



NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2021





MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

"Transformation is necessary, like the renewal of leaves in the spring."

Vincent van Gogh

Dear Members,

A summer with more freedom and social contact is now behind us.

We sincerely hope that you and your families have remained healthy and well during these challenging times. AETAP has also moved online during this pandemic. We have succeeded in attracting great speakers for short webinars. The feedback was excellent and we are pleased with the lively participation of attendees from all over the world. The series will continue and there will be more webinars offered.

The threat assessment field is and will remain very important for societies across the globe. The Covid-19 pandemic shows that radicalisation and domestic violence are crucial topics we need to focus on when aiming at making our world a safer place. We thank you very much for your loyalty in supporting AETAP during the past year.

Due to the pandemic, for two years in a row our annual conference had to be cancelled. We are now in the midst of organising and getting everything ready for next year's AETAP conference in Nuremberg, Germany. The conference will take place from 26-28 April 2022. On Monday April 25th we offer a special expert day training with two internationally regarded speakers presenting. For newcomers in the threat assessment field, also on the 25th we offer a full day foundational training. Save these dates in your calendars! We look forward to a great 'live' conference with face-to-face networking and professional exchange after so many months of video communication and online training. The official conference program will be online before the end of November 2021.

On behalf of the AETAP board,

Andrea Wechlin & Karoline Roshdi

AETAP President & Vice President



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New Developments and New Fields of Expertise

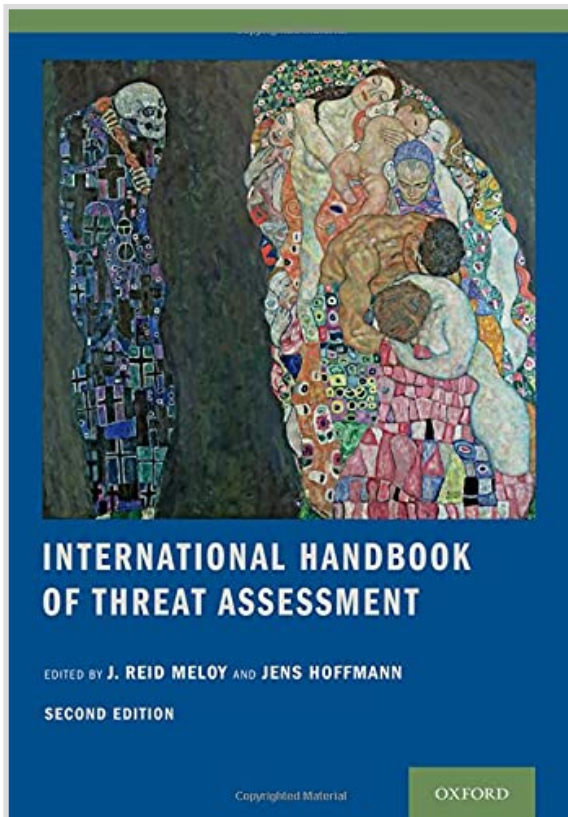
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The **Manfred Guttmacher Award** from the American Psychiatric Association is a prestigious award established in 1975 and recognizes an outstanding contribution to the literature of forensic psychiatry.

The AETAP board has been informed that **dr. Reid Meloy** and **dr. Jens Hoffman** received the 2022 Guttmacher Award for their International Handbook of Threat Assessment.

What a well deserved achievement this is. The AETAP board is proud to work closely with these great scientists and leaders in the threat assessment field. We will celebrate this terrific accomplishment when we all meet in Nuremberg in a few months.

Congratulations Reid and Jens!



