NEWSLETTER

Spring 2018

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Dear members and future conference attendees. The Association of European Threat Assessment Professionals will host it's 11th European conference this year in Helsinki, the capitol of Finland. Preparations are all done and we are looking at perhaps a record crowd based on the number of people who have already registered as we are writing this newsletter. From the management perspective each year it has become easier and easier to organise these events, since our core team has not changed much and it seems like we have all found a role in regards to the preparations. What is especially heartwarming regarding Helsinki conference is the large contingency coming from Finland to our conference. Again, we have participants from five continents and some 20+ countries. Also, our Expert day speaker Dr. Paul Gill has clearly attracted a substantial crowd of people attending his lectures and we also have a very nice crowd attending the Core competencies day, which runs simultaneously with Dr. Gill's topic.

The program will provide a good overview of current and relevant topics. Based on the feedback from our previous conferences, we have tried hard to give voice to as many European speakers as possible and still give our participants a very global view of threat assessment and management through other speakers.

In the past, cooperation between different associations has mainly been through shorted meeting and dinners at conferences, but for the first time ever in the history of our association, after the conference we have presidents or board members of all other Threat Assessment Associations (aka TAPs) spending an extra day in Helsinki to see what are we targeting globally in regards to the development of threat assessment studies and work in various regions. This meeting will help all members of all TAPs in the future with tighter cooperation across continents.

Since this newsletter will be shared with our conference attendees as well, please do not hesitate to give us feedback during the conference days regarding any requests for future conference or if you need more information about AETAP membership benefits.

And finally, it is also time for me to pass the torch to our next president after four interesting and rewarding years running the association with our great board and associate board. I want to publicly thank the volunteers for the fantastic work they have been doing in building a stronger, better association.

Kind regards
Mr. Totti Karpela, President

MEDIA

Can the Media Influence our Risk Perception and Fear?

The night has fallen. The young boys of the tribe gather around the campfire and listen with open mouths to the stories the elders are telling. There are stories of horrifying feats during wars with other tribes. There are stories about stupid things that hunters have done. The boys see that the men of the tribe applaud the feats of the warriors and laugh at the stories of the silly hunters. It doesn't matter whether the stories are true or not. The reactions of the rest of the tribe teach the young boys, who are eager to become accepted as adults as soon as they can, what the values and norms of the tribe are. How the tribe sees the world.

Sociologists and psychologists tend to focus on behavior and direct experience, but our brains developed to learn what the world looks like and how to deal with it through communication. We learn from the experience of others. We don't learn that you have to stop for a red light through direct experience, we learn it when we are told that that is the rule of our tribe. In some communities, we will be told that the punishment for not obeying will be severe. There have been times and cities (Naples, Detroit) where the stories advised you <u>not</u> to stop for a red light. Either way – we learn from the stories.

Risk Assessment

If I ask you whether you are afraid somebody might shoot you *right now* – most readers are likely to say they are not afraid. That is because we tend to experience fear as the result of a risk assessment and the fact that you are reading this, probably means that you believe you are safe.

In daily life, most people make these risk-assessments subconsciously. They are the result of the weighing of three separate judgments. The first is a judgment of the risk involved. I may have an irrational fear of drowning, but if I am nowhere near water, there is no reason to feel afraid. If I am a soldier on foot-patrol in a well-known danger zone, however, my perception of the likelihood of being shot at is probably going to be seriously elevated. The second is an assessment of coping skills. If I am a tall, strong, adult man and a six-year-old kid threatens to hit me, I am unlikely to feel afraid. The likelihood of being attacked is high, but I know I will be able to deal with the "threat." Carrying a gun, a knife, or arming ourselves with a black belt, may lead to us feeling OK with exposing ourselves to higher risk because we believe (rightly or wrongly) that we are protected.

Finally, fear is the result of our judgment of the seriousness of the consequences of what might happen. If I don't know how to stop a kid from hitting me without risking to harm it, I may not mind being hit by the child, because I assume it will not hurt me.

