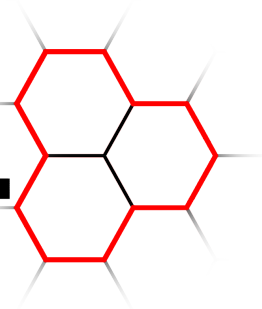


THE CP JOURNAL

get left of bang and stay there.



GETTING BEYOND A PERCEPTION OF SECURITY



A BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS APPROACH TO THREAT RECOGNITION AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Produced By: Patrick Van Horne
Founder and CEO
The CP Journal

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction	
The Conditions For Fear	4
The Existing Standard Of Training	4
The Limitations Of The Variable Approach	5
What You Should Demand In A Violence Prevention Program	5
3. The Overarching Concept and Underlying Science	
Making Accurate Decisions Amongst Uncertainty	6
Confidence and Universality of Observations	6
4. Domains of Observable Behavior	
Assessing An Individual’s Behavior	7
Assessing Group Dynamics.....	8
A Person’s Relationship With Their Environment	9
Reading The Collective Behavior	10
5. The Value	
Confirming and Reducing False Positives	10
Communication of Observations.....	11
Bridging The Experience Gape Between the Novice and the Veteran	11
6. Conclusion	13
7. References	14

Company Overview

The CP Journal is a Veteran Owned Small Business based in Boulder, CO. The CP Journal provides training seminars and professional consultation in behavioral analysis and threat recognition to the military, law enforcement and private security industry. This training empowers our nation’s protectors to take proactive action against those with violent intentions by learning to observe, classify and communicate the behavior of others. This stops violent events from occurring.

The CP Journal also provides training in behavioral analysis to the private sector. This includes threat recognition to non-security focused companies designed to prevent workplace and school violence. Business professionals can improve the effectiveness of their operations by learning to read and understand the nonverbal behavior of counterparts, especially in sales and negotiation settings.

To learn more about their values and training, visit: www.cp-journal.com

Questions or comments regarding this paper can be directed to Patrick Van Horne at:
Patrick@cp-journal.com

1. Executive Summary

The complexities and difficulties that active shooter scenarios present to the security personnel responsible for preventing them create a perception that an active shooter event is unpreventable. This is untrue. Threat recognition is based on a person's ability to accurately predict another person's intentions and capabilities. This allows a person to separate the criminal from the crowd he hides amongst. With the limitations of many threat recognition programs, programs that teach people to search for indicators that change from attack to attack, security providers will continue to struggle in preventing an attack from occurring.

This white paper will discuss how a program based on behavioral analysis and assessment can overcome these limitations and empower security officers to identify an individual with violent intentions. This allows buildings, schools, companies, and law enforcement officers to focus on violence prevention, instead of just the response a violent act.

A behavioral program begins by teaching a person to accurately assess and classify an individual's current emotional state. By understanding how the limbic system's freeze, flight, or fight response to stress manifests itself through nonverbal communication, people can learn to quickly analyze each person in our immediate vicinity. In order to gather true insight and meaning from these observations, these observations need to be weighed against the context that surrounds them. One component of this context is through the analysis of group dynamics and interpersonal relationships. Another component is the geographical area that these individuals and groups are operating in. Essentially, behavior and body language have different meanings in public areas, such as a mall or restaurant, than they would inside that person's home.

These four functional domains of behavior (individuals, groups, relationship with the environment, and collective mood) are principles that allow for these observations to be made around the world and applied in any setting. Each domain is backed by behavioral science to ensure these observations are ones that a person can be confident in, and that represent a true indication of a person's intentions and capabilities.

The terminology used to define behavior allows for effective communication of observations, thus allowing an officer to retroactively justify the actions taken. In addition to facilitating report writing, communication also helps veteran officers with extensive experience mentor their less experienced peers by having the vocabulary available to explain their observations and intuitions.

Learning to read behavior is an empowering capability and complements existing security measures. Because many access control measures channel people through a single point of entrance, those people with violent intentions are mixed in with those who legitimately belong there. Behavioral analysis provides you with the ability to separate the criminal from the crowd.