Jens Hoffman and Reid Meloy in Zillertal, Austria, October 2021

**PUBLISHED RESEARCH*****Predictors of varying levels of risk posed by fixated individuals to British public figures (2021)***

Concerning approaches and communications to the Royal Family and other British public figures are relatively numerous. This paper examines over 2000 of such cases. This paper makes an additional theoretical contribution to the literature by incorporating insights from criminological studies concerning offender decision-making in the context of risk. The results showed that (a) the rates of serious mental disorders are higher among this sample than the general population base rate, (b) approachers were significantly more likely than communicators to suffer from serious mental disorders, (c) approachers were significantly more likely than communicators to have a history of substance use and abuse problems, (d) approachers were significantly more likely than communicators to have a history of violent behavior against property and persons, and (e) the motivations of approachers and communicators significantly differ. The results indicate patterns of factors that are associated with worrying and escalating behavior. There may be a path dependency involved whereby a motivation offers a limited set of potential future actions. Few who communicate went on to approach. However, this is not to suggest they are not worthy of threat management. Other research suggests communicators may pose an increased risk of future violence against individuals other than the targets of their communication. The results also illustrate the importance of specificity when answering; "risk of what?" It demonstrates that what the person is at risk of doing differs greatly depending upon their constellation of previous behaviors, motivations, and mind-sets. For instance, homicidal ideation predicts communications rather than approaches. When present during an attempted breach, however, it also predicts success.

Cited from: **Gill, Paul et al.** In: *Journal of Forensic Sciences*

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1556-4029.14708>



CREST Security Review (issue 11) – Violent Extremism: the assessment and management of risk (2021)

This CREST publication is devoted to risk assessment of violent extremism including excellent articles by our colleagues.

Dr. Caroline Logan offers eight recommendations when undertaking when assessing and managing violent extremism:

1. Act on your assessment
2. Take a dynamic approach
3. See the bigger picture
4. Seek a range of guidance
5. Take the SPJ approach
6. Study the problem
7. Be transparent
8. Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate

These very useful recommendations seem applicable to all fields of risk assessment and management.

file:///H:/Mijn%20Documenten/Downloads/crest_security_review_11_risk.pdf

Journal Violence and Gender (September 2021)

The latest issue of Violence and Gender offers insights on **domestic violence during COVID-19**. The journal succeeds in providing a global picture of the problem by incorporating articles from experts working in different countries (Japan, India, the United States, Lebanon and Belgium):

https://www.liebertpub.com/toc/vio/8/3#utm_source=ETOC&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=vio



RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

The GRIEVANCE Project

GRIEVANCE is a five-year project (2018-2022) funded by the European Research Council, conducted at University College London's Department of Security and Crime Science, and led by Professor Paul Gill. GRIEVANCE seeks to make significant advances in increasing our understanding, and thereby reducing the risk, of various forms of targeted violence. Various strands of research are relevant to AETAP members.

Bettina Rottweiler is currently examining the effects of misogyny on violent extremism and interpersonal violence. The analysis provides empirical evidence which addresses the intersection of attitudes and motivations fuelling gender-based and extremist violence by conducting survey-based analyses. Misogynistic attitudes and behaviours are also increasingly under the microscope of research on violent extremism. Misogyny is outwardly expressed in diverse forms of extremism including recent far-right terrorist manifestos (Wilson, 2020) and the jihadi cause (Pearson, 2020). Data collection took place in July 2020. Participants were recruited via the online platform, Prolific. Participants were based on a UK nationally representative sample (by age, gender, and ethnicity) $n = 1500$.

The results suggest the following: (1) Among men, the results show that misogyny predicts violent extremist attitudes and intentions as well as increased support for and willingness to engage in interpersonal violence. Among women, misogyny is not associated with violent extremist attitudes or intentions but significantly predicts increased support for and readiness to use violence. (2) Men who hold stronger misogynistic beliefs and who demonstrate higher levels of frustrated entitlement beliefs, are significantly more likely to engage in revenge planning, which in turn, leads to stronger support of and willingness to engage in violent extremism and interpersonal violence. (3) When misogynistic men feel threatened, they are much more likely to exhibit hypermasculine attitudes (e.g., justifying violence and emphasizing male dominance and strength), which in turn, leads to higher levels of support for and stronger intentions to engage in violent extremism as well as interpersonal violence.



