

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management

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The Fundamentals



Two Types of Violence



Targeted Violence

- ◇ “identifiable (or potentially identifiable) perpetrator poses (or may pose) a threat of violence to a particular individual or group” (Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995, p. 1).
 - ◇ Stalking
 - ◇ Workplace violence
 - ◇ School shootings
 - ◇ Attacks on public figures
 - ◇ Terrorism

Risk Factors for Violence

Static vs. dynamic

History of violence

History of stalking,
harassing, threatening, or
menacing behavior

History of non-
compliance with limits
and boundaries (violation
of protective orders,
probation, disregard for
rules)

Childhood exposure to
violence

Substance abuse issues
(more so for affective
violence)

Personality issues (e.g.,
paranoia, narcissism,
psychopathic traits)

Risk Factors for Violence

Severe mental illness?

- (command hallucinations, delusional beliefs of persecution or control, hostility, grandiosity)

History of suicidality
(threats and attempts)

Access to weapons
(including fascination
or experimentation
with IEDs)

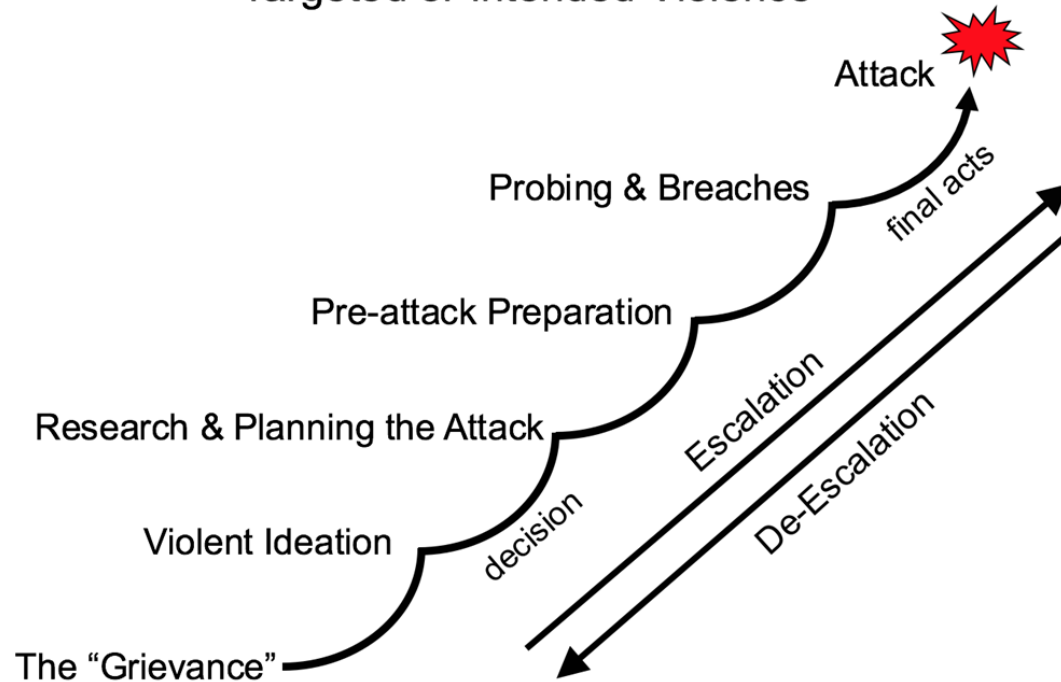
Negative family
dynamics and support
system

Isolation

Instability (financial,
residential,
professional, familial)

Others are concerned

Pathway to Workplace and Campus
Targeted or Intended Violence



The Pathway to Violence

(Calhoun and Weston, 2003)

Warning Behaviors

- ◇ Changes in patterns of behavior that may be evidence of increasing or accelerating risk.
- ◇ Have been studied across samples including:
 - ◇ Public figure targets
 - ◇ Psychiatric patients
 - ◇ Adolescent mass murderers/school shooters
 - ◇ Adult mass murderers
 - ◇ Spousal homicide perpetrators
 - ◇ Workplace violence attackers

Behavioral Sciences and the Law
Behav. Sci. Law 30: 256–279 (2012)
Published online 24 August 2011 in Wiley Online Library
(wileyonlinelibrary.com) DOI: 10.1002/bsl.999