2. Introduction

The Conditions For Fear

From beginning to end, active shooter incidents occur extremely quickly and are typically only “active” for 10-15 minutesⁱ before the shooter is stopped. With each successful attack in a public area, such as movie theaters, religious centers, in the workplace, or on city streets, the myth that these events are unpreventable are reinforced, creating the conditions for fear.

At its core, active shooter recognition and prevention boils down to a security officer’s ability to accurately assess the intentions and capabilitiesⁱⁱ of the people around them. How quickly a person can determine if another’s intentions are either violent or legitimate, can be the difference between life and death. This is an evolutionary ability that has allowed us to survive the predators we have faced throughout history, and it is one that can be honed to execute this process more effectively.

The perception that active shooter events are outside of our control is not the result of an inability to identify these threats. It is a result of ineffective training that teaches people to focus on indicators that don’t separate criminals from the crowd they hide amongst.

The Existing Standard Of Training

A great deal of existing threat recognition training focuses on variables that are present in violent situations. These factors alone are inadequate because they don’t provide reliable information that can be used to stop an attack before it begins. These include:

Motive: Motivations change from attack to attack and this underlying cause could be based on any number of beliefs. It could be a religious, political, or a cultural ideology. It could be personal in nature and a result of a recent firing, insults, bullying, or any other number of reasons. A focus on a person’s beliefs are not accurate indicators of violence as not every laid off worker comes back to attack their former boss and not every religious radical will commit to violence for their cause. Trying to prevent violence by focusing solely on person’s beliefs or situation will not be sufficient in preventing an attack.

Victim Selection/Location: There is often no relationship between the attacker and the victims of active shooter scenarios or the location where the attack occurs. If a location becomes too hardened with security, the attacker will find a vulnerable point to attack. Because the decision for victims and location reside with the attacker, attempting to predict the attacker’s decision will force responders into a reactive role.

Weapons: Any weapon could be used in an attack, whether it is a firearm, explosive, fire, knives, or fists. Attempting to prevent violence by looking for a specific weapon will not ensure adequate security. If access to one is restricted, an attacker will find other means.

Attacker: The attacker can be of any race, religion, age, or gender. A focus on these factors alone is in no way an indicator of a person’s overall intentions or capacity for violence.

I am not arguing that these indicators should be ignored. In actuality they provide a wealth of information following an attack. However, there are inherent limitations in building a violence prevention program solely from these indicators. These security procedures don't stop the violence from occurring, they simply move it to an area with looser security measures.

The Limitation of the "Variable" Approach

In addition to the obvious problem of relying on indicators that change from incident to incident, there are significant limitations to a program that teaches these indicators. The most significant reason is that relying on motives alone requires personal knowledge about the potential attacker. You would have to know that the person had been recently laid off, had medical conditions that require medication, that they had a substance abuse problem, etc., in order to identify them as a potential threat. It would be impossible to gather this level of detail about every single person that you encounter throughout your daily routine, therefore rendering you incapable of ensuring your own security.

What You Should Demand In A Violence Prevention Program

Instead of focusing on the aforementioned indicators that can change from situation to situation, security providers should be taught to focus on the one constant of active shooter scenarios. That constant is the attacker's intention to do harm to others. By focusing our observations on the search for the behavioral and nonverbal cues that violent individuals will display, people can begin to prevent violence from occurring.

The goal of a violence prevention program should be grounded in the early recognition of potential threats. A violence prevention program should be held to the following standards:

1. The program should be universally applicable. Indicators that only work in an office, only in combat, or only in schools, are too limited. Because the attack location can change, the pre-event indicators must be universal and work in any setting, anywhere in the world.
2. The program should be the same for novices and experienced professionals. This means that it should rely on intuitive and objective judgments while also using a structured approach to aid in the accumulation of experiences. This will lead to more informed intuitive judgments in the future.
3. The program's components must allow for clear, concise and standardized communication of observations. If a person cannot justify why a decision was made and explain their observations to others, the program will be of little value.
4. The program must be grounded in science, allowing for people to be confident in their observations. This implies that the program can be quantified and passed on, removing any limitations in the distribution of a threat recognition program.