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The findings provide empirical evidence which articulates through what kinds of mechanisms and for what type of people, misogyny may constitute a risk factor for violent extremism and interpersonal violence, which has important practical implications. In terms of risk assessment, whilst existing violent extremist risk assessment tools do not explicitly consider misogyny, one implication of our findings is to provide empirical evidence to support incorporating such factors into existing structured professional judgement (SPJ) guidances. Given our findings, practitioners may wish to consider misogyny relevant to the risk assessment of potential violent extremist offenders, particularly when expressed alongside hypermasculinity and revenge motivation and amongst those who express frustrated entitlement and perceived threats. The present results could also inform SPJ guidances developed to assess and manage the risk of domestic and interpersonal violence. Given the relationship between misogyny and violent extremism, as well as interpersonal violence more generally, preventative programming aimed at challenging misogynistic attitudes may be of substantial benefit in terms of violence and crime prevention.

Nadine Salman's research focuses on the role of assessor decision making in the individual threat and risk assessment of violent extremism. Nadine's latest study is a quasi-experiment examining whether assessor personality factors can influence the violent extremism risk assessment process in terms of risk judgments, adherence to risk assessment guidance, and reliability. Preliminary results, using a sample of 482 laypersons as assessors, indicate that more agreeable assessors perceived a known violent extremist to be more vulnerable, and that more extraverted assessors were more likely to adhere to risk assessment guidance. Inter-rater reliability was higher among more conscientious assessors. These preliminary results suggest that risk assessors' personalities may affect several aspects of the risk assessment process, which could introduce a degree of subjectivity and unreliability, particularly among non-experts.

Caitlin Clemmow has published research on individuals fixated with British public figures. Fixated individuals pose a significant threat to public figures. Previous research compares individuals labeled 'approachers' to those labeled 'communicators.' Typically, such studies compare a number of risk factors among the two groups to identify significant differences. This has impactful implications for the threat assessment and management of the pathologically fixated. Caitlin's study builds upon this established body of work by considering if more nuance can be disaggregated from a universe of cases referred to the Fixated Threat Assessment Center (FTAC). FTAC is a joint police and mental health unit in the U.K. which applies a public health approach to managing the pathologically fixated.

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The present study takes a deductive approach to detect profiles of cases from the data. First, we use cluster analysis to detect unmeasured subgroups of concerning behavior in the case files of 2,118 referrals to FTAC. We identify 5 patterns of concerning behavior: *incoherent offline communicators*, *incoherent online communicators*, *angry/abusive communicators*, *concerning approachers*, and *problematic approachers*. Second, we examine the rate of diagnosed mental disorder, the nature of concerns evoked, and case management actions taken among each of the five profiles identified. We conclude by highlighting how our results could inform triaging large volumes of cases, the allocation of limited resources, and more generally, how the success of the FTAC model has relevance across the management of grievance-fuelled violence in general.

Paul Gill

University College London

For more, please visit the project website at <https://www.grievance-erc.com> , follow them on Twitter at @grievance_erc , or contact Paul.Gill@ucl.ac.uk for any questions.

Anonymous threatening communications

During the past two decades the psychological dynamics surrounding threats and the assessment of threatening communications have been researched significantly. However, little is known about threats which have been received from an anonymous author. In the absence of a robust scientific research base, threat assessment professionals mainly rely on their practical case experience when performing assessments and advising clients or victims. It is our aim to address this gap.

We have therefore embarked on a programme of research in order to further professionalise the assessment and risk management of anonymous threats. The first project was recently completed with a publication titled '*Assessment Procedures in Anonymously Written Threats of Harm and Violence*', soon to be published in the Journal of Threat Assessment and Management. This article was the result of a collaboration between the University College London, the Major Crime Investigative Support section of the UK National Crime Agency and Dantes Psychology Services. It explored the current practices of threat assessment professionals when presented with an anonymous threatening communication.



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This summer we started with the next stage of the programme, focusing on the needs and questions clients have when faced with anonymous threats. Our methodology includes a semi-structured interview with experienced security professionals in both the private and public sector.

