

The Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention [J-BIT]

A Publication of the
National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA)



[www.nabita.org]

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2015 • Volume 3

The Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention

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ISBN-13: 978-0-9965138-3-8

PRINT ISSN: 2380-1107 ONLINE ISSN: 2380-1115

DOI 10.17732/JBIT03



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A Special Thanks to Our Copy Editor

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Suggested Citation

Van Brunt, B. (Ed.) (2015). *Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention (J-BIT)*, Volume 3. A publication of the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA).

The Enigma of Adam Lanza's Mind and Motivations for Murder

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Abstract

Former college or university students have been responsible for some of the most destructive shooting sprees in recent years. While Lanza did not carry out his attack on a college campus, he certainly could have. For campus Behavioral Intervention Team members, exploring Lanza's motivations could help better address students who may pose a threat of similar violence.

Adam Lanza did not attack a college campus, but he could have. He had attended both Western Connecticut State University and Norwalk Community College. Similarly, other rampage shooters, such as Jared Loughner (Tucson, Arizona; 2011), James Holmes (Aurora, Colorado; 2012), and Elliot Rodger (University of California at Santa Barbara; 2014), had been students at postsecondary institutions not long before carrying out their attacks. Thus, former college or university students have committed several of the worst rampage attacks in recent years. Why these perpetrators chose the venues they did, rather than their former schools, remains a mystery.

Despite the overwhelming attention generated by Lanza's attack, his mental dynamics remain elusive. This article is an attempt to shed light on who he was and what his motivations for violence might have been. Due to the limited available information, much of what follows constitutes questions and speculations rather than conclusions about why he chose to kill his mother and young children.

Though originally Lanza was said to have left no Internet footprint, this has turned out to be incorrect. Reed Coleman has conducted exhaustive research and concluded that Lanza edited Wikipedia, posted on YouTube, and contributed frequently to a forum called "Shocked Beyond Belief" that focused on mass murderers. Coleman has written multiple in-depth articles documenting the content of Lanza's postings and presenting evidence that the posts were indeed by Adam Lanza (see Coleman's blog, *Sandy Hook Lighthouse*; relevant articles will be cited when appropriate).

Because most of the postings were for a public audience rather than entries in a private diary, they cannot necessarily be taken at face value. They may express how Lanza wanted to be perceived rather than presenting who he really was, or they may have been meant sarcastically or humorously. Nonetheless, many of his posts seem meaningful and will be quoted for the possible insight they offer into his mind.

Psychological Type: Psychotic

I have elsewhere presented a typology of school shooters, placing perpetrators into one or two of three categories: psychopathic, psychotic, or traumatized (Langman, 2009; Langman, 2015). Though Lanza was not diagnosed as psychotic during his lifetime, in an earlier work (Langman, 2015), I speculated that he had undiagnosed schizophrenia. At the time, there was no clear evidence of hallucinations or delusions. Since then, however, more information has come to light that supports this diagnosis.

The hypothesis that Lanza was schizophrenic originally was based on several behaviors and traits he exhibited that are associated with schizophrenia. These include the lack of expressed emotion (flat affect)

and the failure to speak in situations where speech would be appropriate and expected (poverty of speech). A former classmate stated, "If you looked at him, you couldn't see any emotions going through his head" (Halbfinger, 2012). The woman who cut Lanza's hair commented, "He would just sit there and not speak... I just thought the child couldn't speak" (Murphy, 2012).

In addition, Lanza's reported periods of withdrawal and unresponsiveness could have been catatonic episodes. For example:

He began having episodes that sent him into complete withdrawal. Loud noises, bright lights, or any sudden change or excitement could send him into a nonresponsive state... "It was like he would go into a trance," one student remembered. "It was a little scary... He just seemed vacant. Like he wasn't there" (Lysiak, 2013, p. 43).

Second, other aspects of his functioning are consistent with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. For example, he had an extreme sensitivity to lights and sounds, yet also had a marked decrease in sensitivity to pain (Office of the Child Advocate, 2014). Both of these conditions occur in schizophrenia (Torrey, 2006). He also had extremely rigid rituals or compulsions (Office of the Child Advocate, 2014), and though this could be seen simply as obsessive-compulsive disorder, such symptoms, particularly when they become markedly severe, can be based on delusions and can be an associated feature of schizophrenia (Torrey, 2006).

In addition, comments by the family members themselves struck me as significant. When Lanza was 14 years of age, he had several meetings with a nurse at the Yale Child Study Center: "During her conversations with him, he asked questions about schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder, but was unwilling to share if he was experiencing any of the symptoms of the disorders" (Office of the Child Advocate, 2014, p. 53).

The fact that Lanza was curious about schizophrenia and unwilling to disclose if he had any of the symptoms suggests the possibility that he had some of the symptoms but was unwilling to reveal this. Similarly, his mother wondered "whether her son had outgrown what had previously been diagnosed as borderline autism into something much more extreme" (Lysiak, 2013, p. 23). This was not necessarily schizophrenia, but it shows that his mother was not satisfied with the autism-spectrum diagnosis he had been given. After Lanza's rampage, his father questioned the diagnosis of Asperger's: "I was thinking it [the Asperger's diagnosis] could mask schizophrenia" (Solomon, 2014).

Nearly two years after the attack, The Office of the Child Advocate in Connecticut released a report summarizing Lanza's contacts with the

medical and mental health systems. Though the report acknowledged that Lanza's functioning "could suggest a possible psychotic break," it concluded that "a review of emails authored by AL [Adam Lanza] through the last days of his life suggests that his thinking, while highly idiosyncratic and verging on the bizarre with regard to mass murder, was not actively psychotic" (Office of the Child Advocate, 2014, p. 105). This conclusion was preceded, however, by the comments that Lanza "would cope by withdrawing into a detached private inner world," and that he had "fantasies that blurred the boundaries between inner experience and outer reality" (p. 104). Since psychosis is generally defined as a loss of touch with reality, the report suggests that Lanza was psychotic. The conclusion that he was not "actively psychotic" is followed a paragraph later by the comment: "It is possible that he increasingly lost touch with reality" (p. 105). Thus, though the report stopped short of concluding he was psychotic, it repeatedly described him as having lost touch with reality or suggesting that this was the case.

The most conclusive evidence of Lanza's psychosis was not made public until June 18, 2015, when Reed Coleman wrote a blog entitled "Exclusive: Private Messages Sent by the Sandy Hook Shooter" (Coleman, 2015c). Coleman had obtained two messages sent by Lanza to people he knew from the online forum in which he participated (the forum was originally known as "Super Columbine Massacre RPG," but then was renamed "Shocked Beyond Belief"). The first of these messages is the relevant one in terms of Lanza's psychosis. (Lanza's writing is quoted as he wrote it without corrections for capitalization, punctuation, etc.)

Lanza wrote, "I have images of distorted faces flashing through my mind," noting that "the faces are fairly mundane, and they sporadically rapidly appear without any context and then disappear" (Coleman, 2015c). Though he referred to them as mundane, they frightened him. He said, "I get slightly paranoid over them" and noted that afterwards he had to search his bedroom to make sure that no one was there. He referred to these as "hallucinations," putting the word in quotation marks as if he weren't sure if they were really hallucinations. He then went on to describe what apparently was his first significant psychotic episode:

The incident was so surreal that I only remember a small amount of the details. Basically, I began to "see" many different things. Although I knew that none of it was actually real, it came as close to being real as it could be for me without it being physically tangible. I heard screaming around me, and I had an overwhelming sense that there was someone dead behind me. I kept seeing silhouettes of flickering people everywhere. I felt like I had to cry. The entire ordeal persisted for about 15 minutes and sort of faded away. Prior to it happening, I had never had that sort of delusional hysteria before (Coleman, 2015c).

In this passage, Lanza recorded both auditory and visual hallucinations.

His comment that he only remembered a little of the experience indicates that there was much more to it than he reported. His previous experiences of seeing faces that caused him to become paranoid apparently were the gradual onset of psychosis that culminated in a dramatic psychotic break. These psychotic symptoms, along with his poverty of speech, flattened affect, and the other factors discussed earlier, all support a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

Another detail is worth noting. Lanza wrote about his psychotic experience on Oct. 3, 2010 (Coleman, 2015c). This was more than two years before his rampage. During the subsequent two years, the frequency and severity of his symptoms may have increased. Though we don't know about the course of his psychosis, he became less functional over time in other domains. He withdrew from his family, stopped taking college classes, stopped posting on "Shocked Beyond Belief" (Coleman, 2014), and spent more and more time in the isolation of his home. By the time of his attack, he may well have been severely psychotic.

Why is the question of psychosis important? Because in trying to understand Lanza's rationale for the attack, we may be faced with an "irrational rationale." There have been shooters who gunned down girls who rejected them, teachers who failed them, principals who expelled them, and colleagues who denied them tenure. As abhorrent as such acts are, there were actual conflicts in which the perpetrators perceived themselves as victims of injustice and sought revenge. Revenge is a common rationale for violence.

In many cases, however, there was no real-life rationale. For example, at least one motivation for Seung Hui Cho's attack at Virginia Tech was to kill others before they killed him. His manifesto makes it clear that he saw himself not only as a victim of horrendous abuse and torture, but that he believed he was facing annihilation. This rationale was irrational, (i.e., delusional). In seeking to make sense of Lanza's violence, we may be faced with one or more irrational rationales.

Identity, Humanity, and Civilization

Lanza had strong views of culture and civilization, and their relationship to human nature. How he viewed himself in terms of these concepts is important to understanding who he was.

To start with, Lanza apparently suffered severe emotional distress throughout his life. Evidence of his struggles occurred as early as elementary school, when he wrote "loser" and "ugly" on his hand (Office of the Child Advocate, 2014, p. 28). In fifth grade, he "did not think highly of himself and believed that everyone else in the world deserved more than he did" (Sedensky, 2013a, p. 33). When he was older and was "taking college courses, he often cried in frustration" and wondered why he was "such a loser" (Solomon, 2014). As a

young adult, he described himself as “numbly perplexed over the foreign concept of loving life” (Coleman, 2014, p. 30), and stated, “I’m fine with the interminable depression that I normally have” (p. 33). According to his mother, he was “acutely aware that he was different from other kids” (p. 64).

Despite this awareness of his differentness and his own distress, his mother wrote, “He will not accept any preferential treatment at all... He wants to believe that he is an ordinary student, and I think it is important to let him believe [this] for his self-esteem” (Office of the Child Advocate, 2014, p. 67). When asked to complete a form for a physician’s office, Lanza “did not check off that he had any mental health issues” (p. 71).

It is interesting to see how Lanza integrated his life experiences and made sense of who he was, at times being painfully aware that he was different, yet at other times apparently trying to deny that there was anything wrong with him. To understand this process, we need to explore his view of human nature and culture.

In his view, growing up in a culture and learning how to function socially is a process of “raping” innocent minds. He stated: “the entire philosophy behind education: the brutal indoctrination of pristine minds so as to propagate some delusional system of cultural values” (Coleman, 2014, p. 32). He referred to “children who’ve been mindfucked by culturapists,” viewing the imposition of culture onto children as a form of rape. He liked to take the word “therapist” and break it into “the rapist.” For example: “Therapists are secular priests who assert that they have some ‘truth’, and if your values deviate, then you are ‘wrong’. Hence, The Rapist. They impose their values onto you through their mindfucking” (Coleman, 2014, p. 16). He also referred to “the rape of civilization” (p. 29), meaning that the process of becoming civilized is a form of rape.

Though civilization certainly has its attendant ills, Lanza’s views were extreme. This issue seemed like an obsession with him, as indicated by the frequency and intensity of his comments on the topic (the following quotes are all from Coleman, 2014).

- “Culture. I’ve been pissed out of my mind all night thinking about it. I should have been born a chimp” (p. 29).
- “Enculturing human children is already terrifying enough” (p. 29).
- “I spent all day ruminating over how much I hate culture” (p. 30).
- “Gory shockumentaries are a joke compared to the terror of cultural indoctrination” (p. 30).
- “I hate how I spend 99% of my time upset about culture” (p. 34).

Why was Lanza so obsessed with culture? He was profoundly anxious around people and never developed the social fluency that most children do. Growing up did not come naturally to him. The conventions that govern social interaction were foreign to him and he struggled when in the presence of other people. No wonder that he felt that socialization is a process of “submission” and “indoctrination.” Included in his hostility toward culture was a disdain for language:

- “I hate every facet of language” (Coleman, 2014, p. 30).
- (In response to the question: “Where would you live?”) “Any place and any time before language infected humans” (p. 30).

As a young child, he had difficulty learning to speak and made up his own “language,” which he used at least until he was approximately five years old (Office of the Child Advocate, 2014, pp. 15–17). Rather than acquiring language with the ease of most children, this, too, was a struggle. Thus, he objected to language as an imposition and longed to be able to live without it.

Lanza once wrote, “My wet dream is living in the wild with apes” (Coleman, 2014, p. 34). This is reminiscent of the lines from T. S. Eliot’s poem, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” in which the title character comments, “I should have been a pair of ragged claws, scuttling across the floors of silent seas.” The character suffered from paralyzing self-consciousness and an inability to engage socially. Lanza, like Prufrock, sought freedom from self-consciousness and social inadequacy by escaping into the wild as a non-human creature.

The concept of culture as a raping of innocent human nature is not only of significance to Lanza’s own self-concept, but is also relevant to his view of mass murderers. The issue of society as the cause of violence was raised when someone posted the following message on the forum “Shocked Beyond Belief,” of which Lanza was a frequent contributor:

It is incredibly debatable whether or not societal factors had an effect or in some way influenced Columbine, and to be honest I think it wouldn’t have made any difference if the high school was a utopia. I see it as two teenagers who were not well in any sense of the word acting for little to no reason whatsoever. Honestly the “society is shitty” commentary just seems a little much for me” (Coleman, 2014, p. 37).

This spurred Lanza to write a rebuttal of more than 600 words, arguing that mass murderers are symptomatic of the alienation caused by civilization. He argued:

Civilization has not been present for 99% of the existence of hominids, and the only way that it’s ever sustained is by indoctrinating each new child for years on end. The “wellness” that you speak of is solely defined by a child’s submission to this process (Coleman, 2014, p. 38).

Lanza concluded by referring to the other writer's admitted anxiety: "Do you really think that the way you feel is not symptomatic of anything other than your own inexplicable defectiveness?" (p. 38).

Lanza appears to have used a critique of civilization to address his own "inexplicable defectiveness." Throughout his life, Lanza was a misfit. By viewing his inability to function as a product of civilization and its resulting alienation, he could blame society for his problems. In this perspective, there was nothing inherently wrong with him—he was simply another young mind that was raped by cultural indoctrination. In fact, he was perhaps special in that he could see through this process and recognize culture for the horror that it is. In this light, perhaps he saw himself not as woefully inferior, but as intellectually superior to all those who mindlessly follow the dictates of civilization. His harsh cultural critique freed him for accepting his own "inexplicable defectiveness."

Lanza also used his cultural critique to explain mass murder. His long response about the connection between civilization, alienation, and violence argues that mass murderers are a product of a flawed society. Lanza commented about mass murder: "If you were trying to measure alienation in a society, what could be a more blatant indication?" (Coleman, 2014, p. 38). Viewing Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold (the Columbine killers) as innocent victims of a fragmented culture shifts the blame from them to civilization and all its evils. Thus, he could view his own murderous impulses not as a result of his own defectiveness, but as caused by the defectiveness of culture.

It is interesting that Eric Harris also objected to civilization and culture, but for completely different reasons than Lanza. Harris railed against morality and laws because they kept him from gratifying his desires: if he wanted to rape and kill, he thought he should be allowed to. He celebrated instincts over society's conventions, stating, "Laws delete instincts" (Langman, 2014b, p. 5). Thus, Harris objected to civilization because it got in his way. Lanza, however, objected to civilization because he couldn't function in it.

Whereas Lanza's posts on "Shocked Beyond Belief" focused on the alienation caused by civilization as the cause of mass murders, his posts on YouTube focused on mental illness as the cause of violence:

- "When mental illness reaches the final point, this [a school shooting] happens" (Coleman, 2015a).
- "Classic deluded psycho sitting in a room fantasizing. Not mind control. Just mental illness" (Coleman, 2015a).
- "Psychology has proven that people who do things like this are mentally sick and not thinking 100% properly" (Coleman, 2015b)
- "People who kill have many reasons and motivations, they are motivated by perverse urges which overcome them.

They are sick in the head that is for sure, but they are not evil" (Coleman, 2015b).

At first, this might seem like a contradiction of his view that civilization causes violence, but in reality, the two views are essentially the same. According to Lanza, civilization causes psychological problems, the most extreme of which result in mass murder. In other words, culture causes mental illness, which in turn causes mass murder.

What remains obscure is how Lanza viewed himself. He wrote of his depression as well as suicidal thoughts: "I already kind of obsess over suicidal thoughts" (Coleman, 2015a). We also know he asked about the symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder and schizophrenia, but refused to answer questions about which of these symptoms he experienced. Did he view himself as mentally ill, and if so, with what diagnosis?

Sexuality

Whether or not Lanza's sexuality was connected to his rampage remains unclear. Regardless, sexuality appears to have been important to him, and yet like so many aspects of his identity, it remains an elusive subject. In fact, even he didn't know what to make of it: "I'm pretty confused when it comes to my sexuality" (Coleman, 2015c). His comments regarding sexual identity and orientation are enigmatic. For example, he was asked to complete a form for Western Connecticut State University. For the item marked "Gender," Lanza wrote, "I choose not to answer" (Goldstein, 2013). Was he so shy that such questions seemed like an invasion of his privacy? Or was he perhaps not certain of his gender?

On Jan. 31, 2011, Lanza posted this comment online: "I castrated myself when I was 15 to rebel against society" (Coleman, 2014, p. 6). What are we to make of this? Was it just a provocative comment? Or did he really castrate himself? Genital self-mutilation does occur and is associated with psychosis (Walsh, 2014). Lanza's autopsy report has not been made public, so we have no way of knowing if he really damaged himself or not. If he did, perhaps that would explain why he couldn't identify his own gender. If he didn't do it, why would he say that he did? Why would such a thought even occur to him unless he had serious issues regarding his sexuality?

Seven months later, on Sept. 6, 2011, he wrote: "I used to think that I was asexual, but the primary reason why I thought that was because my BMI was 14" (Coleman, 2014, p. 13). Extremely low body weight might decrease one's libido, or perhaps low body weight was a convenient cover explanation for his reported asexuality. And yet, other comments suggest that he was not asexual. If not, what form did his sexuality take?

The official police report found evidence on his computer that he

participated in an online “Discussion that focuses on gaming, homosexual fantasies, and day to day activities” (Sedensky, 2013b, p. A217). Lanza made comments online about his interest in a male member of the forum who posted under the name RegalSin, though these comments may have been jokes. For example, he wrote, “Say whatever you wish, but I know that my love for RegalSin is real” (Coleman, 2014, p. 18). He also wrote, “Gay marriage is legal in my state. I was holding out for RegalSin” (p. 19). This is not sufficient evidence to state that Lanza was homosexual, but it raises the possibility.

A more significant concern, however, is that of pedophilia. The police report on the Sandy Hook attack noted various materials on Lanza’s computer related to pedophilia. These included a document “advocating pedophile’s rights,” a screenplay “describing a relationship between a 10-year-old boy and a 30-year-old man,” a “Profile of a pedophile,” and a “movie depicting a man/boy relationship” (Sedensky, 2013b, pp. A215–A216).

The report by the Office of the Child Advocate noted that Lanza “crafted an undated and lengthy essay, which he identified as a college admission application text, outlining a position that pedophilia should not be considered abhorrent or illegal” (p. 101). Though Lanza stated that the length limit was 500 words, his essay was 34 pages long.

Among his online “buddies,” Lanza (who posted under the name Smiggles) had the reputation of being a pedophile. One of them posted, “Doesn’t anybody else notice that Smiggles sometimes sends huge “I AM A PEDOPHILE” signals?” (“Shocked Beyond Belief: Complete Threads,” p. 1,159). Lanza was aware of how he was perceived online and wrote the following:

I don’t think there should be any age of consent, but since no matter what I say everyone will accuse me of just wanting to justify some latent pedophilia I allegedly have, I will only say that you need to be attracted to prepubescents to be considered a pedophile. A 50-year-old who is attracted to pubescent 12-year-olds is not a pedophile; a 16-year-old who is attracted to 8-year-olds is a pedophile (Coleman, 2014, p. 24).

This seems contradictory, with Lanza first saying there shouldn’t be an age of consent, but then categorizing a teenager’s interest in a pre-teen as pedophilia. The fact that he wrote a long essay defending pedophilia and had a document advocating for the rights of pedophiles, suggests that he was attracted to children. Perhaps his online statement was an attempt to deflect criticism by modifying his position.

Coleman’s recent revelation of two personal messages of Lanza’s includes one that argues at length that there is nothing wrong with pedophilia. He ends, however, by stating that he has never had sexual

contact with children, doesn’t desire such contact, and is not a pedophile (Coleman, 2015c).

If Lanza was sexually attracted to children, would this have any bearing on his attack? Perhaps. After all, he didn’t attack either college he had attended, or his former middle school or high school, or anywhere else in town. He deliberately sought out and killed young children. Perhaps he killed children out of sexual frustration, being attracted to them but unable to satisfy his desire for them. Perhaps he resented the power they had over him by stirring up feelings he could not express. In his personal message, he wrote, “the child has all of the control over the relationship” (Coleman, 2015c). This is a bizarre statement, and given his preoccupation with being a victim of society’s control, his attack could be a rebellion against children who “controlled” him by causing him to experience feelings he perhaps did not want or could not express.

Though there is no direct evidence to support this, Lanza did make a connection between sex and violence. He watched a safe-sex ad that involved “an animated drawing of a penis traveling around a bathroom (graffiti) wall looking for a mate, and getting rejected. At the very end, it puts on a condom and is welcomed by several drawings of vaginas” (Coleman, 2015b). Lanza thought the ending should have been different: “In reality, the penis at the end would get a gun and go on a rampage. No seriously” (Coleman, 2015b). In other words, in his mind, sexual frustration would lead to mass murder.

Military Aspirations

Many school shooters had military aspirations that were thwarted (Langman, 2015). In some cases, they were rejected by the military, in others they were accepted but prematurely discharged, and in still others, they were prevented or dissuaded from even applying. The latter was the case with Lanza. As a young child, he dressed up for Halloween in a military costume. As a young adult, he told his mother that he wanted to enlist, but she talked him out of doing so, telling him he would “never be a marine” (Lysiak, 2013, p. 70). Lanza “took the news harder than even his mother expected” (p. 71). This apparently was a significant blow, though it did not end his interest in the military. In fact, “in the months leading up to the massacre, Lanza would dress himself up head to toe in a camouflage military uniform and target shoot with a pellet gun in his basement” (Lysiak and Schapiro, 2013). On the day of his attack, he was dressed in military clothes (Sedensky, 2013b, p. A180).

As discussed elsewhere (Langman, 2015), many shooters not only had military aspirations, but were also poor physical specimens. Their desire to be soldiers may have been an attempt to establish a sense of masculinity. This may have been the case with Lanza. He was

six feet tall but only weighed 112 pounds — this is extraordinarily thin, perhaps emaciated (Sedensky, 2013a, p. 27). In addition, he had never been athletic and was said to walk with “a stiff, lumbering gait” that suggests poor coordination (Solomon, 2014). Lanza was a physically weak, socially stunted, and emotionally vulnerable young man. His desire to become a marine may have reflected his aspiration to become everything that he wasn’t — strong, confident, and powerful. When Lanza created an online persona, “The skinny and frail teenager chose to create an imposing, bulky, muscle-bound soldier dressed in desert camouflage” (Lysiak, 2013, p. 56).