The remainder of this white paper will lay out how a structure of a behavioral analysis approach can meet all of these standards and overcome the existing limitations in threat prevention programs.

3. The Overarching Concept and Underlying Science

Making Accurate Decisions Amongst Uncertainty

To meet the requirements of a successful training program, that program must be built around a heuristic decision-making strategy that works in situations where an observer only has a limited amount of time and a limited amount of information available. This strategy must also be based in principles that are universal and that can be applied in a variety of situations. They must be simple enough to not add an unnecessary tax on an already stressed attention system.

When it comes to analyzing behavior, a straightforward equation of “Baseline + Anomaly = Decision” fits these requirements. By establishing a baseline, finding what is normal in that setting, a person is able to identify anomalies, which are any deviations from that baseline. This allows for broad application, as a baseline can be established for individual people, groups of people, specific events, small confined areas and large areas such as an entire village or city. The behavioral domains that are discussed in this paper will allow a person to quantify and categorize the baseline, facilitating the identification of anomalous behavior.

The recognition that a person stands out from the baseline is the first step of the attention focusing process and allows an observer to begin establishing a plan of action for dealing with the anomaly. The most detailed response plans, building lockdown plans, and the launch of first responders, cannot occur without the initial identification of an anomaly.

Confidence and Universality of Observations

The goal of observation must always be informed action that allows a person to stop violent events from occurring. Often times, people hesitate from taking action because of a lack of confidence in their own assessment.ⁱⁱⁱ By backing all of the observations a security provider makes in fields of behavioral science, a person can be confident that what they are observing are true and proven indicators of a person’s intentions and capabilities.

The nonverbal communication that we look for in individuals, in groups, and in the way that people interact with their environment, are all driven unconsciously by the way humans perceive their personal safety and security. The limbic system of the brain automatically and uncontrollably controls the body’s freeze, flight, or fight response to stress,^{iv} which is hardwired into our survival mechanisms, not a result of learned behavior. This allows these observations to be universal and reliable around the world because they are unconscious and immediate responses. Even though humans face few threats today that require a response of physical aggression or the need to immediately flee the scene, the way a subordinate responds to his boss’s aggression, the way a victim of bullying cowers to the dominant person, and the interaction between the patron and employee at a local coffee shop all show the manifestation of these stress responses through a person’s body language.

4. Domains Of Observable Behavior

Assessing An Individual's Behavior

The foundation of behavioral analysis relies on the ability to quickly and accurately classify an individual's current emotional state and their intentions. Due to the fact that a single gesture, posture, or expression does not have one (and only one) meaning, relying on a single cue to make a determination would lead to inaccurate assessments. To overcome these limitations, a person's intentions and capabilities must be derived from a *cluster* of three or more indicators that all lead to the same conclusion.

These clusters are the result of an understanding of Kinesic indicators (the study of body movement) and Biometric Cues (the uncontrollable physiological and biological responses to stress). The four primary clusters that we focus our attention on are a result of the limbic system's freeze, flight, or fight response to threats, which can be assessed as dominance, submission, discomfort and comfort. The number of potential clusters used is intentionally limited to these four options to ensure simplicity and to maintain a direct correlation of the limbic system's perception of threats.

The first observable cluster is referred to as the "Dominant Cluster" and is the body's manifestation of the fight response. This is identified in people who use their body to take up a greater amount of space as they take "ownership" of their surroundings. This type of body language shows a form of territoriality, confidence and authority.^v Typical gestures and postures include people standing with their hands on their hips and with their feet spread, people sitting with their hands clasped behind their head and legs splayed, and people who use their hands in pointing and lecturing gestures. *

The second observable cluster is classified as the "Submissive Cluster" and is a representation of the *absence* of the body's fight response. This is often seen in people who are victims of abuse and those that feel their best chance of survival against an aggressor is to avoid escalation or agitation. As it is the polar opposite of the Dominant Cluster, this is seen in people who are attempting to minimize the amount of physical space they take up.^{vi} Common indicators include arms being withdrawn towards the body, shoulders that are lowered, minimal hand gestures, legs withdrawn under the body while seated, and other indicators that could refer to as timid or shy. *