Where we get our risk knowledge

Most people have little or no direct experience with high risk. Especially if we are talking about serious crime, terrorism, and similar events. When we have to make a risk assessment in daily life, we rarely have or take the time to wonder where we get our information. We have to decide whether we want to enter a dark alley. Or we hear a loud noise and wonder whether it signals a threat. Or we notice a person and "something" tells us he might be dangerous. Unless we have a lot of training and experience, most of us do not have a ready answer to those questions, and when we do decide upon a course of action, we are unlikely to pause and wonder where the information we base our decisions on came from. When we have to think quickly to decide what to do, we tend to rely on <u>heuristics</u>: fast little shortcuts our brain and memory use to figure things out. Our brain uses all the information it has access to, and quickly. This is where the stories around the campfire become important; because there are a number of ways in which they play a role.

We tend to treat information as real

Every healthy human being older than 11 recognizes fiction. When we watch television, we know George Clooney isn't rescuing a patient in the ER, we know he is an actor playing a role. But we tend to treat the rest of the information as telling us something about reality. And so some people think you can open a door with a credit card, or "know" you can perform an emergency tracheotomy with a ballpoint pen. Drill sergeants have to tell new recruits not to pull the pin out of a hand grenade with their teeth – as they so often see in the movies.

We remember information, but not the source

Information and information about the source of the information are two separate things. We often don't remember the latter. And so we will have "knowledge" about healthy food or the cause of cancer without remembering whether we got it from a serious news show or a shady website, whether our doctor told us, or that strange uncle with the scary medical stories. This happens because a lot of information is not important to us at the time of learning. We weren't worried about cancer when the uncle told us a story five years ago, but we are worried now that we found a strange lump on our head. We never really noticed when bad guys in movies had Russian accents, but now that a stranger has asked us something, the way he speaks makes alarm bells go off in our heads.

We are bad at statistical reasoning

You study consumer reports carefully, trying to make an objective decision about buying a new car. These reports are based on evaluations of hundreds of cars by thousands of people. But when you tell your neighbor what your choice is going to be, he says you are crazy: he has a friend who says that car is terrible! After all your research, that is just one extra observation, but that is not how our brain works. You will probably reevaluate your choice. We do this all the time. Statistics in a newspaper about hunger in the world don't affect us the same way as one weepy story about a dying baby in the tabloids. We respond more strongly to vivid images than to logic and numbers.

It is hard to escape this phenomenon. The most extreme form is called *confirmation bias*. Our experiences tend to overemphasize the stereotypical views we already have. A police officer working in a minority neighborhood will encounter mostly criminals from that community. It is hard not to conclude that "all" members of that community tend to disrespect the law.

The news media play an unwitting role in this. Events are news because they are extreme and rare. But when they become news, they become very prominent in our minds, and we develop a tendency to overestimate their frequency and importance. A law enforcement spokesperson may announce a steady drop in murder rates, but a week of coverage of a single gruesome murder case can lead to the opposite impression.

Everybody interprets things their own way

This is probably the most important lesson about communication and media. When two people are exposed to the same communication message, it may not mean the same thing to both of them. In the 1990s a British TV show carried a storyline about the gruesome effects of an acetaminophen (paracetamol) overdose with the intention of warning the viewers. ERs across the nation were carefully monitored to see whether this would reduce the number of cases. To the surprise of the researchers, there was a 17% increase in cases of self-poisoning. Experts felt that showing the effects of an overdose would be terrible enough to dissuade people. But if you have enough self-hate, the message probably came across as "this is a great way to hurt yourself," and if you were desperately trying to cry for help, it probably meant "look how much care you get." The data transferred by a message only become information after a person has processed it and different people process the same message differently.