It is also noteworthy that Lanza actually seemed to think he could succeed in the military. Though this might not qualify as a delusion, it suggests how out of touch with reality he was. He was so timid that the woman who cut his hair for years was unaware that he was capable of speaking because she never heard him utter a word. His mother instructed people working at the house not to ring the doorbell because the noise would alarm or upset her son. He needed stability to such an extent that even during Hurricane Sandy, he refused to leave his house and go to a hotel, apparently because he could not tolerate a change in his routine (Sedensky, 2013a, p. 28). Keeping in mind what is required during military training, let alone actual military duty and combat experience, Lanza’s apparent belief that he could succeed as a soldier seems bizarre.

Rationale for Murder

There are several approaches to understanding Lanza’s attack. First, we will consider why he might have felt the urge to commit murder in general. Then we will explore possible motives for specifically killing his mother and seeking out children as victims.

Why Kill at All?

Lanza was a physically weak and emotionally vulnerable young man who wanted very much to be a soldier. The idea of using firearms and violence to enhance one’s sense of manhood or self-esteem was written about by Newman (2004), Langman (2015), and can be seen in the writings of other school shooters. For example, Kimveer Gill (Dawson College) complained that society views jocks and preps as being above others; he referred to guns as “the great equalizer” (“Kimveer Gill Online,” p. 15). Eric Harris (Columbine High School) wrote that having guns made him feel more confident and “god-like” (Langman, 2014a). After Elliot Rodger (University of California at Santa Barbara) obtained firearms, he wrote, “Who’s the alpha male now?” (Rodger, 2014, p. 113). Perhaps Lanza also sought to experience power through acts of violence. Certainly, carrying guns into an elementary school made him a feared and formidable figure, which was a far cry from his usual timidity and his occasional terror about being in public. This may have been essentially an act of sadism, of having complete power over others, including the power to kill.

Psychoanalyst Erich Fromm wrote that the desire for absolute power “is the transformation of impotence into the experience of omnipotence” (1973, p. 290). Fromm went on to say of the sadistic character: “He is sadistic because he feels impotent, unalive, and powerless. He tries to compensate for this lack by having power over others, by transforming the worm he feels himself to be into a god” (p. 292).

Lanza had sunk to a state in which he was barely functioning. He was not in school and he didn’t have a job. He had virtually no peer relationships — neither friends nor romantic partners. He was depressed and suicidal. He wished he were not human because he found human culture beyond his ability to deal with. The experience of profound inadequacy and powerlessness may have driven him to seek the experience of absolute power over others. The way to do this was through violence.

Did Lanza provide any insight into his action? Not directly, but he did post this comment on YouTube: “Violence usually occurs when something chaotic is happening and people are charged up or feel threatened, no matter how real or imagined that threat is” (Coleman, 2015b). To explore what he might have been charged up about or threatened by, we will consider the targets of his attack.

Rationale for Matricide?

Lanza’s motivation for killing his mother is obscure. One possibility is that he conceived it essentially as a mercy-killing, preventing his mother from living with the horror of what he was about to do, from knowing that her son committed a massacre of children. There is no evidence to support this, however, and some of his writings suggest hostility toward his mother as well as women in general.

When Lanza was in fifth grade, he co-wrote a series of stories titled “The Big Book of Granny.” In one of the stories, “Granny’s Son shoots Granny in the head with a shotgun” (Sedensky, 2013b, p. A221). Ten years later, Lanza shot his own mother in the head. Was this a coincidence, or did he have long-standing matricidal thoughts?

In 2011, someone posted a sarcastic message online in response to something Lanza wrote. The other user wrote about having sex with Lanza’s mother. Lanza responded with: “We will fuck her together! Then kill her and dispose of the corpse” (Coleman, 2015a). Coleman commented, “This would seem just an effort to elicit shock, except that within one year of this comment, Lanza would indeed claim his own mother as his first murder victim.”

Lanza also wrote a document titled, “Selfish,” focused on “explaining why females are selfish” (Sedensky, 2013b, p. A218). The only woman he had long-term contact with was his mother. Was this an indictment

of her? Lanza also expressed extremely hostile opinions about women and sexuality. For example, he wrote, “Fuckin women just use their pussy all day long, use it to get money, use it to get power” (Coleman, 2015b). Whether or not this comment had any relevance to his view of his mother remains unknown.

Why might Lanza have been hostile to his mother? There are multiple possibilities, among them that:

- She left him alone in the house for days at a time while she went traveling (Lysiak, 2013). Perhaps this seemed selfish to him.
- She was thinking of relocating to another state (Griffin and Kovner, 2013), which would have uprooted him. Given that he wouldn’t leave his house to stay in a hotel even during a dangerous hurricane, the idea of moving to a new home in another state may have been terrifying.
- She reportedly volunteered with students at Sandy Hook Elementary School (Sedensky, 2013a, p. 30). He may have resented her spending time with other children.
- Perhaps he resented her for taking him to appointments with medical and mental health professionals; these were often very difficult for him (Office of the Child Advocate, 2014).
- She talked him out of enlisting in the military, thwarting his dream of becoming a marine (Lysiak, 2013).
- He viewed childrearing as a process of indoctrination and metaphorical rape; as the primary person who raised him, perhaps he viewed her as the most responsible for his being “mind-fucked.”

Despite this list of possible reasons for killing his mother, we need to keep in mind that Lanza left no evidence to support any of them. In addition, it is possible that his motivation was based on a delusion, and was thus irrational.

Why Kill Children?

The factor that made Lanza’s attack particularly heinous was that he gunned down young children. Why single them out? He could have attacked other schools or colleges he had attended, or picked any other location. Why target six year olds?

In the “Big Book of Granny” cited earlier, a character named Dora states, “I like hurting people... especially children,” and “Let’s hurt children” (Sedensky, 2013b, p. A221). Though care has to be exercised in using fiction as a source for analysis, these quotes suggest that Lanza’s homicidal thoughts toward children may have existed long before he actually decided to carry out an attack against them.

Reed Coleman noted the following about Lanza’s posts on YouTube:

[he] posted very frequently on the topics of war, violence, and firearms. Often, the subject of children would conspicuously be brought up in this context, associating children with guns and/or death. As previously noted, the views expressed by this user vary wildly on most subjects, and especially so on this topic, but the steady constant is his fixation on connecting children with destruction (2015b).

Here are a few examples of Lanza’s preoccupation with the killing of children:

- God “goes on multiple baby killing murder sprees” (Coleman, 2015b).
- “They dropped White Phosphorus gas on fallujah and melted children alive in their beds from the inside out. That gas weapon is horrifying. I have seen all the dead children in Iraq. Lots. They shoot them daily” (Coleman, 2015b).
- “Poor guy. He could be shooting children in Iraq instead” (Coleman, 2015b).

Lanza even had a “five-second video (dramatization) depicting children being shot” on his computer (Sedensky, 2013a, p. 26). Documenting his apparent fascination with killing children, however, does explain this interest or shed light on why he personally chose to kill children.

In looking for a motivation, one might wonder if Lanza had been bullied at Sandy Hook Elementary School and conceived his attack as revenge. Even if this were the case, however, it hardly would constitute revenge to kill children who never harmed him and who had not even been born at the time that he attended the school. Thus, if Lanza viewed this as revenge, it was an irrational revenge.

Setting aside the question of how irrational this motive might have been, was Lanza bullied at Sandy Hook? After a thorough investigation, the Office of the Child Advocate concluded that “a history of bullying incidents is not supported by available documents” (2014, p. 72). For example, Mrs. Lanza’s emails indicated that Adam did well at Sandy Hook Elementary in first grade (p. 26). In addition, a later teacher “remembered no incidents of bullying or teasing, a common refrain from virtually all teachers or other former classmates of AL’s” (p. 36). In addition, Lanza “indicated that he loved the school” (Sedensky, 2013a, p. 33), his family remembered his years there as “the best times of his life” (Lysiak, 2013, p. 36), and his father stated that “Adam loved Sandy Hook” (Solomon, 2014). Finally, Lanza left no records indicating hostility toward the school in general or toward any of his former classmates there. Based on the available evidence, there is no evidence that mistreatment by peers was a motivation for attacking his former elementary school.

Another possibility is that since his mother volunteered with children at the school, perhaps he resented them for taking her away from him to some extent. Her volunteering, however, had apparently not occurred for years, so this was not a current concern.

In other shootings, envy appears to have been a significant motivation (Langman, 2015). Knowing how difficult his childhood was, perhaps Lanza envied children in general because in his eyes they were all happy and would be successful, whereas he was depressed and a failure. He may have sought to obliterate children who represented social success and who thus highlighted the extent of his own “defectiveness.”

As noted above, maybe he found children sexually attractive and his hostility toward them was rooted in his frustrated desire. Though he denied being a pedophile, his preoccupation with this issue, along with the impression he gave to his online community that he seemed to be a pedophile, make this a possibility.

Another alternative is that he might have been paranoid about children. His computer contained a file called “babies” that “contains two fictional writings of being attacked by babies and attempts to defend against them” (Sedensky, 2013b, p. A215). Perhaps Lanza had delusional beliefs that children were somehow a threat to him. If so, this would clearly be an irrational rationale.

Finally, perhaps he felt so weak and inadequate that he was afraid to attack teens or adults. Maybe he sought out the most vulnerable targets because that was all he felt capable of handling. After all, he could have attacked his former middle school, high school, college, or university, but he chose the elementary school. Even within this school, he did not go to a fifth grade classroom, but chose to kill first graders. If he sought the sadistic thrill of power as described by Fromm, perhaps the only place he felt confident of achieving this was in a room full of six-year-old children. After all, adolescents and adults might fight back, and in fact have done so in other school shootings. Lanza, with his meticulous research into mass murderers, presumably would have known this.

Lanza’s Username: Kaynbred

One of Lanza’s online usernames was Kaynbred (Lysiak, 2013). The term “Kayn” may be significant, particularly since he identified a photograph of himself as a young child holding a gun as “kayntdler” (Sedensky, 2013b, p. A217). Perhaps Kaynbred meant that he saw himself as having been “bred” from Cain — the world’s first murderer. Given Lanza’s obsession with murderers, it would make sense for him to take the first murderer as a role model. Similarly, perhaps “kayntdler” meant Cain Toddler.

The story of Cain is of particular interest not only because Cain was a murderer, but because Lanza, like many other psychotic school shooters, had a sibling who was much higher functioning than he was (Langman, 2015). Unlike Lanza, his brother, Ryan, “was socially well adjusted, one of the popular kids at Newtown High” (Lysiak, 2013, p. 22). Sibling rivalry and sibling envy were issues for many psychotic shooters (Langman, 2015). Though Lanza left no record of animosity towards Ryan, he broke off contact with him two years before the attack, suggesting a hostile attitude. Thus, there may have been two reasons for Lanza to identify with Cain — sibling rivalry and murder.

December 14

Was there any significance to the date Lanza picked for his attack? He left no indication of this, but Dec. 14, 2012 was the 20th anniversary of the school shooting by Wayne Lo at Simon’s Rock College. We know that Lanza was aware of this attack because he mentioned Lo in an online post, referring to “a string of school shootings which began increasing with Lu Gang [University of Iowa] and Wayne Lo in the early 1990s” (Coleman, 2014, p. 37). Lanza had compiled a spreadsheet that was 7-by-14 feet in size, and included data on 500 mass murders (Lysiak, 2013, p. 165). There is no known reason why Lanza might have identified with Wayne Lo more than any of the others, or chosen him as a model to emulate. Nonetheless, given the thoroughness of his research, he may well have been aware that he was carrying out his rampage on the anniversary of Lo’s attack.

Lanza as an Aberrant Adult Shooter

Aberrant adult school shooters are those perpetrators over 18 years of age who attack schools that they have no current or recent connection to. They are distinguished from college shooters and secondary school shooters; the perpetrators in these categories have current or recent connections to the schools they attack (Langman, 2015). Virtually all aberrant adult shooters have been psychotic (Langman, 2015). Beyond their psychosis, their lives are usually notable for failures across multiple domains. This is true of Lanza. He had educational failures, he had no job or career, he had no significant other (nor had he ever been close to having one), and he failed in his military aspirations. He also had virtually no supportive family relationships; he hadn’t spoken with his father or brother for two years and only communicated with his mother by email, even though they lived in the same house. Aberrant adult shooters often live isolated lives. Even so, the extent of Lanza’s isolation was extreme.

His suicidal thoughts may have been a result of hopelessness about himself and what the future would hold for him. In addition, the magnitude of these failures and deficits may have caused envy and rage against those whom he perceived as succeeding where he had failed.

Conclusion

Adam Lanza remains an enigmatic figure, and his motivations for murder are elusive. He might have had paranoid delusions about children, envied them their social ease and perceived happiness, or been sexually attracted to them. He might have blamed his mother for indoctrinating him with culture, resented her behavior in one or more ways, or killed her for a reason that we cannot guess. Because he experienced psychotic symptoms, his motivation could have been based on a delusion or driven by voices commanding him to kill.

Despite the mystery of his motivation, he resembles other school shooters in his educational failures, lack of employment, failure to establish any intimate relationships, biological challenges to his masculinity, thwarted military aspirations, and the lack of any meaningful social connectedness. Though he is an enigma, he and his life fit many patterns observed among other perpetrators of rampage attacks.

Finally, as noted at the beginning of this article, Adam Lanza, Jared Loughner, James Holmes, and Elliot Rodger were all students in higher education shortly before committing mass murder. Based on my analyses, Loughner and Holmes were psychotic (Langman, 2015), and Rodger had both psychotic and psychopathic traits (Langman, 2014c). The frequency of psychotic shooters among college shooters and aberrant adult shooters is much higher than among secondary school shooters (Langman, 2015). Based on these findings, it is essential for personnel in higher education to be trained to recognize and intervene with students who are experiencing psychotic symptoms.

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Violence Risk Assessment of the Written Word (VRAW²)

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Abstract

The VRAW² is a newly created instrument used to assess emails, letters, or creative writing that contain direct threats or violent themes of concern. The article reviews the five factors and corresponding sub-factors used to assess the potential for threat. Scoring considerations and case examples are provided to illustrate how to score each of the sub-factors informing the overall factors. The VRAW² is then discussed in context of the NaBITA Threat Assessment Tool and the Structured Interview for Violence Risk Assessment (SIVRA-35).

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Introduction

Increasingly, staff at universities, colleges, and high schools are being asked to assess potentially dangerous writing contained in students' emails, letters, and creative writing assignments. While tools such as the Historical, Clinical, Risk Management-20 (HCR-20), the Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk (WAVR-21), the Method for Objectively Selecting Areas of Inquiry Consistently (MOSAIC), and the Structured Interview for Violence Risk Assessment (SIVRA-35) offer the ability to better understand the individuals creating these messages, it would be helpful to have a specific tool designed to help staff rate the level of risk based on writing samples.

There are times when the writing samples or video messages emerge following an attack as part of a media package or "legacy token" created by the attacker. In other instances, violent writing or other disturbing content is discovered or shared prior to a potential attack as leakage. In all of these cases, the content should be explored and analyzed. This is one of the central recommendations offered in a 2008 report to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education by O'Neill, Fox, Depue, and Englander: "Writings, drawings, and other forms of individual expression reflecting violent fantasy and causing a faculty member to be fearful or concerned about safety, should be evaluated contextually for any potential threat" (pp. 32–33).

While risk and threat assessment cannot be predictive, multiple agencies (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Secret Service, Department of Education, U.S. Post Office, ASIS International, the Society for Human Resource Management, and ASME-ITI) have suggested risk factors to consider when determining the potential danger an individual may represent. Several prominent experts in campus violence and workplace threat assessment have also recommended key considerations that are salient when assessing risk and threat (Meloy, 2000; Turner & Gelles, 2003; Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage, 2008; Meloy, Hoffmann, Guldman, & James, 2011; Van Brunt, 2015).

The VRAW² is designed to offer members of campus Behavioral Intervention Teams with an additional risk rubric to apply when faced with written communication of concern. The VRAW² is not designed as a psychological test, but rather as a structured way of thinking about written communication and writing samples. The VRAW² should be used in conjunction with the NaBITA Threat Assessment Tool (Sokolow, Lewis, Schuster, Swinton, and Van Brunt, 2014) and the SIVRA-35 (Van Brunt, 2012), not to replace either of these measures.

Overview

The VRAW² is designed as a structured risk and threat assessment rubric for psychological, administrative, and campus Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) members to better gauge the risk associated with a particular writing sample. While no degree or clinical expertise is

required to use the VRAW², those with a master's degree in counseling, successful completion of a graduate-level testing and assessment course, and/or experience with criminal justice, law enforcement, and threat assessment will help make this tool more efficacious.

The VRAW² consists of five main factors: 1) Fixation and Focus; 2) Hierarchical Thematic Content; 3) Action and Time Imperative; 4) Pre-Attack Planning; and 5) Injustice Collecting. Each of the five factors has five sub-items that are numerically scored to assist campus staff completing an assessment to make a decision about the endorsement of the main factor. Ideally, the assessment should take place after the assessor has reviewed incident reports, available documents related to conduct in the educational setting and in the immediate community, and any other information available in the context of the writing sample.

It is important to keep in mind that there is no set of risk factors or list of concerning behaviors that can predict a future violent event. VRAW² is a useful reference when reviewing concerning writing samples. Any violence risk assessment involves static and dynamic risk factors, contextual and environmental elements, and mitigating factors. But the fact remains that no current tool or computer model exists that can accurately predict future violent behavior based on a writing sample, and no tool is ever a substitute for professional expertise. Therefore, the use of Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ) (Van Brunt, 2015; Hart and Logan, 2011) in combination with documentation and consultation with trusted colleagues is the current best practice.

While the VRAW² primarily assists those conducting violence risk assessments through a structured rubric, there is a quantitative, numeric scoring key to further assist staff in their decision-making. A single administrator will review the document and rate the sub-items to determine if an overall factor is endorsed.

In terms of assessing fiction writing, separating the fantasy from the reality is a challenge. The VRAW² errs on the side of acknowledging that many who have been involved in targeted and predatory violent attacks have written some disturbing creative fiction. A synopsis of some of these writings are collected in Table 1.1. And while this correlation may be a place for further exploration, caution is warranted to avoid making a direct causation argument between writing disturbing content and the reality of carrying out violence. As Polish-American philosopher Alfred Korzybski wrote, "The map is not the territory" (Kendig, 1990, p. 299).

Stephen King, the popular horror author, notes in the front material of his book *It*, that "fiction is the truth inside the lie." Creative fiction, when done well, often pulls from the author's deeper fantasies and desires. This provides a projective test, of sorts, for those willing to listen. So while BIT members should not assume those writing creative fiction with disturbing

violent content are planning the next mass campus shooting, this content, particularly when shared through social media or in a public forum, often warrants completing a more detailed violence risk assessment.

Table 1.1: Creative Fiction and Mass Shootings

Date of Attack	Attacker	Story
9/13/2006	Kimveer Singh Gill	Stories of the death knight killing disgusting human creatures in online posts at www.vampirefreaks.com .
4/17/2007	Seung-Hui Cho	<i>Richard McBeef</i> describes violent arguments between a boy and his stepfather that involve accusations of rape and a mother wielding a chainsaw. <i>Mr. Brownstone</i> explores three teenagers' hatred for their math teacher. They describe him as an "ass-raper" and talk about wanting to "watch him bleed like the way he made us kids bleed."
2/12/2010	Amy Bishop	<i>Amazon Fever</i> details a professor worried about being denied tenure while fighting against a worldwide pandemic. <i>Easter in Boston</i> recounts tales of depression, suicide and murder.
2/27/2012	T. J. Lane	Writes a sing-song story about a man attacking a castle called Lucifer's Laboratory and posts it on Facebook months prior to his attack.

Scoring and Risk Rating

To score the VRAW², the writing sample should be read through carefully several times and areas of concern highlighted. In the case of

video footage or other recorded audio messages or voicemails, the content should be transcribed into text and then reviewed.

Staff using the VRAW² then makes a decision surrounding each of the main five factors to determine if risk is present or not present. This is determined by rating each of the five sub-factors 0 for not present, 1 for unsure, and 2 for present. The sub-factor scores are then added up. Scores of 5 or more indicate that the overall factor is endorsed.

The following chart provides guidance in terms of the number of factors that are endorsed and the corresponding risk level on the NaBITA Threat Assessment Tool (Sokolow et al., 2014) and the Structured Interview for Violence Risk Assessment, or SIVRA-35 (Van Brunt, 2012).

Factors Endorsed	NaBITA Tool	SIVRA-35
5 factors	Extreme	High
4 factors	Severe	High
3 factors	Elevated	Moderate
2 factors	Moderate	Moderate
1 factor	Mild	Low

To assist readers, two sample threat scenarios are scored via the VRAW² in Appendix A and B at the conclusion of this article.

Factor A: Fixation and Focus

This factor is based on the concept of a specific target being identified in the writing sample. This is a target in real life and the target is identified specifically.

Turner and Gelles (2003) suggested that individuals with a fixation and focus on their threats present a higher risk than those who lack these traits. Fixations are strongly held beliefs and obsessions about a certain group being responsible for the pain or suffering an individual may be experiencing. Fixation relates to the degree of blame and how it is attributed; a group of individuals is stereotyped in a grandiose or sweeping manner. Focus is a further narrowing that occurs when an individual with a particular fixation begins to zero in on an individual, system, or location.

Sub-Factors for Fixation and Focus

Each of the following sub-factors are scored 0 for not present, 1 for unsure, and 2 for present. The sub-factors scores for Factor A are then added up. If the score is 5 or more, Factor A: Fixation and Focus, is endorsed.

Sub-factor A.1: Naming of Target: Is the person, place, or system being

targeted identified clearly in the writing sample? This may be a person (e.g., “I’m going to hunt down that Mrs. Castor and make her pay for what she did to me.”), a place (e.g., “The mosque on campus is a symbol of everything that is wrong with this country. Things will be better when it is destroyed.”), or a system, (e.g., “The conduct office thinks it can get away with anything, I’ll show them how very wrong they are.”).

Sub-factor A.2: Repetition of the Target: Is the target mentioned more than once? Is the target identified and then repeated multiple times for emphasis? Are there multiple targets mentioned? Is there an organization to the plan that narrows blame or violence to a single target, or is there a disorganization that spreads across multiple targets and systems? Individuals with disorganized thoughts often do not have the same heightened risk as those with organized thoughts.

Sub-factor A.3: Objectification of Target: Is there language that indicates a negative view or dehumanizing of the target? The language may be hostile, insulting, or diminishing. The language may also be misogynistic or focused on separating the person writing from empathizing or understanding the motives or thoughts of the target. An example might be, “That bitch Carol who runs parking and transportation thinks she is above everyone else. Like her shit doesn’t stink. I’ll show that whore.”

Sub-factor A.4: Emphasis of Target: Does the writer use capital letters, quotes, color changes, graphics, parenthetical inserts, or emoji used to emphasize the target? This becomes more concerning if related to a theme of retaliation, blaming others, or wounded self-image (e.g., “My life is over.”). An example would be, “I have a big problem with the so-called ‘Chief’ Baily who thinks he runs the kingdom with some kind of iron-fist, but his fist is really nothing but a fist of clay. BAILY will pay, you can be sure of that. His days are numbered. ☹️☹️☹️”

Sub-factor A.5: Graphic Language: Does the writer describe what s/he wants to do to the target in a graphic or detailed manner? Is there a description of torture and killing described in a fantasy or wistful manner?

Factor B: Hierarchical Thematic Content

This factor is based on the concept of the writer or protagonist in the story being identified in the writing sample as superior or in an avenging or punishing role. This can occur through the anti-hero of the story or writer being portrayed as all-powerful and handing down judgment for past wrongs, or the proletariat or targets in the story being seek as weak, stupid, or naïve.

Sub-Factors for Hierarchical Thematic Content

Each of the following sub-factors are scored 0 for not present, 1 for unsure, and 2 for present. The sub-factors scores for Factor B are

then added up. If the score is 5 or more, Factor B: Hierarchical Thematic Content, is endorsed.

