Threat Assessment: Behavioral Indicators for Risk of Future Violence
The Next Hour...

• Threat Assessment and Behavioral Assessment - where do we employ Threat Assessment
• “Behavior” vs. “Evidence”
• Risk Assessment Tools: Actuarial/Structured Professional Judgment
• Threat Assessment Models: Pathway to Violence
• Proximal Warning Behaviors and Novel Aggression
• Where do we identify/code/weigh aggression and violence towards animals?
Threat Assessment

We analyze the observed *behaviour* of a potential offender in order to predict what level of threat that offender may pose. The behaviour analyzed consists of observable personality traits, various empirically devised threat assessment tools and/or the offender’s writings.
Threat Assessment

• We are really asking “what is the risk that the subject will engage in an act of violence?”

• **This is not prediction** - The risk level *analysis* is determined based upon the subject’s *behaviour*. Various empirically tested tools are utilized to assist in our analysis.

• Threat assessment is fluid and can change quickly !!!

• Continual **Monitoring** is key – not traditional investigation of arrest, charge and conclude
Training and Certification

- In Canada, the RCMP and the OPP manage programs that train police members through a lengthy understudy program. This includes numerous courses, workshops and conferences as well as consultation in, and preparation of complete Threat Assessments under the supervision of a mentor.

- The Canadian Association of Threat Assessment Professionals is rolling out a certification program for non-police persons working in a similar environment and with similar responsibilities. www.CATAP.ca
Domains of Violence

- General Violence Risk
- Threats to Justice Officials
- Domestic Violence
- Sex Offenders
- Stalkers

- School Violence
- Workplace Violence
- Terrorism
- Threats to Public Figures
- Threatening Communications
Types of Violence

- Instrumental Violence:
  This is ‘Planned’ or ‘Predatory’ violence;
Types of Violence

- Affective Violence:
  This is ‘Reactive’ or ‘Impulsive’ violence;
Actuarial Assessment Tools

- Violence Risk Assessment Guide (VRAG)
- Static 99R
- Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA)
  - Domestic Violence Risk Management (DVRM)
- Psychopathy Checklist - Revised (PCL-R) \(\text{(Sort of...)}\)
Structured Professional Judgment Tools

Risk Factors:

• Historical Clinical Risk - HCR-20
• Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide - SARA
• Stalking Assessment and Management - SAM
• Risk for Sexual Violence Protocol - RSVP
• Assessment of Risk for Honour Based Violence – PATRIARCH
• Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth – SAVRY

Protective Factors:

• Structured Assessment of PROtective Factors - SAPROF
Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide

• Developed by P. Randall Kropp Ph.D. and Stephen Hart Ph.D. out of Simon Fraser University in BC

• Lists 24 individual clinical risk factors identified by an extensive review of the empirical literature and by a review of articles written by clinicians with extensive experience in evaluating people who abuse their partners.

• We do not simply total up the number of risk factors present in a case to yield a total “score.” Each case is analysed on its own merits and any one risk factor could be significant enough, based on the case facts, to warrant a rating of low, medium or high risk.
Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide

The factors are divided into three sections:

• Section I includes 8 risk factors related to the nature of the intimate partner violence;
• Section II includes 10 risk factors related to the perpetrator’s history, circumstances, psychological and social functioning, and
• Section III includes 6 factors related to the victim’s ability or opportunity to engage in self-protective actions
Pathway to Violence

- Grievance
- Ideation
- Research/Planning
- Preparation
- Breach
- Attack
Proximal Warning Behaviors

- Pathway
- Fixation
- Identification
- Novel aggression

- Energy Burst
- Leakage
- Directly Communicated Threat
- Last Resort Behavior

We’re looking for **patterns** of behavior rather than individual risk factors: *pattern analysis*
Identifying and Coding Aggression Towards Animals

- PCL-R
- ODARA
- SPJ Tools (SARA V3)
- Novel Aggression
PCL-R

Item 12 describes individuals who experienced serious behavioral problems at the age of 12 or younger. These problems are more severe than those exhibited by most children. Repercussions can include discipline from schools and/or contact with the police. Some examples of these problems are persistent lying, cheating, theft, fire-setting, cruelty to animals, truancy, drug-use, vandalism, violence, bullying, running away from home and/or preconscious sex.
Domestic Violence Risk Management (DVRM)

16. Are there further considerations or factors that may impact on this offender’s risk for violence? Please document. (Items to consider here may include cultural aspects, social/family support, emotional crisis, power and control issues not already identified, *animal/pet abuse* and stressors, such as child access, financial and health issues).

“Killing or injuring a pet (particularly if the pet belongs to the victim or the children) is a direct means of intimidation to gain control, to instil fear and to regain power in an abusive relationship. Research has shown a correlation between the malicious killing and cruelty to animals with violence against humans. Escalation of stalking violence sees property destruction, credible threats of harm, killing an animal and assaultive behaviour as escalation towards serious harm or death.”
SPJ – SARA V3

Nature of Intimate Partner Violence

N1 – Intimidation - This factor reflects attempts by the perpetrator to induce fear in the victim via utterances or behavior that threaten physical, psychological or social harm in a manner that is ambiguous, vague or indirect. The perpetrator clearly intends to cause fear in the victim, that is, the perpetrator’s conduct gives rise to a reasonable perception that the victim or secondary victim may, or did, suffer considerable harm of some type.
Proximal Warning Behaviors

Novel Aggression

“This is an act of violence which appears unrelated to any “pathway” behavior and which is committed for the first time. The person of concern may be engaging in this behavior in order to test his ability to actually engage in a violent act55 and it could be thought of as experimental aggression. Examples of acts of novel aggression could include animal cruelty, assault, firearm discharge, arson or bombing, rehearsed violence with inanimate objects fantasized to be human targets, or even vandalism. A threat management team should not discount property crimes as they may be attempts at or first steps of a more serious offense or potentially novel aggression.”

Federal Bureau of Investigation – February 2017
Threat Management

Once we have assessed a level of risk for future violence, we then have a responsibility to offer strategies to MANAGE that risk…

These management strategies generally evolve from the risk factors that have been identified in the Threat Assessment process, and involve addressing and mitigating those risk factors.

These strategies can include monitoring (direct or third-party), direct intervention with enforceable conditions, treatment recommendations, mental health interventions, etc…
QUESTIONS ???

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