence that began with propositions supported by the literature, formulated the research questions, followed by the creation of protocols for observations, interviews, and document analysis.

Trustworthiness, validity, and reliability. Several approaches were utilized in order to increase the trustworthiness, validity, and reliability of the findings of this study. Triangulation of the multiple and different sources of data provides corroborating evidence for the study (Creswell, 2007). This was illustrated by the use of several methods to gather data. These included observations of the RA training process, analysis of documents associated with violence prevention education and training, and participant interviews. Member checks were also conducted to enhance the credibility of the findings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was accomplished in this study by sharing interview transcription documents with each participant after the researcher had transcribed each individual interview. Participants were encouraged to share their feedback and provide any edits to the transcription. The focus group of participants from the study further validated the themes that emerged from the data. Participants were asked to reflect on the analyses and themes presented by the researcher.

Researcher bias and limitations of the study. The researcher's personal experiences and background influenced the study. Serving on the campus and workplace violence prevention committee in the capacity of a student representative provided insight and knowledge of violence-related issues and the threat assessment process. The researcher also served on the sexual violence prevention committee and received training on the facilitation of a bystander approach to educating students on issues of sexual violence.

It is important to note the researcher benefits from maintaining what is referred to as both insider and outsider status (Young, 2004). Insider status results from the firsthand knowledge the researcher gained from experience in the realms of violence prevention, student affairs, and threat assessment. The researcher maintains distance between herself and the study participants as an outsider, as she did not have previous relationships with the participants or prior experience in residential life. A challenge faced by the researcher is to maintain the balance between the perspectives and importance placed as an insider while maintaining an understanding of how being on the outside can add to the conversations that take place during the study (Young, 2004).

Limitations in this study are inevitable as with all research. While every attempt was made to collect documents and gather extensive field notes from observations, the strength in the study lies in the data from the participant interviews. Although the participants were all familiar with the study, the range of experience with identifying and reporting behaviors of concern in college students was diverse. Therefore, the researcher relied on the participants' interpretations of general experiences with similar and related issues faced as a student, and not necessarily as a RA. This study also did not include the

perspective of students living within the residence halls and their experiences, and consequently did not encompass the full scope of the issue of identification and reporting of behaviors of concern on campus.

Summary

This chapter provided the rationale and justification of the methodology used in this case study. The case study research design, plans for data collection, and analysis were discussed in the framework from the multiple forms of evidence ensuring trustworthiness including observations, document analysis, interviews, and focus groups. Research bias and limitations of the study are also included.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this case study was to examine resident advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. Resident Advisors, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life professional staff serving at an institution of higher education served as the population for this study. Seven research questions guided this study:

1. How can Institutions of Higher Education enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment through the orientation and preparation process for Resident Advisors?
2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare Resident Advisors for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?
3. What is the perception of the Resident Advisor and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors?
4. What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?
5. What are the student's personal attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening behaviors?
6. What are student perceptions of others' attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors?
7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?

Presented in a thematic analysis of the data, first the seven research questions are presented with supporting data for each of the items addressed within the questions.

Based on the findings of the individual research questions, commonalities and consistencies emerge as the overall themes and sub-themes of the study are presented in the remainder of the chapter. They are presented as:

Theme 1. Violence prevention on campus is navigated and provided to students through education and resources.

Sub-theme a. RAs act as both a catalyst and gatekeeper to the resources for their communities, based upon their training.

Sub-theme b. RAs see the need for and value for more sharing of violence prevention information and engagement with the student population.

Theme 2. A wide range of issues face today's college student.

Sub-theme a. RAs navigate many roles to assist students.

Sub-theme b. Peers, friends, and family play an influential role in assisting students with issues.

Theme 3. Fostering and building a sense of community is a priority for Residence Life.

Sub-theme a. RAs create and develop relationships within their communities for student engagement with the campus community.

Theme 4. Despite reporting systems in place and resources available, identifying and reporting concerns and issues remain a barrier to the student population

Sub-theme a. RAs are trained in the protocol and IR system of identifying and reporting concerns and issues

Sub-theme b. RAs identify advantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others

Sub-theme c. RAs identify barriers and disadvantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others

Analysis of research question one: How can Institutions of Higher Education enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting through the orientation and preparation process for Resident Advisors? This first research question is specifically directed at IHE and their responsibility in preparing RAs for their role with early intervention and reporting of threatening behaviors. All three forms of data were utilized when addressing this research question.

First, based in the observational protocol for RA training, this research question provided the guidance for observing the context and content for which RAs were prepared for their role in identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors. As observed by the researcher, the RAs learned about identification of threatening behaviors from numerous entities representing offices on campus dealing with counseling, relationship issues, policy violations, and others. Through the information presented from each office, RAs learned what warning signs and behaviors to look for in identifying an issue or distressed student. The complementary piece to identification was to educating and informing RAs of the reporting process and official incident report (IR) system. Their training took them through the step-by-step process of identification, documentation, and reporting up to their supervisor. Having students practice facing real issues through scenarios presented in a “Behind Closed Doors” session brought these two elements from the training together.

Next, documents from campus resources and related offices directed at the student's role in the reporting process were analyzed. These documents primarily supported the information and resources shared with RAs during their training process. As supplements to the training and intended to be used for later reference, these documents specifically outlined protocols and policies from the University. Because of the nature and delivery of the presentations, many of the documents were merely referenced as pieces from the supporting offices' websites. This analysis brings consistency through observations and the documents shared in the training process for the RAs in their preparation for early intervention and reporting of threatening behaviors.

The third component of data collection guided by this first research question was through the participant interviews. They were asked what could be done to enhance the role of students in the early intervention on campus. Participants stressed the need for more education for the student population in what to look for when identifying threatening behaviors. "Jordan", a graduate hall supervisor, shared his thoughts on enhancing the role of students,

I think maybe in the first hall meetings at least to reach residents. . talking about bystander behavior and really explaining what that is. . . I think it would be nearly impossible to have a representative from the women's center come to every single hall meeting. . it's just not possible. . therefore, RAs would have to be sort of the foot soldiers to represent that office and be able to articulate what bystander behavior is and how one can avoid that. . . but I think a conversation with residents about bystander behavior and understanding how to prevent violence

from happening how to recognize it how to report it. . even if it's just said at a meeting at least they hear it and it's not foreign.

Utilizing RAs to take the information to the student population is one strategy, but others suggested a realistic approach by using events of the past campus tragedy to relate to and humanize the issue. "Terry", a second-year RA shares,

Make it more applicable. . .I hate to talk about [campus tragedy], but that's a real life situation that is very serious and anyone who goes to [institution] is somehow a part of that even though you were not necessarily there but you know this thing happened and you can't ignore it.

The notion of accountability and responsibility to the community also surfaced as it pertains to this research question about enhancing the students' role on campus.

Through education and information, "Hope", an RA, provided this connection to responsibility,

I think making people aware that they have a more active role and that role is important and it's not something to be ignored. I definitely think that just getting information and getting it out there that you have a big part in this . . . and you have to recognize that as a [institution] student that you have this responsibility to do this for your fellow students. . . I think making people realize that it is their responsibility . . . you've signed on to be a student here, you've signed on to be a part of this community whether you like it or not. . so live up to it.

A Residence Life administrator, "Kurt", questioned the full extent to which students could and should enhance their role in the prevention of violence on the campus. He addressed this question by saying,

I do, but I think it is one of identification more than any kind of ethical or moral obligation to take an active role. I think that there is more of, especially in the culture we have created in higher education and student affairs specifically, that we have created the necessary response systems that the obligation that the students have is to report and that it needs to end there because I don't know if many of the students have the training or ability to really take an active role in dealing with this kind of issue.

All the data stemming from this first research question led to a greater role in both the themes relating to the training and preparation of the RAs. While violence prevention on campus is provided to the RAs through training, education, and resources, they in turn, share a part in the dissemination of this information to the students in their residence halls. Resident Advisors serve as both the catalyst to start the process and gatekeeper to the information regarding the reporting of threatening behaviors on campus. Therefore, IHE aim to enhance the role of students in the reporting on campus through Residence Life and the RA.

Analysis of research question two: What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare Resident Advisors for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors? This second research question also provided guidance for the observational protocol used in RA training. Due to the organization of the training and the way information was presented by individual campus offices, coupled with the interactive scenarios held during the “Behind Closed Doors” session, there were consistencies intertwined through the process. The idea and notion of “identification” was held throughout. Whether it was identification of signs and symptoms, distress, or

through identifying the problem presented in each scenario, RAs were presented with information and opportunities to help them identify issues. Protocols were also discussed as far as those protocols for handling sexual assault, protocols for conduct violations, and the protocol for handling the incident reports (IR) within the Residence Life system. This resulted in a rather repeated and consistent overall protocol or chain of command including reporting to your supervisor and the terminology of reporting “up, not out”, while followed by writing an IR and/or writing a conduct referral (CR), based upon the issue.

As with the first research question, documents provided by Residence Life supported the preparation of RAs and their access to resources related to identification and reporting of threatening behaviors. The several campus offices sharing resources distributed handouts during individual sessions as they presented the information. However, in most cases, the offices presenting resources referred to their websites as major sources of information. The student handbook also provided specifics regarding campus policies which RAs are asked to uphold within their halls and was also referenced as an online resource.

In addition to observations and document analysis, this second research question was addressed in participant interviews. Participants were asked about the preparation for the RA’s role in sharing information with students when it comes to identification and reporting of behaviors that would make them worried, concerned, or cause fear in others. They reiterated findings from the observations and information found in documents presented to them at training. The consistencies in the protocol and resources, for instance, were shared by “Brad”, an experienced RA, “During the training for the RA job

. . . they tell you about it. . they tell you, you're not on your own and these are the places you sign up for X, Y, Z". Hope echoed even the terminology regarding the protocol,

We are instructed to report up, not out so not to spread the word but kind of let the appropriate people above you know what's happened . . . to keep everything confidential and if there's something that I feel needs to be reported I have every right to do so.

In addition, the importance placed on the "Behind Closed Doors" session each day of the training was a reoccurring theme from the participants. "Jordan", a graduate hall director, explains, "We go through an extensive training in the beginning of the semester . . . how to handle certain situations. . . we have "Behind Closed Doors" . . .where it gives you practical experience on how to handle certain situations to come up".

Participants were also asked about the resources they utilize and where they get their information when it comes to helping students with behaviors that are concerning, worrisome, or fearful to you or others. They confirmed the participation from the campus offices and resources disclosed to them during their preparation. Resources coded in the analysis and mentioned numerous times included, the counseling center, women's center, and the health center. RAs, specifically, also included utilizing their supervisor as a resource and reporting up was how they received information on assisting students. These responses demonstrate consistency in what RAs are given in preparation for their role and what they articulate as the resources they utilize.

Overall, this second research question provided substance to the greater themes of this study through the RA acting as a catalyst and gatekeeper to resources for their communities, based upon the training they receive. Therefore, also supporting the notion

that violence prevention on campus is provided to students through education and resources. Because of the training the RAs receive in preparation for their role, they are better able to serve as a resource for their residents. Their thorough training also reflects the supporting theme of their knowledge and use of the protocols and IR system of identifying and reporting concerns and behaviors. Even though barriers are discussed in the overarching theme, RAs make use of the protocols and reporting systems when needed and as reports come forward.

Analysis of research question three: What is the perception of the Resident Advisor and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors? Interviews with participants sought support for the third research question. Starting with the most basic form of this research question, participants were asked to what they saw as their role as a RA. Differing responses evoked several important premises in which RAs serve in various roles. For example, “In my opinion the role of the RA has many aspects. They are a resource person . . . they are a community developer . . . but they’re also a first responder when something goes wrong”, said “Morgan”, a graduate hall director. “Will”, a first-year RA, clarifies his role as, “I see my role mostly to help the students with anything that arises either academics, personal conflicts like homesickness . . .to help them transition and let them know I’m here as someone to help you and of course, regulate policy”. Many provided several roles within a greater purpose of the RA. “Michael”, a Residence Life professional staff, lists, “. . .big brother, little brother, best friend, confidant, the list could go on and on”. “Zach”, a graduate hall director, confirms these many roles by saying,

The role of the RA is to build community on their floor and that entails introducing students to one another, orienting them to their new living environment, laying down the ground rules for what it means to live in a residence hall . . . it's their job to be a mentor, to mediate, to confront policy violations . . . provide opportunities for students to learn, to interact.

Not only were the roles of the RA comprehensive, but so were they types of problems RAs were assisting their residents. When asked for examples of problems residents relied on their RAs to assist them with, Michael explains, "The gamut is just as broad as the descriptions of the roles". Morgan contributes to this expansive notion, "I mean it's a wide range. It goes from homesickness to relationship issues . . . alcohol issues . . . roommate conflicts . . . navigating campus". So as this range is presented, Will shares it from more of a development and continuum perspective. He says, "Mostly academic. . . and then as it progresses through the semester and through the year I see a lot more personal stuff like relationship issues. . . so it's a lot of different kind of situations". Consequently, participants shared the varying range of issues facing them in their role as they assist students.

As part of the role of an RA, participants shared the steps they would take in order to address and report concerns either brought forth by students or as identified by themselves. Terry starts, "I would speak with that person individually and ask them . . . I'll document it in an IR and then in my one-on-one with [supervisor] I would bring it up and discuss it". "Brian", a first-year RA, also shares, "First I would talk to the person . . . I would call the hall director on call . . . and I will also write an incident report on it so it's in the database". Both of these selections reinforce not only the protocols in which

RAs are trained, but they also support their role in the reporting process of concerns and how they would address these issues in the most appropriate manner.

Finally, as supporting the third research question, participants shared an inherent and unanimous, yes, when asked about the role of the RA in violence prevention efforts. For example, “Yes, but they are also trying not to be a community leader but a community developer . . . letting them take ownership of the community and not for themselves”, said Morgan. For Terry it is an obvious part of the job. She says,

That’s what we get paid for. We are here to monitor and make sure people are succeeding in their academic life and they are doing that healthfully and safely. I don’t really think there isn’t always a yes answer to that. I can’t believe that there wouldn’t be.

Zach sees the RA’s role in violence prevention by, “. . . having someone to go to when you’re upset prevents violence . . . because it’s when you don’t have people that will listen to you or you don’t have support is when I think violence happens”. Not surprisingly, the participants all felt part of their role as a RA would be to prevent violence from occurring and serve in that capacity.

These responses, stemming from the perception of the RA and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors, support the overall themes of this study by explaining the wide range of issues facing students as well as the numerous roles RAs navigate to assist students with these issues. Although couched from a perspective of threatening and related behaviors, the RAs note the spectrum of issues that can lead to more threatening and harmful behaviors. In addition, as echoed from the previous research questions, participants supported the training of

protocols and reporting systems RAs receive and how that supports their role in the identification and reporting of threatening behaviors.

Analysis of research question four: What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors? Presented through analysis of material obtained through both campus resources and Residence Life documents from training targeted at the processes and protocols for identification and reporting as well as participant interviews, this fourth research question provides insight to the actual processes utilized by students on campus.

First, as mentioned in previously stated research questions, resources were shared during the training for RAs that operationalized the protocols and processes supported by Residence Life and other campus resources. The findings indicate a comprehensive understanding of the protocols by the RAs and adequate processes provided by Residence Life and for the student population.

The processes students use to report threatening behaviors were also addressed through the interviews. Participants were asked to describe the steps they would take in order to deal with or report a student with behavior that caused them to worry, be concerned, or made them or others fearful. As duplicated from the previous research question, this aimed to further describe the RA's role in the reporting process as well as the processes students utilize to identify and report threatening behaviors. Hope articulates the process,

Just direct contact with your supervisor and graduate hall director. They'll usually tell you to write an IR, an incident report, for it so you have a paper trail of what's been going on. But definitely getting in touch with them [the student]

first before you do anything and that they know what's going on. That's the best case scenario for everyone.

“Kurt”, a Residence Life professional, also explains the formality of the process that is shared with the students. He mentions,

Everything is very formal . . . it is very robotic and we ask for that for a reason both for our process so that there is nothing that can sully our process because they put their own two cents on it or doesn't handle something correctly. It also protects the staff member so they can say look, I have to . . . I just have to document this. I can't let you off because I just have to document this and so it protects them.

This question provides overlap in the understanding of both the RA's role in the reporting process as well as the actual processes students use when reporting threatening behaviors. As found in the interviews, participants shared how students typically turn to peers, friends, and family members before actually reporting the situation to their RA or through a more formalized process. Morgan explains, “Honestly, I feel like they talk about it with each other . . . like residents . . . they talk about it until the RA gets wind of it”. Terry also echoes this sentiment by saying, “Generally, they would go to their friends and their parents, first. But then, I think after that they would go to their RAs”. These express the complexities of understanding the reporting process for students on campus. As identified, Residence Life shares a formalized process in which RAs are trained and provided resources to assist students with the system of reporting threatening behaviors. However, the process students actually utilize as they seek assistance is from peers, friends, and family members. Through this analysis, this identifies a disconnect and gap

in how to reach students, peers, friends, and family as they influence the reporting process on campus.

Analysis of research questions five and six: What are the student’s personal attitudes and beliefs/perceptions of others’ attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening behaviors? Participant interviews targeted the fifth and sixth research questions based in both their own attitudes and beliefs and their perceptions of other students’ attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening behaviors. Therefore, the joint analysis presents similar themes within these two questions.

Asking participants to think about the student population, they were prompted to share if students come forward with their issues and concerns. There was not a definitive response from the group as most explained it was situational and varied in nature.

Morgan explains it from her perspective,

Yes and no. Yes, when they are like this is really affecting me academically or if parents tell them to. No, if it’s really personal and they don’t know how or they don’t know that the RA can help them or they don’t feel like there’s a connection.

Brian also shares this situational nature, “. . .if they feel comfortable with you they’ll discuss it but in most cases they are not going to go out of their way to let you know something happened”. Therefore, Will confirms it isn’t always as straightforward. He says, “Not at first. They come to you and that way of like they want to talk to you but they want you to fish for it”.