The third observable cluster is classified as the "Uncomfortable Cluster" and is a manifestation of the body's flight response. This cluster is often observed by behavior normally categorized as attempts to protect itself, either by physically blocking vital areas on the body or by creating separation from the potential threat.^{vii} These gestures and postures are commonly referred to as being closed off, anxious, or nervous. *

The fourth cluster is the "Comfortable Cluster" which demonstrates that the person does not perceive any threats, and that no flight, or fight response has been initiated by the limbic system. Commonly thought of as relaxed behavior and open gestures,^{viii} the comfortable cluster shows that the person is in an environment that poses no threat to their survival. *

*** For a complete list of cues in each cluster visit www.cp-journal.com/library ***

The Dominant, Submissive, Uncomfortable and Comfortable clusters are the four primary classifications because they are considered honest representations of the current emotional state. Because these limbic system reactions are uncontrollable and universal, they can be applied in any setting, meeting the demand for application in a wide variety of situations.

These clusters are observations and should be considered the “science” behind an assessment, but do not determine whether a person is an anomaly or someone who fits the baseline. Throughout the course of a day, people typically cycle through all of these clusters, which requires that observers add context to them in order to find deeper meaning. The context for assessing individuals is attained by assessing interpersonal relationships and the way these individuals interact with their environment.

Assessing Group Dynamics

An understanding of group dynamics stems from observations relating to the field of Proxemics. Proxemic observations are an assessment about how people interact with the space around them.^{ix} This provides an insight into the intimacy of a relationship that a person has with the other members of their group by observing how close or far away people stand. When two people are seen to be standing very close to each other (with minimal space between them) they can be considered to be in what is described as the intimate space,^x demonstrating a very close personal relationship. To allow another person to be that close shows a high degree of trust, as great harm could be done if someone is within arm’s distance.

An assessment made regarding relationships within a group is confirmed by identifying the clusters discussed in the last section for each individual in the group. If all of the parties are showing a degree of comfort, an assessment made about the relationships can be considered valid. If one member is showing dominance while the others are showing submissiveness or discomfort, the space between the people might be a result of a position of authority and not a true relationship. These observations are important and honest because they are a result of the limbic system’s response to stress and threats. If two people are too close to each other, a proximity that does not truly represent their relationship, they will naturally want to increase the separation and establish a proximity that makes all parties comfortable, providing an assessment that is honest and valid. Whenever there are clusters displaying an emotional state other than comfort, the degree of separation could be considered an anomaly, as it is not a true representation of the relationship of the group.

In regards to threat recognition, observers need to develop their ability to assess the intentions of people who are approaching them. Changes in the Proxemic baseline, when someone is either closing the distance between or separating themselves from a person or object, is a dynamic that warrants focused attention. Because people typically only approach things that are of interest to them and pose no threat,^{xi} a person approaching a building with an intent to do harm will show indicators that differentiate them from those surrounding them. When observations are made of a person in the approach another displaying anything other than the Comfortable Cluster, that person’s behavior stands out from the baseline and can provide an observer with an advanced warning of a potential threat.

Understanding How People Interact With The Environment

The additional functional observation that provides context and relevance to observations about an individual person, as well as groups of people, is their relationship with their surroundings. How people interact with the environment can provide additional information to the trained observer. This includes alerting us to people who are either familiar or unfamiliar with their area as well as if the location they are in is open to everyone or if there are requirements for admission.

We assess the geography using two classifications: a place is labeled as either a habitual area or an anchor point. The difference between these two locations is the behavior of the people within them that demonstrates an impression of being either open or closed to outsiders and the general public.

A habitual area is a place where there are no barriers to entry and a place where people can come or go as they see fit. Habitual areas are places where people are drawn to in order to have a need filled. Places such as malls, restaurants, parks, etc. are often classified this way because there typically isn't anyone or anything that prevents them from entering. While there can be physical characteristics that reflect openness, habitual areas are ultimately identified by the actions and behaviors of the people within the habitual area. These actions can be either an overt display of openness or be an absence of restrictions. Habitual areas are places susceptible to attack because an attacker could appear to have a legitimate reason for being there, such as going to a movie theater, a mall, or a public park. This helps an attacker conceal their intentions up to the last possible moment before an attack.