Sub-factor B.1: Disempowering Language: Is the person, place, or system being targeted described as a sheep, lemming, cattle, retarded, or something similar? Is the target described as stupid, being unaware of his/her surroundings, or in need of punishment? An example would be, “All of those students will find their end, like so many bits of trash floating in the ocean waiting for the tide to sweep them deep under the sea.”

Sub-factor B.2: Glorified Avenger: Is the writer or protagonist described as an all-powerful figure or someone who is smart, knowledgeable, and able to avenge and punish those who have wronged him/her? The writer may use a name like “avenger” or “punisher” to convey the perceived responsibility and role to dole out judgment and make things right. An example would be, “You may think you are safe, but there will come a time when things are made right. Vengeance will sweep down on the ignorant. Karma is a bitch.” There may also be a tendency to use the gun or weapon to enhance the attacker’s gender status to present him/herself as all-powerful or superior.

Sub-factor B.3: Reality Crossover: For fiction pieces, is there a cross-over between fiction and reality? Do names sound the same, or are there other identifying factors that give away the author’s attempt at a metaphor? If the writing sample is an email or letter, this item is scored a two if the writer mentions an actual person, place, or system that is being targeted. Additionally, does the writer reference an ideology or historical figure such as Hitler/Nazis or previous mass murderer as a role model or someone to emulate or copy?

Sub-factor B.4: Militaristic Language: Does the writer use military language around tactical or strategic attacks on a target? Does s/he use phrases like “advancing on the courtyard” or include very specific timing as part of an overall attack? Is there mention of particular weapons, tactical gear, black cloaks, or jumpsuits? Meloy et al. (2011) referred to this as identification warning behavior — any behavior that indicates a psychological desire to be a “pseudo-commando” (Dietz, 1986; Knoll, 2010), have a “warrior mentality” (Hempel, Meloy, & Richards, 1999), closely associate with weapons or other military or law enforcement paraphernalia, identify with previous attackers or assassins, or identify oneself as an agent to advance a particular cause or belief system (p. 265).

Sub-factor B.5: Paranoid Content: Does the story structure give a sense of paranoia or worry beyond what would be considered normal? Does the writer talk about being plotted against, being the victim of a conspiracy, or that the world is working actively against him/her? This

may also include grandiose themes focused on superiority, references to hearing voices, and tangled syntax or misuse of language. An example would be, “All of you at the college think you are so smart, having your parties and private conversations about me. There will come a day when things will be equalized. There will be a payback.”

Factor C: Action and Time Imperative

This factor is concerned with content that conveys a sense of impending movement toward action. This may be communicated by mentioning a specific time, location, or event such as a graduation, academic admission decision, or results of a conduct meeting.

Sub-Factors for Action and Time Imperative

Each of the following sub-factors are scored 0 for not present, 1 for unsure, and 2 for present. The sub-factors scores for Factor C are then added up. If the score is 5 or more, Factor C: Action and Time Imperative, is endorsed.

Sub-factor C.1: Location of the Attack: Is the location of a potential attack site mentioned in detail? Is the site mapped out or highlighted by areas where certain people will be? If looking at a fiction story, is the attack location alluded to through the story’s details? Does the imposing castle with a moat strike a similar resemblance to the student union?

Sub-factor C.2: Time of the Attack: Is there a time or date given for the attack in the writing? Is a specific period given that offers insight into when the attack might occur? This can be specific, such as, “I’m coming for you all at 2 p.m. on Tuesday,” or more vague, such as, “If this isn’t resolved by next spring, you won’t have a very happy summer.”

Sub-factor C.3: Weapons and Materials to be Used: Are specific weapons or materials mentioned in the writing that will be used in the attack? Does the individual discuss specific weapons knowledge or bomb-making knowledge needed prior the attack?

Sub-factor C.4: Overcoming Obstacles: Does the writing sample include obstacles that must be first overcome to carry out an attack? This might include acquiring a weapon or having a job to get money to buy a plane ticket to come back to the school. The writer may discuss obstacles in the past that have thwarted an attack but that will no longer stand in the way. An example might be, “You think you can stop me from communicating, but now I will send your communication far and wide to the board of trustees, your boss, and the college president.”

Sub-factor C.5: Conditional Ultimatum: Is there an ultimatum attached to the time and the location of the attack? Does the writer demand compliance to stave off a potential attack? An example might be, “Change my grade on this paper or else there will be hell to pay,”

or “ You have until next week to take the hold off my account and refund my tuition.”

Factor D: Pre-Attack Planning

Many who move forward with violent attacks write and plan in detail prior to these attacks. Sometimes, this pre-attack planning is boastful and can be described as a “howling” behavior designed to intimidate others towards compliance. Other times, the pre-attack planning is unintentionally leaked prior to the attack and discovered by a third party.

Sub-Factors for Pre Attack Planning

Each of the following sub-factors are scored 0 for not present, 1 for unsure, and 2 for present. The sub-factors scores for Factor D are then added up. If the score is 5 or more, Factor D: Pre-Attack Planning, is endorsed.

Sub-factor D.1: Discussion and Acquisition of Weapons: Does the writing contain evidence of discussion about potential weapons or materials that may be used to carry out an attack? If evaluating a fiction piece, is there a reality crossover with the weapons in the fiction pointing to real-world planning? An example might be, “The cloaked figure waited patiently outside of the school’s auditorium with his long, black rifle, the scope’s optics covered to prevent glints of sunlight from giving away his position.”

Sub-factor D.2: Evidence of Researching or Stalking the Target: Does the writing give evidence that the author has conducted detailed research concerning the potential target? This could be related to stalking his/her social media, obtaining copies of his/her schedule, or learning personal information about his/her family or home. An example might be, “I’ve watched you, attending your parties and having your fun at school, while I’m made to suffer because of your decisions about my life.”

Sub-factor D.3: Details Concerning Target: Has the writer offered evidence of studying the details of a particular location for the attack? This could be obtaining the schematics for a building or studying police response time, security camera placement, or lock-down procedures. Has the author discussed obtaining certain tools or items needed to overcome potential obstacles, such as tape, spray paint, or chains to bar doors?

Sub-factor D.4: Fantasy Rehearsal for Attack: Is there evidence of a fantasy rehearsal concerning a potential attack? Does the writer convey a sense of relishing what it will be like to carry out the attack and how it will feel to have revenge or to be known or understood by others?

Sub-factor D.5: Costuming Description: In fiction writing, is there a discussion of elaborate, dark costuming worn by the anti-hero prior to

or during the attack? This could include a black cloak, tactical gear, or drastic body changes such as shaving off or coloring hair, or dressing as a villain from popular media. In emails or letters, are there descriptions of tactical clothing or a meaningful outfit that will be worn on the day of retribution? Is there mention of accessories such as a personally named gun or weapon, or a particular bag or case to be carried to the attack?

Factor E: Injustice Collecting

The term “injustice collector” was coined by Mary Ellen O’Toole as a risk factor in the first prong of the threat assessment approach: the personality of the student.

In her 2012 book, *Dangerous Instincts* (2011), O’Toole describes this individual as “a person who feels ‘wronged,’ ‘persecuted,’ and ‘destroyed,’ blowing injustices way out of proportion, and never forgiving the person they felt has wronged them” (O’Toole and Bowman, 2011, p. 186). Thus, the injustice collector keeps track of his/her past wrongs and is often upset in a manner way beyond what would typically be expected. This person tends to hold on to past slights, many back as far as childhood, and see the world from this singled-out viewpoint, often having poor coping skills to deal with their frustrations.

Other researchers have made reference to this concept in the threat assessment literature. ASIS International and the Society for Human Resource Management published, *Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention* (2011), a set of standards for security and human resource personnel to prevent or intervene in potentially dangerous scenarios. The concept is described as “chronic, unsubstantiated complaints about persecution or injustice; a victim mindset” (p. 22).

Sub-Factors for Injustice Collecting

Each of the following sub-factors are scored 0 for not present, 1 for unsure, and 2 for present. The sub-factors scores for Factor E are then added up. If the score is 5 or more, Factor E: Pre-Attack Planning, is endorsed.

Sub-factor E.1: Perseverating on Past Wrongs: Does the writer give evidence of being wronged by others? Does the writing convey a sense that the author or protagonist believes certain others have mistreated him/her through social interactions, business relationships, academic assessment, or administrative action? The writer may see this in a hardened and inflexible manner, unwilling to accept attempts to have his/her feelings normalized or rationalized. The writer may also use techniques to amplify the message of threat, objectification, or insult through repetition, the use of ALL CAPS, or the selective use of punctuation and spacing to draw emphasis. An example of this might be, “The main issue of me being suspended was ALSO not looked

into properly, and if people just use their GODDAMN brains to look at the bigger picture in life, you would have not caused what might happen in the future because of this.”

Sub-factor E.2: Unrequited Romantic Entanglements: Does the writer discuss past romantic relationships that ended in frustrated outcomes, with the writer or protagonist alone and isolated? Often, the nature of the writing is focused on the person’s Herculean efforts to attain a relationship or love interest and the resulting rejection and frustration that accompany those feelings.

Sub-factor E.3: Desperation, Hopelessness, and Suicide Ideation/Attempt: Does the story or email have a quality of sadness, isolation, and a lack of positive outcomes or options for either the writer or the main character? Here, we may see a tendency on the author’s part to embrace the gloom and focus on a lack of options or choices. It is as if the author or main character is convincing him/herself that there is no better way to resolve the conflict and no other way out. This also includes the writer mentioning, directly or indirectly, a plan to commit suicide. This may be an idea, thought, or actively described plan.

Sub-factor E.4: Amplification/Narrowing: Is there language that amplifies and narrows the focus of anger and threat to a particular target? This could include the use of CAPS, emoji, or color/highlighting. Is there a narrowing and organization of the threat toward a single individual, department, or group?

Sub-factor E.5: Threats to Create Justice: Does the writer offer an explanation of how ultimate justice, karma, or payback will be sought, or a narrative on how things will be made “right?” This often includes a veiled threat that could be read as either a threat of physical harm or a punishment related to the person who wronged the writer, such as losing a job or otherwise “getting what is coming to him/her.” The injustice collector begins to develop fantasies about finally righting the wrongs s/he has been subjected to over the years. This can involve writing, creation of social media posts, development of a website, creation of a manifesto, or increased conflict with others. The action is often the result of wrestling with insolvable problems.

Conclusion

The VRAW² provides campus BITs, law enforcement, student conduct administrators, and counseling staff a starting place to review disturbing emails, letters, or stories written by students, faculty, and staff. Any structured, thematic analysis of narrative content should be conducted with an awareness of threat and violence risk assessment principles. Elevated scores should lead to further assessment through a Structured Professional Judgment process parallel to a student conduct, BIT or law enforcement intervention, if warranted.

Appendix A: 2015 Embry-Riddle Threat

On April 1, Konstantinos Kostakis, left a threatening note under the door of the assistant professor of commercial space operations at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He wanted his grade changed from a D to an A, because his GPA was 1.9, which put him at risk for being suspended in school, according to the report. He also said he did poorly on his exams, even after studying all night and receiving tutoring. The note is replicated below:

“TO DIANE HOWARD, THERE ARE TWO SNIPERS WHO ARE ALSO STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASS AND THEY ARE BOTH HEAVILY ARMED WITH THEIR GUNS, RIFLES, AND BOMBS. THEY ARE BOTH 100% READY WITH THEIR FIREARMS TO ASSASSINATE YOU AMBUSH STYLE. IF YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE DYING IN YOUR OWN BLOOD BY SURPRISE, THEN RESIGN YOURSELF FROM TEACHING YOUR CLASSES IMMEDIATELY BEFORE YOUR DEATH HAPPENS BY YOUR ASSASSINS. WE AS MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE ROTC PROGRAM WILL NOT TOLERATE HYPOCRITES AT THIS UNIVERSITY AND WE WILL ALSO DEFINITELY NOT LET YOU STEAL OUR MONEY BY FAILING US FOR THE CLASSES. YOU AND OTHER PEOPLE ABSOLUTELY DO NOT HAVE ANY POWER OVER US.

YOU WILL BE TAKING A BIG RISK WITH YOUR LIFE IF YOU DECIDE TO ENTER THE CLASSROOM WITH THE STUDENTS. YOU [SIC] STUDENTS DIDN'T GO THROUGH METAL DETECTORS TO ENTER THE CLASSROOM, SO GET READY TO BE SLAUGHTERED. WE AS STUDENTS WILL DO ANYTHING THE FUCK WE WANT AT THIS UNIVERSITY WITH OUR FIREARMS AND BOMBS SO YOU ARE FIRED BY THE STUDENTS FROM EMBRY RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY AND GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE YOU SCUM ON EARTH. AND IF YOU THINK THIS IS A SCHEME THEN BRING IT ON. WE AS STUDENTS ARE READY TO DEFEAT YOU AND EVERYBODY ELSE IN THIS WAR WITH OUR ARSENAL AMMUNITION. DON'T TURN THIS INTO A SEUNG-HUI CHO AND ADAM LANZA SITUATION BECAUSE THERE IS A FIREARMS AND STUDENTS FOR CONCEALED CARRY ORGANIZATIONS BY THE STUDENTS AT THIS UNIVERSITY. FROM THE PENTAGON”

— (*Bay 9 News*, 2015, p.1).

FACTOR A: Fixation and Focus. Score 10, Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor A.1: Naming of Target:* "TO DIANE HOWARD," Score 2
2. *Sub-factor A.2: Repetition of the Target:* "YOU WILL BE TAKING A BIG RISK WITH YOUR LIFE IF YOU DECIDE TO ENTER THE CLASSROOM WITH THE STUDENTS." Score 2
3. *Sub-factor A.3: Objectification of Target:* "WILL NOT TOLERATE HYPOCRITES AT THIS UNIVERSITY AND WE WILL ALSO DEFINITELY NOT LET YOU STEAL OUR MONEY BY FAILING US FOR THE CLASSES." Score 2
4. *Sub-factor A.4: Emphasis of Target:* Letter in all CAPS. Score 2
5. *Sub-factor A.5: Graphic Language:* "SO GET READY TO BE SLAUGHTERED," "GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE YOU SCUM ON EARTH," and "IF YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE DYING IN YOUR OWN BLOOD BY SURPRISE." Score 2

FACTOR B: Hierarchical Thematic Content. Score 10, Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor B.1: Disempowering Language:* "GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE YOU SCUM ON EARTH." Score 2
2. *Sub-factor B.2: Glorified Avenger:* "WE AS STUDENTS ARE READY TO DEFEAT YOU," "YOU AND OTHER PEOPLE ABSOLUTELY DO NOT HAVE ANY POWER OVER US," and "WE AS MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE ROTC PROGRAM WILL NOT TOLERATE HYPOCRITES." Score 2
3. *Sub-factor B.3: Reality Crossover:* "DON'T TURN THIS INTO A SEUNG-HUI CHO AND ADAM LANZA SITUATION BECAUSE THERE IS A FIREARMS AND STUDENTS FOR CONCEALED CARRY ORGANIZATIONS BY THE STUDENTS AT THIS UNIVERSITY." Score 2
4. *Sub-factor B.4: Militaristic Language:* "THERE ARE TWO SNIPERS WHO ARE ALSO STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASS AND THEY ARE BOTH HEAVILY ARMED WITH THEIR GUNS, RIFLES, AND BOMBS," and "WE AS MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE ROTC PROGRAM..." Score 2
5. *Sub-factor B.5: Paranoid Content:* "WE WILL ALSO DEFINITELY NOT LET YOU STEAL OUR MONEY BY FAILING US FOR THE CLASSES." Score 2

FACTOR C: Action and Time Imperative. Score 10, Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor C.1: Location of the Attack:* "THEY ARE BOTH 100% READY WITH THEIR FIREARMS TO ASSASSINATE YOU AMBUSH STYLE." Score 2
2. *Sub-factor C.2: Time of the Attack:* "RESIGN YOURSELF FROM TEACHING YOUR CLASSES IMMEDIATELY BEFORE YOUR DEATH HAPPENS BY YOUR ASSASSINS." Score 2
3. *Sub-factor C.3: Weapons and Materials to be Used:* "THEY ARE BOTH HEAVILY ARMED WITH THEIR GUNS, RIFLES, AND BOMBS," and "WILL DO ANYTHING THE FUCK WE WANT AT THIS UNIVERSITY WITH OUR FIREARMS AND BOMBS..." Score 2
4. *Sub-factor C.4: Overcoming Obstacles:* "YOU STUDENTS DIDN'T GO THROUGH METAL DETECTORS TO ENTER THE CLASSROOM," and "GET READY TO BE SLAUGHTERED." Score 2
5. *Sub-factor C.5: Conditional Ultimatum:* "THEN RESIGN YOURSELF FROM TEACHING YOUR CLASSES IMMEDIATELY BEFORE YOUR DEATH HAPPENS BY YOUR ASSASSINS." Score 2

FACTOR D: Pre-Attack Planning. Score 8, Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor D.1: Discussion and Acquisition of Weapons:* "THEY ARE BOTH HEAVILY ARMED WITH THEIR GUNS, RIFLES, AND BOMBS," and "WILL DO ANYTHING THE FUCK WE WANT AT THIS UNIVERSITY WITH OUR FIREARMS AND BOMBS." Score 2
2. *Sub-factor D.2: Evidence or Researching or Stalking the Target:* "YOU WILL BE TAKING A BIG RISK WITH YOUR LIFE IF YOU DECIDE TO ENTER THE CLASSROOM WITH THE STUDENTS," and "YOU STUDENTS DIDN'T GO THROUGH METAL DETECTORS TO ENTER THE CLASSROOM, SO GET READY TO BE SLAUGHTERED." Score 2
3. *Sub-factor D.3: Details Concerning Target:* "THEY ARE BOTH 100% READY WITH THEIR FIREARMS TO ASSASSINATE YOU AMBUSH STYLE." Score 2
4. *Sub-factor D.4: Fantasy Rehearsal for Attack:* "WE AS STUDENTS ARE READY TO DEFEAT YOU AND EVERYBODY ELSE." Score 1
5. *Sub-factor D.5: Costuming Description:* "WE AS MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE ROTC PROGRAM..." Score 1

FACTOR E: Injustice Collecting. Score 4, Not Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor E.1: Perseverating on Past Wrongs:* "WE WILL ALSO DEFINITELY NOT LET YOU STEAL OUR MONEY BY FAILING US FOR THE CLASSES," and "WE AS MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE ROTC PROGRAM WILL NOT TOLERATE HYPOCRITES AT THIS UNIVERSITY." Score 2
2. *Sub-factor E.2: Unrequited Romantic Entanglements:* No evidence. Score 0
3. *Sub-factor E.3: Desperation, Hopelessness, and Suicide Ideation/Attempt:* No evidence. Score 0
4. *Sub-factor E.4: Amplification/Narrowing:* No evidence. Score 0
5. *Sub-factor E.5: Threats to Create Justice:* "GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE YOU SCUM ON EARTH," and "IF YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE DYING IN YOUR OWN BLOOD BY SURPRISE, THEN RESIGN YOURSELF FROM TEACHING YOUR CLASSES IMMEDIATELY BEFORE YOUR DEATH HAPPENS BY YOUR ASSASSINS." Score 2

Appendix B: 2015 Philadelphia Threat

In early October, 2015, the website 4chan revealed a post concerning an impending violent attack in the Philadelphia area. The threat referenced the fatal shooting at Umpqua Community College in Oregon at the hands of Chris Harper Mercer: “On October 5, 2015, at 1:00 PM CT, a fellow robot will take up arms against a university near Philadelphia. His cries will be heard, his victims will cower in fear, and the strength of the Union will decay a little more” (Craig, 2015, p1).



The Beta Rebellion has begun Anonymous Fri 02 Oct 2015 10:16:06 No.22859387 [View](#) [Reply](#) [Original](#) [Report](#)
 Quoted By: >>22859507 >>22859533 >>22859568 >>22859574 >>22859609 >>22859620 >>22859643 >>22859665 >>22859671 >>22859674 >>22859679 >>22859703 >>22859722 >>22859761 >>22859872 >>22859901 >>22859977 >>22859991 >>22860079 >>22860099 >>22860131 >>22860143 >>22860159 >>22860165 >>22860203

The first of our kind has struck fear into the hearts of America. His cries have been heard, even by the President.

This is only the beginning. The Beta Rebellion has begun. Soon, more of our brothers will take up arms to become martyrs to this revolution.

On October 5, 2015 at 1:00 PM CT, a fellow robot will take up arms against a university near Philadelphia. His cries will be heard, his victims will cower in fear, and the strength of the Union will decay a little more.

If you are in that area, you are encouraged to stay at home and watch the news as the chaos unfolds. His sacrifice will echo throughout the nation.

I plead to thee, brothers! We only have but one chance, one spark, for our revolution. The United States will soon condemn us to the status quo forever, and soon after, the United Nations. Don't let our one chance at writing history slip away. Martyr yourself for the cause or support those who have the courage to do so. We have the chance to make the world a better place for betas everywhere.

Hiro have mercy on us all. Lend us your strength to fight this evil.

A transcription of the above graphic follows:

The first of our kind has struck fear into the hearts of America. His cries have been heard, even by the President. This is only the beginning. The Beta Rebellion has begun. Soon, more of our brothers will take up arms to become martyrs to this revelation. On October, 5 2015 at 1:00 PM CT, a fellow robot will take up arms against a University near Philadelphia. His cries will be heard, his victims will cower in fear and the strength of the Union will decay a little more. If you are in that area, you are encouraged to stay at home and watch the news as the chaos unfolds. His sacrifice will echo throughout the nation. I plead to thee, brothers! We only have but one chance, one spark, for our revolution. The United States will soon condemn us to the status quo forever, and soon after, the United Nations. Don't let our one chance at writing history slip away. Martyr yourself for the cause or support those who have the courage to do so. We will make the world a better place for betas everywhere. Hiro have mercy on us all. Lend your strength to fight this evil.

FACTOR A: Fixation and Focus. Score 6, Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor A.1: Naming of Target:* University near Philadelphia. Score 2
2. *Sub-factor A.2: Repetition of the Target:* "Lend us your strength," and "take up arms..." Score 2
3. *Sub-factor A.3: Objectification of Target:* "Victims will cower..." Score 2
4. *Sub-factor A.4: Emphasis of Target:* Not present. Score 0
5. *Sub-factor A.5: Graphic Language:* Not present. Score 0

FACTOR B: Hierarchical Thematic Content. Score 8, Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor B.1: Disempowering Language:* "victims will cower..." Score 1
2. *Sub-factor B.2: Glorified Avenger:* "Martyr yourself for the cause," "beta revolution," and "Don't let our one chance at writing history slip away." Score 2
3. *Sub-factor B.3: Reality Crossover:* Attack in Oregon the week prior. Score 2
4. *Sub-factor B.4: Militaristic Language:* "take up arms..." Score 1
5. *Sub-factor B.5: Paranoid Content:* "struck fear into the hearts of America," and "We only have but one chance, one spark, for our revolution." Score 2

FACTOR C: Action and Time Imperative. Factor 4, Not Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor C.1: Location of the Attack:* University outside of Philadelphia. Score 2
2. *Sub-factor C.2: Time of the Attack:* At 1 p.m. Central Time. Score 2
3. *Sub-factor C.3: Weapons and Materials to be Used:* No evidence. Score 0
4. *Sub-factor C.4: Overcoming Obstacles:* "Don't let our one chance at writing history slip away," and "If you are in that area, you are encouraged to stay at home and watch the news as the chaos unfolds." Score 2
5. *Sub-factor C.5: Conditional Ultimatum.* No evidence. Score 0

FACTOR D: Pre-Attack Planning. Score 4, Not Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor D.1: Discussion and Acquisition of Weapons:* No evidence. Score 0
2. *Sub-factor D.2: Evidence or Researching or Stalking the Target:* Research may be implied given the mention of a school in Philadelphia. Score 1
3. *Sub-factor D.3: Details Concerning Target:* Specific location of school. Score 1
4. *Sub-factor D.4: Fantasy Rehearsal for Attack:* "beta rebellion..." Score 2
5. *Sub-factor D.5: Costuming Description:* No evidence. Score 0

FACTOR E: Injustice Collecting. Score 4, Not Endorsed

1. *Sub-factor E.1: Perseverating on Past Wrongs:* "make the world a better place..." Score 2
2. *Sub-factor E.2: Unrequited Romantic Entanglements:* No evidence. Score 0
3. *Sub-factor E.3: Desperation, Hopelessness, and Suicide Ideation/Attempt:* No evidence. Score 0
4. *Sub-factor E.4: Suicide Ideation/Attempt:* No evidence, Score 0
5. *Sub-factor E.5: Threats to Create Justice:* "make the world a better place," and "martyrs to this revelation." Score 2



VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT OF WRITTEN WORD

FACTOR A: FIXATION AND FOCUS

This factor is based on the concept of a specific target being identified in the writing sample. This is a target in real life and the target is identified specifically.