The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment: An Exploration and Suggested Typology

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The concept of warning behaviors offers an additional perspective in threat assessment. Warning behaviors are acts which constitute evidence of increasing or accelerating risk. They are acute, dynamic, and particularly toxic changes in patterns of behavior which may aid in structuring a professional's judgment that an individual of concern now poses a threat – whether the actual target has been identified or not. They require an operational response. A typology of eight warning behaviors for assessing the threat of intended violence is proposed: pathway, fixation, identification, novel aggression, energy burst, leakage, directly communicated threat, and last resort warning behaviors. Previous research on risk factors associated with such warning behaviors is reviewed, and examples of each warning behavior from various intended violence cases are presented, including public figure assassination, adolescent and adult mass murder, corporate celebrity stalking, and both domestic and foreign acts of terrorism. Practical applications and future research into warning behaviors are suggested. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Discussions of threat assessment and targeted violence have their origins in the 19th century work of Laschi and Lombroso (Laschi & Lombroso, 1886; Lombroso & Laschi, 1892) in Italy and Régis (1890) in France. Since the contemporary research of Dietz and Martell (1989), Fein, Vossekuil and Holden (1995), Fein and Vossekuil (1998, 1999), and Calhoun (1998), threat assessment has advanced in a variety of areas, with studies in different domains of intended and targeted violence such as workplace violence, campus and university violence, school shootings, public figure assassination, adolescent and adult mass murder, terrorism, and the development of both threat assessment protocols and threat assessment organizations. As the nascent discipline of threat assessment matures, it is pertinent to revisit and refine terminology to standardize both practice and further research. One such concept is that of “warning behaviors” (James et al., 2007, 2008, 2011), variously termed by others as “signaling the attack” (Vossekuil, Reddy, Fein, Borum, & Modzeleski 2000), “tell-tale behaviors” or “high risk indicators” (Calhoun & Weston, 2003), “stalking-type

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The Typology

Pathway

Fixation

Identification

Novel
aggression

Energy burst

Leakage

Last resort

Direct
threats



Threat Assessment and Management

History and definitions

A man in a suit and sunglasses stands next to a dark SUV. In the background, a helicopter is visible, and a city skyline is seen under a cloudy sky. The entire scene is dimly lit, serving as a background for the text.

- ◆ Pioneered by the Secret Service (Borum et al., 1999)
- ◆ Meloy, 2014:
 - ◆ Threat assessment = “the process of gathering information to understand the threat of violence posed by a person” (p. 4)
 - ◆ Threat management = “the process of developing and executing plans to mitigate the threat of violence posed by a person” (p. 4).

Threat Assessment



Consideration of risk factors, warning behaviors, and protective factors



Watching for changes/escalations in behavior



Multidisciplinary and evidence-based

Threat Management

More art than
science

Ranges from no
action to
restrictive
interventions

Dynamic

Threat Assessment and Management Principles

(Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill,
& Savage, 2008)

- ◇ Targeted violence can often be prevented
- ◇ Violence is a dynamic process
- ◇ Targeted violence is a function of several factors
- ◇ Corroboration is critical
- ◇ Threat assessment is about behavior, not profiles
- ◇ Cooperating systems are critical resources
- ◇ Does the person POSE a threat?
- ◇ Keep victims in mind
- ◇ Early identification and intervention helps everyone
- ◇ Multiple reporting mechanisms enhance early identification
- ◇ Multi-faceted resources can provide effective interventions
- ◇ Safety is a primary focus