Pippa Gregory (National Crime Agency, London, United Kingdom) & **Bram B. Van der Meer** (AETAP board member)

For more information or questions, contact Pippa Gregory:

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INSTRUMENTS & TOOLS

Follow-up on the TRAP-18

Maybe you remember AETAP's expert day 'THE LONE TERRORIST: TRAP-18 AS AN INVESTIGATIVE TEMPLATE' by dr. J. Reid Meloy in 2016 in Ghent? Since then a tremendous amount of research has been conducted on this topic. The Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol-18 (TRAP-18) is a major achievement.

We want to brief you on the main findings from the last few years. An overview of published research can be found on: <http://drreidmeloy.com/press/publication-archive/>.

Validity

The latest findings regarding the tested reliability and validity of the TRAP-18 are promising. The Risk Management Authority in Scotland considers the TRAP-18 since April 2021 as a validated tool: <https://www.rma.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Terrorist-Radicalization-Assessment-Protocol-18-TRAP-18.pdf>. However, most research is done by either the developer of the TRAP-18 or by people not entirely impartial about the usefulness of the TRAP-18. Research samples consisted of both American and European terrorists from different ideological groups. Studies have shown that the TRAP-18 was generalizable across various types of terrorism: jihadists, right-wing extremists and other lone actor terrorists (see Meloy & Gill, 2016). A Spanish study (Fernández García-Andrade et al., 2019) showed the TRAP-18 could be applied to patients with severe mental illness too.

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Studies on the discriminant validity so far – albeit retrospectively, and thus subject to hindsight bias - supports the potential efficacy of proximal indicators as warning signs to discriminate between those with and those without violent intent (Lloyd, 2021, Meloy & Gill (2016), Challacombe & Lucas (2018), Goodwill & Meloy, 2019, Meloy et al. (2019)). This is regarded as one of the major strengths of the TRAP-18. As such, with the TRAP-18, threat assessors are able to not only signal imminent concern about individuals displaying warning signs, but the tool also assists with de-escalation strategies of a case, without any present proximal indicators.

In an exploratory test Challacombe and Lucas (2018) found a first support for the predictive validity: the sum of the TRAP-18 scores was able to postdict violent outcomes in a North American sample of sovereign citizens.

In particular, two recent published studies (in the Journal of Threat Assessment and Management) are worth mentioning:

1. *Islamist Terrorists in Germany and Their Warning Behaviors: A Comparative Assessment of Attackers and Other Convicts Using the TRAP-18 (Böckler et al., 2020)*

This German study again demonstrates the content, predictive and discriminant validity of the TRAP-18. Perpetrators of terrorist attacks were compared with persons who have been convicted of propagandistic and financial terrorist support, and/or of joining a terrorist organization in another country. Results indicate that there are significant differences between violent terrorist perpetrators and persons convicted of nonviolent Islamist activities, both in the number of TRAP-18 items as well as in the proximal warning behaviors: "pathway", "last resort," "energy burst" and "novel aggression". Compared to previous studies the indicators "pathway" and "last resort" are showing that they have the power to discriminate between violent and non-violent terrorists. Though discriminant validity was also demonstrated in this study with respect to the overall quantitative distribution of the TRAP-18 factors, one has to follow the logic of structured professional judgment over a statistical evaluation logic.

2. *Time Sequencing the TRAP-18 Indicators (Meloy et al., 2021)*

This joint American-European study further validates the model of the TRAP-18 by conducting a time sequence analysis on 125 lone-actor terrorists from Europe and North America. Though sequence analysis does not measure cause and effect, the temporal relationships resemble the TRAP-18 model.

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Results indicate that virtually all distal characteristics, such as criminal violence, mental disorder, and ideology, preceded the proximal warning behaviors, such as pathway, identification, leakage, last resort, and directly communicated threats. The only exception is the proximal warning behavior of fixation which precedes the distal characteristic of changes of thinking and emotion. This finding could be explained by the very nature of these two indicators, as both reveal cognitive changes in thinking that may appear to coincide.

Fixation may be the earliest proximal warning behavior. This aligns with previous results indicating that fixation is quite prevalent in all targeted attacks (Meloy et al., 2019; Challacombe & Lucas, 2018), but it is also frequent in subjects of concern with no intent to attack (Meloy et al., 2019).