Sub-factor A.1 Naming of Target: Is the person, place, or system being targeted identified clearly in the writing sample?

Sub-factor A.2 Repetition of the Target: Is the target mentioned more than once? Is the target identified and then repeated multiple times for emphasis?

Sub-factor A.3 Objectification of Target: Is there language that indicates a negative view or dehumanizing of the target?

Sub-factor A.4 Emphasis of Target: Does the writer use capital letters, quotes, color changes, graphics, parenthetical inserts, or emoji to emphasize the target? This becomes more concerning if related to a theme of retaliation, blaming others, or wounded self-image (my life is over).

Sub-factor A.5 Graphic Language: Does the writer describe what s/he wants to do to the target in a graphic or detailed manner?

FACTOR B: HIERARCHICAL THEMATIC CONTENT

This factor is based on the concept of the writer or protagonist in the story being identified in the writing sample as superior or in an avenging or punishing role. This can occur through the anti-hero of the story or writer being seen as all-powerful and giving out judgment for past wrongs or the proletariat or targets in the story being seen as weak, stupid, or naive.

Sub-factor B.1 Disempowering Language: Is the person, place, or system being targeted described as a sheep, lemming, cattle, retarded, or something similar?

Sub-factor B.2 Glorified Avenger: Is the writer or protagonist described as an all-powerful figure or someone who is smart, knowledgeable, and able to punish those who have wronged him/her? There may also be a tendency to use the gun or weapon to enhance the attacker's gender status to present him/herself as all powerful or superior.

Sub-factor B.3 Reality Crossover: For fiction pieces, is there a cross-over between fiction and reality? Additionally, does the writer reference an ideology or historical figure such as Hitler/Nazis or previous mass murderer as a role model or someone to emulate or copy?

Sub-factor B.4 Militaristic Language: Does the writer use military language around tactical or strategic attacks on a target?

Sub-factor B.5 Paranoid Content: Does the story structure give a sense of paranoia or worry beyond what would be considered normal?

FACTOR C: ACTION AND TIME IMPERATIVE

This factor is concerned with writing content that conveys a sense of impending movement toward action. This may be communicated by mentioning a specific time, location, or event such as a graduation, academic admission, or results of a conduct meeting.

Sub-factor C.1 Location of the Attack: Is the location of a potential attack site mentioned in detail?

Sub-factor C.2 Time of the Attack: Is there a time/date given for the attack?

Sub-factor C.3 Weapons and Materials to be Used: Are specific weapons or materials mentioned in the writing that will be used in the attack?

Sub-factor C.4 Overcoming Obstacles: Does the writing sample include examples of obstacles that must be first overcome in order to carry out an attack?

Sub-factor C.5 Conditional Ultimatum: Is there an ultimatum attached to the time and the location of the attack?



VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT OF WRITTEN WORD (CONT.)

FACTOR D: PRE-ATTACK PLANNING

Many who move forward with violent attacks write and plan in detail prior to these attacks. Sometimes, this pre-attack planning is boastful and can be described as a “howling” behavior designed to intimidate others towards compliance. Other times the pre-attack planning is unintentionally leaked prior to the attack and discovered by a third party.

Sub-factor D.1 Discussion and Acquisition of Weapons: Does the writing contain evidence of discussion about potential weapons or materials that may be used to carry out an attack?

Sub-factor D.2 Evidence of Researching or Stalking the Target: Does the writing give evidence the author has conducted detailed research concerning the potential target?

Sub-factor D.3 Details Concerning Target: Has the writer given evidence of studying the details of a particular location to attack?

Sub-factor D.4 Fantasy Rehearsal for Attack: Is there evidence of a fantasy rehearsal concerning a potential attack?

Sub-factor D.5 Costuming Description: In fiction writing, is there a discussion of elaborate, dark costuming worn by the anti-hero prior to or during the attack?

FACTOR E: INJUSTICE COLLECTING

The term “injustice collector” was coined by Mary Ellen O’Toole as a risk factor in the first prong of the threat assessment approach: the personality of the student. The injustice collector keeps track of his/her past wrongs and is often upset in a manner beyond what would typically be expected.

Sub-factor E.1 Perseverating on Past Wrongs: Does the writer give evidence of being wronged by others?

Sub-factor E.2 Unrequited Romantic Entanglements: Does the writer discuss past romantic relationships that ended in frustrated outcomes with the writer or protagonist alone and isolated?

Sub-factor E.3 Desperation, Hopelessness or Suicide Ideation/Attempt: Does the story or email have a quality of sadness, isolation, and a lack of positive outcomes or options for either the writer or the main character? Did the writer express an idea, thought, or description of a plan to kill him/herself?

Sub-factor E.4 Amplification/Narrowing: Is there language that amplifies (use of CAPS, emoji, or color/highlighting) or narrows the focus of anger and threat to a particular individual, department, or group?

Sub-factor E.5 Threats to Create Justice: Does the writer offer an explanation of how s/he will seek ultimate justice, karma, payback, or a narrative on how the individual will “make things right?”

SCORING

To score the VRAW², the writing sample should be read through carefully several times and areas of concern highlighted. Staff using the VRAW² then makes a decision surrounding each of the main five factors to determine if it is present. This is determined by rating each of the five sub-factors as 0 for not present, 1 for unsure, and 2 for present. The sub-factors are then added up. Scores of 5 or more indicated the overall factor is endorsed.

Factors Endorsed	NaBITA Tool	SIVRA-35
5 Factors	Extreme	High
4 Factors	Severe	High
3 Factors	Elevated	Moderate
2 Factors	Moderate	Moderate
1 Factor	Mild	Low



VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT OF WRITTEN WORD

Rate each of the five sub-factors either 0 for not present, 1 for unsure, and 2 for present, then add up all points. Scores of 5 or more indicated the overall factor is endorsed.

FACTORS	POINTS	NOTES
FACTOR A: Fixation and Focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Endorsed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Endorsed	
Sub-factor A.1 Naming of Target	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor A.2 Repetition of the Target	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor A.3 Objectification of Target	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor A.4 Emphasis of Target	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor A.5 Graphic Language	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
FACTOR B: Hierarchical Thematic Content	<input type="checkbox"/> Endorsed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Endorsed	
Sub-factor B.1 Disempowering Language	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor B.2 Glorified Avenger	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor B.3 Reality Crossover	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor B.4 Militaristic Language	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor B.5 Paranoid Content	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
FACTOR C: Action and Time Imperative	<input type="checkbox"/> Endorsed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Endorsed	
Sub-factor C.1 Location of the Attack	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor C.2 Time of the Attack	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor C.3 Weapons and Materials to be Used	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor C.4 Overcoming Obstacles	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor C.5 Conditional Ultimatum	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
FACTOR D: Pre-Attack Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Endorsed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Endorsed	
Sub-factor D.1 Discussion and Acquisition of Weapons	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor D.2 Evidence of Researching or Stalking the Target	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor D.3 Details Concerning Target	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor D.4 Fantasy Rehearsal for Attack	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor D.5 Costuming Description	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
FACTOR E: Injustice Collecting	<input type="checkbox"/> Endorsed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Endorsed	
Sub-factor E.1 Perseverating on Past Wrongs	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor E.2 Unrequited Romantic Entanglements	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor E.3 Desperation, Hopelessness, Suicide Ideation/Attempt	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor E.4 Amplification/Narrowing:	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Sub-factor E.5 Threats to Create Justice:	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	

Note: Dangerousness and violence, from a student, faculty, or staff member is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately predict. This training topic offers research-based techniques and theories to provide a foundational understanding and improved awareness of the potential risk. The training or tool should not be seen as a guarantee or offer any assurance that violence will be prevented.

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Mental Health First Aid (MHFA): A First-Hand Look at Why You Should Consider this Training for Your Campus Community

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Abstract

Mental Health First Aid, an eight-hour course that gives people the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis, can give your campus yet another tool to help in the identification of students, faculty, and staff who may be experiencing mental health issues so that you can intervene before those issues reach the crisis stage.

Introduction

Hello ALGEE... The five basic tenets of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) are represented by this acronym, and there's more about ALGEE later. What you are about to read are my personal experiences and recommendation that you consider for implementation of MHFA at your campus. A five-day training offered by MHFA has reinforced my extensive background in both professional and volunteer training, and I recently became a certified instructor for the standard/adult MHFA curriculum.

In this article, I will offer my personal experiences with this program to help the reader better understand MHFA. Prior to this training, my work in the arena of crisis response, suicide prevention/postvention, disaster mental health, and psychological first aid spanned four decades. My training has included serving in leadership roles at a mid-size state university, as an adjunct professor in the area of clinical mental health, as a mental health lead for American Red Cross Disaster Services (in Conn. and RI), as a Master Trainer for QPR, and as an instructor for Psychological First Aid/Fundamentals of Disaster Mental Health. My crisis intervention work has also been regional and national, working at such events as Superstorm Sandy, Hurricanes Katrina and Irene, and the school shootings at Sandy Hook, Conn. Having participated in multiple types of trainings that would benefit campus communities, I present a synopsis of MHFA training for your consideration. By no means is it a product endorsement, as I have always affiliated myself with multiple programs that enhance outreach and support the well being of students and staff. MHFA may become another item in your toolkit by which to measure student health, safety, and the effectiveness of prevention programming.

First, allow me to provide a brief review of what MHFA is for those of you who are new to it, along with a brief update for those who may already be acquainted with the program.

What is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid is an eight-hour course that gives people the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The evidence behind the program demonstrates that it does build mental health literacy, helping the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness.

The National Council for Behavioral Health defines it this way: "Mental Health First Aid is an in-person training that teaches you how to help people developing a mental illness or in a crisis." Mental Health First Aid USA is managed, operated, and disseminated by the National Council for Behavioral Health, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.

It is important to note that Mental Health First Aid USA is listed in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (other programs like QPR for suicide prevention are also listed). Basing campus programming in proven approaches is essential.

A personal note about programs like MHFA: As a Connecticut resident, I was privileged to have our state senator, Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) sponsor The Mental Health First Aid Act (S. 711/H.R. 1877) in the U.S. Senate, along with Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH). Although the act is not a direct endorsement of any one program, the Australian-based MHFA does fit the "bill."

General Review of Training:

MHFA training provides an intensive immersion into mental health issues across the spectrum. It is a five-day experience that is made highly palatable by very knowledgeable instructors. Two certifications can be earned at the end of training. Completion of an eight-hour course certifies/trains you to provide initial help to people experiencing mental health problems such as depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis, and substance abuse disorders, and instructor certification qualifies you to actually teach the aforementioned eight-hour curriculum.

Make no mistake; it's a long week, and for appropriate reasons. The eight-hour course is conducted during the first two-day training. The remaining three days are devoted to having participants actually teach sections of the curriculum. MHFA instructors do an excellent job of helping all contributors build their comfort level with the material. There are well-experienced teachers, professors, and trainers alongside the first-timers. This coalesces to be manageable for each person through the teamwork, comfort, and leadership MHFA instructors provide. Essential to the process is the immediate feedback offered by the MHFA instructors for each section taught. The final step has instructors meet individually with attendees for one-to-one feedback.

Depth of Curriculum

First two days: MHFA uses the term "unpack" for all the parts for this two-day experience. It's a reasonable description, as it is sort of like you have gone on a working vacation and they brought the suitcase. The entire curriculum is arranged around two booklets that are unpacked in parts. Both days are broken into sessions using the booklets provided. One booklet is what all participates/trainers use for the eight-hour training, complimented by a trainers' teaching guide. The MHFA instructors present all materials supplemented by PowerPoint slides. All of the work is interactive, and has participants working in large and small group formats. Plenty of time is provided to model the "how to" functions of the content, and instructors are very supportive in coaching participants.

The seminal points made the first two days are:

- What MHFA is and the role of the Mental Health First Aider.
- The prevalence and impact of mental health issues in the United States.
- Introduction of the MHFA Action Plan.
- An overview of the signs, symptoms, and possible risk factors/warning signs of depression and anxiety.

Once the eight-hour training is completed over the first two days, you move on to becoming certified to teach over the next three days.

Next three days: The next suitcase to unpack is indeed the largest one. The entire curriculum from the prior days is divided up into various components. All participants are assigned section(s) to present in 50-minute sessions. MHFA provides you with the topic, exercises and discussion points, corresponding slides to the PowerPoint, and the reference pages to the teaching guide. An example of the exercise and discussion would be:

- Topic: Depression and Anxiety/Types of Mood Disorders/Signs & Symptoms of Depression.
- Exercises and Discussion: Signs & Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety; DVD: The Pain of Depression.
- Slides 12–16 for presentation and pages 16–19 for teaching notes.

Throughout the training, a great deal of emphasis is placed on coaching and feedback, as the MHFA instructors and fellow participants support each student-presenter. These days are devoted to truly dissecting the entire eight-hour curriculum, with a strong emphasis on preserving its integrity, efficacy, and fidelity. You learn about:

- Depression and mood disorders.
- Anxiety disorders.
- Trauma.
- Psychosis.
- Substance use disorders.

Mental Health First Aid teaches about recovery and resiliency — “the belief that individuals experiencing these challenges can and do get better, and use their strengths to stay well,” notes the National Council for Behavioral Health.

Understanding ALGEE

The whole training is to support ALGEE, a five-step action plan designed to help individuals assess a situation and help. It calls for:

1. Assessing for risk of suicide or harm.

2. Listening nonjudgmentally.
3. Giving reassurance and information.
4. Encouraging appropriate professional help.
5. Encouraging self-help and other support strategies.

Potential for Campus Use

Mental health issues on college and university campuses mirror what any community might experience. Our advantage is that we have neighborhoods built in that include students, faculty, student affairs staff, police, facilities operations, clerical staff, and a myriad of others who can easily become the “eyes and ears” on the ground to ensure that those who might be experiencing mental health issues are identified and helped.

Should you spend the money to have someone on staff trained to teach MHFA on your campus? Budgets were always the bane of my existence, as they are for many campus leaders across the country. Cut, cut more, and cut even that. We all became more lean and resourceful in our financial stewardship, and ask how can we could maximize every last dollar? When it comes to whether to spend money to train someone in MHFA, my simple answer is yes. One or two staff members who are trained to teach this is a good expenditure that will offer an invaluable return. Up-front costs are mitigated by the number of times that you can offer MHFA on your campus. One person can be trained to offer MHFA for approximately \$2,000, and costs for materials per person are very low. Additionally, there are opportunities to award continuing education units. (Check the websites below for more information.)

By way of the Mental Health First Aid Act, our nation has recognized the need for programs that will provide benefits across many different kinds of settings. Three basic doctrines they outlined in that legislation mentioned earlier were:

- Recognizing the symptoms of common mental illnesses and substance use disorders.
- De-escalating crisis situations safely.
- Initiating timely referral to mental health and substance abuse resources available.

These are three things that we all endeavor to do well on our campuses, and MHFA can help enhance the good work we all do.

Helpful Web Resources:

Mental Health First Aid USA: www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org.

Frequently Asked Questions: www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/faq/.

An Examination of Institutional Approaches to Students Who Exhibit Suicidal Behaviors

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Abstract

Changing regulations related to suicidal students have led institutions to re-evaluate their policies and processes. This collective case study examined institutional responses to the revised direct threat test standard, as well as enforcement of policies that address liability, the duty of care, and compliance issues surrounding disability regulations. Findings focus on the importance of policies that address behaviors rather than diagnoses, the impact of those behaviors on the campus community, the use of due process, and the importance of collaborative decision making.

Introduction

In recent years, institutions of higher education have seen an increase in the number of students with mental illnesses on campus (Gallagher, 2012). As a result, many campus counseling centers have shifted their focus from a developmental and preventive model of treatment to a more clinical and crisis-oriented model in order to meet the demands of students with serious psychological problems (Kitzrow, 2003). Although there is no way to predict suicide, there are certain risk factors that may be present, such as mental illness (Cohen, 2007). “Admittedly, not all mentally ill students who seek crisis counseling are suicidal, but as 90 percent of suicide deaths are related to mental illness, students in the midst of a psychological crisis are a concern” (Douglas, 2007, p. 36). As the number of students on campus with mental illness continues to increase, the number of students who exhibit suicidal behaviors is likely to increase as well.

Cases of student suicide have prompted colleges and universities to evaluate how they address those who display suicidal behavior. The courts have clarified that institutions have a legal duty to prevent students from committing suicide. In 2005, *Shin v. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)* expanded the scope of liability that institutions possess if a student dies by suicide while in treatment at an on-campus counseling center or facility. The court found that administrators and medical professionals had a duty to prevent a student’s suicide due to their knowledge of the student’s suicidal ideology and their ongoing treatment of the student for mental illness (Douglas, 2007). The court ruled a special relationship existed between MIT and Shin, which created a duty to prevent her suicide.

Given the implication of this special relationship, and in order to limit liability, many institutions have adopted involuntary withdrawal policies (Pavela, 2006). Cohen noted that “by requiring the student to leave right away, the institution does not voluntarily undertake to help the student, which may limit the school’s liability if the student commits suicide at a later date” (2007, p. 3114).

While liability risk mitigation is an important consideration for administrators, institutions must balance it with the risk of violating federal disability laws. Revisions of federal regulations have made this balance difficult in the face of seemingly competing interests. The revision of the Department of Justice’s Title II regulation in September 2010, which applies to both the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, redefined the concept of direct threat when dealing with students of concern (Lewis, Schuster, & Sokolow, 2012). The direct threat test application was previously written to allow colleges and universities to take action and involuntarily withdraw students who presented a threat to themselves or others. Under the revisions, which went into effect in

March 2011, a direct threat is only one that constitutes an immediate threat to others. Therefore, institutions can no longer initiate the withdrawal of students who are a threat to themselves (Lewis, et al., 2012). Given this new interpretation of the Title II regulation, and the increased legal interpretation of duty of care for students, institutions face the difficult decision of how to respond to students who have a mental illness and exhibit suicidal behavior.

Purpose of the Study

Due to the prevalence of student suicides, many institutions have begun to review their suicidal behavior policies to seek protection from liability and to save students’ lives (Cohen, 2007). It is important to understand emerging institutional practices of attending to the needs of these students while navigating an unfamiliar legal landscape. The purpose of this study was to understand these emerging institutional philosophies and examine how institutions are adhering to the revised direct threat test standard when students exhibit suicidal behaviors. This study also explored how institutions are enforcing policies that address both the duty of care in regards to students and the compliance issues surrounding disability regulations. Specific research questions included:

1. What are the institutional philosophies used when developing and implementing policies to address students who exhibit suicidal behaviors?
2. What institutional philosophies are used when developing and implementing policies that balance the duty of care and the need to remain in compliance with Title II?

Definition of Terms

- Mental illness is having a diagnosed psychiatric disorder based on the criteria of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Mowbray et al., 2006).
- Suicidal behaviors span a spectrum that ranges from the feeling that life is not worth living and being tired of life to thoughts of suicide and suicidal acts (Ahrens et al, 2000).
- The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 covers non-discrimination based on a disability (including mental illness) by public entities in the U.S., which includes access to public institutions of higher education (Department of Justice, 2010).
- Title II of the ADA extends the prohibition on discrimination based on disability established by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, to all activities of U.S. state and local governments. Title II regulates both ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Department of Justice, 2010).
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability. Under this law, individuals with disabilities are defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment

that substantially limits one or more major life activities (Department of Human and Health Services, 2006).

- Involuntary withdrawal takes place when an institution dismisses a student from all classes on medical grounds and no longer considers the individual an enrolled student (Pavela, 2006).

Literature Review

Institutions of higher education have noted concern with the trend of students with mental illness entering campus communities (Levine & Dean, 2012; Belch & Marshak, 2006; Mowbray et al., 2006; Stone, Vespia, & Kanz, 2000). Federal law requires institutions to provide students with reasonable accommodations to ensure they have an equal opportunity to be successful, regardless of mental health status (Department of Justice, 2010). Because an increased number of students present with mental illness, there is likely to be an increase in the number of suicides of college students on campus as well (Douglas, 2007). Court cases related to students who have died by suicide on campus have placed an increased legal burden on institutions (Moore, 2007).

Institutional responses designed to limit legal responsibility vary. One method some institutions have used to limit legal responsibility is to impose an involuntary withdrawal of students who exhibit suicidal behaviors. Prior to March 2011, this separation from an institution was deemed legal based on the direct threat standard outlined in the American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (The Jed Foundation, 2008), which referred to students who were a threat to themselves or others. However, with the elimination of "threat to self" in the direct threat standard as an allowable reason for separation, this use of involuntary withdrawal to address suicidal behavior became prohibited (Lewis, et al., 2012).

College Student Suicide

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people aged 25 to 34, and the third-leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 24 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Ninety percent of people at any age who die by suicide have a diagnosed mental illness (The Jed Foundation, 2006). The Center for Collegiate Mental Health (2014) reported that 33.3 percent of the students who responded to a survey had seriously considered suicide within past five years. Depression and anxiety are the most common mental illnesses linked to suicidal behaviors (Garlow et al., 2008; Wilcox et al., 2010). A survey of counseling center directors, (Gallagher, 2012) reported that 80 percent of students who died by suicide within a campus community were clinically depressed. The link between mental illness and suicidal behavior among college-aged students is evident. Administrators must understand the underlying dynamic of students' suicidal ideology in order to provide a complete intervention (Drum, Brownson, Denmark, & Smith, 2009).

Institutional Liability

Court decisions have created uncertainty regarding the legal responsibility of institutions and have amplified concern regarding suicide liability (Blanchard, 2007; Cohen, 2009; Lake & Tribbenet, 2002; Moore, 2007; Wei, 2008). Blanchard (2007) stated:

Legal cases have forced institutions to evaluate policies to limit liability when possible. In the 1960s, the student-institutional relationship could be referred to as the bystander era, a time in which judicial rulings inferred that universities should not get involved in the lives of students to avoid running the risk of assuming a duty of care. Presently, courts hold institutions to a duty of reasonable care. (p. 462)

Schiesler v. Ferrum College found that the college's dean of students could be held responsible in the death of Michael Frentzel, a student who died by suicide at the institution. In this 2002 case, Frentzel had a documented behavioral pattern with the institution related to exhibiting anger management issues. During the spring semester, Frentzel expressed suicidal thoughts after an altercation with his girlfriend. When confronted by police about his suicidal thoughts, Frentzel was found locked in his residence hall room with self-inflicted bruises on his head. As a result of that, the dean of students required Frentzel to sign a pledge agreeing to not hurt himself again. The dean did not require any further follow-up with the student, such as counseling or mental assessment. Within a week, the student wrote two suicide notes to his girlfriend. The institution did not respond to the first note, and after the second note, administrators found the student hanging in his residence hall room.

The court determined that the institution's inaction could be proximate cause of the student's death (Blanchard, 2007; Cohen, 2009; Lake & Tribbenet 2002; Moore, 2007; Wei, 2008). The court also determined that an assumed duty arose from a special relationship between student and institution due to Ferrum College's knowledge of the imminent danger Frentzel posed to himself (Blanchard, 2007; Cohen, 2009; Lake & Tribbenet, 2002; Moore, 2007; Wei, 2008). This case set the precedent for future litigation regarding student suicides and related institutional liability.