This begins to unravel some of the underlying disconnect with reporting and barriers as seen from the RA’s perspectives as comparable to those working in Residence

Life administration. “Matt”, a Residence Life professional, answers, “Yes, and their parents, too. I do think they come forward. I think that students that have problems even their peers or their close friends will come forward and then share that information with us”. The differing responses between those in RA positions and those working in the administrative roles bring to light the two diverse perspectives as shared in the understanding of student reporting.

For example, RAs shared what students do, how they react, and who they turn to for help when unsure of how to handle a situation stemming from worry, concern, or fear of others’ behavior. They indicated either inaction or taking these concerns to parents or friends. First, Brian shares the lack of taking action,

I would say in most situations if a student is unsure of what to do they will choose inaction, just because they don’t want to make a mistake. They don’t want to get anyone mad at them so they will just choose inaction . . .because they see that as neutral ground. I’m not going to make anything worse by the action.

Both Will and Zach confirm Brian’s response. Will said, “They would blow it off. That’s the normal thing to do. If I’m not involved and I don’t see it, I’m not involved . . . you’re taught not to intervene because once you’ve intervened you’re guilty of association”. In anticipation that the issue will fix itself, Zach responds by saying, “I guess initially, they don’t say anything. I think they just kind of sit with it and hope it gets better . . . hope that it gets resolved without saying anything”.

Participants also shared the important role that friends and parents play when students are turning to someone of trust to assist them and help with an issue. “Beth”, a first-year RA, gives this example,

Honestly, when people are really worried about something I feel like they typically vent about it to somebody else. I don't know if most students really take the proactive stance and go talk to whoever is concerning them or go talk to their supervisor. I feel like more likely than not, they'll talk about it with their suitemate or with their best friend.

The role that others play in the assistance for students is crucial. Jordan notes,

I think nowadays they go directly to their parents and they get their parents involved . . . but I think students definitely go to their parents first . . . sometimes will also just try to handle the situation themselves . . . talk to friend about it . . . so I think they consult their friends and their family.

Conversely, Matt shares what he hopes for them as far as coming forward to the RA first. Although ideal, his perspective differs from what the RA participants shared.

He states,

I know what I would like for them to do . . . I do think they contact the RA. I say that because of the reports. I see the reports and there are many occasions where the RA has been contacted, although there are many occasions where the RA runs up on a situation . . . but I think there are times where the resident will go to the RA.

The participants expressed greater concern regarding the understanding for students in their ability to identify threatening behaviors. Brian expressed, "I would say most students on the average can pick up the very obvious things . . .but I don't think they so much pick up on the more subtle things". Will also shares concern, "I think it's

very limited. It's very limited. I take this from personal experience because what I see now from when I was a freshman, I never saw".

If they do pick up on concerning behaviors or identify a potentially threatening situation, how do students determine whether they report a situation or concern? Beth understands the situational nature, "I think it depends on how important the individual feels the issue is or you know, how concerned someone is about someone else". Perhaps if the situation affects them personally, they will consider coming forward. Zach explains, "If it's affecting them . . . it's rare for us to see someone report something merely because they are concerned for that person's well being. It's normally reported if it's affecting them personally . . and that's just sad . . . but that's how it goes".

It could also depend on the severity of the situation, not only the proximity to the situation as expressed by the others, but Will states, "Unfortunately, students determine if they report something unless it's to the extreme". Brian also shares this sentiment, "I think it's just like how real they perceive the threat . . .but I guess none of them want to be seen as the person that gets the authorities involved for no reason".

In keeping with the theme of reporting and coming forward, participants disclosed what reasons would prevent a student from coming forward with their concern of harmful or violence about another student or peer. Getting in trouble rose to the top of the responses and analysis of barrier to student reporting. Terry and Brian both share examples of this concern. First, Terry explains, "Getting in trouble. That's the number one thing. They don't know the consequences of their behavior and they don't know how severe or lenient they could be". Brian confirms, "I think it has to reach that level where

the positives in their mind overcomes the negatives. No one wants to get themselves in trouble and no one wants to get their friends in trouble.”

If students are afraid of coming forward with their concerns, issues, and reports, then who are they turning to? Participants revealed their thoughts on who students feel comfortable talking to about threatening behaviors and issues where again, the theme of peers, friends, and family emerged as a consistent solution. Zach shares, “Probably their friends and family. I think a lot of students will complain to their friends about what’s going on or they’ll call their parents and talk to them about what’s going on”.

Therefore, as they are turning to their friends and peers for support, participants conveyed the types of issues and problems are they helping each other with. Beth shares,

I feel like it could be anything from academics to relationships to family issues to you know not having a car for a week and just needing a ride to class. So, it could be anything from the small things to the big things that we rely on each other for.

Based in this understanding of peers helping one another, participants shared their attitudes and beliefs regarding if peers best understand how to help each other. This was consistently answered with the negative. Brian faces the reality of this understanding by saying, “Absolutely not . . . that’s one thing even as a RA I’ve had some training but I wouldn’t say I always know what’s best for my residents . . . but I would say that peers trying to help never works out”. Beth understands the comfortable aspect of going to a peer, but doesn’t believe the experience level is there to truly help. She says,

No. I mean we’re all 20 or 21 years old and we don’t have the experience of professionals. We don’t have the expertise or the education so we do the best we can. But sometimes, I don’t know what to do in a situation or sometimes you

know serious things come up and we're not the best to answer all of the questions but . . . we probably are the best as far as someone who feels comfortable with in coming to with their problems.

Even with the lack of confidence expressed in the ability of peers being able to help one another in the most effective manner, participants still agreed students can and do play a role in the violence prevention efforts on campus. Whether it's in holding more power in the reporting role or serving as a bystander, they confirmed the need for students to engage in the prevention of violence on campus. When asked about students' role Will shares, "Huge role. Unfortunately it's not as effective as I would like it to be . . . I would like it to be more of a bystander". Beth notes the importance of the student by saying,

I feel like it's generally students that cause the violence so we hold all of the power in that aspect as far as preventing violence and making sure that it's viewed negatively and making sure that people don't see it as something that will be tolerated.

The interplay of a lack of understanding of how to help peers coupled with the need for students to further engage in violence prevention presents a potential issue on how to address that need and gap of understanding. Participants suggested methods that best support and educate students on their understanding and their role in the prevention of campus violence through identifying threatening behavior. Having methods that support in-person, interactive, and real life, relevant scenarios was shared by several of the RAs. Morgan explains,

It's always better to do things like that in person rather than send an email out or put up a flyer because people tend not to pay attention to things when you get 50 billion of them a day so sitting them down and making them listen to it is going to be more beneficial than handing them a piece of paper.

Interviews with participants supported the fifth and sixth research questions based in the RAs own attitudes and beliefs as well as their perceptions of students' attitudes and beliefs of identifying and reporting support several of the overall themes of this study. Based in the realistic perspectives shared in their responses, RAs see the role of peers, friends and family playing an influential role in assisting students when they are facing issues of threatening or concerning behavior. Because of this power students hold in their influence over others, RAs also expressed the need and value for more education and sharing of information with students with regard to violence prevention.

These questions also brought to light the issues surrounding the barriers to reporting and the differences in perspectives shared between the RA and administrative participants. Although participants shared the comprehensive reporting systems already in place, this study found barriers and disadvantages surrounding the actual identification and reporting of concerns and issues from the student population that prevent students from coming forward with their reports of threatening behavior. Although RAs were adequately trained and serve as the gatekeeper to their residents, the actual follow through of reporting is limited and faces barriers to students on campus.

Analysis of research question seven: What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors? The final research question addressed the role students play when helping their peers determine to report threatening

behaviors. As mentioned previously from participant interviews, the resulting responses shared the same themes. For instance, participants expressed the types of problems students rely on RAs to assist them with and the role the RA plays in assisting students with issues both address research question three and this current question. Stated again, the findings indicate a wide range of issues and problems as well as multiple roles the RA serves in assistance to students. These responses echo the peer's role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors and supports the overall themes of this study by explaining the wide range of issues facing students as well as the numerous roles RAs navigate to assist students with these issues.

As identified in earlier questions, reporting poses both advantages and disadvantages to students. Participants conveyed both the advantages and disadvantages of reporting. Kurt notes one advantage, "I think the advantage from their perspective is that it gets it off their plate". Jordan also shows his support for reporting by saying, "The advantages is that it's going to ultimately help the student . . . if you let somebody know you can help people . . . I think it contributes . . . it shows people that you care when you report it."

But just as there are reasons and advantages for students to come forward with their reports of threatening behavior, the barriers and disadvantages are also present. In addition to those already shared in previous questions such as getting in trouble and a lack of awareness, Kurt shares this other side, "I think there is a lot of disadvantages. I think that once you report it for the student at least, there are disadvantages. Once your report it, it can't be ignored, especially on this campus".

With the focus of this seventh research question grounded in the role of peers, participants explained the amount of influence peers have over decisions to seek advice or help in times of trouble. Many agreed the influence of peers was substantial. As supported in the overall theme of peers, friends, and family assisting students with a range of issues, Hope expresses this sentiment,

I think a ton. Especially in an environment like this where we're not living with our parents anymore . . . your first line of anything is your roommate, your neighbor, your best friend . . . and you know we're all students and we're all in the same age group . . . the same situation.

Also supported by previous questions, participants explained the role students play in programming and policies concerning issues of threatening behavior and violence on campus. Although shared as a lack of knowledge and need for education from earlier findings, it is made clear the students should play a role. Jordan explains, "Whatever department or entity is promoting violence prevention or trying to get the word out . . . there should be some sort of constituent group working with that group to get the word out". Therefore, involving students in the education will not only benefit those engaged in the process of sharing information, but the message to other students will be met with greater support when presented by peers.

This research question addressed the role of students influencing their peers in the prevention of violence and supports several of the overall themes presented in this study. First, the need for violence prevention education exists as articulated by the participants. The RA's role as a resource and peer educator is supported by the responses. Additionally, as a wide range of issues face students, the RAs, peers, friends, and family

members are asked to support and assist them as they potentially influence their decision whether or not to seek help or come forward with a report of threatening behavior. Finally, as resounded in many of the other research questions, the overall theme of barriers to reporting was addressed by this research question as peer influencing the decision for students to come forward.

With the individual analysis of the research questions guiding the study's findings, the overall themes are grounded in the previous analysis. In the following sections, the four themes and supporting sub-themes are presented as the findings of this study.

Theme 1: Violence Prevention on Campus is Navigated and Provided to Students Through Education and Resources

As a result of the research and protocol questions, violence prevention on campus remained a theme throughout the interviews and was supported by the documents serving as resources. What surfaced from the interviews with participants was the means by which students obtain information, identify resources, and take action on any type of violence, threatening or concerning behaviors on campus. Again, as identified in the numerous roles of the RA, they have a unique position of knowledge of these issues, the influence to share resources, and the authority to take concerns forward.

Sub-theme a. RAs act as both a gatekeeper and a catalyst to the resources for their communities, based upon their training. RAs live within the community of students, although different from the residents on their floors, they have been trained and educated in the resources that assist students with issues related to violence prevention. RAs have already been identified as resources and therefore, act as gatekeepers of

information on violence prevention. This is demonstrated in the findings as supported by the observations of the RA training and the participant interviews.

The training for RAs was held prior to the start of the fall semester. Because the full scope of the training last seven days (Appendix L), the observations took place during the sessions specifically focused on identifying and reporting threatening behaviors, held during a two-day time span. During these two days, presentations were delivered by campus offices offering services and assistance to students in distress or in need of assistance with issues related to threatening behaviors. The counseling center, women's center, police department, rescue squad, and student conduct offices were all given time on the agenda to present the role of their respective offices as well as helpful information in identification of issues and protocols in handling situations.

The afternoon of each day included the hands-on component of the "Behind Closed Doors" session based in topics of peer helping and confronting conflict. The RAs took turns facing various scenarios based on these issues and walked through how they would handle and address the concerns. Returning RAs, residence life staff, and staff from the women's and counseling centers were on hand to give feedback and offer advice on protocols.

In reference to their training they receive, the reporting structure and protocols are as straightforward as possible. From observations of RA training, the protocol is shared and summarized as,

Write an incident report (IR) for anything that occurs "out of the ordinary", this can even be a good thing. If it is private in nature, such as sexual assault, there is a different protocol. Contact your supervisor, if in doubt, of how to handle any

situation or document any situation. Contact and work with your supervisor to report “up” not “out”.

The overarching message and chain-of-command is to: inform/report to your supervisor, up not out, write an IR, write conduct referral (CR) if needed. In the observation of training, the IR system was explained as an in-house database to keep track of incidents that creates a trail if something becomes a pattern.

Kurt mentioned, “They will go through actual training sessions that will articulate to them all of the steps that they have to take so they’ll be seeing more of the documented protocols”. In all of this information they learn the step-by-step protocols, especially when it comes to conduct and policy violations. When learning how to write a CR, Kurt explained, “. . . also articulates what information they should be gleaning from the incident so that they report it correctly”. All of this provides the RAs with the preparation and training needed to take the necessary information from a situation and move it forward in the process. Kurt summarized this,

They are told and trained that they are not allowed to make their personal judgment on why somebody did something or how they did it or anything like that . . . they are just to report what actually happened . . . so they are going to report up.

With their training and knowledge of the system, RAs become the primary resource for students. Hope said, “I’ve experienced people coming to me when they need a resource or some sort of connection to some sort of office on campus to see if I have that ability to help them with that. . . I’m like their first line of contact with that.” With

all of these resources, Jordan claims, “. . . it has to do with the role of the RA and letting them [residents] know all of these resources are available”.

Even still, a gap exists where students are concerned. If they are familiar with the RA, the RA becomes the access point to the resources and education. Hope stressed this by saying, “That knowledge of who to go to is also hard to come by”. Jordan explained,

I don't always think that the people on campus that preach violence prevention actually reach the students and I think that is where challenges happen. Me as a supervisor, I know it . . . my RAs know it . . . but does the resident in 3055 know it?

As a result, RAs are relied upon even more to fill the gap where the students are made aware of the resources available to them.

Another aspect to the awareness and education lies in the reporting structure RAs follow as a part of the training they've received and Residence Life protocols. Brooke placed an importance on students knowing more of the policy, structure, and processes RAs follow. She said, “I think that if they became a bit more aware of the policy and the ways things are structured for us . . . if you tell us a problem we have to report it to our supervisors.” Perhaps transparency of the process would lead to more awareness, but regardless, RAs have been pinpointed as the major source for violence prevention information, education, resources, etc. for students.

It is not always the case where the RAs solve the issue, rather provide the opportunity for students to be able to help themselves, therefore acting as a catalyst. This gives the RA the ability to bring about change in a situation that a resident may be facing or help a student begin the process of getting help. Zach mentioned,

RAs are intended to encourage their residents to confront things themselves . . . to put the responsibility on the members in the community in general . . . so I think those things kind of help or at least inform residents on what they should be doing whether they do it or not.

The RA may be an integral piece to the policies and resources that are affecting students and residents alike. Brian said, “I think it makes perfect sense to have students that are directly involved in these things and in most cases are actually the ones doing the majority of work in it”. RAs relate to the general student population and can give their input. When it comes to getting involved in violence prevention education, Jordan made the case, “I really think that the resident advisors need to engage in the entities that are trying to spread the word [about violence prevention] when they receive the training”.

Some of this is already accomplished during the RA training. From observations, two of the main campus offices focusing on violence prevention issues highlighted in the training were the counseling and women’s centers. Both of these entities are given one hour on the program during the first day to share about their respective offices and programs. Additionally, both participated in the “Behind Closed Doors” scenarios on both days. Representatives from those offices sat in and acted as resources to provide input and information as RAs were debriefing each scenario.

Because of their training, RAs have been given opportunities to learn, practice, and engage with these issues and types of problems commonly found on campus. In their “Behind Closed Doors” session, RAs were given practical experience on handling a variety of serious issues. Kurt described this process as learning through practice. He said, “They go through two sessions . . . which are real life scenarios that are acted by

returning staff members and are then confronted by new staff members so they can actually have hands on experience”.

Jordan also explained “Behind Closed Doors”,

It’s really meant to be a learning opportunity and because I think sometimes you don’t expect certain situations to come up . . . your day-to-day life is not dealing with suicidal ideation, your day-to-day life is dealing with roommate conflicts . . . but you still need to be prepared.

Working from the assertion that the training provides RAs with the information and resources to assist students in the prevention of violence, the training also goes on to educate RAs on engaging in the process of gathering information and assisting students. Zach said, “The department gives us training as they teach us how to know the types of questions to ask and how to ask them”. Therefore, RAs act as both a gatekeeper of information as well as the catalyst to make things happen by taking action and moving the process forward.

Sub-theme b. RAs see need for and value for more sharing of violence prevention information and engagement with the student population. In individual interviews with the RAs, they shared a need for students to have more access and education towards the prevention of violence. Hope mentioned, “I definitely think getting information out there . . . that you have a big part in this and you have to recognize that as a [institution] student you have this responsibility to do this for your fellow students”. Thus, by maintaining student involvement, engagement, and responsibility in the process, students are more invested. Morgan shared,

I think that if they [students] help program or they help create these policies not only are they more knowledgeable about it but they have a personal investment and with that personal investment they take that more into their informal networks. . . it just trickles down.

Beth made the claim for education and letting students know the steps to take if they feel violence is taking place. She said, “. . . knowing their resources and knowing what warning signs could be so they can see it in other hall mates or . . . identify the issue”. And because fellow students generally cause violence on campus, she believes, “We hold all of the power in that aspect . . . as far as preventing violence making sure it’s viewed negatively and making sure that people don’t see it as something that will be tolerated”. As a result, giving students access to education and putting more responsibility on the student is something RAs feel is acceptable and appropriate.

However, the method for and level of education is to be determined. A range of suggestions emerged as participants were asked to share their thoughts on educating students about violence prevention on campus. Will and Jordan were advocates for every student having the mandatory education. Will believed, “I would have to make it mandatory . . . some kind of instruction on how to see signs and you know bring it to their attention . . . it will just open their eyes to it more”. Jordan followed by saying,

I think when a student comes to college they don’t know it all and it’s here for exploration and sometimes you have to, I guess, just mandate it . . . you have to go through this training because if you don’t you’ll never pursue it, you may never learn about it, you may never recognize it as a problem . . . so making it a

mandatory training on violence prevention so people are aware of it. They may walk away saying oh, that was a waste of my time . . . at least you hear about it.