Contrary to a habitual area, an anchor point is a location where access is restricted to a certain group of people. People establish both permanent and temporary anchor points that serve as a base of operations and are places that a person will defend when invaded. A person's home is often considered a permanent anchor point because not everyone is allowed inside, only those invited in. Criminals also use anchor points as a base of operations to plan their future attacks. While violence prevention for an anchor point primarily consists of keeping people who don't belong out of the building, such as a former employee who was recently fired, it is also necessary to read the intentions of those who are normally allowed in. Stopping the insider attacks requires the same observations and prevention plan that would be created for a habitual area.

These environmental considerations assist in not only providing additional context and meaning to the people being observed, but also help in predicting future actions. As people approach habitual areas, certain patterns of behavior would be expected, and deviations from those patterns aid in rapid identification of anomalous behavior.

Reading the Collective Behavior

The final functional domain of observable behavior relates to the collective mood of a situation or place. When people feel that the area, both the geographic area and the people within it, pose no threat, their behavior reflects the positive atmosphere. When people seem anxious, tense, or afraid, it is very likely that something has occurred or is present causing them to feel that way. These negative atmospheric cues and emotions pass from one person to another unconsciously through mimicry. A single person's fear, discomfort or rage can quickly pass through a crowd.^{xii}

A security officer who can quantify the “feel” of an area and the collective mood using the domains of Proxemics and Kinesics, in addition to other factors such as graffiti, the order or disorder, the noise level, and activity level, will be able to quickly identify any shifts in the Atmospheric baseline. Shifts from the baseline are significant pre-event indicators that observers can use to realize that something has changed in their area, and that they need to be on a heightened level of alertness. If a single person realizes that someone or something doesn't fit the baseline, the way that their reaction will spread throughout the crowd can be the indicator needed for an observer to realize a change has occurred that must be investigated.

5. The Value Added

Confirming and Reducing False Positives

As the goal of behavioral analysis is to accurately assess another person's intentions and capabilities, there are times when uncertainty and doubt will negatively affect the decision-making process and a speedy recognition of threats.

To reduce the uncertainty and improve confidence in a person's observations, officers are encouraged to talk to any potential anomaly. Behavioral assessment assists during the preparation and execution of this conversation. Before the contact begins, an officer can establish control questions, questions the officer already knows the answer to, to test the level of honesty in a person. Questions about the relationship they have with another person that you observed using Proxemics or the reason they were in a Habitual Area are some examples. This gives the educated observer an upper hand from the beginning of the contact and conversation, allowing them to gather the information they are searching for.

During the conversation, the same behavioral cues made with standoff apply when up close. Any changes or shifts in nonverbal behavior indicate a perceived threat by the person and should alert the observer to a topic that requires them to dig deeper. Through this process people have the ability to confirm or deny their earlier observations and make informed decisions about how to proceed.

Communication Of Observations

Once the observation and decision process is complete, the terminology given to the domains is designed to facilitate communication between the person on the ground and anyone else who requires an understanding of the events. Whether this is across operational units or to retroactively justify actions taken in reports, by using the vocabulary, officers have the ability to quantify exactly what they observed, why it was important, and how it guided their decisions. This ability has previously been obscure and inaccessible to officers.

An officer who stops and frisks a person on the street cannot rely on being able to say, “I did what I did because the guy looked funny,” or, “the guy was up to no good.” That justification simply does not meet the standard. Being able to explain that, when observing a habitual area, a group of men did not appear to be there for any clear purpose and one member of that group exhibited the behavior that the officers used to identify him as the leader of the group. When the officers approached the group and contacted the leader, his behavior shifted into the uncomfortable cluster whenever the conversation focused on their purpose for being in the area. After seeing the person continuously touch his waistband, the officers determined that there was something being concealed that the person was attempting to remain hidden. Upon a search, the officer found a weapon, leading him to make the arrest. This explanation gets the reason for the initial contact and subsequent search beyond inaccurate or vague descriptions. This terminology ensures that singular and ineffective observations such as race or religion were not factors in any decision.