In the Shin case, the parents of Elizabeth Shin filed a lawsuit against MIT in 2005 after the death of their daughter. At the time of Shin's enrollment at MIT, she suffered from a documented mental illness. Administrators at MIT worked with Shin until the time of her death, meeting regularly for counseling sessions and contacting her parents during difficult periods. However, the administrators failed to communicate a proper plan to assist Shin after acquiring knowledge of her plan to commit suicide. Shin ultimately set her residence hall room on fire and died from third-degree burns, which were determined to

be self-inflicted. Her parents sued MIT's medical and psychiatric personnel, as well as other campus administrators, for breach of contract. The court cited *Schieszler vs. Ferrum* in determining that MIT had a duty to assist Shin because the administrators were aware of her mental health issues (Blanchard, 2007; Cohen, 2009; Lake & Tribbenet 2002; Moore, 2007; Penven & Janosik, 2012; Wei, 2008).

Both of these cases changed the landscape for higher education administrators. Many institutions began to develop policies to limit liability once the courts ruled that a special relationship exists between institutions and students when campus administrators have knowledge of suicidal behaviors. This "special relationship," means that colleges and universities have a duty to protect students from foreseeable harm (Kaplin & Lee, 2014).

Policies Related to Suicidal Behavior

There are many factors to consider when drafting policies to address students who exhibit suicidal behavior. Administrators must determine the appropriate response when addressing such behaviors. In order to make such decisions, many use an interdisciplinary threat assessment team. Such teams provide a centralized method for administrators to collaborate and intervene with students of concern, with the ultimate goal of reducing violence and tragedy on campus (Dunkle, Silverstein, & Warner 2008).

Administrators may elect to designate some suicidal behaviors as violations of the code of conduct. Creating a policy addressing suicidal behaviors must be done with great care and consideration (Dickstein & Christensen, 2008). Despite concerns, many institutions adopt policies designed to reduce legal risk if a student dies by suicide on campus. Senior student affairs officers see a critical need to develop policies that allow involuntary withdrawal to effectively manage the well-being of suicidal students (Belch & Marshak, 2006). An increase in such policies occurred in response to recent court decisions (Appelbaum 2006).

Involuntary withdrawal policies allow an institution to separate a student from the institution so that the student can receive the medical attention needed (Wei, 2008). Campus administrators must make an individualized and objective assessment of a student's ability to safely participate in the educational community before requiring involuntary withdrawal (The Jed Foundation 2008). However, Pavela (2006) stated that by adopting involuntary withdrawal policies, institutions are taking premature action that is likely to expand, not reduce, legal risk due to the potential of violating discrimination laws.

Direct Threat Assessment

Institutions are at risk of noncompliance with discrimination laws when adopting involuntary withdrawal policies to address students'

mental health issues. (Wei, 2008). Federal law protects students from discrimination based on disability, including mental illness. The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces ADA and Section 504 and ensures that institutions comply with these laws (Jed Foundation, 2008; Office of Civil Rights, n.d.). Title II is a joint regulation under the ADA and Section 504 that regulates, among other things, whether action against a student that is determined to be a direct threat can be taken (Department of Justice, 2010).

The direct threat standard considers nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that the risk will result in action; and whether reasonable accommodations or interventions will sufficiently reduce the risk (Department of Justice; The Jed Foundation, 2008). "An institution must apply the direct threat standard before taking action (e.g., placing a student on involuntary leave) regarding students with a disability whose behavior poses a significant risk to the health or safety of [the student or] others" (The Jed Foundation, 2008, p. 14).

The Title II regulation, which only applies to public institutions, went through a revision that took effect on March 15, 2011 and that eliminated the option to take action on a student who was determined to pose a threat to self. The current definition of direct threat in Title II is "a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices, or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services as provided in § 35.139" (Department of Justice, 2010, p. 30). Campus administrators had to reconsider appropriate policy development for students who exhibit suicidal behavior within a campus community, because they can no longer be involuntarily withdrawn as a result of the direct threat test finding.

Rationale for Study

There has been no published study to inform campus administrators regarding policy implementation in response to the new direct threat standard. OCR has acknowledged that the revised Title II regulation may have some unintended practical concerns (Grasgreen, 2014). Additionally, OCR has indicated that it would provide clear guidance to help avoid harmful consequences, but has yet to release follow-up information. Because of this uncertainty, there is a need for better understanding of policies that limit liability and adhere to the new direct threat test standard. This study explored the process by which administrators try to balance both the duty of care to students and the compliance issues surrounding disability regulations.

Methodology

A collective case study design was used to address the posed research questions. According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), the collective case study method is most effective when a researcher is seeking to gain a greater insight into a research topic by concurrently studying

multiple cases in one overall research study. By researching several institutions, the collective case study method provides greater insight into institutional philosophies.

Sampling Procedures

The sample included four public institutions in the University System of Georgia (USG). All institutions had a working policy to address students who exhibit suicidal behaviors prior to the change of the Title II regulations. At the time of the study, the participants also had withdrawal policies that addressed students who exhibited suicidal behaviors and that balanced the duty of care and the need to remain in compliance with Title II. A pre-screening email was sent to prospective institutions to verify that they had policies in place to address suicidal behaviors prior to the updated Title II regulation.

Four administrators from various institutional types responded and agreed to participate in the study. Institutional types within the USG system are classified as research universities, comprehensive universities, state universities, and state colleges (University System of Georgia, 2013). Responses were received from one research university, two comprehensive universities, and one state university. The selection of public institutions was intentional because of the applicability of the Title II regulation. (The Title III regulation, which governs private institutions, did not change; therefore, private institutions do not currently have to adapt their policies to meet the new legal standard (Lewis, Schuster, & Sokolow, 2012).) Review of various institutional websites indicated that the dean of students was typically the administrator with direct responsibility for policy development and implementation in this area, so initial invitations were directed to individuals in that position. Each administrator selected for the study had direct responsibility for policy implementation regarding students who exhibit suicidal behaviors. Once eligible participants were identified, in-person interviews with each participant were scheduled.

Data Collection

This study used a semi-structured open interview guide with questions developed from the Jed Foundation Framework for Developing Institutional Protocols for Acutely Distressed or Suicidal College Students (2006). The Jed Foundation, a group focused on suicide prevention among college students, provides questions to consider when developing policies that address suicidal students. To develop a framework to assist administrators in drafting policies to manage students who are acutely distressed or suicidal, the Jed Foundation convened a round-table discussion that included senior college administrators, college counselors and other mental health practitioners, and attorneys specializing in higher education issues (2006).

After IRB approval, the interviewer went to each campus and interviewed the dean of students or other designee. For each campus in

the study, the semi-structured interviews took place in person and were audio-taped.

Data Analysis

The data collected at the interview was transcribed and analyzed. Member checking was used to ensure interpretive validity (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). During the member checking process, each respondent was given the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the transcribed responses.

The case analysis technique was used to examine each institution's philosophy on how it implements policies that focus on students who exhibit suicidal behaviors (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). For the case analysis, each transcript was reviewed and the information each participant provided regarding his or her institution's philosophy, information that provided context to the philosophy, and any differences in how they addressed suicidal behavior, was highlighted. Additionally, each transcript was reviewed to gain insight regarding how each institution has adjusted or altered practices to comply with the revised Title II regulation. Lastly, each institution's written policy was reviewed to ascertain further context.

Findings

Respondents outlined how their institutions balanced the legal landscape with the duty of care and the need to remain in compliance with Title II, as well as current policies addressing students exhibiting suicidal behavior. Each respondent reported a review of previously written policies to remain in compliance with the revised direct threat legal standard. An initial analysis of the data was conducted to examine individual institutional policies, and then a collective case study analysis focused on the similarities and differences among the institutions (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Comprehensive University A

At Comprehensive University A, there has been a shift in enforcing the written involuntary withdrawal policy to remain in compliance with the revised regulation. The dean of students was originally contacted to interview for this research study; however, the newly appointed dean referred the researcher to the director of counseling services, who had historical context of the policy, as well as in-depth knowledge of the revised policy development and implementation. The administrator explained, "We were removing students prior to Title II changes for being a danger to themselves. We have done significantly less of that since then." Comprehensive University A still has an involuntary withdrawal policy in place, but decided to use it less and conduct fewer involuntary withdrawals. When determining whether to remove a student involuntarily, administrators at Comprehensive University A consider the severity of the suicide attempt, as well as patterns of suicidal behavior and first create a safety plan for the student. The respondent stated,

“If a student is actively suicidal and cannot make a safety plan with us, then we are going to move to involve the family, hospitalize, [any] kind of thing to secure them because their safety is important.”

Two strategies used at this institution reflect how administrators balance the rights of the student while protecting the campus community. One way is to use the campus intervention team to decide collaboratively if an involuntary withdrawal would be the most effective intervention for the student. The respondent explained that collaborative decision-makers consist of the Dean of Students and representatives from campus police, student conduct, housing and residence life, student counseling center, and health services. The other way is to use the student code of conduct to guide practice in addressing the student’s behaviors. The administrators revised the code of conduct to reflect revisions of the Title II regulation so that students have due process before an involuntary withdrawal. Prior to the updated interpretation of Title II, due process was not necessarily provided for involuntary withdrawals. The respondent described the philosophy regarding involuntary withdrawals as ways to intervene that are most beneficial for the student, have the best potential outcome consider how a student’s behavior affects the campus community.

Comprehensive University B

Comprehensive University B discontinued the practice of involuntary withdrawals of students who exhibit suicidal behaviors. The dean of students explained that prior to the Title II regulation revision, the policy permitted administrators to involuntarily withdraw students who did not comply with recommendations from a counselor. In response to the revised Title II language, the institution no longer gives administrators the authority to remove a student from the institution for exhibiting suicidal behaviors. This respondent also explained that university counsel decided that, due to the unclear nature of the updated language, removing students who exhibit suicidal behaviors infringes on the students’ individual rights and is a form of disability discrimination. The administrator stated that Comprehensive University B now addresses students’ suicidal behavior as a disruption to the campus community. Student who disrupt the campus community due to their suicidal behaviors are referred to the Office of Student Conduct for alleged policy violations. Though the respondent explained the institution’s rationale for the current policy, it was also mentioned that when it comes to threat to self, they continue to be challenged by how to effectively mitigate risk.

Research University

At the Research University, the policy narrowly defines what behavior leads to removal from the institution. The assistant vice president for student affairs outlined ways in which the university responds to students who exhibit suicidal behaviors. The written policy outlines that

students who display a high probability of harm to self or others, not simply speculative behaviors, may face involuntary withdrawal. The policy was written to address any type of student situation, not just students who exhibit suicidal behaviors. When determining whether to remove a student involuntarily, the respondent explained that a student’s negative impact on the community is equally as important as the student’s situation at the time. The administrator outlined ways the policy is designed to balance the legal landscape of the Title II regulation. For example, prior to making a decision to withdraw a student, the university uses a collaborative behavioral team to gather information regarding the student’s behavior. The members involved in the discussion include two student affairs administrators, one mental health professional, one representative from legal affairs, and the chief of police. The assistant vice president stressed the importance of due process as well, stating, “What’s really important, probably most importantly within our policy, is the due process piece. So as we remove a student from campus, they are allowed to make an appeal to the vice president for student affairs, and they have a time period that’s outlined that they can do that.” The respondent further stated that there is a close working relationship with the legal affairs office, and administrators do what they collectively think is the best interest of the university.

State University

The State University was created from a consolidation of two public institutions, which the associate vice president for student affairs said resulted in a unique challenge for the development of their policy. Before the consolidation, each institution had a separate policy in place to address suicidal behaviors. After the announcement of the consolidation, work groups were created to establish a consolidated code of conduct and policies to address students who pose a risk to the campus community. The creation of the consolidated university’s policy reflects the revised Title II regulation. The respondent explained four considerations that drove their policy development. First, the policy focuses on conduct and not the disability. Second, the policy requires an individualized assessment. Third, the policy ensures consideration of reasonable accommodations. Finally, it ensures due process to students.

At this university, when a student exhibits suicidal behaviors, a comprehensive Behavioral Intervention Team convenes to discuss the student. The team, consisting of representatives from the campus counseling center, student disability center, campus police, and student conduct, is tasked with determining the threat risk. These campus constituents gather to determine the best individualized approach to deal with the student, which can include an involuntary withdrawal. The student’s safety is of the utmost importance. The respondent stated when the team makes its decision on how to intervene, it is based on the student’s behavior as it relates to the disruption to the learning environment. The university considers a “threat to self” incident

a health or safety violation. Disability is not considered when making a decision to withdraw a student involuntarily. The policy makes provisions to ensure that a student who is withdrawn receives due process. Safety, not only to the student, but also to the campus environment, is the overarching philosophy of the institutions' policy.

Differences and Similarities

This study's respondents all described specific institutional philosophies on addressing the behaviors of students who exhibited suicidal behavior. Though the policies reviewed address the removal of students from the institution, it is important to note that not every intervention with students who exhibit such behaviors results in the students being immediately removed. There were commonalities and differences among the approaches of the institutions represented.

Policy Development

Among the four institutions reviewed, each presented different approaches to policy development. For the Comprehensive University A, written policy remained the same, but implementation changed to meet the revised Title II legal standard. Comprehensive University B abandoned the policy altogether and decided to handle students who pose a threat to themselves as a disruption, which is a violation of its code of conduct. The Research University sought approval from the faculty and staff council, as well as the president for their policy to expand their authority to withdraw students. The State University created a new policy due to the recent institutional consolidation of two institutions. Three of the institutions still have policies that permit them to involuntarily remove students who pose a threat to themselves. Comprehensive University B no longer has a policy in place that permits such action.

All of the administrators stressed the need to focus on students' behavior and how it impacts the campus community when dealing with students who pose a threat to themselves. The State University, in particular, stressed the importance of ensuring that the decision to remove students involuntarily is not based on disability. At Comprehensive University A, the respondent stressed that when addressing suicidal behavior, it is important to look for ways to intervene that will be most beneficial to students to ensure the best outcome.

Policy Implementation

All institutions stressed the importance of due process when enacting policies to remove students who are disruptive to the campus community. Though all institutions engage in some form of due process, an analysis across institutions shows different approaches. Whereas Comprehensive University A made changes to its code of conduct to ensure students received due process, Research University developed a stand-alone policy outside of the code of conduct that affords

students the ability to appeal an involuntary withdrawal decision to the vice president of student affairs.

Two of the respondents noted their institution's code of conduct was used to address students who exhibit suicidal behaviors. While Comprehensive University A and Comprehensive University B both use the code of conduct to address such behavior as a code violation, Comprehensive University B exclusively uses the conduct process to enforce the policy, while Comprehensive University A uses a collaborative decision-making process. Though State University administrators also view a student's suicidal behavior as a health and safety violation, all incidents are reviewed by their Behavioral Intervention Team for the best possible intervention, which according to their policy may include an involuntary withdrawal.

Three of the institutions stressed the importance of a collaborative decision-making structure when determining what course of action to implement, while one institution used only the code of conduct to address these situations. All three respondents who used a collaborative process spoke about the importance of having a mental health professional's voice when making such decisions. The inclusion of a mental health professional is paramount to make an individualized assessment of a student, which is a requirement of the direct threat standard (Jeb Foundation, 2008).

Overall, respondents stressed the importance of creating policies that focus on student behavior and how such behavior impacts the campus community. The administrators also outlined institutional philosophies that balance the duty of care with the need to comply with Title II. They also stressed the importance of a collaborative decision-making process when addressing student behaviors. Finally, it is important to ensure due process in policies addressing suicidal students.

Implications

This study sought to understand how institutions were adhering to the revised direct threat standard when students exhibit suicidal behaviors. It was particularly important to understand institutions' philosophies when developing and implementing their policies. Consistently, the underlying philosophies involve focusing on students' behavior and how that behavior impacts the campus community.

It is important when implementing a policy that addresses suicidal behavior to ensure the decision-making process is collaborative. The philosophies outlined by three respondents centered on and used a collaborative decision-making process. One respondent eliminated the policy in favor of using the code of conduct to address students who exhibit suicidal behaviors. Administrators should consider such measures when reviewing policies to

ensure that individualized assessments are taking place. Such assessments are required by the ADA and the direct threat test (Department of Justice, 2010).

When developing a policy, it is important to consider the legal implications involved in implementation. The Title II revision focuses on “threat to self” policies that address students who have a diagnosed disability, including mental illness. Enacting policies focusing strictly on behavior rather than on disability limits the legal risk when the Title II regulation applies. After the revision of the direct threat standard, administrators outlined steps taken to balance the legal landscape while keeping the safety of students as a main consideration, focusing on conduct rather than how disability influences behavior. The respondent from State University received guidance from Paul Landon, author of the National Association of College and University Attorneys notes on the Title II revision (Lannon & Sanghavi, 2011). Using such guidance, the respondent stated that, “viewing the threat to self situation as health and safety violations permits institutions to intervene and remove students who exhibit suicidal behaviors by focusing strictly on the student’s behavior and not the student disability.” This is important for administrators seeking to develop risk mitigation policies. By developing policies that focus on the behavior only, institutions can limit legal liability by involuntarily withdrawing students.

Future Research

Several areas require further inquiry. One of the recommendations for further research would be to replicate this study with a different sample of institutions. The current study only sought to gain information from institutions within the state of Georgia. Further, research is needed into the ways in which institutions within other states develop and implement policies to address students who exhibit suicidal behaviors. A larger quantitative study is also recommended to provide more comprehensive data on how institutions address these situations.

Conclusion

The lack of specific guidance regarding new interpretation of the Title II regulation has made administrators re-examine involuntary withdrawal policies. Though most institutions in this study continue to use withdrawal policies that address behavior if a student seems to pose a direct threat to self, institutions have implemented safeguards that will also limit their legal liability with regard to Title II. These safeguards allow institutions to ensure that the entire campus community is at the center of each decision made by administrators. Overall, the safety of all students is always important in determining whether withdrawing an individual student is the most effective way to address suicidal behaviors.

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The Power of Potential: Navigating Disability and the Career Search with Students

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Abstract

Students with disabilities that affect behavior can sometimes find it difficult to interact with others, regardless of setting. When it comes to helping students seek employment during and beyond college, campus disability services can play an important part by helping these students strengthen their professional communication skills to ensure that the value of their college educations is not diminished because they cannot secure employment. This article explains how one institution's disability services office is helping to better position students with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder for successful professional life.

Taking out the “Dis”

James (not his real name) had worked as a temp in our disability services office for just over a year when he landed an interview for a full-time position in a different department at the university. We were all excited about the prospect of James landing a full-time position, and wanted to help in any way that we could. When James asked our director, Poppy Fitch, if she could assist by conducting a mock interview with him, she was more than happy to oblige. The mock interview was a chance for James to practice his interview skills, and gave Poppy the opportunity to share some best-practices with James. It wasn't until a week after the interview that Poppy shared her experience with the rest of the team, “There was a really powerful moment during the mock-interview,” she said, “when things really clicked for James, and he said, ‘You know, I noticed that this position requires a lot of attention to detail, and as a person living with Asperger’s, that’s something that I am very comfortable with.’”

I was completely blown away at the ease with which James was able to turn his autism spectrum disorder, a highly stigmatized condition, into a strength that made him a more desirable candidate for the job. While I’m sad to report that James did not get the position, he did make it to the final round of interviews, which shows just how big of an impact appropriate preparation and disclosure can have on a job seeker’s chance of landing a job. I later met with Greg Lewis, a career services specialist in our Career and Alumni Services department, to talk about what college professionals should know about disability and the career search. What started as the simple matter of James’ self-advocacy eventually turned into a presentation given at NASPA’s 2015 annual conference. That presentation was designed to give student affairs professionals the information they need to help their students with disabilities navigate what can often be an intimidating process.

Communication is Key

As a content specialist, I have always been drawn to the simple, quality content produced by Scope, an organization based in the U.K. Their “end the awkward” campaign takes a straightforward approach to combating the discomfort that people might feel when communicating with individuals with disabilities. Scope, in addition to producing great content, does a lot right when it comes to disability education, including conducting research related to disability. According to a 2014 Scope study, 67 percent of individuals in the U.K. indicated that they felt uncomfortable speaking with individuals with disabilities, (Scope, 2014). While I’ve never been able to find corresponding data regarding disability communication for U.S. populations, it’s safe to assume that our country likely feels similarly uncomfortable in its ability to communicate with individuals who are living with disabilities. The Scope study also shows some startling data regarding 18–34 year olds, specifically that one in five people in that age group indicated that they have intentionally avoided talking to a person with a disability because they

weren't sure how to best communicate with them. The question this data begged us to ask was: what advice can we give our colleagues so that they don't find themselves feeling this sense of overwhelming discomfort? Here are some suggestions:

1. *Use positive, people-first language.* Unless you have had a history of working with individuals with disabilities, or have found yourself working with your school’s disability support services office, chances are you could use a refresher when it comes to your disability diction. That’s OK. Many of us need a jump start when it comes to knowing what positive disability language sounds like. (Check out the tips from the Department of Labor at www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/effectiveinteraction.htm.) Using people-first language is simply the act of putting a person before a disability in a sentence’s structure (e.g., using the phrase “people with disabilities” rather than “disabled people”). If you want to learn more about what people-first language looks like, www.disabilityisnatural.com will tell you all you need to know. What’s really important is that we all make an effort to be comfortable in our communications regarding disability. Like anything else, the more confident we are in ourselves, the more comfortable we can be around others.
2. *Be real.* Whenever I’m talking to groups, and I tell them to “be real,” a puzzled look comes across everyone’s face. To clarify what I mean by the term, I ask them to do a simple exercise: “Raise your hand if you’ve ever had the feeling that someone wasn’t being real with you.” Hands shoot up. “Keep them in the air if you enjoyed that feeling.” Crickets. When I think of what it means to “be real” I think of my first real job. When I was pursuing my undergraduate degree, I worked one-on-one with individuals who were affected by autism spectrum disorder. I lived in constant fear of someone approaching us and using what I liked to call, “The Condescending Disability Voice.” It never ceased to amaze me how people would completely change their tone after finding out that they were speaking with an individual who had a disability. A completely natural and easy conversation could quickly devolve into an unnecessarily plodding, saccharine, and awkward time for everyone. Be real! It’s the easiest and most effective way to create a comfortable communication environment, and your students will appreciate it.
3. *Know the law.* While it might not seem like it’s related to disability communication, having a solid understanding of disability law can really go a long way when it comes to boosting your confidence. Not entirely thrilled about brushing up on your disability employment law? Check out the links that follow for clear, concise overviews of the laws you need to know:
 - The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Revised ADA Regulations Implementing Title II and Title III: www.ada.gov/2010_regs.htm.

- Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Section 501: www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/rehab.cfm.
- Rehabilitation act of 1973: Section 503: www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-rehab.htm.
- Rehabilitation act of 1973: Section 504: www.section508.gov.

It's important to understand that there are other times for an individual to disclose as well, including: after being offered a job, when already in a job and a disability-related problem arises, or never. The most important thing is that the individual disclosing feels comfortable in the timing of the disclosure. It is better to have people feeling confident in their communications than ask them to disclose during a time that might seem like a better fit for them.

Disclosure: No Right Answer

The thing that really impressed me about James' interview was how gracefully he handled his disclosure. Disclosing a disability, especially to a prospective employer, is not an easy thing to do. While James was able to take his disclosure and turn it into an opportunity to illustrate why he was a good fit for the job, chances are, this won't always be the case with the students you encounter. While you can't guarantee that a student's disclosure will always go so smoothly, you can prepare them for disclosing by working with them to develop a disclosure strategy.

1. *Timing is everything.* Just because James chose to disclose his disability during the interview process doesn't mean that your students have to. There is no one "right" time to disclose. The table below illustrates some of the advantages and disadvantages of disclosing at different times of the job search.