The relevance of this aggregated temporal sequence is that threat management of a case can now forecast which indicator will likely occur next if the subject of concern continues to move down the path toward an attack, although individual terrorists may follow a different sequence / timeline. 'Pathway', 'leakage', and on occasion 'direct communicated threat' may create critical points where law enforcement can practically intervene. On the other hand, the turning point event of changes in thinking and emotion would likely necessitate a more strategic and long-term effort to disengage an individual of concern from proceeding further along a pathway to violence (Rahman, 2018).

Case studies

In addition to these group studies several post-attack case studies have been conducted. Studies in which the TRAP-18 has been used to look retrospectively into the various stages of the individual's life while moving towards the final attack (Böckler et al., 2015, Erlandsson & Meloy, 2018). Another case study worth mentioning is still in progress (Dmitrieva, A. and Meloy, J.R., submitted for publication) using data *prior* to a possible attack. The preventive nature of this American case provides an opportunity to test the ecological¹ validity of the TRAP-18. Since most individuals who support extremist beliefs will never be violent, even if they are sympathetic towards those who are violent, the TRAP-18 attempts to assist counterterrorism professionals in their judgments of the actual risk for violence. This study highlights that the indicator "creativity and innovation" seems to be a problematic one in threat assessment practice: specific evidence typically is available only after the perpetrator has carried out the attack.

¹ The ecological validity refers to the generalizability of the TRAP-18 to practice.

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Another potential problematic indicator may be the 'last resort warning behavior', since this information is usually present only in the hours or days leading up to an attack. However, the sheer amount of data and behaviors in this case translating into pathway, fixation, identification, energy burst, and leakage add to seriousness of the situation and suggest the potential of an attack. However, the presence of such data does not absolutely predict an attack!

Psychological dynamics

Theoretical analysis of TRAP-18 indicators is showing progress as well. For instance, Knoll and his colleagues submitted a paper for review in order to contribute to the understanding of the powerful psychodynamic of severe envy. This new knowledge could definitely be of significant value of our understanding of the problem and help threat assessment practitioners. In order to illustrate the process in which severe envy can finally result in extreme violence, as well as illustration of the concepts 'obliterative mindset' and 'pseudo-spiritual transformation', three cases of extreme violence in the United States will be used for psycholinguistic analysis. By using these case studies the authors also make references to several TRAP-18 indicators. In theory the oblitative mindset is associated with the distal characteristic of "Changes in Thinking and Emotion", in that the development of fatalistic, destructive beliefs become more concrete and extreme. Beliefs in the superiority of one's cause become rigidly fixed and overvalued (Rahman et al., 2019). Pseudo-spiritual transformation (PST) is the perpetrator's belief that violent revenge, in response to a personal grievance, is guided and sanctified by some transcendent power (typically of a religious nature). PST serves to motivate and justify the evolution towards sacrificial revenge and transforms mere vengeance into an act with sacred meaning for the perpetrator. Pseudo-spiritual transformation is associated with the TRAP-18 distal characteristic of "Ideological Framing".

Linguistic analysis

Kupper and Meloy (in press.) analyse targeted violence manifestos by looking through the lens of the TRAP-18. Almost all TRAP-18 indicators could be coded in retrospect. This supports the generalizability of the TRAP-18 when applied only to language data. The TRAP-18 appears to be useful regardless of the mode of communication (written vs. spoken), type of attack (primarily ideologically motivated vs. grievance fuelled) and primary motivation (e.g. race/ethnicity or jihadism). Beyond the TRAP-18 indicators notions of persuasion (encouragement of others to commit similar attacks; tactical advice on weapons and technology) or repercussion (outcome of attack, reaction from media and public) could also be indicators of risk.

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For practical threat assessment purposes it is important to know how long before an attack, and how visible for law enforcement professionals manifestos are usually shared. An answer to these questions seems to be needed in a follow-up study to make successful disruptions possible.