Risk Assessment and Media Input

In sum – when we are dealing with risk we are at a disadvantage. In daily life, risk assessments are split-second decisions: is this a dangerous street? Should I get out of this elevator now this man got in? Does this accent mean I can trust this person? Would I be able to handle myself if things go wrong? These are moments when we are hard-wired to use all the information accessible in our brains. Unfortunately, in today's society, a lot of that information does not derive from real-world experience. We spend more time than ever in history sitting around a digital campfire, listening to stories. Originally those stories were meant to help us learn the knowledge we needed to thrive in our community. Today those stories are only meant to entertain us.

Whether we are an individual worried about our own safety or a professional assessing the risks to others, we have to be aware of the tricks our brain plays when we have to make a threat assessment. Try to pause and wonder: is what you call a "gut feeling" really your intuition or is it unverified information from unreliable or unconfirmed sources? Is it the result of sound reasoning or a lazy mental shortcut? And finally: don't overestimate yourself. You would be surprised how many campfire stories found their way into your memory.

Jan Van den Bulck, Ph.D., D.Sc.
Jan Van den Bulck is a professor of media psychology at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. He studies what people learn from media entertainment, particularly about the worlds of Law Enforcement and Emergency Services.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Call for research proposals: opening calls for secure societies in Horizon 2020

Horizon2020 is a serious grant for research on security. There is a big budget available to cooperate internationally on innovative solutions that contribute to a safer society. Research proposals are requested on:

1. Protecting the infrastructure of Europe and the people in the European smart cities

2.   Security

- Disaster resilient societies

- Fight against crime and terrorism

- Border and External Security

- General Matters

3.   Digital security (cyber security)

More information on these topics can be found in The Work programme 2018-2020: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2018-2020/main/h2020-wp1820-security_en.pdf

Deadline for proposal submission: August 23, 2018

Call for papers: Young Killers

In light of recent events involving school shootings such as the tragic act of terror in Florida on February 14, and other calculated threats of violence perpetuated by young killers, ***Violence and Gender*** is seeking high quality research on the topic of young killers, mental health, weaponry, and mass killings. The published work will provide a broad overview of the current state of affairs on a national and international scale.

The journal will consider Research Articles, Reviews, Perspectives, and Commentaries on the following topics:

Young killers, firearms, and violence:
- Motives of young killers in school shootings and other public settings
- Access to firearms by young killers
- Young terrorists
- Gender-based violence
- Profile similarities/differences in young killers
- Role of firearms and/or other weapons in mass homicide
- Mental health and violence: What we need to know
- Is the crime landscape changing, and how does this implicate young killers?
- Politics, violence, and mental health: What policies should be considered and what policies should be implemented to prevent further violence?
- Legal mandates and policy recommendations and firearms
- What mental illness diagnosis poses the greatest risks for violence?
- How can we prevent mass murders by young killers moving forward?

- What are the roles of mental health professionals, police, firearm laws, politics, culture, and so forth in these homicides?
- Comparing the use of firearms and other weapons in attacks
- International research on violence, youth, and mental health
- Are young killers on the rise, is mass murder on the rise, and what can be done about it?
- The impact on victims and survivors of mass murder perpetuated by young killers

For manuscript submission guidelines and further information about the Journal, please visit the *Violence and Gender* website.

Deadline for manuscript submission: May 15, 2018

PUBLISHED RESEARCH

Foreshadowing targeted violence: Assessing leakage of intent by public mass murders (2017)

The idea that identifiable behaviors presage violence is a core concept in the threat assessment literature. Especially meaningful from an operational perspective is "leakage", which concerns whether offenders intentionally or unintentionally reveal insights into their thoughts or feelings that suggest impending targeted violence. Previous research has generally been limited to assessing the prevalence of leakage in various offender populations. The present study more thoroughly describes leakage in a sample of 115 public mass murderers in the U.S. whose activities took place between 1990 and 2014. We disaggregate leakage into three distinct forms (written statements, verbal statements to the public, verbal statements to family/friends), and examine these in relation to theorized correlates of leakage. We found that a significant predictor of leakage is the presence of a grievance, specifically a grievance against a person or entity, as opposed to a grievance against a category of people or a grievance against an idea, movement or religion. We discuss implications of these results as well as directions for future research. Ideally, future efforts will also address the issue of false positives – namely, comparing cases of targeted violence and leakage with instances where there was leakage but no targeted violence.