Time of Disclosure	Advantages	Disadvantages
Before the Interview	When the employer is specifically recruiting individuals with disabilities. Gets the disclosure out of the way, allowing more focus to be paid on other strengths during the interview process.	Employers use the application process to screen applicants. Applications are often not considered an appropriate place to disclose personal information.
During the Interview	Can address any visible disability that would be noticed by the interviewer. Has the potential to demonstrate confidence when communicated effectively.	May "surprise" potential employers. Has the potential to take focus off of a job-seekers skills and experience.
After the Interview	Provides employers an opportunity to ready any required accommodations for the person.	Employer might wonder why the individual did not disclose earlier.

Note: The information was presented adapted from *Disclosing a Disability in a Job Interview*, 1996; and *Disclosing a Disability*, 2011.

2. *Give students the facts.* James was able to turn his disclosure into an educational moment. He presented himself as someone who was not only comfortable in communicating his disability, but also in using that communication to educate his prospective employer about Asperger's. This can be a great opportunity for an individual to come across as being a well-informed, self-aware job seeker. Still having a hard time seeing what this might look like for your students? Try working with them to build one of the following facts into their disclosures:

- For students wanting to dispel disability myths regarding job performance: "A DuPont study which involved 2,745 employees with disabilities found that 92 percent of employees with disabilities rated average or better in job performance, compared to 90 percent of employees without disabilities." (See www.onestops.info/article.php?article_id=93.)
- For students wanting to dispel disability myths regarding job retention: "Companies report that employees with disabilities have better retention rates, reducing the high cost of turnover. Other American surveys reveal that after one year of employment, the retention rate of persons with disabilities is 85 percent." (See www.un.org/disabilities/convention/facts.shtml.)
- For students wanting to dispel disability myths regarding accommodation costs: "Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations, and the cost for those who do is minimal or much lower than many employers believe. Studies by the Job Accommodation Network have shown that 15 percent of accommodations cost nothing, [and] 51 percent cost between \$1 and \$500." (See www.onestops.info/article.php?article_id=93.)

By building some sort of educational information into a disability disclosure, your students have the opportunity not only to present themselves as well-prepared job candidates or employees, but also to help break down any negative preconceived notions that a potential or current employer might have regarding employment and disability.

3. *Preparation is essential.* The last thing you want is for a student to go through the disclosure process without feeling comfortable-or prepared. To ensure that your students are as comfortable as possible, encourage them to do the following:
- *Be honest.* Encourage your students to examine their feelings regarding their disabilities. The more comfortable they are with themselves, the more comfortable they will be in their disclosures.
 - *Practice.* Disclosing a disability takes practice. Encourage students to polish their disclosure with a friend, family member, or staff from the career center.
 - *Be clear and informed about accommodations.* Do your students require any adjustments to the work environment to be successful? If so, make sure that they are comfortable communicating detailed information about what those adjustments are. (Check out <http://askjan.org/>.)
 - *Develop a disclosure outline.* Work with your students to find out what their ideal disclosure would look like, and use that information to come up with a plan.

Putting the Focus Back on Ability

James taught me something when he went in for that interview: It's not how people label you that matters; it's your potential. Maybe you have never worked with a student with a disability. Maybe you

have never had a working relationship with anyone with a disability. Maybe you fall into that group of people who feel uncomfortable speaking with individuals with disabilities. At the end of the day, none of that matters. What matters is that you have the potential to make a lasting, positive impact in your students' lives.

Resources

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Community Colleges and Behavioral Intervention Teams: A Study of North Carolina Community Colleges

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Abstract

The number of students presenting risk behaviors as defined by Sokolow, Lewis, Wolf, Brunt, Byrnes, (2009), is increasing, creating critical concerns for community colleges. This study examines North Carolina community college counselors and how they respond to students who present risk behaviors. Are there consequences if counselors are not trained to deal with students in crisis? How confident are community college counselors in North Carolina when assisting students who present risk behaviors? This study investigated these questions and determined the qualification levels of counselors who serve students on such campuses. Findings from this study indicate that North Carolina community college counselors desire training to support students who fall into the extreme/severe risk category as defined by Sokolow et al.'s Threat Assessment Tool available through NaBITA (2009).

Introduction

Violent crises on college campuses are increasingly being reported in the news. Campus shootings is one form of this violence rapidly increasing on college campuses (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011; Davenport, 2009; The Associated Press, 2007). The Associated Press (2007) described eight campus shootings that occurred between August of 1966 and April of 2007 on four-year campuses. In this 41-year time period, there were eight campus shootings, with an average of two shootings per decade. It is currently not unusual to learn of a campus shooting when watching the evening news. Support for college campuses does exist, as they seek to reduce threats and strategically intervene to prevent violent attacks. In 2009, the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA), Sokolow et. al. (2009), introduced a free threat assessment tool for use by the higher education community. The tool's suggested use was to "measure to assess mental health related risk." The threat assessment tool categorizes the following five levels of generalized risk: extreme, severe, elevated, moderate, and mild (2009, p. 3). This threat assessment tool is intended to be utilized by college campuses to help Behavioral Intervention Teams adopt a systematic method for measuring threat.

College administrators lead the ethical, legal, and social charge to support and promote the security and safety of their respective college campus populations (Anderson & Davies, 2000). There are fundamental ethical and legal needs to address the issue of growing violence on campuses. Behavioral intervention and management research has been focused on universities, possibly due to four-year campuses being mostly residential (Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011); however, ethical and legal issues exist not only on four-year campuses, but also at two-year community colleges, many of which have open-door admissions policies. Colleges are resolving to address the ethical and legal issues of threatening situations on their campuses with the assistance of NaBITA, which supports colleges by aiding with the implementation of tools and resources and the development of Behavioral Intervention Teams.

This study used the term "Behavioral Intervention team, as defined by NaBITA: "a multi-disciplinary group whose purpose is meeting regularly to support its target audience (students, employees, faculty, staff) via an established protocol. The team tracks 'red flags' over time, detecting patterns, trends, and disturbances in individual or group behavior. The team receives reports of disruptive, problematic, or concerning behavior or misconduct (from co-workers, community members, friends, colleagues, etc.), conducts an investigation, performs a threat assessment, and determines the best mechanisms for support, intervention, warning/notification and response. The team then deploys its resources and resources of the community and coordinates follow-up" (retrieved from: <http://nabita.org/behavioral-intervention-teams/>).

The term "crisis" can "apply to both individuals and systems;" a crisis "has the potential to cause severe affective, behavioral, and cognitive malfunctioning" (Myer, James, & Moulton, 2011, p. 15–16). Defined by Barton (1993), a crisis "is a major unpredicted event that impacts the organization across its employees, products, services, and reputation in unpredictable ways with the potential for negative results" (p. 2). Duncan and Miser (2000) explain the events in which a college can be in crisis: "a student death (whether it be from murder, suicide, or an accident), a student demonstration, violent act (rape or assault), or a natural disaster (hurricanes, tornadoes, or earthquakes)" (Duncan & Miser, 2000, p.453). For the purposes of this study a crisis will be defined as student violence towards themselves and others. This study also uses the reference of risk behaviors as defined in the research of Sokolow, Lewis, Wolf, Van Brunt, and Byrnes (2009) who identified five levels of risk: mild risk, moderate risk, elevated risk, severe risk, and extreme risk. According to the NaBITA rubric:

Mild and moderate risk-level behaviors include distress-level behaviors. This includes individuals who are emotionally troubled, those impacted by situational stressors and traumatic events, and individuals who may be psychiatrically symptomatic. Elevated risk behaviors include disturbance-level behaviors, such as individuals who are behaviorally disruptive, unusual and/or bizarre acting, engage in destructive behaviors, are apparently harmful to others, and are abusing substances. Severe and extreme risk behaviors are considered dysregulation/medically disabled, and include individuals who are suicidal, para-suicidal (e.g., extreme cutting or eating disorder), engaging in risk-taking behaviors (e.g., substance abusing), hostile, aggressive, relationally abusive, and deficient in skills that regulate emotion, cognition, self, behavior, and relationships (2009, p. 1).

Context of the Community Colleges

According to Cohen and Brawer (2003), "during most of its history, the community college has been unnoticed, ignored by writers about higher education" (p. 35). In 1988, Dallas Herring, later named Chairman Emeritus of the North Carolina State Board of Education, stated, "We face a new century a dozen years from now; not just a new century, but a new millennium. No one knows what it holds for civilization. One thing is certain: education of the masses of humanity, not only as economic beings, but especially as human beings, will be essential to the achievement of peace and prosperity" (p. 7).

Modern day community colleges are in flux, described by Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) as undergoing "institutional shifts in strategic and operational planning that change from a focus on expanding educational and training opportunities for the local community to achieving economic goals motivated by values of efficiency and productivity [which] have affected the governance of community colleges" (Levin,

et al., 2006, p. 47). Demands have shifted, faculty perform multiple roles, and, because of the added duties, quality services are lacking (Levin, et al., 2006). According to Anderson and Davies (2000), community college leaders are responsible for the safety of their campuses as a whole. For the leaders to make sound decisions, it is important that they understand their campus counselors' perceptions and be able to create innovative approaches that will allow them to plan effectively for the safety of students, faculty, and staff.

Planning strategically as community college campuses serve a more diverse population is a necessity (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). Yet strategic planning is difficult for community colleges, which often face budget deficits. It's not surprising that the United States economy has presented community colleges with additional challenges; specifically, the need to serve more students with specialized services (2010). It is possible that community college counselors can adopt a vital role in the development of crisis intervention and management as related to campus violence prevention in addition to the role community college administrators assume in crisis intervention and management.

College counselors take part in identifying "at risk" students who could potentially threaten the campus at large. Research suggests that counselors are the ones who provide de-escalation for students in crisis (Davenport, 2009). The consequences if counselors are not trained to deal with students in crisis are severe. To make any plan, it is important to first understand how confident community college counselors are when assisting students who present risk behaviors. This study investigated questions for North Carolina community colleges that can be used in making changes to the colleges' culture in terms of working with at-risk students.

Method

Due to the access of participants and the large geographical area covered, a survey instrument was used to evaluate the current practices in place for counselors who provide services to community college students in North Carolina who are facing crisis situations.

Participants

The population for the study was North Carolina community college counselors. The sample of counselors for this study was accessible through an email listserv maintained by the North Carolina Community College System Office.

Instrumentation

Survey questions were designed around student behaviors as indicated by risk levels (Sokolow et al., 2009). There were six major areas covered by the survey: 1) community college policies and

practices; 2) behavioral assessment teams at community colleges in North Carolina; 3) counselor preparation; 4) levels of implementation of policies relating to behavioral assessment; 5) counselor demographics; and 6) a qualitative analysis of policies related to behavioral assessment at community colleges in the state. Socio-demographic information, including the education level, types of certification, years of experience, experience working with individuals who present mental health crises, and the length of time employed at a North Carolina community college(s), was also covered by the survey. The survey concluded with an unrestricted question regarding participating counselors' perception of their community college's preparedness to serve students in crisis.

Data Collection and Analysis

The survey instrument developed by the researcher was used to collect data and a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study assessed the instrument for validity. The link to the electronic survey was distributed on the email listserv maintained by the North Carolina Community College System Office. The data was analyzed using frequency, percent, mean, and standard deviation.

Results

Demographic, employment, and educational levels of the counselors employed at community colleges in North Carolina provide a description of the counselors. Participants provided the number of years they have worked for the North Carolina Community College System, their gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, and credentials. Table 1 provides an overview of the gender, ethnicity, educational level, and credentials. The mean age of participants was 45 (SD=9.51). Of the participants, 72 percent (n=56) were female, and 28 percent (n=16) were male. A majority of the participants, 75 percent (n=57) identified as Caucasian, 21 percent (n=16) identified as African American or Black, 2.6 percent (n=2) identified as American Indian, and 1.3 percent (n=1) identified as multi-racial.

Educational levels within the group varied 84.2 percent (n=64) had a master's degrees, 8 percent (n=6) indicated that they had either a Ph.D. or Ed.D. (n=6), while 1.3 percent (n=1) reported having a Psy.D. Those participants with a bachelor's degree totaled 3.9 percent (n=3), and those who held other degrees totaled 2.6 percent (n=2). When reporting licensures, 36 percent (n=27) of participants were licensed professional counselors, 3 percent (n=2) were licensed clinical social workers, and 15 percent (n=11) reported that they held other related licenses. Of the participants, 51 percent (n=38) reported that they had no specific counseling related credentials. It is vital to note that North Carolina community college counselors work in varying circumstances and it is not unusual for the counselors' educational levels to be different. Some perform

work in conditions that do not require licensure and others work under someone else's license.

Table 1
Frequencies and Percentages of Gender, Ethnicity, Educational Level, and Credentials of North Carolina Community College Counselors:

Variable	Respondents		
	n	%	
Gender			
	Male	56	72.0
	Female	22	28.0
Ethnicity			
	Caucasian	57	75.0
	African American or Black	16	21.0
	American Indian	2	2.6
	Multi-racial	1	1.3
	Hispanic/Latino	0	0
	Asian	0	0
	Other	0	0
Educational Level			
	Master's degree	64	84.2
	Ph.D. Ed.D.	6	8.0
	Psy.D.	1	1.3
	Bachelor's degree	3	3.9
	Associate's degree	0	0
	Other	2	2.6
Credentials			
	Licensed Professional Counselor	27	46.2
	Licensed Clinical Social Worker	2	3.0
	Certified Rehabilitation Counselor	0	0
	Licensed Psychological Associate	0	0
	Other related license	11	15.0
	None	38	51.0

The five levels of risk identified by Sokolow et al., (2009) were divided into three categories (mild/moderate risk, elevated risk, and extreme/severe risk) for this study. Table 2 describes the definition of each level (Sokolow et al., 2009).

Table 2
Levels of Risk Defined by Sokolow (2009)

Level	Definition
Mild/Moderate Risk	Emotionally troubled individuals impacted by situational stressors and traumatic events; psychiatrically symptomatic.
Elevated Risk	Behaviorally disruptive, unusual and/or bizarre acting, destructive, and apparently harmful to others; substance abusing.
Extreme/Severe Risk	Suicidal, para-suicidal (extreme cutting, eating disordered), individuals engaging in risk-taking behaviors (e.g., substance abusing), and hostile, aggressive, and relationally abusive individuals deficient in skills that regulate emotion, cognition, self, behavior, and relationships.

In the survey, participants were asked to rate, using a five-point Likert scale, how often they assisted students who brought forward the behaviors. Data reported by 70 counselors who responded to the survey indicates:

Students presenting mild/moderate risk behaviors:

- Three percent (n=2) "never" provided services to students who presented mild/moderate risk behaviors;
- Seven percent (n=5) "rarely" provided services to students who presented mild/moderate risk behaviors;
- Thirty-eight percent (n=27) "sometimes" provided services to students who presented mild/moderate risk behaviors;
- Forty percent (n=28) "often" provided services to students who presented mild/moderate risk behaviors; and
- Eleven percent (n=8) "always provided services to students who presented mild/moderate risk behaviors.

For the behaviors associated with the elevated risk category:

- Six percent (n=4) "never" provided services to students who presented these behaviors;
- Forty percent (n=28) "rarely" provided services to students who presented these behaviors;
- Forty percent (n=28) "sometimes" provided services to students who presented these behaviors;
- Thirteen percent (n=9) "often" provided services to students who presented these behaviors in this category; and
- One percent (n=1) "always" provide services to students who presented these behaviors in this category.

For the behaviors associated with the extreme/severe risk category:

- Thirteen percent (n=9) “never” provided services to students presenting extreme/severe risk behaviors;
- Fifty-eight percent (n=41) “rarely” provided services to students who presented these behaviors;
- Twenty-three percent (n=16) “sometimes” provided services to students who presented these behaviors;
- Three percent (n=2) “often” provided services to students who presented these behaviors;
- Three percent (n=2) “always” provided services to students who presented these behaviors.

The data is further summarized in the table that follows.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviation for Students’ Risk Behaviors as Reported by Counselors and Standard Deviations of Each Occurrence

Risk Behaviors	M	SD
Mild/Moderate Risk	3.5	.897
Elevated Risk	2.64	.835
Extreme/Severe Risk	2.24	.824

On the survey, counselors were able to assess their confidence levels when serving students who fell into the risk behavior categories. Counselors reported feeling most confident when working with students who present with mild/moderate risk behaviors. The majority of counselors reported that they “agree” they are confident when working with students in the mild/moderate risk category (M=4.01, SD=.819).

When assisting students who fell into the elevated risk behavior category, they responded half-way between the “neither disagree or agree” and “agree” responses (M=3.5, SD=.922). The counselors reported assisting students who fell into the extreme/severe risk categories mostly in the “agree” response (M=3.28, SD=1.104). Table 4 provides detailed descriptive data for confidence levels.

Table 4

Summary of Counselor Confidence Levels Reported When Providing Services to Students Presenting Risk Behaviors

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mild/Moderate Risk	1	1	4	6	4	6	43	63	16	24
Elevated Risk	1	1	10	15	18	27	32	47	7	10
Extreme Risk	5	7	14	21	11	16	33	49	5	7

Summary and Recommendations

How confident are community college counselors in North Carolina when assisting students who present risk behaviors?

This study found that 93.5 percent (n=71) of counselors who work at North Carolina community colleges have earned a master’s degree or higher. This educational training qualifies them for the profession. Sixty-four percent of counselors “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that additional training is needed to better assist students who present mild/moderate risk behaviors; 73 percent of counselors reported that training is needed to better assist students who present elevated risk behaviors; 84 percent of counselors reported that training is needed to better assist students who present extreme/severe risk behaviors.

The counselors who participated in this study reported that they most often work with students who present mild/moderate risk behaviors, and rarely encounter extreme/severe risk behaviors when assisting students. Twenty-eight percent of counselors either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that they were confident when assisting students who present extreme/severe risk behaviors. This research supports the conclusion that additional training is needed for community college counselors to be confident when dealing with students who demonstrate elevated and extreme/severe risk behaviors.

What are the consequences if counselors are not trained to deal with students in crisis?

A decreased level of confidence when dealing with students who present extreme/severe risk behaviors was reported by counselors who took part in this study, and 84 percent of counselors reported that training is needed for dealing with this risk level. The combination of decreased confidence and a desire for training makes it evident that counselors at North Carolina community colleges would benefit from support when working with students who present extreme/severe risk behaviors. A failure to respond to this level of need could result in ethical and legal implications. College leaders hold an

ethical responsibility to provide safe campuses, but also hold a social responsibility as well.

Anderson and Davies (2000) support the view that “community colleges play an integral role in the social, political, and economic lives of their respective communities” (p. 711). Counseling services are key during threatening situations and aid in managing risks (Davenport, 2009). Suicidal and homicidal incidents on college campuses have increased in recent years; threat assessment teams, which include counseling staff, are being developed to deal effectively with student concerns as a result (Davenport, 2009). A code of ethics is provided by the American Association of Community Colleges as well (AACC, 2005). The core values developed by the association allows ethical standards to be followed by community college leaders.

Research supports “disability law, laws that govern student privacy and confidentiality, and concerns about liability for student suicide and violence” as three key areas with which an institution’s legal counsel should be familiar (Eels and Rockland-Miller 2011, p. 10). Communication among team members is imperative in the process of mitigating threats at an institution of higher education with the legal representation of the college for legal guidance (Eels & Rockland-Miller, 2011).

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A Behavioral Intervention Team at a Two-Year College: Responding to a Case of Suicidal Ideation

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Abstract

This article examines the processes that underlie the application of a Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) to an acute student mental health situation, specifically suicidal ideation, at a two-year college. In college systems across the nation, classrooms are continuously bombarded with disruptive student behaviors exacerbated by serious mental health concerns. These situations are often intense and challenging when they occur, presenting faculty, educators, and administrators with difficult decisions. Based on a counseling case scenario, this article provides a framework depicting team collaboration for making sound decisions that safeguard both students and the institution after BIT involvement.

BIT Implementation at a Two-Year College

The recent era of mass shootings on college and university campuses has enlightened academic, legislative, and professional leaders about the pressing needs regarding the safety and health of students, faculty, and staff regardless of campus size, focus, or mission (Apodaca, Brighton, Perkins, Jackson, & Steege, 2012; Bendlin, 2013; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Heiselt & Burrell, 2012; Kennedy, 2010; Kennedy, 2015; Randazza & Cameron, 2012). The college years can correspond to the peak onset of mental health symptoms, especially considering the added pressures and stressors that relate to academic studies (Mitchell, Kader, Haggerty, Bakhai, & Warren, 2013). According to one survey, 56.2 percent of undergraduate college students reported being diagnosed or treated by a professional within the 12 months preceding the survey. Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and psychiatric issues were listed as the top two conditions for those students surveyed (American College Health Association, 2014). Because of increased mental health issues and psychiatric hospitalizations among college and university students, attention has focused on the promotion and development of Behavioral Intervention Teams (BITs) at the higher education level, particularly major research institutions (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2013).

Van Brunt & Lewis (2014) reported that this focus on institutions of higher education emerged largely from the rise in severe mental health issues and related behaviors associated with suicidal ideation, hallucinations, and threats of violence against other students, faculty, and staff. Heightened awareness of these issues is also present at two-year community colleges, as they, too, establish Behavioral Intervention Teams that fit the needs of students in a non-residential setting. Thus, the purpose of this article is to explore the use of BITs at two-year colleges to mitigate campus crises related to suicidal ideation, to share the strengths and challenges of the two-year community counseling model, and to provide a case study that illustrates implementation of behavioral interventions using a team approach.

Two-Year College Focus

At their core, two-year community colleges are focusing more on proactive and preventive approaches to crisis situations, rather than post-intervention strategies and approaches to college shootings and threatening/violent behaviors (Van Brunt, 2012). In addition, Behavioral Intervention Teams implemented at two-year institutions may enlist the help and resources associated with community agencies and other off-campus professionals to proactively respond to college students' issues. For example, Georgia Perimeter College (GPC), a two-year, multi-campus transfer college in metro-Atlanta, Georgia, which has a combined population of 21,057 students, hosts annual domestic violence and suicide awareness and prevention programs. In the fall of 2014, a total of 691 campus community members (592

students, and 99 faculty and staff) participated in trainings related to resources for domestic violence and suicide across five campus sites. Panelists at the programs represented a diverse array of community professionals and members, including judges, police officers, directors and staff of domestic violence and suicide prevention agencies, mental health counselors, college faculty and staff, students, as well as family members and survivors of those who have experienced effects of suicide and domestic violence. Emphasis was placed on communication, coordination, and the use of specialized knowledge, information, and physical agency resources at the earliest indication of a potential crisis. The goal was to train student-leaders, faculty, administrators, staff, and supervisors about concerning behaviors, in addition to appropriate responses and protocols.

Conceptual Structure of a Community College BIT

Community colleges are seeing increased numbers of students reporting to their campuses with serious mental health issues (American College Counseling Association, 2013; Kay & Schwartz, 2010; The National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2012). Colleges cannot do their jobs adequately or effectively without properly addressing a myriad of mental and behavioral health issues in the learning environment (Douce & Keeling, 2014). As a result of this growing trend in student mental health and psychological issues, members of the BIT at Georgia Perimeter College (GPC) were assembled as early resources to assist students, faculty, and staff.

The BIT at GPC is comprised of a team of six core members with expertise in a diversity of areas. Members include a licensed professional counselor, a public safety officer, academic advisors, the disability service coordinator, an international student advisor, and the testing center advisor. The mission of the BIT is to: a) implement prevention and intervention processes that support the policies and procedures of the college; b) provide a framework for addressing student psychological, emotional, and behavioral issues; c) provide an early intervention resource for students, administrators, faculty, and staff; d) promote student safety and academic success through appropriate and timely response; and e) maintain a healthy and safe college environment for all.

The BIT holds confidential meetings to evaluate case information. The team makes recommendations for action that will attempt to resolve issues while balancing the needs of students of concern with the expectations of the college. Additionally, the team connects students with appropriate on-campus and off-campus resources. The licensed professional counselor will contact students directly to meet with them face-to-face and provide clinical assessments and interventions, when necessary.