Will provides freshmen could go through a class similar to that of RA training. He said, “I think there should be instruction on how to pinpoint not just other’s behaviors, but also what you’re doing to help the situation or worsen the situation”. Such a class, he suggested, might help them grow as an individual and become more self-aware.

Less severe on the spectrum of making it mandatory is the practical viewpoint from Hope. She provided her perspective,

In a perfect world everyone should go through the “Behind Closed Doors” training that we did during FTLW [Fall Training Leadership Workshop]. . . and I think a lot of people would benefit from that . . . is it feasible to train every student on the [institution] campus with “Behind Closed Doors”? . . . not at all . . . but I think even modifying that making it something that you can go do . . . I think it’s really important and if you’re put in the situation and you know, forced to handle it the next time and if you’re forced to handle it when the situation real you’ll know how to handle it.

More viable and perhaps practical solutions emerged from the participants as they thought of ways to make the information more accessible to the student population. Jordan suggested,

I think at least reaching residents in the first hall meetings . . . talking about bystander behavior and really explaining what that is . . . I think a conversation with residents about bystander behavior and understanding how to prevent violence from happening and how to recognize it . . . how to report it.

Brooke saw value in sharing information on identifying warning signs. She said, “They might not know exactly what the warning signs are . . . but if they haven’t been trained or taken classes on that kind of thing . . . they won’t know”. Beth also explained the benefits of in-person education and training, “. . . rather than send an email or put a flyer up, because people tend not to pay attention to things . . . sitting down and making them listen to it is going to be more beneficial than handing them a piece of paper”.

Making it relevant to students is also crucial. If students can relate to a situation or see how the information would be applied to their lives, it makes more of an impact.

Hope shared her thoughts on learning from other campuses,

Other campuses have stories that are very educational to people at the college age and I think definitely making use of those and giving real life examples and look, this is what’s being done here and in other places or this is what has happened at other places . . . learn by that example . . . the example doesn’t always have to come from here.

Beth referenced other good examples from her involvement with the Greek community and their methods of education. She suggested,

The University as a whole could create programs that are available for students. I feel like in the Greek community we do a lot of work to have programs for individual chapters and Pan-hellenic-wide events are available to all chapters, but as far as the university goes, I don’t see that much programming taking place for general students . . . it would be nice to have that resource available.

Brad and Brian both referenced the online alcohol-wise training students are required to take before enrolling in courses for the spring semester. Brad said, “Maybe

having something similar as far as violence . . . make them do something before they can sign up for classes their second semester”. Brian also shared the need for training on what should be reported or how to spot warning signs. He mentioned,

I think I know everything that’s going on in my community. . my residents are going to know way more than I do . . . they’re going to notice things that I’m not going to notice, so I think it would be a good idea for them to have some sort of training to know what things should be reported or not.

In light of making it a requirement, Brad shared his realistic perspective, “You can’t enforce that all residents go through certain programs no matter how awesome that program is going to be . . . there’s nothing you can really do, they’re either going to go or they’re not”.

This definitely follows more in line with what was presented by the administrators in Residence Life when asked about educating students on violence prevention. Kurt provided, “I don’t know if many students have the training or ability to really take an active role in dealing with this kind of issue”. Hence, his belief is that even required programming doesn’t add value to the student population’s education on violence prevention. He suggested,

I think that because ultimately there is an inherent negativity with requirements, so required programming is going to dumb it down, preach to the choir, or not tell anybody that actually needs to know. . . so I think that probably the best thing that I could see at [institution] is Res Life moving toward this idea of every student being known.

Michael added there are a lot of resources and avenues for students to find this information, but states, “I just don’t know how much or different ways to do it where we could have a meaningful impact and if it would have enough of an impact”.

Matt talked about it from a proactive and communication-sharing approach. He believes it is the role of both the administration and students to get involved and approach this problem together. He said, “. . . you have forums where students can ask questions. . . the administrative side can ask questions and both sides can also give feedback. . . the major piece is closing that loop making sure there is follow up . . . making sure you are addressing those issues”.

In finding a solution or providing an explanation for this issue of educating students on violence prevention, Kurt struggled. He explained,

I don’t know . . . I really don’t know . . . I think that is one of those things where you’re damned if you do and damned if you don’t . . . I think that the more you push the more it becomes bureaucratic and part of the system which is going to be fought against . . . but then you don’t do anything and those stories don’t get told and again it’s hard to make something real without telling a real story and you’re not allowed to tell real stories so it is hard to do. It is also very reactive . . . things happened. . you react to them and then a lot of times it gets dropped because you are handling so many situations that there is no longer any pressure for you to handle those situations to the heightened extent . . . so efforts dies until the next bad thing happens that heightens everybody’s awareness again . . . so it’s really damned if you do and damned if you don’t type of scenario.

Michael held similar views in saying, “I don’t think we are ever going to get it right because there is always a better way to do it and the evolution of the student and what they will respond to evolves with every generation”.

Despite the dichotomy of RAs and the Residence Life professionals’ views being optimistic or realistic, the need was identified. More students should have access to, awareness of, and opportunities to engage with the entities provided on campus regarding the prevention of violence.

Theme 2: A Wide Range of Issues Faces Today’s College Student

All three types of data collected in the study supported this first theme emerging from the study’s findings. Based in the content of the RA training, a range of issues and scenarios facing college students were presented as part of their education. Grounded in the research questions surrounding the perceptions of the RA and their role in the identification and reporting process, participant interviews and supporting policies and information provided in documents all confirmed this wide range of issues facing the students on campus today.

In the interviews, participants were asked to identify or share experiences on the issues that face their residents and students on campus. All could agree that the issues on campus today encompass a breadth of issues. As Kurt explained, “It runs the gamut”. Morgan and Jordan found it hard to identify just one or two issues facing the students that they work with. Morgan said, “I mean it’s a wide range”. Jordan concurred, “It goes from homesickness to relationship issues, alcohol issues, and roommate conflicts”. As observed during the format and content of the RA training, the agenda was planned based on topical issues ranging from conflict management, mental health issues, relationships

and sexual assault, crisis management, and other scenarios RAs are apt to face within their job. Jordan went on to explain,

The spectrum of situations is very large. I mean it could be something as simple as I saw spilled milk in the hallway to something that a roommate came to me and said they have suicidal ideation. . . so it could be anywhere in that range.

Several identified specific issues when working with first-year or freshman students. Many felt the immediate issue was helping residents transition to college while assisting them with other issues such as combating homesickness, helping create a sense of home, and establishing a sense of belonging. Morgan explained, “. . . just navigating that transition . . . having a sense of belonging a sense of home”.

Both those working closely with the students and those living in the halls consistently shared academic concerns and issues. Hope, Brooke, and Will, as well as the graduate hall directors, Morgan and Jordan, all mentioned academic concerns their residents were facing such as text anxiety, school-work overload, classes, and academic pressures. Will shared the academic concerns,

Academic. . .they're really worried about if they came into the right major and if they're going to get the right class selections for the next year. . .if they're not doing too well . . . if they are going to drop a class or deadlines and how they withdraw from a class.

With academics serving as the primary purpose for these students, it is natural that those issues and stresses would carry over into their personal life and outside of the classroom. Class choices, changes in majors, teacher issues, studying skills, time management, and other related problems translate to their home and living environment within the

residence halls. Therefore, the staff and RAs naturally see academic concerns as one of the frequent issues on college campuses.

In addition to academic concerns, participants felt personal concerns, including roommate conflicts and relationship issues, played a major role in the lives of college students and their residents. Zach, mentioned, “I think a lot of them [problems] start on the simplest level of roommate conflicts”. As referenced in the Office of Student Programs Student Handbook, “Basic Rights of a Roommate”, states each student living in the residence halls have certain rights. This information is shared with RAs as a part of their training as well as available online for all students to access, noting the importance and relevance of roommate issues and conflicts.

Another concern was expressed over the fact that students did not know how to confront personal issues. “People are afraid to confront other people or don’t know how to go about it so they come to me”, said Brooke. Jordan talked about the significance of having roommate or suite contracts to combat issues upfront. “We’ve been preventative in a sense . . . so we did roommate contracts . . . I was able to see the problem last year when we didn’t have contracts and this year when we do and the problem has significantly went down”. Others referenced having roommate contracts for specific issues or circumstances as a possible solution to problems brought to them by residents.

As the semester, year, and relationships with the RAs progress, so do the range of issues brought to the surface. Jordan, Morgan, and Brad all expressed the reality of stress in their residents’ lives. “Life is stressful and it’s stressful for everybody”, said Jordan. Brad explained the poignant times of stress, “. . .at the beginning of the semester and at the end of the semester when the residents are a lot more stressed out”. Stress about

academics, roommates, or life in general, the RAs articulate a progression of what's being shared. Will conveyed,

As they progress through the semester and through the year I see a lot more personal stuff like a lot of guys will come to me and say hey, I really miss my girlfriend who doesn't go here, or I really miss my family and I never thought I would miss my family . . . and it's usually a lot of relationship issues . . . issues with girlfriends.

At the beginning, academics are at the forefront, and continue to be so. However, as relationships build with their RAs and others, personal issues become more apparent.

In other instances, students are looking for ways to connect with others and their new community. Jordan shared, “. . . establishing that social network . . . Greek life . . . deciding should I join a fraternity or should I join a sorority . . . should I join an interest group . . . trying to talk to people about joining different clubs and organizations . . . trying to get involved”. Although a more positive issue to have, regardless, the social and personal expectation of finding a fit on campus weighs on students' minds.

More serious and concerning issues are also facing students. Alcohol, more serious relationship issues, and depression are all mentioned by the participants. “Alcohol abuse is always at the top of the list”, said Morgan. The combination of residents being under legal age and drinking too much brings additional issues because of the role alcohol plays in other situations. Terry and Brian shared their concern and recognize unhealthy relationships, abuse, and sexual assault all stemming from alcohol consumption. Jordan mentioned, “The role that alcohol plays in . . . sexual assault . . . hate crimes. . .”, brings a mix of deeper problems. Within the student code of conduct, a

section on alcoholic beverages addresses alcohol as a major issue on campus while also providing,

The university provides a variety of resources for those with questions and concerns about the use of misuse of alcoholic beverages and controlled substances. Support groups are available to members of the university community.

While other sections state specific policy, there are also ample efforts to provide resources through campus offices directed at alcohol abuse, counseling, and health. This was supported by both findings in the online resources from campus offices and through the content as provided to the RAs through training.

These deeper problems Jordan mentioned are related to depression and other mental health concerns. Most residents are reluctant to talk about these types of issues with their peers, RAs, and other outlets on campus. Brad mentioned, “. . . guys don’t really talk to other guys about feeling depressed or sad”. They might also be afraid to share or admit these types of issues with anyone. “People who go to [counseling center] are sometimes embarrassed because they went to [counseling center] and they don’t want their friends to find out”, said Brad. The stigma attached to mental health on campus and the complexities of such issues are beyond the scope of this study, but have emerged as participants reflect on concerning issues facing students.

Bullying and related Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) issues also fall along the spectrum of problems that college students are facing. Terry talked about getting a call from a resident, “. . . he didn’t know what to do because his parents found out he was homosexual and it was a complete disaster on his end”. In this case, students

facing self-identity and developmental milestones are concerned about how that will affect their personal relationships and in turn, that effects how that interplays with other issues, as mentioned previously. Brooke gave another side to these issues,

Bullying and that type of thing especially with the recent suicides . . . you don't have to point it toward the LGBT community, but like bullying in general and how to recognize you are being bullied . . . that your friends are being bullied or maybe that even you are bullying someone.

She was able to recognize the range of bullying behaviors and how they are all harmful to students. Jordan brought it to light in a broader sense by identifying these issues in the context of violence,

Violence comes in many forms and it's not just physical . . . there's verbal . . . there's emotional . . . there's several forms of violence and students should be aware of these forms because it's easy to identify physical violence but it's not easy to identify emotional violence. You don't know if somebody's hurting.

The final and most serious issues facing college students today come in the form of suicide ideation and concerns of self-abuse. "I've had a student who has expressed suicide ideation", said Jordan. Terry expressed that, too, as more serious issues being handled by RAs. Brad talked about how to handle these problems when brought forth.

As long as you don't appear to be shocked by the issue that they're talking about . . . because if you react like, holy crap, then that's going to shut them down.

You've just got to deal with them as if they're going to keep talking about it.

Brooke also talked about a resident coming forward with concerns about another friend. She shared,

Sometimes it's more difficult. I had a resident who was concerned come to me as she had a friend in another state who was cutting herself . . . so I stood there for a second and was like, let me think about that, but I had to help her work through that situation like they train us on.

So in some cases, the student in harm may not be the person coming forward. Regardless, RAs and Residence Life staff have to be prepared to handle the entire scope of issues whether it is helping residents transition to college, minor academic concerns, or more complex personal and mental problems. The range of issues is truly complicated as shared by the participants.

Sub-theme a. RAs have many roles to navigate in assisting students. The next sub-theme, based in the research question surrounding the perceptions of the role of a RA, is also related to the range of issues facing college students and that role RAs have in assisting students. Data primarily supporting this sub-theme included both observations of RA training and participant interviews. Put simply in one interview, “The role of a RA has many facets”, said Kurt. Whether it be the “first line of contact”, mentioned by Hope, or “first responder”, shared by Jordan. The RAs navigate numerous roles as they support their residents and students they serve. Morgan, a veteran RA and now graduate hall director, shared her thoughts,

In my opinion the role of the RA has many aspects . . . they are a resource person especially if they have first year students that don't know how to navigate the campus . . . they pass down important school traditions that students first year students might not know about . . . they are also community developers. . . they make sure that everyone feels like they belong that they feel like their hall is their

new home . . . they're also like a first responder when something goes wrong . . . if they're on rounds they are the first people on the scene.

Resource was a word that was often used to describe the role of a RA. Beth stated her role as, “. . . just being a resource for them and being able to answer questions and being knowledgeable and aware of what's going on in the university”. Kurt, Morgan, Brian, and Brook all confirmed that the RA is there to be a resource and answer questions. Jordan shared, “I mean I think the specific role . . . they are here to be a human resource to residents”.

Building community in that first year on campus is also an important role of the RA. Brooke shared that her role is to, “. . . build your community . . . get to know everybody”. Matt, a Residence Life administrator, echoed, “. . . put more emphasis on we want you to take time to get to know your residents . . . we want you to help build a community”. This takes shape not only in that crucial first-year on campus for new students, but happens on each floor and in every building as students get to know one another and their RA. The concept of building community emerged as a role of the RA, but will also be addressed in a separate theme emerging from the findings.

Transitioning to college is something both Brad and Will expressed as part of their role as a RA for new students. Brad has experience as a RA for 3 years. The first two were spent in a primarily freshmen residence hall and now he resides with upperclassmen. He mentions from the first hall, “. . . you're much more of a resource and you're helping your residents transition to college much more so than in the second”.

Will shared from his experience,

My role, I think, is to help them transition and to let them know I'm here as someone who has background . . . by giving them kind of like my physical presence but also knowing that there is someone to help you but at the same time maintain them . . . because I tell you, if I wasn't here they would kind of go overboard on some things and they would forget why they are actually here which is to get an education and experience college and the struggles of college. So it kind of it works both ways, you're here for them, but at the same time you have to enforce regulations on them, but at the same time you have to let them know you're still here for them. That's why you're enforcing things, because it's for them in the long run. So, in a way, you kind of feel like a parent, but the same time like a peer and a student with them, because they see me going through the same stuff that they are . . . and so the role is an all-around student, but one who enforces policy, but at the same time you could go to if you have trouble or conflict.

There is also an administrative side to the roles of the RA. Jordan mentioned RAs act as, "the eyes and ears of the administrators". That comes in the form of, "making sure residents uphold policies and the policies that are articulated through the housing code of conduct and student conduct codes", said Kurt. Beth even stated, "I have a lot more responsibility regarding paperwork". The RA sets the expectations for the hall and works on the communication and sharing the rules. "They are the ones who are going to communicate information to the proper authorities to help students to get students to where they need to be", said Jordan.

As observed during the training process for RAs, participants were given the context for different issues and experiences through various elements throughout their training. Through each component of training, the specifics how to report and how to take proper documentation were given to RAs. Specifically, during a session by the student conduct office, RAs were given the steps on referring and handing policy violations. In this training on how to write a referral, they were provided scenarios and RAs were asked to read them aloud, followed by a discussion of the pros and cons, and what information was missing from each scenario. This facilitation not only outlined the process for reporting a conduct violation and policy, but also helped further define specific violations of policy and procedures.

This very unique role of the RA provided Hope, “a talking point, especially for the future”. Having the responsibility that comes with being a RA in college gives those students the opportunity to deal with conflict, handle crisis, communicate effectively to various audiences, all while maintaining the care for and authority over others. Regardless of the careers these RAs pursue, their experiences in this role give them an unique niche. Michael, who has made his career in Residence Life, provides this summation of the role of a RA,

I think of a RA as Ferris Buller, without the adolescent behavior that would require the kind of lengths he had to go to. I really do think that the RA, and this a bias, and this an ideal, a RA is all things because they have to be potentially all things to the diversity of whatever their community has to offer and so that’s a lot of pressure. But that’s an ideal and so that’s basically what an RA is . . . big brother, little brother, best friend, confidant, you know the list could go on and on.

It's an approachable ideal, but one that you can shoot for and I've seen some that come very close.

Therefore at this institution, RAs and Residence Life staff have articulated the numerous roles RAs are asked to navigate from representing resources, solving problems, upholding policies, and many others. They do this all as they maintain their own status as a student and community member of the campus.

Sub-theme b. Peers, friends, and family play an influential role in assisting students with issues. Based in the research question of the role students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors, this theme provided evidence of the amount of influence others have in a student's decision to seek help. Through participant interviews, RAs expressed the importance of fellow peers, friends, and family members offering help and guidance to students facing issues. Although RAs provide a human resource to students when they are facing issues as they live on campus, assist them as they navigate academics, and transition to college, they are not the only resources students turn to when facing issues, search for answers, and attempt to find solutions to problems. The RAs represent an influential piece, but only a part of the equation when it comes to assisting students. Hope mentioned, "I'd like to say they come to me all the time but usually they go to their friends". Their peers, friends, family members, and other networks are often consulted, and therefore have influence in the direction students pursue when taking action, solving, or attempting to deal with issues.