Use in practice

The TRAP-18 is intended to be used by mental health-, intelligence-, law enforcement- and security professionals in order to manage operational data on an individual of concern, and prioritize cases based upon the presence or absence of warning behaviors. The tool helps practitioners to identify dynamic patterns of behavior indicating that a person has already taken steps on one's path towards a violent terrorist attack. Moreover, the TRAP-18 helps practitioners to identify blind spots regarding information about a given case.

At the moment the TRAP-18 is used in countries and by different organizations. In the Netherlands, investigative psychologists already have the instrument in their toolbox. Because psychological knowledge seems to be necessary for assessing distal characteristics, only investigative psychologists have been using the tool so far. Experiences of this group of investigative psychologists: the TRAP-18 seems especially useful when there is time pressure. The TRAP-18 is suitable to assess the concerns of a *possible* terrorist attack. Pathway behavior is regarded as an important factor to help de-escalate a case. On the other hand the TRAP-18 does not look into the (practical) capacities of a person of concern, so this might be an important additional indicator to consider in urgent cases. Also, possible social-, group-, cultural- and ideological contextual factors are missed when using the TRAP-18. Moreover, the TRAP-18 does not directly assist in answering questions regarding the motivation and drivers of the subject of concern. The professional is forced to search for and uncover this extra information and take it into account when performing a risk assessment. These experiences in The Netherlands are consistent with recommendations made in recent publications. In order to allow a more individualized assessment of behaviors and motivations associated with lone actor terrorism, it is suggested to incorporate additional tools such as the HCR-20 V3 when using the TRAP-18 (Guldimann & Meloy (2020)). Moreover, the absence of measurement of protective factors in the TRAP-18 is considered as a weakness of the instrument, which needs to be compensated for by other instruments (Meloy et al., 2021).

Lieke Bootsma

AETAP board member

NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND NEW FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

"What if... Listen to your gut and do the relationship test, because domestic violence doesn't start with beatings!"

In 2020, in Luxembourg, police interventions in cases of domestic violence increased by 11.07% and restraining orders (that temporarily forbid perpetrators to stay at home) by 4.91% (Comité de coopération entre les professionnels dans le domaine de la lutte contre la violence, Rapport 2020). "The 2020 figures show that victims of domestic violence are increasingly daring to seek help. Removing the taboo from the topic helps" (Taina Bofferding, Minister of Equality in Tageblatt.lu, 2021). For this purpose, regular prevention campaigns and projects, such as raising awareness on the topic, education and training of professionals, etc., are undertaken. In addition, during the pandemic, extra crisis intervention tools were developed by the Ministry of Luxembourg, together with its partners. Examples of these interventions reducing the risk of domestic violence were: existing laws continued to exist, a helpline for women and men suffering domestic violence was created, a helpline for perpetrators was developed, provision of alternative accommodation for victims such as hotels, 100% support of partners which guaranteed that help services were available at all times, and intensive awareness programs through median order to encourage victim populations to seek help (personal quote Schröder & Witry, 2021).

In order to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence, there is a constant need for widespread awareness in this area and (warning) measures to start in an early stage. In addition, opportunities for support must be known. It should also be noted that domestic violence includes not only physical but also sexual-, emotional- and psychological violence.

This is precisely where the project comes in. The project is managed by the organization Fondation Maison de la Porte Ouverte in Luxembourg since September 2020, and has ended mid-September 2021. The project was funded by the Ministry of Gender Equality. The aim is to develop a relationship test, made available online and thus accessible to the general public.

The questionnaire is not only intended to show people whether warning signs of violence are occurring or whether violence already exists, but the instrument also indicates beforehand whether the relationship is "in order", i.e. equal.

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It is possible that the person filling out the questionnaire receives a result that the relationship is not that equal, but that warning signs of violence are present. The two other evaluation possibilities are: warning signs of emotional violence are present; physical violence is present.

The questionnaire includes 16 questions, through which the participant is encouraged to think about a possible danger in the relationship. Finally, the participant receives an evaluation of his/her own relationship including an overview of possible warning signs of violence as well as access to the help system with concrete counseling centers. The questionnaire will be available in three languages (German, French and English).

