

An Alternative Method of Reviewing Behavioral Trajectory

Mohandie & Duffy 1999

The following information is excerpted and edited from "Threat Assessment in Schools" by Kris Mohandie, as contained in the "International Handbook of Threat Assessment."

An alternative framework which can be used to review a behavioral trajectory is to analyze five factors related to a subject's behavior and communication. These factors are: *organization, fixation, focus, violent action imperative, and time imperative.*

Organization refers to the extent to which an identified at-risk subject demonstrates the ability to sequence his or her actions as evidenced in written, verbal or other behavior, and whether there are well-understood central themes of motivation.

If the subject is capable of sequencing, and able to clearly articulate his or her motivational themes, the risk for well-orchestrated, planned predatory attack is higher.

If such an individual is disorganized in word and deeds and themes are unclear, risk may still exist but the offenses are more likely to take the form of impulsive less predictable attacks.

Fixation occurs when the subject is invested in an important issue or agenda, usually suffused with blame and the need for retaliation, but themes of omnipotence or misguided delusional missions might also be important.

Fixation indicates energy that may fuel an attack and thus is a risk-enhancing variable.

Focus indicates whether the subject has identified a potential target or set of targets at which to direct this energy vs. an individual or group who have yet to settle upon a direction. Focus increases risk.*

Violent action imperative occurs when the subject states or demonstrates through behavior or a willingness to use violence or other unacceptable means to resolve an issue.

Time imperative reflects urgency or an inferred or stated deadline for acting out. Both of these last variables signal increased violence risk potential.

* An additional perspective is found in a recent study and reported in the publication titled: "A study of the pre-attack behaviors of active shooters in the United States between 2000-2013" published June 2018 by US DOJ / FBI Silver, Simons, Craun. The authors report the following statement on page 23, under "Targeting Considerations":

"Relatedly, the FBI has observed that when an active shooter's grievance generalizes- that is, expands beyond a desire to punish a specific individual to a desire to punish an institution or community- this should be considered to be progression along a trajectory towards violence and ultimately a threat-enhancing characteristic."