Cited from James Silver, John Horgan and Paul Gilll. In: Aggression and Violent Behavior. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1359178917300502

Protecting victims of intimate partner violence: Swedish prosecutors' experiences of decision-making regarding restraining orders (2018)

The aim of this study was to examine how prosecutors work with cases of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), with a focus on their collaboration with police, use of violence risk assessment and implementation of restraining orders, as a risk management strategy. A qualitative analysis was conducted. Earlier research shows that the highest risk for IPV recidivism is within the first three months following a report of IPV. Furthermore Strand (2012) found restraining orders were effective at preventing future IPV amongst male IPV perpetrators assessed as low or moderate risk using the B-Safer, but not for high risk perpetrators, who are usually the ones given a restraining order. This study showed that prosecutors seldom used violence risk assessments conducted by police as a basis for issuing restraining orders. The primary reason for this was a lack of clear routines governing cooperation between police and prosecutors. Prosecutors use unstructured professional judgement, whereas police use of structured violence risk assessment tools has been a priority in Sweden over the past decade. Moreover prosecutors seem to give priority to their role as the leader of the investigation instead of focusing on victim protection.
Cited from *Susanne J.M. Strand, Sofi Fröberg & Jennifer E. Storey. In: Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention.* *https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14043858.2018.1450547?scroll=top&needAccess=true*

JOURNAL OF THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The journal of threat assessment and management (JTAM) is of course the most relevant journals regarding our profession. Though every article is worth to read, we have chosen to select and highlight the recent European authors below. As a TAP-member you can read JTAM free of charge.

Serial stalking of Mental Health Professionals: Case Presentation, Analysis, and Formulation Using Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM) (2017)

Through case analysis the authors explain the phenomenon of stalking of mental health professionals by their clients. The case study under examination involves a perpetrator who stalked 4 mental health professionals over the course of multiple decades. In this case the SAM, a violence risk assessment instrument for stalking, was completed and shows how this tool can be very helpful in identifying the key risk factors and motivations for stalking, also recommending management strategies to end the stalking behaviour. The article seeks to achieve three goals:
1. to demonstrate how to use a violence risk assessment instrument and manage stalking risk,

2. to illustrate how we can better understand the motivation and dynamics of stalking, and
3. to shed more light on the phenomenon of stalking of mental health professionals.
Cited from *Jennifer Storey, Stephen Hart and Yan Lim*

The Virginia Tech Massacre as a Starting Point for Threat Assessment programs in European Universities (2017)

In this article dr. Jens Hoffmann explains how the Virginia Tech mass murder shocked not only academics in the United States but also had a rippling effect and opened doors for violence prevention programs at European universities. Especially in Europe the idea that acts of mass murder could happen in a university setting seemed for many decades almost unthinkable. Higher education was seen as something sublime and not fitting in an academic setting.
Violence prevention programs have been virtually absent in the European academic world, but we clearly see this changing in Europe.
Dr. Hoffmann illustrates, also by describing interesting case examples, how European universities have in recent years started to develop threat assessment programs, starting in German speaking countries.
Cited from *Jens Hoffmann*.