"Their network would be their roommate or their friends or family", said Brad. Brooke, Terry, and Jordan agreed that friends, parents, and family would be the first they would go to. Jordan expressed, "Parents are the primary go-to . . . their parents give them

advice sometimes knowing the procedures and sometimes not knowing the procedures . . . it's just that immediate reaction to go back to parents, like they have all of the answers".

With that constant communication back and forth with their parents, comes more ways for the parents to get involved in their student's issues on campus. Jordan continued,

I think nowadays they go directly to their parents and they get their parents involved . . . but I think students definitely go to their parents first. They do not go to their RA first, they actually will go to their parent first and their parent will maybe try and get into contact with the RA.

Others see how college brings distance to the parent-child relationship. With many residents living away from home for the first time, they learn to rely on others for advice. As students begin to transition fully to their campus environment Hope explained,

. . . especially in an environment like this where we're not living with our parents anymore. . . . mom and dad are a phone call away, but at the same time they are a phone call away, it's not the same as having a conversation with them, especially when they're not face-to-face, it's tough. . your first line of anything is your roommate, your neighbor, your best friend, and we're all students, we're all in the same age group, the same situation . . . we all live here on campus . . . so especially when you're at school your first thought is your peers . . . your parents, your family members, relatives, and more qualified adults kind of come second because you're surrounded by people your age all of the time.

Peers and friends are often consulted for advice when students are worried about something, or just need to vent. Morgan mentioned, "Peers are just those people that you

turn to when you're like, I don't really think this is a big deal . . . what's going on in my life, but let me talk it out with someone". When it comes to consulting with friends on academics, relationships, and other decisions, Brian shared, "I would say they turn to their peers when they are stressed out. So . . . the daily life, school, work, and things like that. . . I guess just the things that are normal to pop up in everyone's life".

Will noted how sharing their concerns and issues helps students form a connection with each other. By allowing others to see their own vulnerability, they open the door for sharing similar worries. He said,

It brings a commonality among them . . . because when students outwardly express they're having stress or if they're like oh man, that test was really hard I don't know what I'm going to do . . . personally or academically . . . the other students are like well, hey I'm the same way . . . you know, this test really kicked my butt or I didn't do well here. . I'm really stressing about this, too . . . and actually it builds bonds because it shows them . . . hey, I'm not the only person in this boat and they are doing the same thing and we're feeling the same way . . . but it definitely builds on bonds and commonality and that's very important.

That connection with peers brings a certain level of respect for one another. Consequently, influence becomes a player when it comes to students turning to peers and friends for help with issues. Jordan observed people to be followers. He noted, ". . .they like to follow what's cool. . . you know, the established norm . . .and if peers are telling you to do this then most likely it's what they are going to do". Morgan followed,

Maybe hearing somebody else say hmm . . . that's kind of a big deal, maybe you should go somewhere else to talk about that. So I think in that capacity peers play a very important role because that's who you feel comfortable with things first. This established norm, whether it be positive or negative, on a college campus can have an immense amount of power. Peers can speak up at the right moment and provide answers, resources, and options for a student in need of help.

Jordan explained a situation he faced where a resident was hesitant to share and report a situation to the RA, but did so with the help of a friend. He shared,

She talked to her best friend and her best friend was insistent on sharing this information. Tell the RA, do this, and do that . . . and through that peer help she was able to come forth to the RA and the RA was able to come to me and we called the police department and the situation was solved . . . and you know I think the influence of the peer was very important.

Peers have the potential to point their friends in the right direction. When in a situation where the student should be seeking help, Morgan shared,

The student is already thinking about seeking help they just need someone on the outside to reinforce that. . so I think that if a peer says maybe you should go to [counseling center] they are more likely to do that because they were already thinking about it but they needed that confirmation of yes, go do it.

In the form of assertive, proactive advice or genuine reinforcement of resources available, peers and friends have the ability to greatly affect the situation. The participants in the study all comprehend this power that lies in the influence of others. Even though the role of the RA is influential, they are not the only source for students to turn to.

Theme 3: Fostering and Building a Sense of Community is a Priority for Residence Life

One of the roles of an RA was to build community and help their students get to know one another. This concept of community, although not directly asked through the research questions, emerged as a resounding theme from the participants through their interviews and reinforced by observations and a document provided during their training. Both RAs and Residence Life professionals mentioned a new initiative behind a desire to connect students and give them a sense of responsibility to the campus and to their community within the residence halls. Even though not directly tied to a specific research question, this theme emerges as a result of initiative to create a sense of community, which in turn, supports more students as they feel comfortable coming forward. As students get to know one another and feel accountable and a sense of ownership to their community, the hope is that they will feel more confident about reporting concerning and threatening behaviors they witness within their affected community. This theme supports the identification and reporting of behaviors on campus through the fostering and building of community.

Sub-theme a. RAs create and develop relationships within their communities for student engagement with the campus community. Several participants expressed the importance of developing relationships and building community within the residence halls. Jordan shared, “The division of student affairs and the department have taken on a new vision”, with regard to this principle of community and practicing civility. As shared in a document from RA training, “Meeting Residents’ Needs”, its intent was “to

provide some guidance to programming with discovering and meeting the needs of their residents”, starting with how to build community. Taken from this document, it stated,

Building Community – is creating a physical living environment that fosters a sense of belonging, shared experiences, and establishes the ideas of trust and open communication among members of the community. Often, residents view their hall/floor community as their primary group of friends and peers while in college (at least for the year they spend together). While some students join into sub-communities quickly, the general idea is that the hall/floor community provides a fairly specific group of students within which a resident can comfortably settle.

The document then provides reflection on their residence hall community experience and what steps the RA can take to initiate that within their community.

Zach articulated a need for community, “I really think it needs to start early in life . . . instill the importance of community or relationship building. I think the students we see now are so individually focused that there is an important factor missing . . . care for others.” Although his statement implied a focus on this concept prior to coming to college, it is reinforced as they come to this campus where an emphasis is placed on relationships and care for others in your community.

Making it an intentional focus for the department, Residence Life has incorporated this concept into part of the learning outcomes. This was also reinforced and shared with RAs during their training. Taken from observations, the office of student conduct emphasized civility, relationships, and community as part of their office’s outcomes. Matt, a Residence Life professional staff, outlined this new vision,

The division came up with five learning outcomes this year . . . and so we developed a committee within Residence Life on how are we going to help students learn . . . how are we going to have the RAs have an influence on that . . . and we decided we have got to adhere to these learning outcomes. Where should we start? . . . So we started with practice civility. We are trying to have everyone from me to the RAs . . . trying to have students grow and learn in that area. There are many different ways to do that . . . examples are, just having residents be respectful of their space and their rooms cleaned up and be respectful to their roommate . . . just having a positive interaction . . . acknowledge people . . . talk to the housekeepers . . . so there are many ways we are trying to have students focus on that area . . . learning and also developing community by knowing individuals on their floors.

The new community-building model is something both Jordan and Morgan mentioned from their perspectives as graduate hall directors. Jordan said, “If somebody in your community has affected you, you need to say something about it because they’re community members . . . because ultimately it does affect you directly. Morgan followed, “We’re talking a lot about community ownership and taking responsibility for your space and your actions within that space”. RAs and staff communicate this respect for one another and the ability to understand how actions taken by one person within the community truly do have an impact on others. It doesn’t always have to be viewed from a damaging perspective, either. By embracing this concept of community and civility, Jordan said, “students should be interacting with one another and should be confronting one another in a very respectful way”.

Just as negative actions have their consequences, so do the positive. Ownership, buy-in, and responsibility are all encouraging outcomes of this principle of community. This common responsibility and ownership was highlighted by Hope, “I think that if you make people feel like they are a part of something, like they are a part of the equation, they take more responsibility and ownership over it”. This sense of ownership can lead to greater awareness of what’s happening in the community as well as reporting things that are not appropriate or affecting the community in a negative manner.

This concept of building and fostering a sense of community was also highlighted as civility. Matt emphasized the benefits of working together on this,

We should care for each other . . . and we want everyone to have a positive experience and you just can’t rely on administration or the Res Life staff to take care of all of the issues. We all should be in this together and help each other out.

Relationships are at the heart of how this is carried out within the Residence Life system. Zach noted, “The most useful thing we can do is build those relationships . . . students don’t do something about a situation unless they feel personally affected and sometimes that’s because their friend is being affected”. This happens as RAs build relationships on their floors with individual students. Zach continued by emphasizing, “. . . make sure they have a go-to person that they can talk to. . .that you don’t have a loner on your floor and everyone feels comfortable even if it’s just with the RA. . .everyone has someone they feel comfortable talking to”. When they feel comfortable talking to someone, students are more apt to report concerns that affect those they have relationships with.

This concept is also put into action through communication. Brook mentioned how she is building her community as, “get to know everybody”. By RAs communicating this message and actively talking to their residents about the greater sense of community, they can accomplish that. Hope said,

I definitely think every RA should be required to talk to their residents and have that conversation. . . you guys may not realize this, but again you signed up to live on campus which comes with its own set of responsibilities which goes beyond being a [institution] student. . . It may not be written out in any contract you signed, but it’s something that comes along with it . . . if you need help dealing with an issue, find someone who can help you . . . if you feel like you can’t handle it, find someone who can . . . you owe that to your friend that you’re trying to help . . . yourself . . . you know, anybody that is affected by the situation.

Residence Life administrators continue to place importance on this new vision and assert that building community and practicing civility will make a difference. On facing this challenge, Matt mentioned,

Tough times don’t last but tough people do. That’s my motto, but as we continue to put emphasis on knowing our residents and making strong, sincere connections and trying to build community and hopefully no one will feel like they are on our campus or living on our halls without anybody to go to. Just having one person you can go to can make a major difference.

It will be a challenge to implement this type of approach on a large campus. By starting at the individual level and within the floors of the residence halls, the RAs provide that personal connection with residents. Michael noted,

What our hope is, that at least at this institution is . . . that I may serve . . . I am here to serve my fellow member of my community . . . I am a member of this community and should be protecting myself as well as others by ratifying their place and their value as a member of this community.

With this sense of community, students not only protect themselves, but also look out for others. Therefore, they are more likely to identify, report, and address adverse issues facing their community because of the value that is placed on this initiative on campus.

Theme 4: Despite Reporting Systems in Place and Resources Available, Identifying and Reporting Concerns and Issues Remain a Barrier to the General Student

This final theme represents the need for students to be able to identify concerns within their campus community and find the necessary means to report this to the proper system and authorities. Building from the previous theme of education and resources related to violence prevention on campus, this fourth pattern recognizes the systems in place, but also the generalized student views and norms when it comes to reporting such issues. This overall theme was consistently expressed and reinforced through individual participant interviews, while the training observation and documents provided evidence for the systems in place and resources available on the campus.

Sub-theme a. RAs are trained in the protocol and IR system of identifying and reporting concerns and issues. As observed, RAs are educated on the protocol of reporting during the training process. It is shared, walked through, and discussed with participants at various points throughout the training. Taken from the RA training observations, facilitators explained the protocol as writing a incident report for anything that occurs out of the ordinary, contact your supervisor by reporting up and not out. This

was shared during the “Behind Closed Doors” sessions, in addition, it was referenced as part of the session presented by the women’s center, the counseling center, and the office of student conduct. Also observed during the “Behind Closed Doors” session was the feedback and discussion that took place as residents processed the scenario with Residence Life professional staff, returning RAs, and representatives from the counseling and women’s centers. Taking place in the official program for the counseling center of RA training, participants were shown how to access the online referral form. In addition, during the presentation of the office of student conduct, the protocol was shared in a handout of what to include in the CR process.

Jordan explained, “I think that through training they engrain in us this is the protocol and what happens and then this happens . . . but you have to document it and tell your supervisors”. Documenting remains an integral piece to the protocol as outlined by Brooke, “They pretty much tell you to document everything so . . . definitely a formal protocol”. More explicitly, Morgan shared the process of the reporting system,

I think with the system in place here . . . I would expect the RA to have written an incident report about it just to keep things traveling up so everyone knows about it, so if anything were to happen there’s a record of this happened, and this happened, and this is what we knew about it, and this is how we followed up with that.

Terry used the terminology shared throughout training of “report up, not out” in her reflection of the training by saying, “We were taught if you talk about a situation you have to say now, I do have to report this, and you know it will be confidential, but I have to report up, I’m not reporting out.” Even with as concrete of a process in place, RAs

still acknowledge the subjectivity that plays into their role. Will expresses this as, “Residence Life does a good job about telling us there is a grey area . . . because you can’t go into this job thinking it’s black and white . . . it’s just not possible”.

Therefore, as RAs are trained in the protocol of identifying and reporting issues that arise in their communities, they are advocates for reporting and recognize the need for students to step forward and report. This takes form in two different ways. First, students can self-report by sharing an issue he or she is individually facing with their RA or someone of authority. Secondly, students can report issues or problems they see in others or something they have witnessed.

Sub-theme b. RAs identify advantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others. In the interviews, participants were asked about students coming forward with concerns and reports. As a result, Hope stressed the need for sharing the benefits with students and how a lack of that knowledge may prevent them from doing the right thing, by reporting. She explained,

Getting people to do that is a whole other thing . . . and I don’t think we educate enough on the benefits of . . . reporting up and . . . you don’t have to tell everyone you know, but you should go to somebody and I think more needs to be done.

Due to this lack of understanding about the advantages, Morgan feels students cannot comprehend the magnitude of their choice to come forward. She said, “I don’t think they understand the amount of power that they have in that”. Once they do report a concern to their RA, the protocol takes over and it is shared with supervisors, as observed during their training process and shared by the RAs. Morgan expressed, “. . . and how fast it goes through that system to let somebody else look into it . . . I don’t think they

understand sometimes like how far it goes and that's how impactful that is". This sentiment was also echoed by Terry, "Once you report it, it can't be ignored, especially on this campus".

So does this campus have a heightened awareness when it comes to student reporting? Michael gave his perspective and why the event of [campus tragedy] plays a role,

We did experience the amount of reporting from students and parents that we got after [campus tragedy] was amplified was everything and anything . . . so as the institutional memory declines and everything else, do people know that they have the power and how do you use them . . . you know those personal stories, there has to be some sort of tangible experience, I think, in our current culture for people. They have to identify with it . . . it can't be merely anecdotal it has to be an anecdote with a purpose.

Will also believes because of [campus tragedy] the protocol, documentation, and reporting of early warning signs have become increasingly valuable. He shared, "It's a real advantage . . . we can see something's going to escalate . . . you can see warning signs and there's documentation and I think especially after [campus tragedy], there's a real importance of documenting the history patterns of people".

Others provided explanations of the benefits of students' reports. Hope gave meaning to what she wishes students would believe by saying,

That's okay . . . to report it . . . it doesn't make you a bad person for something that happened to you . . . it doesn't make you a bad person if you are concerned about your friend . . . it doesn't make you nosy . . . there's nothing wrong with it.

There's a big stigma attached to needing somebody's help and wanting somebody's help, and really it shouldn't be bad, especially in a community like ours where bad things have happened.

She also desired for students to be more accountable to the [institution] community by saying, “. . . you have a big part in this and you have to recognize as a [institution] student you have this responsibility to do this for your fellow students”. In addition, Michael believed, “I think it provides people the sense of self-worth if they feel like they've done something good by helping someone else.” Having this sense of responsibility gives students the confidence to step forward and help someone. This behavior, when seen as having a positive effect, could lead to more reports. Michael also stated, “It might give them more inclination to continue to do that you know, if you get a good response from stepping outside to help someone else odds are you'll typically do it again”.

Even with all of these advantages articulated by RAs and fellow students, there still remains a fairly negative impression with the typical campus culture for reporting fellow students and coming forward with concerns about others.

Sub-theme c. RAs identify barriers and disadvantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others. Through interview responses, RAs and staff identify the barriers and disadvantages for students to report. Overwhelmingly, they confirmed the number one barrier as Terry simply stated it, “Getting in trouble. That's the number one. I think getting in trouble is that they don't know the consequences of their behavior”. Will shared his concerns with this line of thinking. He said, “You're taught not to intervene because once you've intervened you're of guilty association”.

There are two pieces to this barrier. This first is getting in trouble, oneself; the other lies in the peer influence and concern for getting friends in trouble. Will explained both sides of this,

They're intimidated in the first part because they feel like one, at the heart of the matter they'll be like well, what was your role and are you guilty? . . . and two, they feel like they will be looked down by their peers if they report something.

They'll be known as a snitch or someone who can't be trusted in the hall or someone that can't take things.

Brad also gave his view, "It depends on whether they think they're going to get that person in trouble or not . . . friends are put in a lot of hesitation . . . is what I'm thinking going to get them help or are they getting in trouble".

The administrators share this understanding and concern for barriers that prevent students from coming forward. Getting in trouble, again, rises to the top. Kurt provided, "People are always scared to get in trouble themselves and especially here where we don't have a Good Samaritan policy . . . it is easy to get in trouble yourself for ratting out a friend". Taking a more positive view, Matt looked at it from a similar approach,

I think that if they feel like as long as they're not going to get into trouble, then they will report it. It's almost like we're not going to contact the police if I'm also going to be implicated, so I think students don't have a problem reporting as long as they are not going to be implicated.

Unfortunately, overcoming students' beliefs of the reporting system is the major battle. Kurt shared his realistic view,

I think that they would need to believe that they are not going to get into trouble. . . .I think you can talk until you are blue in the face that the system is there to help students but the first time that a student feels that their concerns were turned on them or not believed or that it resulted in a negative reaction . . . they are going to tell their friends and that's the message that is going to be taken. So you have to be very careful about how you handle those situations . . . not to overreact not to get people in trouble . . . to actually deal with the situation of helping the student and that should be your primary goal.

From the perspective of getting oneself or others in trouble, there are definitely beliefs and perspectives that need to be addressed. Jordan shared his hope for this, "Get out of this mentality that you're a tattletale . . . that you're snitching . . . that you're doing these things . . . it's really you're helping people and that's trying to transition from tattletaleing to helping people . . . it's really a hard process".