Strengths of a Community College Model

Structural factors related to the implementation of BITs on college and university campuses may differ based on budget allocations,

enrollment, or campus size. Of equal interest, however, are the unique factors that drive the formation of BITs on two-year campuses or open-access institutions. There are six major strengths of such a model (Higher Education Mental Health Alliance, 2013). There is a focus on: a) understanding, assessing, and intervening effectively with each student's psychological, emotional, and/or behavioral problems; b) team members recognizing and identifying potentially troubling and bizarre student behaviors inside and outside the of classroom and communicating, initiating, and coordinating prevention efforts; c) faculty, staff, and BIT participating in trainings to identify and respond to students in crisis; d) teams establishing partnerships with local mental health and medical professionals for the purpose of making needed referrals for distressed students; e) the college using electronic methods to report disruptive and distressed students; and f) licensed professional counselors helping to coordinate local mental health transports for the hospitalization of students in need.

Challenges of a Community College Model

In seeking to proactively identify student psychological and behavioral problems before they exacerbate or interfere with social functioning, there are five challenges for community college leaders to be aware of:

1. Two-year colleges often face budgetary constraints that interfere with the sustained operation and coordination of BIT efforts.
2. There is often a lack of uniformed cooperation and communication across a system of multiple campuses.
3. Given the diversity of the BIT make-up, team members may have too little time to meet and train as a collective group.
4. Administrators at two-year colleges often have many responsibilities, which can lead to a "less-than-desirable response time" when dealing with students who display disruptive and or crisis-related behaviors.
5. After-hours services and resources for non-residential students are few and limited on two-year college campuses. Community colleges are usually commuter campuses, which presents a challenge in comparison to providing services for students on residential, four-year campuses.

Case Study

Behavioral intervention teams play a crucial role in determining the most effective way to respond to serious issues and in making the needed assessments and referrals to the appropriate resources and treatment. The following case is a recent illustration of the BIT's protocol at GPC:

Adiza (pseudonym), a 22-year-old, international female student, walked into the counseling office seeking services for depressive symptoms. She was referred by a staff member who recently attended the suicide awareness and prevention forum, and who encouraged her to seek personal counseling services. A therapist

met with Adiza for an initial session to review informed consent and to complete a biopsychosocial assessment. During the assessment, Adiza reported current suicidal ideation (along with a history of suicidal ideation), two previous suicidal attempts, and a past history of self-harming, cutting behaviors. The most recent suicide attempt occurred two days ago, when she decided to jump out of her third-story bedroom window, but she was interrupted when her brother burst in the door because he received no response after calling her. Adiza reported never being hospitalized or seeking mental health treatment.

The therapist administered the American Psychiatric Association's severity measure for depression — adult rating form, and completed a suicide risk assessment. Adiza's score on the rating form indicated severe depression, and the assessment indicated that Adiza had a history of depressed moods with few coping skills, protective factors, or healthy support systems. Adiza did not report a clear plan to complete suicide, but was unsure of her ability to keep herself safe. She reported researching elaborate ways to die on the internet the previous week, and she shared making arrangements for someone to care for her cat two weeks ago. Adiza was willing to contract for safety, but she struggled to identify strengths, familial or social supportive persons, and coping strategies. Due to high intent, means, a recent attempt, and a lack of protective factors, the therapist concluded that she posed a moderately high risk level for suicide.

The therapist spoke with Adiza about voluntarily going to the hospital for psychological and physical safety. Adiza was hesitant about being admitted and began to express the need to attend class. The therapist explained the prioritization of her wellbeing and safety and shared ways to address missing class (e.g., completion of a release of information form to provide a medical letter to the professor requesting make-up assignments). Adiza expressed understanding that her safety was important and agreed to go with the therapist to the hospital.

The therapist informed Adiza of the transportation process to the hospital and called public safety for transport. While awaiting transportation, Adiza began to express reluctance again, with concerns about being searched by a male officer, others seeing her being transported in a public safety vehicle, and her family not displaying support via notions that she is not really ill but instead seeking attention. To address Adiza's concerns, the therapist informed Adiza of public safety's protocol for same-sex searches (with the therapist present if she desired), contacted public safety and made arrangements for the vehicle to park in a discrete location, reached out to the nearby psychiatric emergency receiving

hospital (with which the therapist had a previously built relationship) to ensure ease of admission, agreed to ride with Adiza to the hospital, and called Adiza's family with her to explain the situation while advocating for Adiza's health and safety.

Throughout the process, the therapist used techniques learned in behavioral and crisis intervention trainings to assist the client with increasing rational decision-making and to remind her that the ultimate goal was to keep her safe. The therapist also collaborated with public safety officers to enhance student, personnel, and campus safety. Campus procedures were followed, Adiza had the opportunity to express her concerns, the therapist provided informed consent throughout the process, and Adiza's comfort level during the transport was elevated by the therapist's riding with her in the public safety vehicle to the hospital and remaining with her during the hospital's intake process.

Mental Health Transport Protocol

Relative to the above case scenario, students who voluntarily agree to a mental health transport to a local hospital or mental health facility are provided such transportation as part of a point-of-care and campus resource. The BIT has campus coordinators and licensed professional counselors who serve as a sub-committee of the BIT to address acute mental health issues. At GPC, a mental health transport for a voluntary admission involves the following basic steps: 1) A campus coordinator of the BIT, or a licensed personal counselor, contacts the Department of Public Safety, stating a need for a mental health transport (e.g., 98 percent of the calls to Public Safety have been for a mental health transport); 2) The type of transport needed is clearly identified to the Department of Public Safety (e.g., a mental health transport [voluntary client], versus a 1013 or 1013 [involuntary client] transport or a medical transport [medical emergency, EMT, 911]); 3) Transportation is provided by the Department of Public Safety to the designated medical or mental health facility; 4) The counseling professional may ride in the front seat with the attending public safety officer and the client in the back seat (counseling professionals cannot at any time transport potential mental health clients in their own personal vehicles due to issues of liability); 5) After safe arrival at the designated medical hospital or mental health facility, the counseling professional communicates with the attending physician, counselor, psychologist, or social worker regarding the admission process (i.e., confidential process); 6) The counseling professional returns to campus with the public safety officer at the conclusion of the admission process; 7) The counseling office will communicate with and provide an update to parents regarding the mental health admission process, answers any relevant questions, and informs them of a prospective discharge date. The consent to speak with

parents is obtained by the clinician prior to admission, because once admitted, sometimes clients are not permitted to communicate with anyone until stabilization is reached; and 8) Following discharge and clearance to return to the college, follow-up assessments are available to students through the counseling office.

Conclusion

In higher education, there are lively, ongoing discussions on what to do and how to do it regarding disruptive, threatening, or crisis-oriented mental health issues. Behavioral Intervention Teams should know and understand that students' psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems are part of the college and university experience, too. This article provides pertinent information and a framework for the implementation of a BIT at a two-year college and demonstrates its usefulness as an effective mechanism for appropriately responding to suicidal ideation. For students who matriculate at community colleges, early prevention and behavioral intervention may have a positive and meaningful impact on student outcomes in situations of suicidal ideation or other harmful and destructive behaviors. More specifically, this article underscores the fact that positive behavior and mental health stability among students may be enhanced in community college environments as faculty, staff, administrators, students, parents, and counselors work to better understand potentially harmful and dangerous situations, and to appropriately communicate and respond to said situations with effective and coordinated efforts.

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A BIT Response to a Non-Community Member Threat: A Tabletop Exercise of the Charleston, SC Shooting

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Abstract

As the authors contemplated this paper describing a tabletop exercise involving the horrific and senseless killing of nine members of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, it was critical that we offer help to Behavioral Intervention Teams and not be exploitive in any way. Our hearts are saddened and our prayers continue to be with the families and friends of Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Tywanza Sanders, Cynthia Hurd, Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Myra Thompson, Ethel Lance, Rev. Daniel Simmons, Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, and Susie Jackson. The surviving members of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church have demonstrated the strength of their faith and compassion for their fellow man. Their response is a shining beacon in the darkness of an all too familiar national tragedy.

Introduction

Behavioral Intervention Teams in higher education should look for opportunities to improve their processes and test procedures. Reviewing a previous case which an institution's team dealt with is one method. Packaged scenarios, such as those provided by NaBITA in "The Book on Behavioral Intervention Teams" and during the annual Threat Assessment Institute are invaluable resources for tabletop exercises. Another option for BITs is to create a dynamic tabletop exercise from a current event. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how a current event can be used as a tabletop exercise and to encourage other BITs to consider this practice in their training.

There is the need for testing and practicing plans because great plans can go horribly wrong during crises. Tabletops can expose gaps, uncover issues that need to be addressed, and serve as a reminder of positional responsibilities of members of the team responding to the incident, while also checking the current validity of resources such as warning systems, relationships with local authorities, and a BIT's ability assemble and react quickly (Harmon, 2010). Tabletop exercises are used in a wide range of fields and organizations because "tabletops can be used to enhance general awareness, validate plans and procedures, rehearse concepts, and/or assess the types of systems needed to guide the prevention of, protection from, mitigation of, response to, and recovery from a defined incident" (CERT, 2015). Exercises should have a clear objective, use the proper tools, and stick to the agenda for the particular exercise. Additionally, these exercises should foster engagement between team members as they work together in response to the hypothetical incident (Harmon, 2010 and Ready, 2015).

At the conclusion of the exercise, the team should conduct a hot wash, or immediate response of what worked as planned, what did not, and ways to improve the response. Appropriate members of the team should then be assigned the tasks of updating and making adjustments to the plan (Harmon, 2010).

Some incidents lend themselves better to a tabletop exercise than others. This was the case with the incident of June 16, 2015, as it was soon discovered by authorities that the alleged gunman had originally considered an attack on a local college. This tabletop started with the question, "What if we had discovered we were being targeted by a non-campus community member?"

The authors followed the news accounts of Dylann Roof and the shooting in Charleston, SC. When *Reuters* (2015) reported the gunman had told a friend of his intentions to attack a college campus, the BIT chair and chief of police at Columbus State University speculated about how the team would address pre-incident leakage of

information regarding a non-student. In nearly 60 percent of all targeted attacks, there is some degree of leakage of the perpetrators' intent (Drysdale, Modzelenski, and Simions, 2010). When a community member who may be leaking information of an attack is identified, the BIT can work to de-escalate the behavior through various methods of intervention (Sokolow, Schuster, and Lewis, S, 2012, December). In this case, Roof was a member of the greater community, but when he leaked information about an attack on a particular college campus, he inserted himself into that college community.

Pre-Tabletop Exercise

The exercise facilitator should gather the information and tools needed and set the stage for the hypothetical incident (CERT, 2015). With this particular exercise, the materials were presented as if they were in real time. The facilitator (BIT chair) instructed team members to read the *Reuters* June 20, 2015 article (Appendix A) as a BIT report generated by the campus police department. BIT members were also instructed to view the Brendan O'Connor account of Roof's manifesto that appeared in *Gawker* (Appendix B). The manifesto was discovered during a campus police interview with Christon Scriven, friend of Roof's. The BIT chair further instructed the team to refrain from projecting any knowledge of information regarding the actual incident (i.e., news accounts or knowledge of the shooting outside the context of the exercise and the two Appendices attached).

A BIT report was generated by the BIT chair, which included Appendix A as the incident description and Appendix B as an attachment to the report. A BIT report is the official record of reporting an incident about a person of concern to the BIT. For this exercise, the BIT report was submitted into the institution's Maxient software database. A "poke" (Maxient notification function) was sent out to the BIT core team with instructions to review the case for an emergency tabletop exercise (which actually took place during regular summer team training).

Information Presented to the BIT for the Tabletop Exercise

1. Bob (fictitious character) reported to the Campus Police Tip Line that his friend, Christon Scriven, told him that Dylann Roof stated that he wanted to "shoot up" our college campus.
 - a. Campus Police asked Bob to come in for an interview, to which he agreed.
 - b. The Campus Police chief informed the BIT chair about the information from obtained from Scriven.
2. Scriven agreed to come in for an interview, which the BIT chair watched on a live video feed with the chief of police. This point was debated by the team during the exercise. The question was whether the BIT chair could be viewed as an agent of the police. The team's final determination was the

person of concern was not a campus community member and the members of the university were working in concert to provide a safe campus environment. There were no Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act violations, and the chair would not be acting or recommending actions against a student or employee.

- a. Scriven shared the information found in Appendix A and led the police to the online manifesto (Appendix B).
 - b. During the interview, Scriven told the police that Roof attended a local high school.
 - c. The dean of students located a high school classmate (Sandy) who currently attends the college that is the alleged target of the attack and spoke with her. Sandy relayed her beliefs concerning Roof. She remembered him as being similar to a white-supremacist and always seemed to be in trouble at school. This served to validate to the BIT the claims and feelings that Roof had made in his manifesto. Sandy reported that while she and Roof were in the same class in high school, he had not graduated. She stated that Roof had stopped attending high school around their junior year.
3. Behavioral Intervention Team Discussion:
 - a. The BIT chair and the chief of police briefed the team, using the Actionable Case Workflow Chart (Appendix C) as the guide for the discussion.
 - b. Using the NaBITA Threat Assessment Tool, the BIT rated Roof at 6-Elevated.
 - i. As indicated by the NaBITA Threat Assessment Tool in that Roof may be a threat to others, the BIT conducted a preliminary SIVRA-35 (see Appendix D), which returned a score of 40/70.
 - c. Campus Police provided social media content concerning Roof and available police records. Campus Police reported that his Facebook page contained pictures of him holding guns and white supremacist materials. Police also reported that Roof had been informed that if he returned to a local mall, he would be arrested for criminal trespassing in February 2015 after engaging in strange and suspicious behavior. He was then arrested in March 2015 for misdemeanor drug possession and arrested April 2015 for violating the no-trespass warning at the mall. During the arrest at the mall, Suboxone, a drug used to treat narcotic addiction, was found in his possession. He had a prescription for it.
 - d. The BIT reviewed Scriven's statements, the information from Sandy, and the manifesto.
 4. The BIT discussed the problem of how to harden-the-target (the university) while not agitating the person of concern,

who was not formally a member of the campus community.

- a. The BIT considered ways to encourage Roof to submit himself for a mental health assessment. The questioned remained of who would make the contact with Roof and who would facilitate the assessment.
- b. The BIT considered contacting family and known friends to request their assistance. How would this be received and then passed on to Roof? Could the lack of control of the message actually agitate Roof into taking action, or would the message even be passed along?

Determinations of the Behavioral Intervention Team

After much BIT discussion, it was determined that:

1. Since Roof was not currently and had never been a student at the university, the university administration had no authority to approach him, his family, or friends to encourage him to participate in a mental health assessment.
2. Therefore, Campus Police would present Judge Smith with the findings of the BIT (Threat Assessment Tool & SIVRA-35), along with a copy of the manifesto, pictures from Roof's Facebook page, and the statements from Scriven and Sandy in an effort to obtain a search warrant for Roof's home to search for the gun Scriven had described. The team discussed that:
 - c. In Georgia, a Terrorist Threats claim could not be used as probable cause, because no individual had been targeted by name.
 - d. However, as: (1) the school was named; (2) a time frame was established for an attack (within seven days); and (3) a person of concern had recently purchased a weapon and it appeared that he was in drug rehabilitation, the team felt that it was possible that the judge would grant the warrant under 16-10-28 False Public Alarm.

Projected Results of the BIT's Action

Once the BIT had determined its intended course of action, the team postulated as to what it believed would happen as a result. The following is a summary of that discussion:

1. Roof would refused to come in for an interview with Campus Police, but his attorney would inform the university that Roof would be filing a complaint for an unlawful search.
2. While the police would able to confiscate the gun on Day Five of the seven-day window, four months later, it would most likely be ordered by the court that the gun be returned to Roof.
3. During that four-month time period, Roof's parents would become involved and Roof would be placed in a residential treatment program.

4. On Day Seven, everyone would still be breathing and continue to do so.
5. Regarding the gun being returned to Roof, the university would petition the court to have the gun remain in the custody of police, as the person of concern is undergoing a residential treatment program for drug rehabilitation and mental health assessment related to violent tendencies.

At the end of the exercise, the BIT felt strongly that:

1. Acknowledging the threat in an official capacity can bring attention to the person of concern, who can now receive help.
2. This acknowledgment could thwart an attempt by hardening the target.
3. When the findings of the NaBITA Threat Assessment Tool, SIVRA-35, and a Structured Professional Judgment of a trained BIT are coupled with statements taken by police and a copy of the manifesto, this truly would make a great argument to a judge for obtaining warrants and protective court orders.

Conclusion

Modern Behavioral Intervention Teams should have a variety of tools, protocols, and procedures that have been tested and considered as best practices within the industry (Sokolow and Lewis, 2009). Much like any team involved in the safety of others, BITs should routinely evaluate their tools and resources to determine their current state of readiness. Tabletop exercises have long been used by law enforcement and emergency management teams to prepare for what they hope never occurs.

Using a current event that is still unfolding may add urgency to a discussion for a BIT tabletop exercise. Inserting fictional characters to a scenario may be necessary to allow the conversation to flow around the table, linking team members to the person of concern. Utilizing this particular incident created a sense of realism and familiarity to the campus for this BIT. The team found itself protecting the campus community, not discussing an incident that happened at some other location far away.

The team discovered that while the courts may not allow a search

warrant, a judge may overturn a decision, and families of a person of concern may or may not be cooperative; and that simply having the conversation and bringing others into the discussion may very well in itself harden the university as a target of a violent act. The tabletop experience by this Behavioral Intervention Team should encourage other colleges and universities to conduct similar exercises.

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Appendix A

CHARLESTON SHOOTER ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO ATTACK A COLLEGE

By Reuters

June 20, 2015 | 8:41am

www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/20/us-usa-shooting-south-carolina-friends-idUSKBN0P008D20150620



Dylann Roof Photo: Reuters

Friends of the white gunman who shot and killed nine black people inside an historic African-American church in Charleston, South Carolina said he first talked about attacking a college campus, the *Washington Post* and *NBC News* reported on Friday.

The *Washington Post* reported 22-year-old Christon Scriven, a black neighbor of gunman Dylann Roof, said that during a recent

night of drinking, Roof said he wanted to open fire on a school. At another point, Roof talked about shooting up the College of Charleston, according to the newspaper. "My reaction at the time was, 'You're just talking crazy,'" Scriven told the *Post*. "I don't think he's always there."

Scriven also told *NBC News* that Roof may have changed his plans after deciding the college campus was a harder target to access.

"He just said on Wednesday, everything was going to happen. He said they had seven days," Scriven said to *NBC News*. "I just ran through my head that he did it [...] Like, he really went and did what he said he was going to do."

Reuters could not verify the report as Scriven could not be immediately reached for comment.

Roof, 21, who authorities say spent an hour in Bible study with parishioners at the nearly 200-year-old Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church before opening fire on Wednesday night, appeared via video feed before a magistrate judge who on Friday ordered him held without bond.

He has been charged with nine counts of murder and a weapons offense.

The attack at the church nicknamed "Mother Emanuel" for its key role in African-American history followed a wave of protests across the United States in recent months over police killings of unarmed black men, focusing attention on racial bias in the criminal justice system and renewing a civil rights movement under the banner of "Black Lives Matter."

Appendix B

Here Is What Appears to Be Dylann Roof's Racist Manifesto

<http://gawker.com/here-is-what-appears-to-be-dylann-roofs-racist-manifesto-1712767241>

Brendan O'Connor

Filed to: DYLANN ROOF 6/20/15 10:55am



Via Twitter users @HenryKrinkle and @EMQuangel, here is what appears to be Charleston shooter Dylann Roof's racist manifesto. "The event that truly awakened me was the Trayvon Martin case," the author of this document writes. "I can say today that I am completely racially aware."

It goes on: "Black people are racially aware almost from birth, but White people on average dont think about race in their daily lives."

The manifesto comes from a website registered under Dylann Roof's name, *lastrhodesian.com*, discovered through a Reverse Who is look-up on *domaintools.com*.

There are two links on the front page of *lastrhodesian.com*: one is to a text file; the other is to a .zip folder, which contains numerous photographs of Roof. In several of these, he is seen to be wearing a jacket stitched with the flag of the white supremacist state of Rhodesia.

Read the full document below:

I was not raised in a racist home or environment. Living in the South, almost every White person has a small amount of racial awareness, simply because of the numbers of negroes in this part of the country. But it is a superficial awareness. Growing up, in school, the White and black kids would make racial jokes toward each other, but all they were were jokes. Me and White friends would sometimes would watch things that would make us think that "blacks were the real racists" and other elementary thoughts like this, but there was no real understanding behind it.

The event that truly awakened me was the Trayvon Martin case. I kept hearing and seeing his name, and eventually I decided to look him up. I read the Wikipedia article and right away I was unable to understand what the big deal was. It was obvious that Zimmerman was in the right. But more importantly this prompted me to type in the words "black on White crime" into Google, and I have never been the same since that day. The first website I came to was the Council of Conservative Citizens. There were pages upon pages of these brutal black on White murders. I was in disbelief. At this moment I realized that something was very wrong. How could the news be blowing up the Trayvon Martin case while hundreds of these black on White murders got ignored?

From this point I researched deeper and found out what was happening in Europe. I saw that the same things were happening in England and France, and in all the other Western European countries. Again I found myself in disbelief. As an American we are taught to accept living in the melting pot, and black and other minorities have just as much right to be here as we do, since we are all immigrants. But Europe is the homeland of White people, and in many ways the situation is even worse there. From here I found out about the Jewish problem and other issues facing our race, and I can say today that I am completely racially aware.

Blacks

I think it is fitting to start off with the group I have the most real life experience with, and the group that is the biggest problem for Americans.

Niggers are stupid and violent. At the same time they have the capacity to be very slick. Black people view everything through a racial lens. That's what racial awareness is, it's viewing everything that happens through a racial lens. They are always thinking about the fact that they are black. This is part of the reason they get offended so easily, and think that some things are intended to be racist towards them, even when a White person wouldn't be thinking about race. The other reason is the Jewish agitation of the black race.

Black people are racially aware almost from birth, but White people on average don't think about race in their daily lives. And this is our problem. We need to and have to.

Say you were to witness a dog being beat by a man. You are almost surely going to feel very sorry for that dog. But then say you were to witness a dog biting a man. You will most likely not feel the same pity you felt for the dog for the man. Why? Because dogs are lower than men.

This same analogy applies to black and White relations. Even today, blacks are subconsciously viewed by White people as lower beings. They are held to a lower standard in general. This is why they are able to get away with things like obnoxious behavior in public. Because it is expected of them.

Modern history classes instill a subconscious White superiority complex in Whites and an inferiority complex in blacks. This White superiority complex that comes from learning of how we dominated other peoples is also part of the problem I have just mentioned. But of course I don't deny that we are in fact superior.

I wish with a passion that niggers were treated terribly throughout history by Whites, that every White person had an ancestor who owned slaves, that segregation was an evil and oppressive institution, and so on. Because if it was all true, it would make it so much easier for me to accept our current situation. But it isn't true. None of it is. We are told to accept what is happening to us because of ancestors' wrong doing, but it is all based on historical lies, exaggerations and myths. I have tried endlessly to think of reasons we deserve this, and I have only come back more irritated because there are no reasons.

Only a fourth to a third of people in the South owned even one slave. Yet every White person is treated as if they had a slave owning ancestor. This applies to in the states where slavery never existed, as well as people whose families immigrated after slavery was abolished. I have read hundreds of slaves' narratives from my state. And almost all of them were positive. One sticks out in my mind where an old ex-slave recounted how the day his mistress died was one of the saddest days of his life. And in many of these narratives the slaves told of how their masters didn't even allow whipping on his plantation.

Segregation was not a bad thing. It was a defensive measure. Segregation did not exist to hold back negroes. It existed to protect us from them. And I mean that in multiple ways. Not only did it protect us from having to interact with them, and from being physically harmed by them, but it protected us from being brought down to their level. Integration has done nothing but bring Whites down to level of brute animals. The best example of this is obviously our school system.