Violent versus Nonviolent Actors: An empirical Study of Different Types of Extremism (2017)

This study adopted an empirical approach to compare violent extremist (VEs) and nonviolent extremists (NVEs). In-depth case studies on 40 extremist individuals were developed and analyzed for key themes, subthemes and underlying variables. An earlier Home Office review of literature found no studies that examine why those "at risk" choose *not* to become involved in violent extremism. Moreover, radicalization is often implied as an essential step necessary for violent extremism, but this is not necessarily the case. Central in this study is why are some people with extreme views prepared to commit acts of violence whereas others, with seemingly similar views, are not? Findings indicate that the choice to use violence to achieve certain goals is linked to negative life experiences, resultant emotions, and low self-esteem. Compared with NVEs, significantly more VEs had: been exposed to examples of extreme violence, been bullied, deliberately disconnected themselves from certain others, visited a variety of mosques, been reported as having low self-esteem, underachieved, perceived themselves to have a personal responsibility to act, seemed to be operating in an environment with few security constraints, participated in extremist-related training; traveled abroad for extremist-related events; and had been involved in and reported as passionate about participating in team sport.

This list provides an indication of the type of things practitioners should be looking for when assessing individuals of interest. It is recommended that these factors should be compared with existing risk assessment tools such as the ERG, VERA and MLG. Furthermore, this study indicates that there are a number of shared attributes that underlie extremism in general (i.e., identity, seeking belonging, a perceived external threat to blame for grievances and dehumanization), but these factors were not found to distinguish between VEs and NVEs. A key requirement for future research is to distinguish between different types of extremists.

Cited from: *Sarah Knight, Katie Woodward, and Gary L.J. Lancaster.*

The Reliability and Predictive Validity of the Screening Assessment for Stalking and Harassment (SASH) (2017)

A structured screening assessment can help police officers to recognize, prioritize, and respond to stalking appropriate. This study provides a first evaluation of the reliability and the predictive validity of the Screening Assessment for Stalking and Harassment (SASH). The SASH was developed by a group of Australian, Swedish and British clinicians and researchers with expertise in stalking and intimate partner violence. 115 cases were scored from file review and followed up over 6 months. The SASH level of concern outcome was effective in differentiating between subsequent stalking of differing severities, particularly for identifying and ruling out cases where subsequent stalking was of low severity. This study demonstrated that the application of the SASH to the first official report resulted in allowing a more comprehensive and accurate case priority for preventive actions, beyond simply reviewing the case to determine whether a criminal investigation is warranted, as currently occurs. Appropriate training on the SASH is vital to ensure that the item scores are correctly translated into the appropriate level of concern. The results have informed the decision of the Netherlands National Police to implement the SASH across the country as part of a structured response.

Cited from: *Kirsten Hehemann, Dorien van Nobelen, Cleo Brandt and Troy McEwan*

INSTRUMENTS & TOOLS

Asking direct questions about suicide ideation does not generate iatrogenic risks

Last year I was working on a case of an individual who expressed suicidal threats. He was strongly expressing his wish to commit suicide and thought of several methods, including suicide by cop or a mass suicide attack. This is where law enforcement came into play.

In order to assess the risk of this subject I advised to interview this person very thoroughly and ask more specific but open what concrete ideas and intentions he has. However mental health care replied that this extensive and direct way of questioning would be contra-productive to do and could even encourage him more in his suicide wish, like a fulfilling prophecy.

This case made the direct benefits of associations like AETAP very visible. I remembered one of Stephen Harts lessons on an expert day very well: good interviews with direct questions are actually not making the problem worse; however, they do improve your assessment. Thanks to the great network opportunities of the TAP's Stephen immediately sent me a tremendous amount of research to support this view:

With respect to suicide risk assessment, there is very good published (i.e. DeCou et. al, 2017) evidence in the form of meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and randomized controlled trials that suicide risk assessment—including direct and repeated assessment of suicidal ideation in high-risk populations—does not increase suicidality or risk for suicidal behavior. There is also evidence that people do not mind being asked about suicidality. The best direct evidence Stephen has comes from a study they have been doing in Norway with Knut Rypdal and others for some years. They implemented a triage for admissions to a psychiatric emergency ward that included direct questions about suicide, violence, and victimization. They have assessed several thousand people at intake, and also did follow-up interviews with some patients to ask how they felt about the questions. Virtually all (>95%) of the patients who were asked triage questions answered them. The hospital did not report any evidence of increased risk for adverse outcomes in the hospital following implementation of the triage process. Furthermore, patients who were asked said they did not experience discomfort when they were asked about suicide or violence —the only questions that made them feel upset were those about past victimization.
Lieke Bootsma