Brian also justified a student's mindset,

I think it has to reach a level of where the positives in their mind overcome the negatives. No one wants to get themselves in trouble and no one wants to get their friends in trouble . . . and even though it's not like getting in trouble, they perceive as anywhere I intervene, I feel like they see it as a punishment, if I was to refer someone [counseling center] or the [women's center] or something like that.

Other reasons and barriers exist for students' hesitancy in sharing and reporting concerns. Jordan believed apathy or being directly affected plays a role. He said, "It might be apathy. It might be they're not directly affected by whatever the student's

doing. They may not know the full story and not want to put themselves in the middle of the situation”. Or perhaps, students lack trust in the system. Terry noted, “Trust is a big one. Granted, you do want to document things for the greater good, for the public, and for students themselves, but you do have that trust issue.” Along those lines, Brad suggested, “You can tell your residents that the more severe will be addressed and the other stuff doesn’t matter . . . but it’s almost like they don’t believe you”.

Zach also brought up the factor of how reporting will affect their living situation. He expressed, “I think they are worried how going to their RA or how going to the hall director or Residential Learning Coordinator (RLC) will affect their living situation . . . they don’t want things to get worse or they think things will get worse”.

The other resonating factor seemed to be a lack of awareness towards some of these issues that could be reported. Kurt mentioned, “They don’t catch a lot of subtlety . . . that is, more big issues right in their face”. Therefore if they are not aware of the issue, they are not reporting it. He provided further examples, “. . . so typically it’s going to be something big, someone getting drunk a lot, sleeping a lot, actually saying they are going to commit suicide, and things like that. So it takes something pretty in their face”. Will echoed this concern, “Unfortunately students don’t report something unless it’s extreme . . . they miss the beginning and the middle that leads to those extremes and they won’t report those . . . that’s unfortunate because that’s when you really need to prevent things from happening”. Brooke also shared this sentiment by saying,

Not to say we’re self-centered or anything, but sometimes we are . . . and people may not have had a lot of these to deal with back in high school, too, so they may not even know it exists . . . and they may just be like why are you acting weird? . .

. I don't get it . . . so definitely telling them the warning signs making them aware of stress, anxiety, fear, and those kinds of things.

Finally, Kurt shared the side of this issue that only few others can articulate. He explained his perspective,

I think there are a lot of disadvantages that once you report it, for the student, it can't be ignored, especially on this campus. I think that there is a heightened level of reaction and I don't know if that is necessarily because I've only worked here since [campus tragedy]. . I haven't worked anywhere else so I don't know if it is similar or different in other places due to [campus tragedy], but the reaction that I see for issues is heightened. So in terms of an issue with a student that we may have let go for a little bit to see what was going to happen, like really we're kind-of-concerned, but it is not super-concerned, back before [campus tragedy] we might have just let it go and checked in a month later. Now, as soon it is on our radar, it gets handled and everybody's all hands on deck . . . so those are the disadvantages . . . sometimes you over-blow issues and you make a student's experience harder by taking the harder stance where they could have very easily just had a crappy day and that crappy day made them say something that they really didn't mean . . . a month later if you were to follow back up with that person they could have just told you, I was just having a crappy day, but in our new world that crappy day would . . . could result in a mandatory assessment by [counseling center] . . . where pre-[campus tragedy], [counseling center] would never have been involved with that person.

The barriers and disadvantages are plenty, and relatively commonly understood by both RAs and Residence Life professionals. These findings provide an example of how students believe and their attitudes towards reporting threatening behaviors.

Summary

This chapter provided the findings of this study based upon the analysis of data through observations, document analysis, and participant interviews. Based in an analysis of the study's guiding research questions, commonalities and consistencies were presented. The chapter begins with an analysis of each of the seven research questions that guided the study. As a result, four themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the data.

All the data stemming from this first research question led to a greater role in both the themes relating to the training and preparation of the RAs. While violence prevention on campus is provided to the RAs through training, education, and resources, they in turn, share a part in the dissemination of this information to the students in their residence halls. Resident Advisors serve as both the catalyst to start the process and gatekeeper to the information regarding the reporting of threatening behaviors on campus. Therefore, IHE aim to enhance the role of students in the reporting on campus through Residence Life and the RA.

Overall, this second research question provided substance to the greater themes of this study through the RA acting as a catalyst and gatekeeper to resources for their communities, based upon the training they receive. Therefore, also supporting the notion that violence prevention on campus is provided to students through education and resources. Because of the training the RAs receive in preparation for their role, they are

better able to serve as a resource for their residents. Their thorough training also reflects the supporting theme of their knowledge and use of the protocols and IR system of identifying and reporting concerns and behaviors. Even though barriers are discussed in the overarching theme, RAs make use of the protocols and reporting systems when needed and as reports come forward.

The responses from the third research question, stemming from the perception of the RA and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors, support the overall themes of this study by explaining the wide range of issues facing students as well as the numerous roles RAs navigate to assist students with these issues. Although couched from a perspective of threatening and related behaviors, the RAs note the spectrum of issues that can lead to more threatening and harmful behaviors. In addition, as echoed from the previous research questions, participants supported the training of protocols and reporting systems RAs receive and how that supports their role in the identification and reporting of threatening behaviors.

The fourth research question provides overlap in the understanding of both the RA's role in the reporting process as well as the actual processes students use when reporting threatening behaviors. As found in the interviews, participants shared how students typically turn to peers, friends, and family members before actually reporting the situation to their RA or through a more formalized process. It was evident Residence Life shares a formalized process in which RAs are trained and provided resources to assist students with the system of reporting threatening behaviors. However, the process students actually utilize as they seek assistance is from peers, friends, and family

members. Through this analysis, this identifies a disconnect and gap in how to reach students, peers, friends, and family as they influence the reporting process on campus.

The analysis of research questions five and six brought to light the issues surrounding the barriers to reporting and the differences in perspectives shared between the RA and administrative participants. Although participants shared the comprehensive reporting systems already in place, this study found barriers and disadvantages surrounding the actual identification and reporting of concerns and issues from the student population that prevent students from coming forward with their reports of threatening behavior. Although RAs were adequately trained and serve as the gatekeeper to their residents, the actual follow through of reporting is limited and faces barriers to students on campus.

The final research question addressed the role of students influencing their peers in the prevention of violence and supports several of the overall themes presented in this study. First, the need for violence prevention education exists as articulated by the participants. The RA's role as a resource and peer educator is supported by the responses. Additionally, as a wide range of issues face students, the RAs, peers, friends, and family members are asked to support and assist them as they potentially influence their decision whether or not to seek help or come forward with a report of threatening behavior. Finally, as resounded in many of the other research questions, the overall theme of barriers to reporting was addressed by this research question as peer influencing the decision for students to come forward.

The analysis of the seven research questions guiding the study provided support and the foundation for the study's findings. Four themes emerged from the data

beginning with the first theme, violence prevention on campus is navigated and provided to students through education and resources. Supported by evidence from all three sources of data, the sub-theme, RAs act as both a catalyst and gatekeeper to the resources for their communities, based upon their training, exemplified the thorough process RAs go through in order to better understand violence prevention and the related resources for students. As a result, another sub-theme surfaced, RAs see need for and value for more sharing of violence prevention information and engagement with the student population. Throughout the interviews RAs and graduate hall directors stated the importance of students being able to have access to more information and training on how to identify warning signs, be aware of bullying issues, and others that are affecting the campus.

The second theme, a wide range of issues face today's college student, was supported by examples and issues from the participant interviews as well as observations from RA training based in the research questions pertaining to the perceptions of the role of the RA and the amount of influence peers have over other students. The sub-themes supporting this included, RAs navigate many roles to assist students. Supported by interviews and observations of training, it is clear that the role of the RA is complex and has many facets ranging from a resource, administrative tasks, and a first responder in a crisis situation. The remaining sub-theme was, peers, friends, and family play an influential role in assisting students with issues. Many examples were provided through the interviews as students find other outlets, beyond that of the RA, to help them in times of need and trouble. The peers, friends, and family proved to be an influential source for students as they face issues on campus.

The third theme, fostering and building a sense of community is a priority for Residence Life, emerged as both RAs and Residence Life professional staff shared their vision and hope for the campus in interviews, supporting documents, and observations of RA training. Although not directly supported by the study's research questions, this emerging theme connects to the overall purpose of identification and reporting of threatening behaviors through the proactive approach taken on this campus by providing students accountability and responsibility for their actions and others through this notion of community. The supporting sub-theme was, RAs create and develop relationships within their communities for student engagement with the campus community. This was provided through participants sharing their desire for students to get to know one another and build strong relationships resulting in a greater sense of accountability and responsibility for their campus and community.

The final theme, despite reporting systems in place and resources available, identifying and reporting concerns and issues remain a barrier to the general student, was demonstrated by RA sharing their experiences. It was evident through observation and interviews that RAs are trained in the protocol and IR system of identifying and reporting concerns and issues, as seen in the first sub-theme. To build further in the second sub-theme, RAs identified advantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others. Because of their training and their experiences, RAs see the benefits of having students come forward with their concerns regarding themselves or others. However, just as they identified the positives, they also shared and identified barriers and disadvantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others, as supported in the third sub-theme. Articulated in the interviews, RAs and Residence Life professional staff shared the

barriers that still exist both physically and culturally on this campus when it comes to identifying and reporting threatening behavior.

The purpose of this case study was to examine resident advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. RAs, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life professional staff at an institution of higher education served as the population for this study. Through observations, document analysis, and participant interviews, the findings provided in this chapter are a result of the thematic analysis of the data. Four themes and subsequent sub-themes emerged from the data, which addressed the study's research questions.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Discussion, and Summary

The purpose of this case study was to examine resident advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. Resident Advisors, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life professional staff at an institution of higher education served as the population for this study. Seven research questions guided this study:

1. How can Institutions of Higher Education enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment through the orientation and preparation process for Resident Advisors?
2. What is Residence Life currently doing to prepare Resident Advisors for the identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors?
3. What is the perception of the Resident Advisor and their role in the identification and reporting process of threatening and related behaviors?
4. What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?
5. What are the student's personal attitudes and beliefs toward identifying and reporting threatening behaviors?
6. What are student perceptions of others' attitudes and beliefs (social norms) toward identifying and reporting of threatening behaviors?
7. What role do students play in helping peers choose to report potential threatening behaviors?

The following themes emerged through analysis of the data. The themes provide support and understanding of RAs attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors:

Theme 1. A wide range of issues face today's college student.

Sub-theme a. RAs navigate many roles to assist students.

Sub-theme b. Peers, friends, and family play an influential role in assisting students with issues.

Theme 2. Fostering and building a sense of community is a priority for Residence Life.

Sub-theme a. RAs create and develop relationships within their communities for student engagement with the campus community.

Theme 3. Violence prevention on campus is navigated and provided to students through education and resources.

Sub-theme a. RAs act as both a catalyst and gatekeeper to the resources for their communities, based upon their training.

Sub-theme b. RAs see need for and value for more sharing of violence prevention information and engagement with the general student.

Theme 4. Despite reporting systems in place and resources available, identifying and reporting concerns and issues remain a barrier to the general student.

Sub-theme a. RAs are trained in the protocol and IR system of identifying and reporting concerns and issues.

Sub-theme b. RAs identify advantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others.

Sub-theme c. RAs identify barriers and disadvantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others.

Three different types of data were collected separately and analyzed in this study. The observation of RA training, analysis of documents, and participant interviews from RAs, graduate hall directors, and Residence Life staff provided the basis for the findings. Triangulation of the data assisted in the interpretation of the findings and themes presented in the previous chapter. The following sections will provide the discussion and conclusions based upon the findings and the recommendations for further study and research.

Conclusions and Discussion

The Reasoned Action Approach (Figure 2) provided the theoretical basis for this study and also confirms many of conclusions asserted in this study. By encompassing the existing literature with the study's findings, background factors including individual, social, and information, give added implications to the findings. Institutions of Higher Education and those developing programming, research, and assessment for current programs, should purposefully target those factors and aim to reach their audience through these background factors. By following the model, it suggests these factors impact the beliefs, attitudes, and norms within the campus culture and climate, ultimately leading to the intended behaviors. Therefore, if IHE wish to encourage students to come forward, identifying and reporting threatening behaviors, it must begin with the intentional engagement at the individual, social, and informational factors.

Figure 2. The Reasoned Action Approach

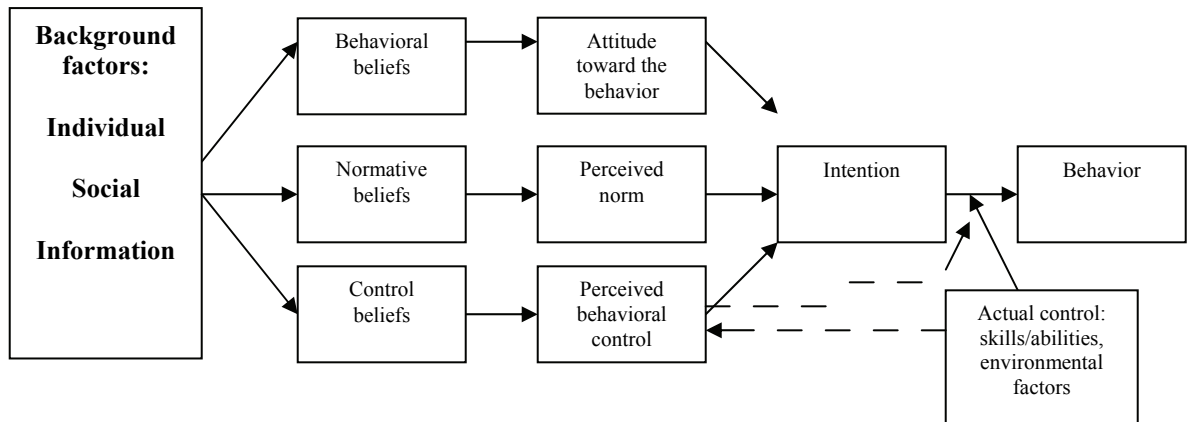


Figure 2. Adapted from “The Reasoned Action Approach,” by Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010.

As presented in The Reasoned Action Approach, focus of this study corresponds to the background factors of the model. In order to understand the behavioral outcomes, the model presents predictors that are followed from the behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. However, these beliefs are grounded in several variables that influence beliefs, in the form of background factors. These background factors are highlighted in each of the conclusions that guide the discussion of this study as it related to the identification and reporting of threatening behaviors.

Individual, social, and information background factors. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) present background factors as individual, social, and information. Provided in The Reasoned Action Approach, individual background factors include personality, values, stereotypes, general attitudes, perceived risk, and past behavior. Social background factors are influenced by education, age, gender, culture, religion, race, and ethnicity. Finally, information background factors are presented as knowledge, media, and forms of intervention. Based in the findings of this study the conclusions are based in one or more of the background factors:

- The concentration on civility and community building is represented through social background factors.
- This institution provides ample resources and for identifying and reporting threatening behaviors as supported by information background factors.
- Peers, friends, and family influence the individual and social background factors.
- Social and information background factors explain the disconnect between Resident Advisors' and administration's perception of identifying and reporting threatening behaviors due to a concern of confidentiality.
- Resident Advisors influence individual, social, and information background factors.
- The campus tragedy affects individual, social, and information background factors.
- Providing more education to the student population through social norms, peer education, and bystander approaches encompass the individual, social, and background factors.
- There are individual, social, and information background factors that influence barriers to reporting threatening behaviors.

The concentration on civility and community building is represented through social background factors. The finding from this study based in civility and the community building approach on this campus is explained through social background

factors. If influence at the community level is successful in providing support for reporting of threatening behaviors, the beliefs, attitudes, and norms will in turn, be affected. Fostering and building a sense of community, a finding of this study, suggested that creating community and civility is important at this institution and was embraced by both RAs and the Residence Life professional staff. This notion within Residence Life and the residence halls illustrates a proactive and caring initiative for students living on this campus. The Residence Life professionals and RAs have shown buy-in and communicated its importance through the interviews, even though not prompted by specific research or interview questions. Matt pointed out,

. . .as we continue to put emphasis on knowing our residents and making strong, sincere connections and trying to build community and hopefully no one will feel like they are on our campus or living on our halls without anybody to go to. Just having one person you can go to can make a major difference.

On a large campus, such as this, an initiative that aims to reach students at the individual level can be a challenge. However, by starting with the residence halls on individual floors, facilitated by RAs, it seems possible. Michael shared, “. . . that I may serve . . . I am here to serve my fellow member of my community. . . I am a member of this community and should be protecting myself as well as others”.

By using RAs to help create and develop relationships within their communities, the hope is for continued, positive student engagement with the campus community. This approach also gives more of the responsibility of these norms and beliefs back to the community. The RA assists in the development of these community building situations

for students to get to know each other, but from there, individual community members take action and ownership of situations that arise and how to handle those accordingly.

This institution provides ample resources and for identifying and reporting threatening behaviors as supported by information background factors. Serving as the basis and foundation for this study, the concerns surrounding the underreporting of threatening behavior and incidents of violence by students continues to be an issue for an accurate understanding of campus violence. As known through the literature, it has been difficult to determine the extent, nature of, and frequency of violence on campus due the underreporting of violence (Cockey et al., 1989; Nicoletti et al., 2001; Pezza, 1995; Pezza & Bellotti, 1995; Sloan et al., 1997; Thompson et al., 2007).

As found in the results of this study, there are sound reporting systems in place supported by an ample amount of campus resources and offices at this institution, targeting these information factors. Therefore, the institution and Residence Life have provided sufficient measures for students to report and receive assistance as well as making it a priority to train and prepare their staff and RAs to handle this variety of issues. Other entities on campus such as the women's center, the counseling center, and the student conduct office all have a vested interest in the training of RAs and utilize them as a catalyst and gatekeeper for referrals as demonstrated through the observation of RA training.

Peers, friends, and family influence the individual and social background factors. Background factors are shaped through the influence of peers, friends, and

family. Affecting the beliefs, attitudes, and perceived norms of a college campus or even residence hall culture can be based in the individual and social background factors.