The names for each cluster and each domain are chosen to be specific enough to facilitate rapid and effective communication. What one person would call “aggressive” behavior, another might call “posturing,” while a third could call it “intimidation.” By standardizing a common terminology and calling the cluster “Dominant,” it facilitates communication and reduces confusion. They are also chosen to not be overly specific. We could easily differentiate between kinesics and haptics (the study of touching), but this differentiation would be an over-classification of behavior and begin to inhibit the decision making process. The goal is to empower the “guy on the ground” to provide the information needed to make accurate decisions, communicate their observations, while not overcomplicating the situation.

Bridging the Education Gap Between The Novice and The Veteran

This ability to communicate observations also helps the process of mentoring a new officer in the field. This development often occurs through after-action reports in the form of a recollection of *what* took place – a series of steps that an officer took. While this is an essential part of development, it doesn’t take into consideration *why* the officer did what he did. The intuitive judgments and observations that separate experienced professionals from their novice peers take years to develop and hone before they become a reliable asset. That intuition is built upon a highly developed “database” of experiences stored in the brain, and allows people to quickly recognize patterns of behavior.^{xiii} A common terminology grounded in science can serve as a catalyst in bridging this gap.

The fundamentals of the behavioral analysis described above allows for a new recruit to systematically develop the experiences and observations needed to intuitively recognize the patterns that their more experienced counterparts rely on to be effective in their jobs. This structured approach is more preferable than leaving their development to chance, simply hoping that a new police officer, soldier or security guard will learn to recognize the subtle changes in behavior over time and with experience. Formalizing the development process can shorten the time required to achieve that understanding, improve overall operational effectiveness and potentially save their life.

Another reason this helps to reduce development time is because it produces a vocabulary to assist a veteran officer in mentoring someone with less experience. Using an example from law enforcement, a new officer is expected to “learn his beat,” which is just another way of saying that he/she is expected to intuitively learn the baseline for that neighborhood. By breaking down human behavior into quantifiable observations and terms that facilitate communication, it allows a new recruit to talk about what they are seeing with a common terminology. An officer becomes much more capable when he can explicitly state:

- The baseline Atmospheric are for his area
- Where the habitual areas and anchor points are located
- What groups of people are commonly out on the street
- What the relationships are of the people are in that group
- What the individual behavioral clusters are for the shop owners, residents, etc., are in that area, and how those change in the presence of officers or gang members

A veteran officer can use these points to pass on the information they have gained through experience on that beat to a new officer who only has a limited amount of time to learn these dynamics. Using this universal terminology, both veterans and rookies can begin stopping crime more quickly, more accurately, and more confidently.

6. Conclusion

“We evaluate people all the time, quite attentively, but they only get our conscious attention when there is a reason. We see it all, but we edit out most of it. Thus, when something does call out to us, we ought to pay attention. For many people, that is a muscle they don’t exercise.”

- Gavin De Becker

Many of the observations we have discussed in this paper are ones that people have been making their entire lives, although often outside of conscious awareness. Threat recognition at its core consists of assessments about a person’s intentions and capabilities. With the complex threat that active shooters pose for security personnel and civilians, we can’t rely solely on intuitive judgments that may take years to develop. We also can’t rely on stopping an attack by focusing our observation on the variables that exist in a violent event.

By learning to accurately classify the behaviors of every single person in our vicinity, we can get beyond the limitations of current security training and implement a program that allows people to become proactive against threats. This is a process that can be learned and systematically expanded upon, shortening the time required for officers to become truly effective at protecting our country from crime, terrorism and threats.

Recognizing threats, however, is only the first step. To meet the requirements of an effective violence prevention plan, observers need the ability to apply their observations in any setting. The program must be grounded in science to ensure the observations are valid and allow for effective communication of the situation. Finally, the program must be the same for novices and veterans to allow for continuous development throughout a career. A program based on learning to read the behavioral cues of a person’s intentions and capabilities fulfills the requirements for success. When an observer is trained to accurately and rapidly assess an individual’s current emotional state, gain additional understanding from group dynamics as well as the environment, they can maintain the upper hand in separating criminals from the crowd and prevent violent acts from occurring.

Questions or comments regarding this paper can be directed to Patrick Van Horne at:

Patrick@cp-journal.com

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