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS & EDUCATION

ATAP
The biggest threat assessment conference in the world was again held at Disneyland resort, Anaheim, California. With over 1000 participants and three simultaneously running tracks the ATAP conference is truly an impressive experience. Contrary to AETAP, the crowd at ATAP is very law enforcement focused, but in such a crowd you will find your share of mental health, education, corporate security and other fields represented as well.

Besides core competencies and excellent, captivating keynote speakers, the ATAP venue also provides the attendees a possibility to take a peek at commercially available services in the field. ATAP has a good representation of booths in the lobby and long enough breaks to spend some time with the service providers as well.

The next ATAP conference will take place again in Disneyland resort hotel, Anaheim, California, between 14th-17th of August 2018. Due to the fact that the conference is organized in cooperation with Disney, you might want to plan on taking the family along to enjoy the park while you are enjoying the conference. If you plan on attending make sure you register quickly because I know the seats fill up quickly and getting a room from the resort can be tricky close to the seminar.

CATAP

For the first time in the existence of the Canadian association, they organised their annual conference in the beautiful French speaking part of Canada, Quebec. Participants could choose between two 2-day pre-conference workshops, followed by 3 excellent conference days with world renowned presenters. The conference also allowed plenty opportunities to interact with both attendees and presenters, which is one of the key functions of such an event: not only gaining knowledge but also building a network of professionals which improve every professional's practice.
We recommend attending CATAP's 2018 conference which will be held at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler, British Columbia - CATAP Workshop on October 13 & 14th, and the Conference from 15– 17 October 2018. https://catap.ca

APATAP

Wellington, NZ, March 5-7 2018

Asia-Pacific Association of Threat Assessment Professionals had it's annual conference in Wellington, New Zealand this year. The conference gathered an impressive crowd of 70 professionals from the region and from other TAPs. APATAP conference is a three day event, with the first day giving the participants a possibility to attend experts day lecture. This year it was Dr. Michael Davis who spoke about behavioural analysis for the threat assessors. Other Keynotes of the conference were Dr. Stephen Hart who spoke about evidence based threat assessment and Dr. Paul Mullen who presented on assessing and managing those who threaten to commit a massacre. Overall the conference provide an excellent overview from various topics related to threat assessment from stalking crimes to victim perspective to threats of massacres.

The conference crowd was also a great representation of various professionals working in the field, even though psychiatry and psychology were clearly the biggest fields represented. Lots of law enforcement and some corporate security professionals were amongst the participants as well.

Conference facility was in the Intercontinental hotel in downtown Wellington and the premises provided an excellent venue for networking between the breaks as well as the Gala dinner location in the Wellington harbour. Also the surrounding nature was breathtakingly beautiful and after the conference our small AETAP-ATAP-APATAP entourage took an extra day in the countryside in the name of iTAP activities. Time well spent on this APATAP, far away from Europe.

Next APATAP conference in 2019 will take place in Hong Kong, the dates 25.-27.2.2019

International Conference On Behavioural And Social Sciences In Security
10-12th July 2018, Lancaster University, UK

BASS18 is the first international conference on Behavioural and Social Sciences in Security. The theme of this three-day conference is '*From Inspiration to Impact: Research into Understanding, Countering and Mitigating Security Threats*'*.*
The focus is on: 1.) understanding who and why 2.) better intelligence gathering and decisions and 3.) protective secuity and risk.
Have a look at their website for more information: https://crestresearch.ac.uk/bass18/