Sharkin et al. (2003) findings of students helping peers with a variety of problems was also echoed in the results of this study. It was found peers, friends and family members assist students with a range of issues as they continue to play an influential role in their lives. Accordingly, students often choose to consult with other peers or family members rather than resources available to them on campus. This is due, in part, from students not wanting to disclose their peer or the fact that they didn't even know if the incident was serious enough to report (Sharkin et al., 2003). As comparable to the findings of this study, the existing gap has been identified between acknowledging peers serving as helpers and those resources on campus created for assisting students. Not a novel concept, it seems the literature and this study both conclude the amount of influence peers have as resources is substantial. The concern still remains in how to connect students as peers with their "role" as a resource to others, but can be targeted through the individual and social background factors.

Social and information background factors explain the disconnect between Resident Advisors' and administration's perception of identifying and reporting threatening behaviors due to a lack of confidentiality. While the RAs presented the need for more education for the student population, they also showed concern for the lack of reporting as well as barriers and obstacles for students when facing issues of confidentiality and knowing where to turn to get help on campus. While the Residence Life professional staff acknowledged barriers and related issues to reporting, there still remains a gap in the identified realities and needs as presented by the RAs and the

perceptions of sharing education and resources with students by the Residence Life professionals. Jordan's view exemplified this,

I don't always think that the people on campus that preach violence prevention actually reach the students and I think that is where challenges happen. Me as a supervisor, I know it . . . my RAs know it . . . but does the resident in 3055 know it?

This disconnect provides a realistic account of the perceptions of student needs and those perceptions of the administration. Although supportive and grounded in many years of experience with Residence Life, it is always a challenge for the Residence Life professionals to stay aware of the ever-changing pulse and issues facing their students, without the input from students themselves. Michael admitted, "I don't think we are ever going to get it right because there is always a better way to do it and the evolution of the student and what they will respond to evolves with every generation".

The professionals in Residence Life maintained trust in their training process, reporting processes, and the RAs that represented their department. As illustrated in their training and confirmed through the interviews, the RAs play a major role when it comes to keeping students safe and getting residents the help they need. However, when approaching these same issues with RAs, because of their proximity to the student population and their position as a student helper, they communicated a greater need for student involvement in campus safety and violence prevention. Hope shared, "I definitely think getting the information out there . . . that you have a big part in this and you have to recognize that as a [institution] student you have this responsibility to do this for your fellow students". They expressed concern over being able to know of every

situation happening within their floors and acknowledged students were the firsthand knowledge of issues and their power to do something about it. They suggested getting students personally involved and invested in these issues through a variety of methods, stressing the importance of relevance and in-person training. Morgan shared,

I think that if they [students] help program or they help create these policies not only are they more knowledgeable about it but they have a personal investment and with that personal investment they take that more into their informal networks . . . it just trickles down.

Other barriers voiced in the interviews related back to the awareness and education of the students. Without knowing the warning signs that lead to threatening behaviors, many students lack the ability to notice and understand these behaviors when faced with them, directly or indirectly. Will explained, “Unfortunately students don’t report something unless it’s extreme . . . they miss the beginning and the middle that leads to those extremes and they won’t report those . . . that’s unfortunate because that’s when you really need to prevent things from happening”. By recognizing this barrier, administration needs to provide the necessary education and programming or make adjustments in initiatives already in place.

Resident Advisors can play a crucial role in support of this gap in the perceptions as they act as the catalyst and gatekeeper to the student communities. Because of their extensive training, they provide the unique outlet for IHE to engage the student population through the peer educator and bystander approaches, while carrying that message and reactions back to those in administration.

Resident Advisors influence individual, social, and information background factors. Resident Advisors build individual relationships with residents, provide a social structure and community, while also sharing information and knowledge based in the identification and reporting of threatening behaviors. The literature sets the context for this study stating more research was needed on peer influence and how perceived norms affect behavior of college students (Perkins, 2003).

Consequently, the RA may provide that influential outlet for many IHE as they attempt to inform their students' attitudes and behaviors through individual, social, and information factors. As the closest resource and fellow peer, the RA can have a great amount of influence on the student population through the residents they interact with on a daily basis. Because the RA serves in many capacities, this allows them to be a trusted peer in certain situations and a campus resource in others. Based upon the findings of this study, the RA can provide part of the solution to this gap that exists between influential peers and resources. If residents and students feel a sense of trust with the RA, then as a result, peer influence can take effect. Therefore, if we are to enhance any of the roles that RAs represent, it should be that of the peer. Supported by the notion that RAs act as both a catalyst and gatekeeper to the resources for their communities, the capacity, training, and structure already exists. Because peer influence continues to be a guiding factor when students choose to consult and take action on times of stress and concerning situations, the RA should continue to address this need by serving in the role of a peer and trusted resource to provide students with guidance in situations of concern.

The campus tragedy affects individual, social, and information background factors. So does this campus have a heightened awareness when it comes to student

reporting because of the tragedy that occurred? Michael gave his perspective and why the event of the campus tragedy plays a role,

We did experience the amount of reporting from students and parents that we got after [campus tragedy] was amplified was everything and anything . . . so as the institutional memory declines and everything else, do people know that they have the power and how do you use them . . . you know those personal stories, there has to be some sort of tangible experience, I think, in our current culture for people. They have to identify with it . . . it can't be merely anecdotal it has to be an anecdote with a purpose.

The campus tragedy acts as an influential, multi-faceted background factor at this particular institution that cannot be ignored when discussing the result and findings of this study as related to the theoretical model. Will also believed because of [campus tragedy], the protocol, documentation, and reporting of early warning signs have become increasingly valuable. He shared, "It's a real advantage . . . we can see something's going to escalate . . . you can see warning signs and there's documentation and I think especially after [campus tragedy], there's a real importance of documenting the history patterns of people".

Individual's histories and social awareness regarding the campus tragedy play a role in the greater picture when it comes to their beliefs and attitudes about reporting threatening behaviors. Thus, the social and individual background factors vary from student to student based upon their own awareness of the events of the campus tragedy, their connection to the institution, and other variables all impacting these background factors.

It is hard to ignore the key background factor in the tragedy that occurred on this campus. As a result the findings support thorough and supportive resources available on this campus, as shared by all participants. The evidence provided in the findings show there are staff, policies, and resources available to assist students in reporting threatening behaviors, if they so choose.

Providing more education to the student population through social norms, peer education, and bystander approaches encompass the individual, social, and information background factors. Students serve as the target audience and play a crucial role in the efforts of violence prevention on campus (Fox & Savage, 2009; Levin & Madfis, 2009). It is because of the RAs firsthand knowledge and role in the efforts of violence prevention on campus that they recommend more education for their fellow students on these issues. But it is not just information factors that guide this conclusion, as peer education and social norms approaches already target the individual and social background factors of The Reasoned Action approach.

The findings of this study supported the value RAs place on sharing more violence prevention information and with the student population. This can be accomplished through more purposeful engagement with students on topics and resources pertaining to identifying and reporting behaviors that in turn, prevent violence from happening on campus. As the literature suggests, students have the firsthand knowledge of potential violence, in addition to having the power and proximity to identify warning signs and threats and report by come forward with information. (Levin & Madfis, 2009; Sharkin et al., 2003; Prothrow-Stith, 2007).

The social norms approach is one supported by the literature targeting social and information background factors. This approach engages students as educators in violence prevention targeting the social factors that in turn, affect perceived norms. Based in an environmental view, social norms removes the focus from changing an individual's personal attitude and directs it toward the peer or community group and the individual's perception of the attitudes or behaviors of their peers and other community members being different from their own. (Berkowitz, 2003; Perkins, 2003). When students are made aware of the accurate information about their community, the reality has been shown to reduce problem behaviors and enhance more protective behaviors (Berkowitz, 2003). Therefore, with this type of influence, an individual student may feel more compelled or comfortable sharing dissatisfaction with others' behaviors. Knowing this, concentrated efforts can be made on using peers and RAs as helpers within their communities to share accurate information about violence related issues and assist in prevention efforts.

As demonstrated above, social norms approaches can lead to influence on attitudes in a peer or community group. These approaches have been frequently used on college campuses utilizing peers as educators and have consequently demonstrated their influence in many cases. For example, peer education uses the role of peers and uses peer teams to address problems of distress and prevention efforts within a campus community, influence and alter campus cultures, and is shown to improve knowledge, change attitudes, and promote self-efficacy (Choate, 2003; Hertzog & Yeilding, 2009; Katz, 1994; Kress et al., 2006; Lonsway et al., 1998; Schwartz et al., 2006; Sharkin, 2003; Stein, 2007).

Although considered a new priority of Residence Life, the application of social norms approach can further enhance the sense of community. RAs act as a peer educator developing relationships and encouraging residents to further engage with and build their community. This priority and objective is supported well by the literature previously laid out. It encompasses the role of the RA as a peer educator, but also brings a level of accountability to the entire community and to all students. By having stronger relationships and ties to the community, students have a more accurate view of the behavioral norms and actions of their peers.

The need also exists for primary prevention models to be applied in new approaches, programming, interventions, reporting structures, strategies, and research to improve reporting rates at IHE. Primary prevention aims to prevent violence before it occurs through interventions including education and training in social skills, empowerment, assertiveness, sexual decision-making, conflict resolution, and self-defense at the community level. Suggested in the literature, these primary efforts should aim for intervention with multiple causes and aspects of violence while working within levels and various contexts (Krug et al., 2002; LaVant, 2001; Lee et al., 2007; & Nicholson et al., 1998). As articulated through participant interviews, the RAs see a need for sharing more violence prevention information and with the general student, suggesting primary prevention efforts. This kind of concern and awareness by the RAs acting as both entities of the institution and as fellow students brings this need to the forefront. Although not providing substantial suggestions for implementation, the voice of concern included students becoming more aware of warning signs leading to violence, having a more transparent view of the process to handle situations of concern, and

perceiving fewer barriers of concern such as getting in trouble for coming forward with concerns.

Participants also suggested giving students an opportunity to engage through active learning and the actual planning or practice of some the skills needed for intervention against violence. Several authors offer ongoing education, development, and skill-building need to be developed and implemented on campuses in order to support a responsive campus culture for violence prevention (Fossey & Smith, 1996; LaVant, 2001; Stone, 1993). Examples of active learning and skills-building have been found in peer and bystander education approaches. They have been utilized as a primary source of prevention and research in the forms of interpersonal violence in the literature based on college students (Berkowitz, 2003; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Foubert & Cowell, 2004; Foubert & La Voy, 2000; Katz, 1995; Lonsway & Kothari, 2000; Lonsway et al., 1998). This type of involvement could support also the proposition for which IHE should create a culture that is responsive and prepared to deal with campus violence while implementing prevention plans that give students an active role by engaging them in the planning and practice of skills for intervention against violence.

There are individual, social, and information background factors that influence barriers to reporting threatening behaviors. The findings of this study indicate the institution provides resources and systems for students to report threatening behaviors, although the issue remains in getting students to actually making use of those them. Resident Advisors have a working knowledge and have been trained in how to take a concern or report and move the process forward, but they also recognize the gap between what is actually happening within their community and what gets brought forward.

Interview participants were able to share the benefits and advantages of problems being solved and issues handled when students felt comfortable coming forward with their reports about themselves or others. In fact, the participants comprehend the power that lies in the ability for students to be able to see and experience things that may never reach the proper authorities due to a lack of reporting. As a result, more support is needed in order to help students understand how much power they actually have over their own environment.

However, the disconnect with campus administration was also present as RAs communicated the barriers and disadvantages to the student for coming forward and reporting threats and threatening behaviors on campus. Getting in trouble presented concerns and barriers for students to be able to come forward with issues as well threats to themselves or others. Brad shared, “It depends on whether they think they’re going to get that person in trouble or not . . . friends are put in a lot of hesitation . . . is what I’m thinking going to get them help or are they getting in trouble”.

The conduct referral policies, such as those dealing with alcohol, are clearly stated in documentation shared with students in the handbook and the website of student conduct. Both RAs and administration shared concerns related to overcoming the obstacle of educating students on the policies while stressing safety and immediate threats override the policy violation in many situations. One administrator noted this campus does not provide a Good Samaritan policy, which does not seek disciplinary actions for those taking proper precautions for the health and safety of other students. Kurt provided, “People are always scared to get in trouble themselves and especially here where we don’t have a Good Samaritan policy . . . it is easy to get in trouble yourself for

ratting out a friend”. Therefore, the need exists to override the barrier that exists due to a concern of getting in trouble or violation of policy in order for the gap to be addressed in student reporting.

The entire process for this study, beginning with the propositions and supporting literature and further supported by the findings from data analysis, guided the discussion. The conclusions included relevant literature to further define the key messages from this study including ties to the model for this study, The Reasoned Action Approach, and excerpts from the analysis. The discussion included a focus on background factors influenced by community, RAs, peers, friends, family, resources, and the campus tragedy in the context of individual, social, and informational factors.

Recommendations

The recommendations surfaced from this study are grounded in the findings and analysis of results from the data. They are based in the targeted areas for practice and recommendations for future research. The focus lies in training for RAs, the influential role of peers, friends, and family, building and fostering a sense of community within Residence Life, and the addressing the gap for education and resources made available to the student population through a course offered to first-year students .

Recommendations for practice. The findings and conclusions of this study are focused, in part, at the population which provided the context and environment for this study. Institutions of Higher Education and those working in the field of Residence Life are the audience for which these recommendations for practice can be applied. The following recommendations are listed below and explained in more detail in the sections that follow.

- Develop a course for first-year students with a purposeful and integrated curriculum designed to address the range of issues facing college students.
- Provide opportunities for student input on delivery for violence prevention education.
- Students and administration need to work toward a common understanding of violence prevention efforts.
- Create and utilize consistent messaging regarding reporting for all campus offices.
- Develop targeted approaches for violence prevention education for peers, friends, and family members of students.

Develop a for-credit course for first-year students with a purposeful and integrated curriculum designed to address the range of issues facing college students.

Identified in both supporting literature and the interviews, it is clear the range of issues facing college students today is far-reaching. Given this range, a course should be developed for first-year students to help define and address the issues ranging from the most basic to the more complex issues. Although not specifically stated in the findings, it is evident that this range does exist, and both RAs and administration acknowledge its existence through their articulation of the variation of issues expressed in the interviews. Such a course could be utilized to teach students life skills led by the professionals and staff for student affairs, residence life, and other entities on campus working with the development of college students. Much of this information already exists, however, having a consistent terminology and format would provide consistency for not only training but in referencing issues as students are assisted in the future.

Providing a continuum and integrated curriculum of issues would also support the preparation of the RA as they define and articulate the various roles in which they serve. Based upon certain circumstances for given campuses, types of residence halls, different living-learning communities, and other differentiations of students would purposefully provide a guide for RAs serving in different capacities. For instance, an RA working with first-year students in a traditional residence hall could focus on particular issues within the continuum, where another RA working in a Greek community would have differing issues to focus on.

Provide opportunities for student input on delivery for violence prevention education. Within this wide range of issues, RAs supported in the findings more education for students based upon these issues. Additionally, the results of this study also found this campus provided many resources and educational opportunities for RAs to learn about the prevention of violence and subsequent issues on college campuses. Knowing that these resources and programming are made available to all students on campus, it provides an interesting gap as articulated by the RAs on how to educate the general student population. In order to bridge that gap between the average student knowledge and that of our trained RAs, input from students will be required.

Participants were also unsure of the methodology best suited to fit the needs of this education. It ranged from making it a mandated course, part of orientation, or an addition to the alcohol-wise program students are required to complete before they enroll for spring semester classes. Others suggested more optional programming as part of greater initiatives already taking place on campus, such as weeks or months dedicated to the prevention of violence. One thing stressed by all was making it relevant and real to

students, by giving examples of situations that have actually happened on college campuses. The literature and research in this field suggests bystander and peer education approaches have been effective. By participants stating the need and knowledge of these research-based approaches, this provides a viable foundation and solution to begin to implement programming for this campus.

Based on the influence and knowledge of the RA, curriculum could be developed for specific issues. This curriculum would be written and designed to be taught by students for students, based in a peer education model. Even though some expressed negative aspects of providing more programming, have such a resource available could lend itself to support a larger initiative on campus with regard to education and awareness of violence prevention. The important aspect of a curriculum, such as this, would be the students-teaching-students element. Based in the findings, peers have a large influence over attitudes and beliefs, which in turn, affect behaviors.

Students and administration need to work toward a common understanding of violence prevention efforts. There needs to be a continued effort to address this gap between RAs beliefs about violence prevention education and administrators perspectives. It was apparent in the findings of this study that the resources are available on this campus, but as the intended information trickles down to the general student, the educational efforts are not saturating the general student population. However, more can be accomplished by opening the lines of communication between those who make the decisions about the education on campus and the students they serve. Administration should continue to seek student input through RAs and other residents, such as an advisory panel, representing a cross-section of the campus. By sharing their perspectives

and views on issues facing their residents and communities more proactive measures can be taken to improve conditions, share information, or develop new resources to combat any future issues that arise.

Create and utilize consistent messaging regarding reporting for all campus offices. In support of the educational effort in violence prevention, there is a concern for the lack of reporting of threatening behaviors, despite the reporting systems in place and available to students on this campus. With supportive offices and resources already in place on this campus, there is a foundation to provide a consistent and relevant message to students regarding the identification and reporting of threatening behaviors. In any programming or education, first the benefits must continue to be stressed to the students, while still acknowledging the reasons for not coming forward. Participants suggested making the process more transparent and educating the students on how reports are handled once they are reported. The RAs also stressed making it real and relevant to students by using real life examples. These findings support the initial proposition suggesting a need exists for primary prevention models to be applied in new approaches, programming, interventions, reporting structures, strategies, and research to improve reporting rates at IHE. Consequently, this becomes a matter of focusing educational programs and awareness on these specific barriers, combating those barriers, and providing advantages in hopes to shape the beliefs and attitudes of students in the future. Such a message could also make the process of reporting more transparent to the general student, in order for a better understanding of how concerns and conduct violations are handled when brought forth. Efforts do not have to be duplicated, but if the message about reporting, how and to whom, is consistent, more students are apt to be influenced

by such focused programming. This also allows for a wider, campus-based approach that influences students outside of the Residence Life community.