The Threat Assessment and Management Team (TAMT) at U of A



The Team

Director

Case Coordinator

UAPD

HR

Dean of Students

CAPS

Faculty representative

Phoenix campus staff

OGC and other departments as needed

TAMT Procedures



**Receive and review
report**



**Determine whether
it is something
TAMT can/should
manage**



**Communication
about the
assessment and
management plan**

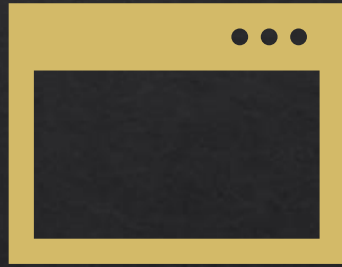


**Documentation for
purposes of case
management and
institutional
knowledge**

Examples of threat management strategies

- ◇ Watch and wait
- ◇ Information gathering
- ◇ Regular monitoring
- ◇ Safety planning
- ◇ Coordination with other entities (DOS, HR, OIE, LE)
- ◇ Limit setting with the POC
- ◇ Connecting the POC to resources/support
- ◇ Creative problem-solving on a case-by-case basis
- ◇ Restrictive interventions in collaboration with other entities (e.g., termination, expulsion, No Contact Orders, arrest, hospitalization)

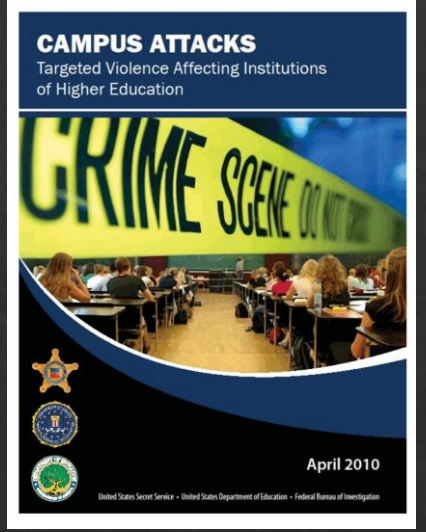
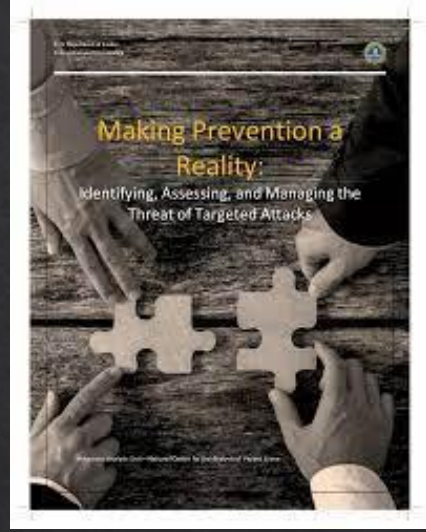
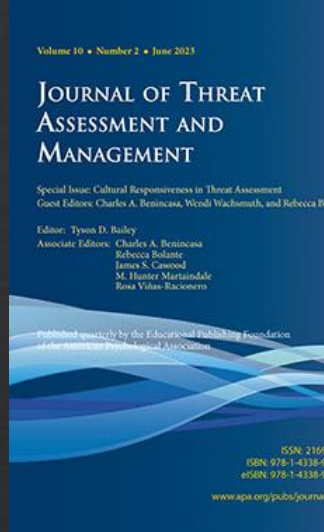
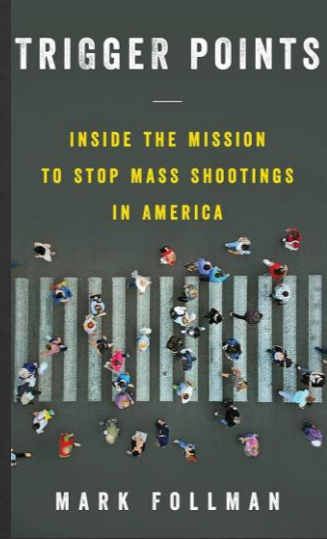
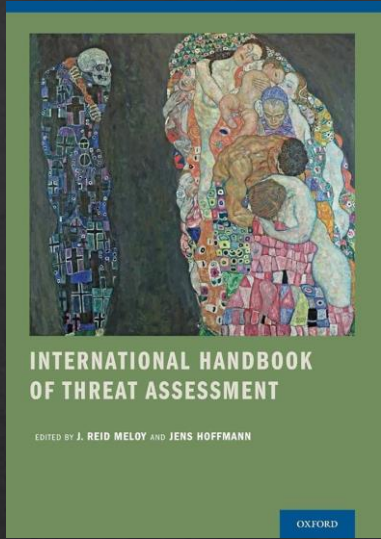
TAMT Resources



TAMT.Arizona.edu



Reporting form



Recommended Readings

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