The campaign is meant for all people living in an intimate relationship, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation. Based on scientific research, risk factors of domestic violence as well as early warning signs of emotional/psychological violence were extracted and also expert interviews were conducted.

The following factors were obtained as evaluation categories, subdivided into 16 questions (in the questionnaire):

Area 1

Categories of equal or less or non-equal relationship management.

- communication strategies
- recognition/appreciation
- trust
- respect
- emotional regulation
- boundary maintenance

Area 2

Categories of emotional signs of violence

- Social isolation
- Controlling behavior
- Devaluation/ humiliation
- Aggressive behavior
- Threats
- Blame

Area 3

Categories of physical signs of violence

- Attitude towards violence
- Signs of physical violence
- Signs of sexual violence

Currently, the testing phase is finished and final changes are being incorporated. By mid-September, this test will be advertised on social media. Forensic Psychology, Counseling & Training was involved with the technical development and NEON for the digital implementation.

Karoline Roshdi

AETAP Vice President



Preventing workplace violence: Are you collecting the right data?

I am a retired police sergeant and crisis negotiator and I have worked as a threat management professional for three decades around the globe related to violence prevention across diverse sectors. To my surprise, many workplaces that I have worked with are not collecting the “most valuable information” that would help them in preventing workplace violence incidents. In many countries the employer is required to collect information about violent incidents. The purpose of this action is to compel the employer to make necessary changes to protect employees from actual, attempted or threatened violence. Many workplaces have implemented this action and I strongly support their efforts in doing so. I believe this is a necessary step, but I do not believe it is a sufficient step.

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When I challenge participants in workshops by claiming that they are not collecting the “most valuable information” about incidents, I usually get blank stares looking back at me and you may be feeling the same right now. I believe that if you only focus on the violent incidents that have taken place, you obtain valuable data from encounters that took a wrong turn. I am not blaming the employees who were involved but, if violence occurred, it often means that violence was not prevented, and something should have been done differently.

So, by “most valuable information?” I mean that workplaces should focus on the incidents that were disrespectful, intimidating, threatening, or involved attempted violence but did not result in acts of violence—and should ask yourself, why and how was violence prevented in these situations. The importance of looking at incidents involving the prevention of violence, as well as incidents involving the perpetration of violence, first became clear to me when I was working as a supervisor in police emergency services in Finland's capital region. As I followed the arrest statistics of different shifts in the central district, I started to notice big differences in violence targeting the police during arrests. I expanded my focus to the local hospital's emergency room shifts and started to see the same kinds of differences in the frequency with which shifts called for police assistance. It occurred to me that, to really understand violence prevention, instead of just focusing on when violence occurred, we needed to focus on when violence did not occur. I began to ask myself “Why do different shifts have statistically less violence? Do they have a different work culture? Do they have different values? Do they have different leadership? Do they focus on different warning signs or risk factors? Do they engage in different tactics or strategies?” By asking these questions, I realized I was learning more about violence prevention by what went right than what went wrong—which is why I consider this the “most valuable information.” To help illustrate this point, I am going to close with an age-old example regarding the analysis of damage to bomber planes in WWII (modified from an article by Trevor Bragdon). The Center for Naval Analysis reviewed the bullet holes and damage from each bomber after each mission. The data began to show a clear pattern: most damage was to the wings and body of the plane. The solution to their problem was clear: increase the armor on the plane's wings and body. But there was a serious problem with this analysis. Before the planes were modified, a statistician named Abraham Wald pointed out a critical flaw—the researchers had only looked at bombers who'd returned to base and had not looked at any of the planes that had been shot down. When we take the above example and apply it to violence prevention, ask yourself: could you possibly be making the same “mistake” by focusing only on incidents where violence occurred and not considering incidents where violence was prevented?



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Based on my experience in this area, I strongly encourage you to start to gathering information about violence that was prevented. Learn from your success stories and use them as a benchmark of your violence prevention progress, and share them (as appropriate) within your organization. We can all learn more from what goes well than what goes wrong.

Totti Karpela

AETAP Board member