Develop targeted approaches for violence prevention education for peers, friends, and family members of students. As the findings and literature suggest, peers, friends, and family of college students all have significant influence over decisions made. These decisions can affect the campus community in both positive and negative ways. A proactive approach to this would be to begin placing an emphasis on sharing specific information with these targeted groups. Such information could be related to identifying warning signs and behaviors, resources and offices on campus to refer students to. An important aspect to any kind of information or approach to these audiences would be to combat any misconceptions of “getting someone in trouble” or those listed above as barriers to reporting. With regards to parents, an institution might consider putting up a “frequently asked questions” website marketed and geared towards parents seeking ways to assist their child from a distance.

It is important to note that the influence cannot be taken away from these groups. They have been identified as influential, so how can we find better ways to work with them and through them to help students on college campuses? If we truly wish to affect the normative beliefs and perceived norms on a college campus we have to target those individual factors influencing them. The individual, social, and informational factors are represented in part by peers, friends, and family members. Perhaps, more should be stressed when communicating to these audiences or more purposeful communication targeted to them. Perkins (2003) suggests more education is needed from a social norms perspective, linking what peers actually believe and what they think their peers believe

and behave, through the lens of peer and bystander education. If peers, friends, or family take interest in learning more about how to better help one another or their child when it comes to the wide array of issues, there is a greater chance of a student getting the help that he or she needs in a time of concern or crisis. Institutions of Higher Education, more than likely already have structures and resources in place to target the influential groups, it's just a matter of thinking through the strategies to connect with them on these issues. Coupled with the premise and proposition that students help peers in times of trouble and distress, this leaves power in the hands of students and family members untrained in campus resources and violence prevention.

Recommendations for future research. The recommendations for future research are based in three main areas for future study.

- Continue to compare to other institutions in reaction to this particular campus tragedy, the recovery process of others facing tragedies, and institutional changes made as a result.
- Explore the implications of the reporting processes for threatening behaviors and threat assessment on college campuses.
- Examine the assessment and sustainability of the community building approach.
- Conduct similar research through in-depth interviews with students and selected RAs with experience facing threatening behavioral issues.

Continue to compare to other institutions in reaction to this particular campus tragedy, the recovery process of other campuses facing tragedies, and institutional changes made as a result. As a limitation of a single case study, it lacks the ability to

draw comparisons against other cases. For instance, how did other campuses react to this particular campus tragedy? Questions concerning changes in policies, reporting procedures, communication strategies, and other safety related initiatives and their implementation would provide insight into how other institutions reacted in the time following this campus tragedy.

Additional research drawing upon other IHE facing similar tragedies could provide insight to the recovery process, institutional reactions and changes as a result of tragedy, among many others. With regard to violence prevention policies, procedures, communication, and education, how do other campuses react and in what ways? With the participants interviewed, only graduate hall directors had outside experience with other Residence Life programs after the campus tragedy that struck this campus and institution. Comparative case studies would provide an insight to the reaction to these types of events and if the culture of reporting, campus policies, and other related procedures differ from those who have experienced tragedy and those campuses, which have not.

Explore the implications for the reporting processes for threatening behaviors and threat assessment on college campuses. Another suggestion for research would be in the transparency of the reporting process for threatening behavior. Are institutions making the process more transparent for all community members including, students, faculty, parents, etc.? What harm or benefits come from making the entire reporting process, including threat assessment, more transparent to the general student? Would sharing this information harm the system or cause undue alarm in students? These are all

questions directed at new processes yet to be fully understood and evaluated at many IHE.

Because threat assessment teams have been implemented across many states, several opportunities for assessment and evaluation lie in these new procedures and policies. Does this change in the handling of concerns and procedures affect the reports campuses are seeing? Are threat assessment teams able to quantify or quality their impact on campuses? Further research can help clarify and validate the threat assessment approach and its value to the safety of campuses across the nation.

Examine the assessment and sustainability of the community building approach.

The participants in this study have identified a focus on community, building relationships, and taking responsibility of actions and oneself. By doing so, the hope is to get students to take accountability for what happens around them on campus and within the community. According to their model and approach, this all begins on the individual floor level and with individual RAs leading the charge. How then, can this initiative be taken campus-wide? How does this begin to affect students not living and residing on campus? Do other entities on campus have buy-in to this initiative? There are implications for wider, campus-based approach, but has this been implemented effectively before or are there suggestions for doing so?

Because this is a relatively new approach for this particular campus, the assessment and answers to some of the questions above come in time. This brings a multitude of research opportunities as it pertains to the evaluation of this initiative. Defining and measuring community on a large campus provides a complex and difficult

task. Based upon the objectives already set forth, there may be an assessment plan in place. It will be up to and determined by the Residence Life staff and professionals on how to best assess the initiatives and to be able to measure if it is working in the current form. There are opportunities to follow communities or subsets of students in a longitudinal fashion in how they build, interact with, and maintain their community over the years they are at this institution.

Conduct similar research through in-depth interviews with students and selected RAs with experience facing threatening behavioral issues. Based in the purpose and research questions guiding this study, similar, more in-depth interviews should be conducted with students living in the residence halls. By only interviewing the RAs and those affiliated within the residence life structure, the student perspective was missing from this study. Therefore, by having students as participants completes the full circle of those affected by threatening behaviors on campus and deepens the perspective shared on this topic.

Additionally, RAs could be purposefully selected for participation in a study which further investigates the perspectives of those who have faced situations or dealt with issues of threatening behaviors. The purposeful selection of participants in this study with a range of experience was insightful for this study; however, those with actual experience facing situations of threatening behaviors were able to provide a deeper understanding and grasp the complexity of handling these issues.

Summary

The complexities of threatening behavior and violence on college campuses continue to provide challenges for IHE. With recent tragic events coupled with new legislation for handling reports of these behaviors, many questions remain on the best approaches, policies, and procedures to utilize when it comes to keeping our campuses safe. Even though solutions presented cannot completely prevent crime and violence, steps can be taken to improve those violence prevention efforts or create new approaches.

The purpose of this case study was to examine resident advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and choosing to report threatening behaviors. Thirteen participants from Residence Life at a major Land Grant University served as the case study group. Seven research questions guided this study, based in propositions, and supported by literature. A qualitative approach guided the inquiry of the case study and was represented through observations, document analysis, and participant interviews. The interviews were transcribed and documents were coded and analyzed.

The analysis of the seven research questions guiding the study provided support and the foundation for the study's findings. Four themes emerged from the data beginning with the first theme, violence prevention on campus is navigated and provided to students through education and resources. Supported by evidence from all three sources of data, the sub-theme, RAs act as both a catalyst and gatekeeper to the resources for their communities, based upon their training, exemplified the thorough process RAs go through in order to better understand violence prevention and the related resources for students. As a result, another sub-theme surfaced, RAs see need for and value for more sharing of violence prevention information and engagement with the student population.

Throughout the interviews RAs and graduate hall directors stated the importance of students being able to have access to more information and training on how to identify warning signs, be aware of bullying issues, and others that are affecting the campus.

The second theme, a wide range of issues face today's college student, was supported by examples and issues from the participant interviews as well as observations from RA training based in the research questions pertaining to the perceptions of the role of the RA and the amount of influence peers have over other students. The sub-themes supporting this included, RAs navigate many roles to assist students. Supported by interviews and observations of training, it is clear that the role of the RA is complex and has many facets ranging from a resource, administrative tasks, and a first responder in a crisis situation. The remaining sub-theme was, peers, friends, and family play an influential role in assisting students with issues. Many examples were provided through the interviews as students find other outlets, beyond that of the RA, to help them in times of need and trouble. The peers, friends, and family proved to be an influential source for students as they face issues on campus.

The third theme, fostering and building a sense of community is a priority for Residence Life, emerged as both RAs and Residence Life professional staff shared their vision and hope for the campus in interviews, supporting documents, and observations of RA training. Although not directly supported by the study's research questions, this emerging theme connects to the overall purpose of identification and reporting of threatening behaviors through the proactive approach taken on this campus by providing students accountability and responsibility for their actions and others through this notion of community. The supporting sub-theme was, RAs create and develop relationships

within their communities for student engagement with the campus community. This was provided through participants sharing their desire for students to get to know one another and build strong relationships resulting in a greater sense of accountability and responsibility for their campus and community.

The final theme, despite reporting systems in place and resources available, identifying and reporting concerns and issues remain a barrier to the general student, was demonstrated by RA sharing their experiences. It was evident through observation and interviews that RAs are trained in the protocol and IR system of identifying and reporting concerns and issues, as seen in the first sub-theme. To build further in the second sub-theme, RAs identified advantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others. Because of their training and their experiences, RAs see the benefits of having students come forward with their concerns regarding themselves or others. However, just as they identified the positives, they also shared and identified barriers and disadvantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others, as supported in the third sub-theme. Articulated in the interviews, RAs and Residence Life professional staff shared the barriers that still exist both physically and culturally on this campus when it comes to identifying and reporting threatening behavior.

Conclusions from this study were explained through the individual, information, and social background factors of The Reasoned Action Approach. One conclusion brought forth an identified need for a continued concentration on civility and community building is represented through social background factors. Secondly, it was determined that this institution provides ample resources and for identifying and reporting threatening behaviors as supported by information background factors of campus

resources and offices. Peers, friends, and family influence the individual and social background factors of students on campus through their relationships with others. Social and information background factors also explain the disconnect between Resident Advisors' and administration's perception of identifying and reporting threatening behaviors due to a concern of confidentiality and perspectives held by the student population. Additionally, it was determined that the Resident Advisors influence individual, social, and information background factors through their relationships, interactions, and resources they share with their residents. The campus tragedy affects how individual, social, and information background factors are navigated as participants explain the impact tragedy had on their understanding, awareness, and continued involvement in the identification and reporting of threatening behaviors. It was also suggested to provide more education to the student population as explained through social norms, peer education, and bystander approaches encompassing the individual, social, and background factors. Finally, there are individual, social, and information background factors that influence barriers to reporting threatening behaviors as identified by all participants.

In support of the study's findings and conclusions, recommendations for practice and further research included developing a course for first-year students with a purposeful and integrated curriculum designed to address the range of issues facing college students. Next, providing opportunities for more student input on delivery for violence prevention education proposes more involvement from the student population. Students and administration also need to work toward a common understanding of violence prevention efforts through focused communication and engagement. A need

also exists to create and utilize consistent messaging regarding reporting for all campus offices. Last, targeted approaches for violence prevention education should be formulated for peers, friends, and family members of students.

Future research and studies were suggested in order to continue to compare to other institutions in reaction to this particular campus tragedy, the recovery process of others facing tragedies, and institutional changes made as a result. More research could also explore the implications of the reporting processes for threatening behaviors and threat assessment on college campuses. It is also proposed to examining the assessment and sustainability of the community building approach in efforts to continually support the efforts in this area. In close, similar research should be conducted through in-depth interviews with students and selected RAs with experience facing threatening behavioral issues.

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Appendices

Appendix A – IRB Approval

Form



VirginiaTech

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
e-mail irb@vt.edu
Website: www.irb.vt.edu

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 10, 2010

TO: Rick Rudd, Jill Casten

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires June 13, 2011)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Observations of RA Training

IRB NUMBER: 10-652

Effective August 10, 2010, the Virginia Tech IRB Administrator, Carmen T. Green, approved the new protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved as: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.101(b) category(ies) 2**

Protocol Approval Date: **8/10/2010**

Protocol Expiration Date: **NA**

Continuing Review Due Date*: **NA**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

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VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 27, 2010

TO: Rick Rudd, Jill Casten, Donna Moore

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires June 13, 2011)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Resident Advisors' Attitudes and Beliefs About the Process of Identifying and Reporting Threats and Behaviors

IRB NUMBER: 10-905

Effective October 27, 2010, the Virginia Tech IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore, approved the new protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved as: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6, 7**

Protocol Approval Date: **10/27/2010**

Protocol Expiration Date: **10/26/2011**

Continuing Review Due Date*: **10/12/2011**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

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Appendix B – Letter to Participants-Resident Advisors

Dear (insert name),

You have been identified as a resource for your work with Residence Life at Virginia Tech. Because of your work as a RA and your role as a student, I believe you can provide essential information regarding your experiences and work with students at Virginia Tech. Your insight and relationships with students offer a perspective that is unique to many issues and topics related to student development.

While working as a graduate assistant in the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention, I was able to engage in prevention-related discussions while serving on the Campus Workplace and Violence Prevention Committee and the Sexual Violence Prevention Committee. I found an opportunity, through my research, to help connect student experiences and beliefs with administrative goals for a safe campus.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to take part in a study of RAs' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and reporting threatening and related behaviors. By participating in this study your commitment would consist of an interview and a focus group. As a participant you will be asked to:

- Participate in a one-on-one interview where you will be asked questions about your experience, attitude, and beliefs with identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors – approximately 1 hour
- Participate in a focus group with other RAs discussing study findings – approximately 1 hour

If you are interested in setting up a time to interview or would like more information about this study, please contact me at the email address or phone number below. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Jill Casten, PhD Candidate in Agricultural and Extension Education
jcasten@vt.edu
540-557-7874

Appendix C – Letter to Participants-Graduate Hall

Directors

Dear (insert name),

You have been identified as a resource for your work with Residence Life at Virginia Tech. Because of your experience with Residence Life and knowledge of the training process for Resident Advisors, I believe you can provide essential information regarding student development. Your insight and relationships with students offer a perspective that is unique to many issues and topics related to students.

While working as a graduate assistant in the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention, I was able to engage in prevention-related discussions while serving on the Campus Workplace and Violence Prevention Committee and the Sexual Violence Prevention Committee. I found an opportunity, through my research, to help connect student experiences and beliefs with administrative goals for a safe campus.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to take part in a study of RAs' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and reporting threatening and related behaviors. By participating in this study your commitment would consist of an interview and a focus group. As a participant you will be asked to:

- Participate in a one-on-one interview where you will be asked questions about your experience, attitude, and beliefs with identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors – approximately 1 hour
- Participate in a focus group with others involved in Residence Life discussing study findings – approximately 1 hour

If you are interested in setting up a time to interview or would like more information about this study, please contact me at the email address or phone number below. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Jill Casten, PhD Candidate in Agricultural and Extension Education
jcasten@vt.edu
540-557-7874

Appendix D – Letter to Participants-Residence Life Professional Staff

Dear (insert name),

You have been identified as a resource for your work with Residence Life at Virginia Tech. Because of your work and knowledge of RAs and their training process, I believe you can provide essential information regarding your experiences and work with students at Virginia Tech. Your insight and relationships with students offer a perspective that is unique to many issues and topics related to student development.

While working as a graduate assistant in the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention, I was able to engage in prevention-related discussions while serving on the Campus Workplace and Violence Prevention Committee and the Sexual Violence Prevention Committee. I found an opportunity, through my research, to help connect student experiences and beliefs with administrative goals for a safe campus.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to take part in a study of RAs' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and reporting threatening and related behaviors. By participating in this study your commitment would consist of an interview and a focus group. As a participant you will be asked to:

- Participate in a one-on-one interview where you will be asked questions about your experience, attitude, and beliefs with identification and reporting of threatening and related behaviors – approximately 1 hour
- Participate in a focus group with other RAs discussing study findings – approximately 1 hour

If you are interested in setting up a time to interview or would like more information about this study, please contact me at the email address or phone number below. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Jill Casten, PhD Candidate, Agricultural and Extension Education
jcasten@vt.edu
540-557-7874

Appendix E – Research Consent Form

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Resident Advisors' Attitudes and Beliefs About the Process of Identifying and Reporting Threats and Behaviors

Investigator(s): Ms. Jill Casten, Graduate Student, Virginia Tech
Dr. Rick Rudd, Professor, Virginia Tech
Dr. Donna Moore, Assistant Professor, Virginia Tech

I. Purpose of this research

The purpose of this research is to examine resident advisors' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying threats and choosing to report such behaviors. RAs and Residence Life staff serving at Virginia Tech will be the population for this case study.

Students currently serving as resident advisors, Residence Life staff serving in supervisory roles, and Residence Life professional staff will be eligible participants for this study. RAs and Residence Life staff who assent to participate will be interviewed based upon qualifying criteria with a comprehensive representation of all types and variables of different residence halls at Virginia Tech. RA and Residence Life supervisory staff participants will be randomly selected by the researcher based upon criteria of gender, type of residence hall, and experience as a RA.

II. Procedures

The researcher will spend 6 to 8 weeks, depending on interview schedules, working with this case study group. Participant interviews will begin as consent is given and times are arranged with the researcher and individual participants. The interviews will take place at a time and location arranged by the participant to protect the participant's confidentiality and limit disruptions. Interviews will be audio recorded; however, at no time will the recordings be released to anyone other than the researchers involved with the project.

Upon completion of individual interviews and the data collection, participants will be asked to participate in a focus group to validate and discuss the results of the study. The researcher will determine the participation in the focus group at a time and location convenient to the participants.

III. Risks

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board. This study poses no more than minimal risk to those participating in this study.

IV. Benefits

While there are no personal benefits associated with participating in this study, results from this study may be used to inform the design of violence prevention programs on college campuses. There has not been any promise or guarantee of benefits to participants from this study. However, benefits of this study will span to people in higher education and residence life who are responsible for making decisions on the education, awareness, and policies surrounding issues of violence and threatening behaviors on college campuses. By participating in this study,

you will have the opportunity to share your opinion, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of these issues, which is valuable information for those who are responsible for the protection and safety of college campuses.

V. Extent of anonymity and confidentiality

Protecting your identity is a top priority of this study. As a participant in this research project, your information will be kept strictly confidential. Participants will be identified in the interviews by pseudonyms, and audio recordings will be labeled with a numerical code system. At no time will information be released that allows an individual to be identified. At no time will the researchers release the results of the study to anyone other than the individuals working on the project without your written consent.

Interview transcripts and audio recordings will only be accessed by members of the research team, which includes Ms. Jill Casten, Dr. Rick Rudd, and Dr. Donna Moore. Ms. Casten will be the person responsible for transcribing and coding the interviews. Audio recordings will be stored in a locked filing cabinet by the research team. Data and recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the researcher's dissertation.

It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in this research.

VI. Compensation

There is no compensation affiliated with this study.

VII. Freedom to withdraw

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You are free to not answer any questions without penalty.

VIII. Participant's responsibilities

This study involves participating in interviews that focus on the topics outlined above. Participation is entirely voluntary. The individual interviews and the focus group are expected to take approximately 60 minutes each. Responsibilities are to answer the questions during the interview and to the best of their ability at their comfort level.

IX. Participant's permission

I have read and understand the permission and conditions of this project. I have had all of my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ YES

_____ NO

Signature _____ Date _____

Should I have pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Ms. Jill Casten, Graduate Student, Co-Investigator	540.557.7874/ jcasten@vt.edu
Dr. Rick Rudd, Professor, Investigator	540.231.6836/ r Rudd@vt.edu
Dr. Donna Moore, Assistant Professor, Co-Investigator	540.231.5717/ mooredm@vt.edu
Dr. David M. Moore Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects Office of Research Compliance, 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497), Blacksburg, VA 24060	540.231.4991/ moored@vt.edu

Appendix F – Observation Protocol

OBSERVING RESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT TRAINING

Observation Guide

The purpose of these observations is to understand the context and participants in the study of residential assistants' attitudes and beliefs about the process of identifying and reporting threats and behaviors. The observation of RA training adds to the evidence collected for the study and gives the researcher additional insight and understanding of both the context and roles of the RAs as participants in this study.

During training, the following constructs will be used to guide the researcher's observations.

Research Question 1:

How can IHE enhance the role of students in early intervention and reporting to threat assessment through the orientation and preparation process for RAs?

- a. What organizations administer and deliver training to the RAs?
How long is each organization given to share their information?
- b. Which organizational representative is involved in the direct delivery of the training?
- c. What is the context given for the RAs as their role in the intervention and reporting process?
- d. Is the overall process of threat assessment shared/mentioned/referenced as a part of the training?
- e. What objectives are shared at the beginning?
- f. How is the training delivered; through what teaching techniques and delivery methods?
- g. What is the nature of the learning environment?
- h. How long is the training and what time is allotted to each topic?
What are the participants doing during at each point?
- i. How are questions handled?
- j. Is discussion encouraged?
- k. Are examples and scenarios given to provide context for the information being shared?

Research Question 2:

What are the processes students use to identify and report or not report potential threatening behaviors?

- a. What topics and issues are covered as part of the violence prevention and identification of threatening behaviors?
- b. What resources are utilized and/or identified in the training as pertinent to the role of RAs in the reporting process?
- c. Is there a protocol shared/given to RAs as part of their training?
- d. Is there a chain-of-command identified as part of the process for identification and reporting?
- e. Are questions being asked for clarification?
- f. Are examples of situations for reporting being shared?

Appendix G – List of Documents for Analysis

List of Documents for Document Analysis

1. Student handbook
2. Student conduct_FAQ_making a referral
3. Women's center web_counseling advocacy services_information resources
4. Questions for RAs_dailies
5. Questions for RAs_prequiz
6. Questions for RAs
7. Questions HDGA_dalies
8. Questions for HDGA_prequiz
9. Questions for HDGA
10. CD script for in building time
11. FTLW_brief overview
12. FTLW_schedule
13. FTLW_learning outcomes_RAs
14. FTLW_schedule for RAs
15. FTLW_transition report
16. FTLW_GHD opening to do list
17. HD_script for RA in building time
18. HDGA_expectations
19. Diversity_new RA
20. Diversity_returning RA
21. Judicial placeholder outline for RA
22. RA opening outline
23. BCD_Confrontation and crisis management facilitators guide
24. BDC_Confrontation and crisis interventions outline
25. VTPD_VT Rescue
26. Basic rights of a roommate
27. Duty, conflict, and basic paperwork
28. Mediation
29. Women's Center_sexual assault flow chart
30. Women's Center_sexual assault role play
31. Women's Center
32. Meeting residents needs

Appendix H – Interview Protocol-Resident Advisors

RESIDENT ADVISORS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING THREATENING BEHAVIOR

Interview Questions

To begin, I am going to ask you a few questions about your background and role and experiences as a residential assistant.

Tell me about how you came to be a RA.

Probe: Why have you chosen to return as a RA this year? (if applicable)

What do you see your role is as an RA? (Q3)

As I understand, there are many roles you are asked to fill as a RA. I would like to ask you questions specifically related to the identification and reporting of behaviors that make you worry, concerned, or fearful.

What types of problems do students rely on RAs to assist them with? (Q3/Q7)

Probe: How much time do you spend talking with students about their problems?

In your experience, do students come forward with their major issues/concerns? (Q5/Q6)

Probes: If no, why do they not?

Who comes forward?

Is it difficult to address some of these issues?

Are there some that are harder to talk about than other?

Whose role is it to raise these issues?

.....
I'm also interested in the protocols and official procedures you would go through to report behaviors that cause you to be worried, concerned, or fearful.

What role do you play in sharing information with students when it comes to identification and reporting of behaviors that would worry, concern, or cause fear in others? (Q3/Q7)

Probe: How were you prepared for this role? (Q2)

What resources do you utilize when helping students with behaviors that are concerning, worrisome, or fearful to you (or others)? (Q2)

Probe: Where do you get your information?

Describe the steps you would take in order to address/report a student with behavior that causes you to worry, be concerned, or makes you (or others) fearful. (Q3/Q4)

Probes: Is this the formal protocol?

Is there an informal protocol that exists for students to report? (Q5/Q6)

Tell me about your experiences with helping students experiencing trouble or difficulties with stress, others, etc. - Describe a situation in which you identified a student or were asked by others to help a student exhibiting behaviors that caused worry, concern, or fear. (Q7)

What experience do you have with a problem being resolved because of early intervention? (Q7)

.....

RESIDENT ADVISORS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING THREATENING BEHAVIOR

Drawing upon your personal experience as a current student and as a RA, I am interested in your general belief of others as it pertains to this discussion. (Q5/Q6)

When students are unsure of how to handle a situation stemming from worry, concern, or fear of others' behavior,

- Probes: What do they do?
- How do they react?
- Who do they turn to for help?
- Do they tell other peers?
- Do they come to you as the RA?

What would you say is typical or normal for understanding and identifying behaviors in that make others worry, concerned, or fearful?

How do students determine whether they report a situation/concern with threats of violence to themselves or others (or not)?

What reasons would prevent a student from coming forward with their concern of harmful or violence (to themselves or others) about another student or peer?

What people or groups do you think students would feel comfortable talking to about violent behaviors?

What percentage of students do you think report?

What do you see as the advantages of students reporting? (Q7)

What do you see as the disadvantages of students reporting? (Q7)

.....
The next questions address the role of peers as helpers.

How do students help their peers when they are experiencing worry, concern, and other stressful situations? (Q5/Q6/Q7)

Probe: With what types of problems?

Do you think students understand how to best help their peers? (Q6)

How much influence do peers have over decisions to seek advice/help in times of trouble? (Q7)

.....
Students' role in the prevention of violence

Do students have a role in these violence prevention efforts? (Q6)

Probes: If yes, are they effective?

If no, why do you think they are not involved?

Should RAs play a role in these prevention efforts? (Q3)

RESIDENT ADVISORS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING THREATENING BEHAVIOR

Do students comprehend their role in the prevention of violence on campus? (Q6)
Understand their "power" to identify warning signs of violence?

What role should students play in the programming and policies concerning issues of threatening behavior and violence on campus? (Q7)

What can be done to enhance the role of students in early intervention of violence on campus? (Q1)

.....
Making programs relevant and available to students

What methods best support and educate students on understanding and their role in prevention of campus violence through identifying threatening behaviors? (Q6)

Probes: How do you think this is best carried out?

What suggestions would you make if you could improve the education and awareness about these issues in order to engage more students?

What topics regarding the reporting of violence and threatening behaviors are most important and relevant to college students and you? (Q6)

Are there violence prevention programs that you are aware of/familiar with? (Q6)

Probes: If so, what programs best address these sensitive issues?

If not, what would you like to see?

What messages do students need to be able to understand and believe when it comes to reporting threatening and violent behaviors on campus? (Q1)

Probes: Are there changes Virginia Tech could make in order for more students to report?

.....
Threat Assessment

Are you aware of the official threat assessment process for identifying threatening behaviors? (Q6)

If yes. . .

What steps need to be taken to educate students about the threat assessment process? (Q1)

Is it necessary for students to be educated about the threat assessment process? If so or if not, why? (Q1)

Appendix I – Interview Protocol-Graduate Hall Directors

RESIDENT ADVISORS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING THREATENING BEHAVIOR

Interview Questions

To begin, I am going to ask you a few questions about your background and role and experiences as a residential assistant.

Tell me about how you came to be involved with Residence Life.

How would you describe the RA's role? (Q3)

As I understand, there are many roles RAs are asked to fill. I would like to ask you questions specifically related to the identification and reporting of behaviors that make you worry, concerned, or fearful.

What types of problems do students rely on RAs to assist them with? (Q3/Q7)

Probe: How much time do you spend talking with students about their problems?

In your experience, do students come forward with their major issues/concerns? (Q5/Q6)

Probes: If no, why do they not?

Who comes forward?

Is it difficult to address some of these issues?

Are there some that are harder to talk about than other?

Whose role is it to raise these issues?

.....
I'm also interested in the protocols and official procedures you would go through to report behaviors that cause you to be worried, concerned, or fearful.

What role do you play in sharing information with the RAs and students when it comes to identification and reporting of behaviors that would worry, concern, or cause fear in others? (Q3/Q7)

Probe: How were you prepared for this role? (Q2)

What resources do you utilize when helping RAs and students with behaviors that are concerning, worrisome, or fearful to you (or others)? (Q2)

Probe: Where do you get your information?

Describe the steps you would take in order to address/report a student with behavior that causes you to worry, be concerned, or makes you (or others) fearful. (Q3/Q4)

Probes: Is this the formal protocol?

Is there an informal protocol that exists for students to report? (Q5/Q6)

Tell me about your experiences with helping students experiencing trouble or difficulties with stress, others, etc. - Describe a situation in which you identified a student or were asked by others to help a student exhibiting behaviors that caused worry, concern, or fear. (Q7)

What experience do you have with a problem being resolved because of early intervention? (Q7)

.....

RESIDENT ADVISORS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING THREATENING BEHAVIOR

Drawing upon your personal experience as a current staff of Residence Life and working with RAs, I am interested in your general belief of others/students as it pertains to this discussion. (Q5/Q6)

When students are unsure of how to handle a situation stemming from worry, concern, or fear of others' behavior,

- Probes: What do they do?
- How do they react?
- Who do they turn to for help?
- Do they tell other peers?
- Do they come to you as the RA?

What would you say is typical or normal for understanding and identifying behaviors in that make others worry, concerned, or fearful?

How do students determine whether they report a situation/concern with threats of violence to themselves or others (or not)?

What reasons would prevent a student from coming forward with their concern of harmful or violence (to themselves or others) about another student or peer?

What people or groups do you think students would feel comfortable talking to about violent behaviors?

What percentage of students do you think report?

What do you see as the advantages of students reporting? (Q7)
What do you see as the disadvantages of students reporting? (Q7)

.....

The next questions address the role of peers as helpers.

How do students help their peers when they are experiencing worry, concern, and other stressful situations? (Q5/Q6/Q7)

- Probe: With what types of problems?

Do you think students understand how to best help their peers? (Q6)

How much influence do peers have over decisions to seek advice/help in times of trouble? (Q7)

.....
Students' role in the prevention of violence

Do students have a role in these violence prevention efforts? (Q6)

- Probes: If yes, are they effective?
- If no, why do you think they are not involved?
- Should RAs play a role in these prevention efforts? (Q3)

RESIDENT ADVISORS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING THREATENING BEHAVIOR

Do students comprehend their role in the prevention of violence on campus? (Q6)
Understand their "power" to identify warning signs of violence?

What role should students play in the programming and policies concerning issues of threatening behavior and violence on campus? (Q7)

What can be done to enhance the role of students in early intervention of violence on campus? (Q1)

.....
Making programs relevant and available to students

What methods best support and educate students on understanding and their role in prevention of campus violence through identifying threatening behaviors? (Q6)

Probes: How do you think this is best carried out?

What suggestions would you make if you could improve the education and awareness about these issues in order to engage more students?

What topics regarding the reporting of violence and threatening behaviors are most important and relevant to college students and you? (Q6)

Are there violence prevention programs that you are aware of/familiar with? (Q6)

Probes: If so, what programs best address these sensitive issues?

If not, what would you like to see?

What messages do students need to be able to understand and believe when it comes to reporting threatening and violent behaviors on campus? (Q1)

Probes: Are there changes Virginia Tech could make in order for more students to report?

.....
Threat Assessment

Are you aware of the official threat assessment process for identifying threatening behaviors? (Q6)

If yes. . .

What steps need to be taken to educate students about the threat assessment process? (Q1)

Is it necessary for students to be educated about the threat assessment process? If so or if not, why? (Q1)

Appendix J – Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Protocol

This focus group is designed to be informal and give the participants the opportunity to review and give feedback for each theme from the findings. Participants are given a list of the themes and the researcher presented supporting quotes and findings from each, based upon transcripts and printouts from the software analysis. Both discussion of support and suggested changes are encouraged.

1. Violence prevention on campus is navigated and provided to students through education and resources
 - a. RAs act as both a catalyst and gatekeeper to the resources for their communities, based upon their training
 - b. RAs see the need for and value for more sharing of violence prevention information and engagement with the general student
2. A wide range of issues face today's college student
 - a. RAs navigate many roles to assist students
 - b. Peers, friends, and family play an influential role in assisting students with issues
3. Fostering and building a sense of community is a priority for Residence Life
 - a. RAs create and develop relationships within their communities for student engagement with the campus community
4. Despite reporting systems in place and resources available, identifying and reporting concerns and issues remain a barrier to the general student
 - a. RAs are trained in the protocol and IR system of identifying and reporting concerns and issues
 - b. RAs identify advantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others
 - c. RAs identify barriers and disadvantages of students self-reporting or reporting for others

Appendix K – List of Codes from

Analysis

List of codes from ATLAS.ti

Community

Codes (12): [april 16] [care] [communicating to residents] [community] [connected to the institution] [feels comfortable] [living community] [new approach] [peers as helpers] [personally affected] [relationship] [support]

Quotation(s): 138

Educate-general student

Codes (28): [administration] [alcohol] [assault] [behind closed doors] [bullying] [bystander] [changes to be made] [Cook Counseling] [educate violence prevention] [engage students in discussion] [enhance the role of students in prevention of violence] [identifying] [lack skills and knowledge] [messages students need to understand] [personal responsibility] [prevention of violence on campus] [programming] [resource] [responsibility] [Student Conduct] [student role in violence prevention] [suicide] [threat assessment] [topics] [violence prevention programs] [VTPD] [warning signs] [Women's Center]

Quotation(s): 396

Educate-RA resource

Codes (17): [alcohol] [assault] [beginning of the semester] [behind closed doors] [bullying] [bystander] [communicating to residents] [Cook Counseling] [educate violence prevention] [identifying] [resource] [share information] [threat assessment] [time estimate talking with students] [VTPD] [warning signs] [Women's Center]

Quotation(s): 287

Range of issues-peers friends family

Codes (19): [care] [comfortable talking to] [friends] [help] [informal networks] [issues] [lack skills and knowledge] [LGBT] [living community] [normal] [not dealing with everything on your own] [parents or family] [peer influence] [peers as helpers] [relationship] [roommate conflicts] [stress] [suicide] [typical]

Quotation(s): 338

Range of issues-role of RA

Codes (22): [alcohol] [assault] [behavior] [bullying] [care] [comfortable talking to] [communicating to residents] [confrontation] [feels comfortable] [handle it the best way possibl..] [help] [issues] [LGBT] [mediation] [normal] [role as grad hall director] [role of a RA] [roommate conflicts] [stress] [suicide] [time estimate talking with students] [topics]

Quotation(s): 375

Reporting-advantages

Codes (15): [advantages of reporting] [comfortable talking to] [coming forward with issues and concerns] [confidential] [determine to report] [feels comfortable] [help] [identifying] [intervention] [not dealing with everything on your own] [personal responsibility] [report] [share information] [situational] [support]

Quotation(s): 216

Reporting-disadvantages

Codes (10): [comfortable talking to] [coming forward with issues and concerns] [confidential] [determine to report] [disadvantage of reporting] [identifying] [personally affected] [prevent from coming forward] [report] [situational]

Quotation(s): 216

Reporting-RA training protocol

Codes (19): [behind closed doors] [coming forward with issues and concerns] [communicating to residents] [confidential] [Cook Counseling] [determine to report] [document] [identifying] [incident reports] [informal protocol] [mandate] [protocol] [RA training] [report] [role of a RA] [safety] [situational] [staff initiated contact] [supervisor]

Quotation(s): 364

Appendix L – Resident Advisor Training Schedule

	10 Tuesday	11 Wednesday	12 Thursday	13 Friday	14 Saturday	15 Sunday	16 Monday	17 Tuesday
9am		Opening	NRA - Cook/ RRA - Breakout	NRA - VT Rescue/ RRA - Breakout	RLC Time: Admin - Duty/ Paperwork /Opening	Area and Online Work Time	RLC Time (Comm Devo Wrapup)	Area Office Time
10am		Comm Devo Overview	RLC Time: Policy/Conflict Resolution	Student Conduct	BCD: Facilities Tour			Pic at Lane
11am		Common Book						
12pm		RLC Comm Devo Time	NRA - WC / RRA - Breakout	NRA - S.C. / RRA - Breakout	Picnic Lunch		Lunch	
1pm	SRA Training	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Community Carousel I		Student Programs Leadership	
2pm					Travel		Dr. Spencer	
3pm		RLC Time: BCD/Comm Devo Continued	BCD: Peer Helping	BCD: Conflict/ Confrontation	Community Carousel II		Provost	
4pm					Area Time / Video Wrapup		Dr. McClinton	
5pm				Marketing and Graphics Pickup	Travel		Travel	Dinner Pickup
6pm		Welcome/Area Time/RA Training Starts	Dinner	Dinner	McComas		Dinner	Dinner
7pm								
8pm		In Building Time or Imaginarium	In Building Time or Imaginarium		In Building Time or Imaginarium	In Building Time or Imaginarium	Movie at the Lyric	
9pm								