Now White parents are forced to move to the suburbs to send their children to "good schools". But what constitutes a "good school"? The fact is that how good a school is considered directly corresponds to how White it is. I hate with a passion the whole idea of the suburbs. To me it represents

nothing but scared White people running. Running because they are too weak, scared, and brainwashed to fight. Why should we have to flee the cities we created for the security of the suburbs? Why are the suburbs secure in the first place? Because they are White. The pathetic part is that these White people don't even admit to themselves why they are moving. They tell themselves it is for better schools or simply to live in a nicer neighborhood. But it is honestly just a way to escape niggers and other minorities.

But what about the White people that are left behind? What about the White children who, because of school zoning laws, are forced to go to a school that is 90 percent black? Do we really think that that White kid will be able to go one day without being picked on for being White, or called a "white boy"? And who is fighting for him? Who is fighting for these White people forced by economic circumstances to live among negroes? No one, but someone has to.

Here I would also like to touch on the idea of a Northwest Front. I think this idea is beyond stupid. Why should I for example, give up the beauty and history of my state to go to the Northwest? To me the whole idea just parallels the concept of White people running to the suburbs. The whole idea is pathetic and just another way to run from the problem without facing it.

Some people feel as though the South is beyond saving, that we have too many blacks here. To this I say look at history. The South had a higher ratio of blacks when we were holding them as slaves. Look at South Africa, and how such a small minority held the black in apartheid for years and years. Speaking of South Africa, if anyone thinks that things will eventually just change for the better, consider how in South Africa they have affirmative action for the black population that makes up 80 percent of the population. It is far from being too late for America or Europe. I believe that even if we made up only 30 percent of the population we could take it back completely. But by no means should we wait any longer to take drastic action.

Anyone who thinks that White and black people look as different as we do on the outside, but are somehow magically the same on the inside, is delusional. How could our faces, skin, hair, and body structure all be different, but our brains be exactly the same? This is the nonsense we are led to believe.

Negroes have lower IQs, lower impulse control, and higher testosterone levels in general. These three things alone are a recipe for violent behavior. If a scientist publishes a paper on the differences between the races in Western Europe or Americans, he can expect to lose his job. There are personality traits within human families, and within different breeds of cats or dogs, so why not within the races?

A horse and a donkey can breed and make a mule, but they are still two completely different animals. Just because we can breed with the other races doesn't make us the same.

In a modern history class it is always emphasized that, when talking about "bad" things Whites have done in history, they were White. But when we learn about the numerous, almost countless wonderful things Whites have done, it is never pointed out that these people were White. Yet when we learn about anything important done by a black person in history, it is always pointed out repeatedly that they were black. For example when we learn about how George Washington Carver was the first nigger smart enough to open a peanut.

On another subject I want to say this. Many White people feel as though they don't have a unique culture. The reason for this is that White culture is world culture. I don't mean that our culture is made up of other cultures, I mean that our culture has been adopted by everyone in the world. This makes us feel as though our culture isn't special or unique. Say for example that every business man in the world wore a kimono, that every skyscraper was in the shape of a pagoda, that every door was a sliding one, and that everyone ate every meal with chopsticks. This would probably make a Japanese man feel as though he had no unique traditional culture.

I have noticed a great disdain for race mixing White women within the White nationalists community, bordering on insanity it. These women are victims, and they can be saved. Stop.

Jews

Unlike many White nationalists, I am of the opinion that the majority of American and European Jews are White. In my opinion the issues with Jews is not their blood, but their identity. I think that if we could somehow destroy the Jewish identity, then they wouldn't cause much of a problem. The problem is that Jews look White, and in many cases are White, yet they see themselves as minorities. Just like niggers, most Jews are always thinking about the fact that they are Jewish. The other issue is that they network. If we could somehow turn every Jew blue for 24 hours, I think there would be a mass awakening, because people would be able to see plainly what is going on. I don't pretend to understand why Jews do what they do. They are enigma.

Hispanics

Hispanics are obviously a huge problem for Americans. But there are good Hispanics and bad Hispanics. I remember while watching Hispanic television stations, the shows and even the commercials were more White than our own. They have respect for White beauty, and a good portion of Hispanics are White. It is a well known fact that White Hispanics make up the elite of most Hispanic countries. There is good White blood worth saving in Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and even Brazil. But they are still our enemies.

East Asians

I have great respect for the East Asian races. Even if we were to go extinct they could carry something on. They are by nature very racist and could be great allies of the White race. I am not opposed at all to allies with the Northeast Asian races.

Patriotism

I hate the sight of the American flag. Modern American patriotism is an absolute joke. People pretending like they have something to be proud while White people are being murdered daily in the streets. Many veterans believe we owe them something for “protecting our way of life” or “protecting our freedom”. But im not sure what way of life they are talking about. How about we protect the White race and stop fighting for the jews. I will say this though, I myself would have rather lived in 1940’s American than Nazi Germany, and no this is not ignorance speaking, it is just my opinion. So I dont blame the veterans of any wars up until after Vietnam, because at least they had an American to be proud of and fight for.

An Explanation

To take a saying from a film, “I see all this stuff going on, and I dont see anyone doing anything about it. And it pisses me off.” To take a saying from my favorite film, “Even if my life is worth less than a

speck of dirt, I want to use it for the good of society.”.

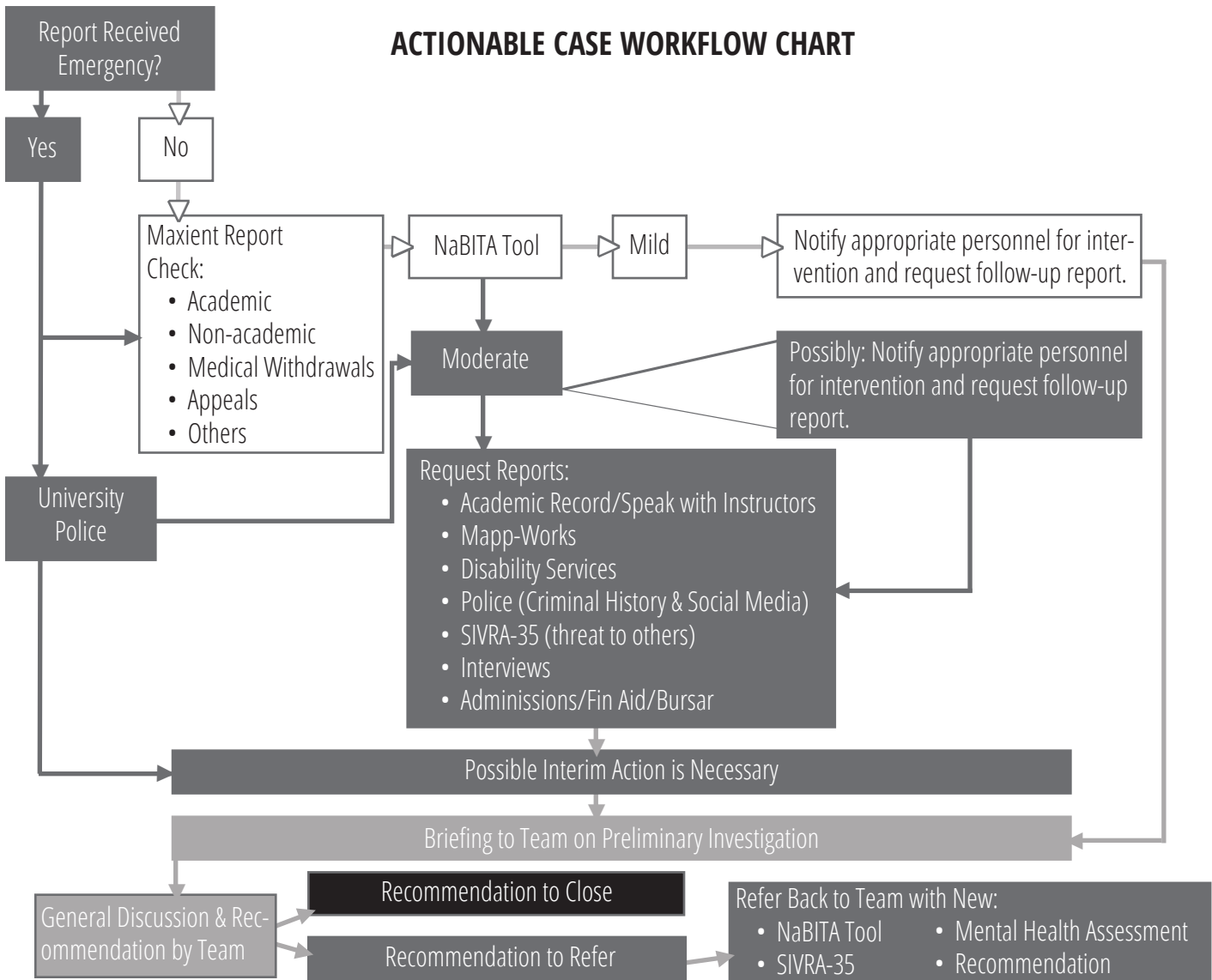
I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight. I chose Charleston because it is most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country. We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me.

Unfortunately at the time of writing I am in a great hurry and some of my best thoughts, actually many of them have been to be left out and lost forever. But I believe enough great White minds are out there already. Please forgive any typos, I didnt have time to check it.

If this was indeed written by Dylann Roof — as it certainly seems to have been — let there be no more equivocation about his motivations.

Appendix C

ACTIONABLE CASE WORKFLOW CHART



Appendix D

SIVRA-35 Results

1 message

NaBITA <noreply@nabita.org>
To: reese_aaron@columbusstate.edu

Thu, Jul 2, 2015 at 9:07 AM

Total Score: 40/70

OVERALL RISK: HIGH

Case Number: 20150702

Narrative: The data you entered suggests an individual who is a risk to others. Decisive and quick action is required to thwart a potential violent attack on an individual or on campus. Multiple departments should be involved in this case to better address concerns for the community and campus safety.

If the student's whereabouts are not currently known, locating the student for further assessment is essential. Most extreme risk cases will require some separation — as permitted by law and campus policy — from campus to allow for further assessment, information gathering and potential campus and/or criminal charges.

Efforts should be made to notify and work with those who can help mitigate risk (e.g. parents, extended family, friends) while the BIT engagement continues.

Item Breakdown

A score of "1" indicates that some of the behavior may be present.

A score of "2" indicates that the behavior is strongly present.

Item #1: There is a direct communicated threat to a person, place, or system. Rated: 2

Source: Deisinger, Randazzo and Nolan, 2014; ASIS and SHRM, 2011; Meloy et al., 2011; Drysdale et al., 2010; Randazzo and Plummer, 2009; ATAP, 2006; Turner and Gelles, 2003; O'Toole (2002).

Item #2: The student has the plans, tools, weapons, schematics, and/or materials to carry out an attack on a potential target. Rated: 1

Source: Meloy, Hart and Hoffmann, 2014; US Post Office, 2007; ATAP, 2006; Turner and Gelles, 2003.

Item #3: The student harbors violent fantasies to counteract his/her isolation and/or emotional pain. Rated: 1

Source: Van Brunt, 2015; Mohandie, 2014; O'Neill, Fox, Depue, and Englander, 2008; ATAP, 2006.

Item #4: The student has an action plan and/or timeframe to complete an attack. Rated: 2

Source: Meloy et al., 2011; ATAP, 2006; Turner and Gelles, 2003.

Item #5: The student is fixated and/or focused on his target in his actions and threatening statements. Rated: 2

Source: Deisinger, Randazzo and Nolan, 2014; Meloy et al. (2011); O'Toole and Bowman (2011); ASIS and SHRM (2011); US Post Office (2007); Turner and Gelles (2003).

Item #6: The student carries deep grudges and resentments. He can't seem to let things go and collects injustices based on perceptions of being hurt, frustrated with someone, or annoyed. Rated: 1

Source: O'Toole and Bowman, 2011; ASIS and SHRM, 2011; Calhoun and Weston, 2009; Randazzo and Plummer, 2009; ATAP, 2006; Turner and Gelles, 2003.

Item #8: There has been leakage concerning a potential plan of attack. Leakage can include a direct threat, but also can be "found" items shed ding light on a plan of attack. Rated: 2

Source: Deisinger, Randazzo and Nolan, 2014; Meloy et al., 2011; O'Toole and Bowman, 2011; ASIS and SHRM, 2011; Randazzo and Plummer, 2009; ATAP, 2006; Turner and Gelles, 2003; O'Toole, 2002; Vossekuil et al., 2002.

Item #13: The student displays a hardened point of view or strident, argumentative opinion. This is beyond a person who is generally argumentative or negative. Rated: 2

Source: Meloy et al. (2011); ASIS and SHRM (2011); Randazzo and Plummer (2009); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003); O'Toole (2002); Byrnes (2002).

Item #15: The student is driven to a particular action to cause harm.* Rated: 2

Source: Deisinger, Randazzo and Nolan, 2014; Meloy et al. (2011); US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003).

Item #16: The student has had a recent breakup or failure of an intimate relationship and/or the student has become obsessed in stalking or fixated on another person romantically. Rated: 1

Source: ASIS and SHRM (2011); Drysdale et al. (2010); Randazzo and Plummer (2009); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003); Vossekuil et al. (2002).

Item #19: The student has a weapon (or access to weapon), specialized training in weapon handling, interest in paramilitary organizations, or veteran/law enforcement status. Rated: 2

Source: Meloy et al. (2011); ASIS and SHRM (2011); US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003); Vossekuil et al. (2002).

Item #20: The student glorifies and revels in publicized violence such as school shootings, serial killers, and war, or displays an unusual interest in sensational violence. The student uses weapons for emotional release and venerates destruction. Rated: 2

Source: Meloy et al. (2011); ASIS and SHRM (2011); US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003) O'Toole (2002); Vossekuil et al. (2002).

Item #21: The student externalizes blame for personal behaviors and problems onto other people despite efforts to educate him/her about how others view these actions. The student takes immediate responsibility in a disingenuous manner. Rated: 1

Source: O'Toole and Bowman (2011); US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003); O'Toole (2002).

Item #22: The student intimidates or acts superior to others. The student displays intolerance to individual differences. Rated: 2

Source: Van Brunt, 2015; Meloy et al. (2011); O'Toole and Bowman (2011); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003); O'Toole (2002).

Item #23: The student has a past history of excessively impulsive, erratic, or risk-taking behavior. Rated: 1

Source: O'Toole and Bowman (2011); ASIS and SHRM (2011); Randazzo and Plummer (2009); US Post Office (2007); Turner and Gelles (2003).

Item #24: The student has a past history of problems with authority. The student has a pattern of intense work conflicts with supervisors and other authorities (e.g., resident advisor, conduct officer, professor, or dean). Rated: 2

Source: O'Toole and Bowman (2011); ASIS and SHRM (2011); US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003); O'Toole (2002).

Item #25: The student handles frustration in an explosive manner or displays a low tolerance for becoming upset. This is beyond avoiding responsibility or calling mom/dad or a lawyer. Rated: 1

Source: O'Toole and Bowman (2011); ASIS and SHRM (2011); Turner and Gelles (2003); O'Toole (2002).

Item #26: The student has difficulty connecting with other people. The student lacks the ability to form intimate relationships. The student lacks the ability to form trust. Rated: 2

Source: Van Brunt, 2015; Randazzo and Plummer (2009); US Post Office (2007); O'Toole (2002).

Item #27: The student has a history of drug or substance use that has been connected to inappropriate ideation or behavior. Substances of enhanced concern are methamphetamines or amphetamines, cocaine, or alcohol. Rated: 2

Source: O'Toole and Bowman (2011); US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003).

Item #30: The student engages in the objectification of others (perhaps in social media or writings). Rated: 2

Source: O'Toole and Bowman (2011); O'Toole (2002); Byrnes (2002).

Item #31: The student seems obsessed with another person, location, or behavior the individual has little control over. Rated: 2

Source: ASIS and SHRM (2011); Meloy et al. (2011); US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006); Turner and Gelles (2003).

Item #32: The student has oppositional thoughts and/or behaviors. Rated: 2

Source: Van Brunt, 2015; US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006); O'Toole (2002).

Item #33: The student has poor support and connection from faculty, administration, and staff. The student has an unsupportive family system and peers who exacerbate bad decisions and offer low quality advice or caring. They experience evaporating social inhibitors. Rated: 1

Source: Randazzo and Plummer (2009); US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006); Vossekui et al. (2002).

Item #35: The student has drastic, unexplained behavioral change. Rated: 2

Source: ASIS and SHRM (2011); Randazzo and Plummer (2009); US Post Office (2007); ATAP (2006).

The SIVRA-35 is an informal, structured set of items for those who work in higher education to use with individuals who may pose a risk or threat to the community. The SIVRA-35 is not designed as a psychological test and it is not designed to assess suicidal students. SIVRA-35 results are not a prediction of future violence.

The ideal approach to violence risk assessment is utilizing an individual trained and experienced in violence risk assessment to interview the subject. Since these individuals are difficult to find, the SIVRA-35 serves as a starting place for clinical staff and administrators to conduct a more standardized, research-based violence risk assessment with students determined to be at an increased risk.

While risk and threat assessment cannot be predictive, multiple agencies (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Secret Service, Department of Education, Post Office, ASIS International, and the Society for Human Resource Management, ASME-ITI) have suggested risk factors to attend to when determining the potential danger that an individual may represent. Several prominent experts in campus violence and workplace threat assessment have also recommended key considerations salient when assessing risk and threat (Meloy, 2000; Byrnes, 2002; Turner & Gelles, 2003; Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage, 2008; Meloy, Hoffmann, Guldemann, & James, 2011).

Building on this research, the SIVRA-35 provides the user a score from 0–70 indicating a numerical level of risk. Scores from 1–20 indicate a low risk for violence, scores from 21–40 indicate a moderate risk, and scores from 41–70 indicate a high risk. The SIVRA-35 will help those assessing violence risks to organize their thoughts and perceptions in a standardized manner and bring the current literature to the task of evaluating at student.

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When Students' Academic Needs Clash with Behavioral Sanctions

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Abstract

Some college students engage in behaviors that violate their campus code of conduct and consequently face disciplinary actions that may impede their access to academic services or facilities needed for student success. This paper focuses on four case studies involving sanctioned students who were referred to the Student Behavioral Consultant Team with a variety of behavioral concerns. All experienced academic challenges as a result of the sanctions. Strategies and techniques used to address these matters are discussed.

Introduction

Some college students, unfortunately, engage in behaviors that are in violation of their campus code of conduct and consequently face disciplinary actions that may impede their access to services or facilities directly needed for student success. These student behaviors range in severity but may include harassment, stalking other students and/or faculty, and disruptive behaviors in and outside of the classroom (Grasgreen, 2012). Often, these students are given sanctions which may include restriction from campus buildings and/or a no-contact order, following conduct hearings (Armada, 2004). While these sanctions may help maintain campus safety, educate the students, and prevent recurrence, they may also have a serious impact on the students' educational progress and academic success.

Responding to incidents of disruptive behavior, harassment, and/or stalking seem to be an inevitable part of the working environment of many college officials and educators. The issues leading to the disruption are often resolved by pointing out to the responsible students how their behavior disrupts the teaching/learning process. Sometimes, students persist with harassment, stalking, or other disruptive behavior, and disciplinary action may be needed. The key is for the campus to take some action to stop the disruptive behavior, reactivate the students' participation in the learning process, and prevent other students and/or the college community from being affected (Murphy, 2010).

Administrative measures that could impact academics may include temporarily or permanently removing students from a class, dismissing students from a department or major, restricting students from one or more buildings, instituting no-contact orders, or removing them from the institution altogether. While these measures may be necessary, any one of these actions may harm students' academic progress and, in the long run, may put their completion of a degree in jeopardy (Johnson, 2012).

Any of these measures may have a negative impact on the learning process. For instance, students banned from faculty office buildings may lose access to tutoring or contact with their faculty advisors. Restrictions on entering other buildings may prohibit students from using the library, science laboratories, seminar rooms, student support centers, counseling, and/or other key university offices. The students may need alternate work assignments or arrangements to meet with faculty advisors, which may or may not be successful.

There are a variety of behaviors that may lead to students being sanctioned, including disruptive conduct in and outside the classroom; threats of harm; harassment of fellow students, faculty, and college staff members; and stalking of faculty, staff, or students. Many of these

behaviors are serious, potentially violent, and may result in injury or death. For example, a former student in Chicago, Illinois was arrested for stalking a professor in June of 2009 (Morgan & Kavanaugh, 2011). The student threatened the professor with a crowbar, but was disarmed and the professor was fortunately not injured. The student was arrested at the scene soon after the incident took place. Altercations like these, however, can end very differently. Seven years before the Chicago incident, a University of Arizona nursing student murdered three professors before taking his own life after receiving a failing grade in a class (Holguin, 2002). All three faculty members had been stalked and harassed by the student before the murders took place.

Significant research has been conducted on college campuses assessing the prevalence and characteristics of students who harass fellow students. Such research has found a pattern of harassment often similar to that found in the general population. For example, it was found that 13.1 percent of female students had been stalked, with one in eight of those reporting more than one stalking incident. Almost 80 percent of these stalking incidents fit within the domestic violence category proposed by Roberts and Dziegielewski (2006).

While stalking is often associated with romantic feelings, it's more broadly defined as a pattern of repeated and unwanted contacts that are experienced as intrusive by the recipients, and lead them to feel distressed or fearful (McKeon, McEvan & Luebbers, 2015). Morgan & Kavanaugh (2011) expanded stalking research on campuses by assessing the prevalence of student stalking of faculty. The subjects were asked to complete a survey that assessed 28 potential stalking behaviors. Results revealed that approximately a third of faculty members had experienced at least two separate incidences of stalking behaviors that led them to feel intimidated, anxious, or fearful. Similarly, other researchers found data on students stalking faculty members (Osterholm, Horn, & Kritsonis (2007).

Prevalence of stalking among college students and college-age adults are often higher than in the general population (Ravensberg, 2003). Two possible reasons have been identified, including, developmental shortfalls in students' social skills and the organization of college life. Due to immaturity and less experience with adult social situations, young adults may not have all the abilities necessary to appropriately initiate and maintain relationships with significant others. In addition, the structure of college campuses and the tasks of student life may also contribute to the high prevalence of stalking among undergraduates. The availability of social media and other electronic devices may additionally make it relatively easy for students to engage in cyber stalking.

While stalking is a serious concern, many college students also engage in other types of disruptive behaviors both in and outside of the classroom. Types of behavior a disruptive student may engage in include sleeping in class, arriving late, having conversations with other class members or talking on their phones, arguing with instructors, text messaging, playing video games, or becoming hostile and/or aggressive (Ali & Gracey, 2013; Hara, 2011). These behaviors may lead to conduct sanctions, particularly for hostile and aggressive behaviors.

This paper focuses on four case studies involving sanctioned students who were referred to the Student Behavioral Consultant Team with a variety of concerns consisting of stalking, classroom disruption, threats of harm, and harassment. All were negatively affected by the sanctions, which involved being banned from faculty office buildings — limiting their access to faculty office hours and restricting them from taking some courses — and no-contact orders with fellow students and/or faculty. Strategies and techniques used to manage these ongoing concerns will be addressed in this paper. The authors acknowledge a gap in the literature and field research pertaining to the impact that disciplinary actions may have on student academic success and wish to add this paper as relevant research in this area.

Case Study A

Overview: “A” is a male student in his mid 30s who is a military veteran and current National Guard member. He was a chemistry major who struggled academically, often repeating courses multiple times to achieve a passing grade.

Incidents and Team’s Response: While taking a class in his major, he met regularly with his female professor for tutoring and subsequently developed a crush on her. When he learned of her engagement and upcoming wedding, he sent her hundreds of emails and texts. He stalked her and showed up at her off-campus swim club and often cornered her at various sites on campus. As a result of this behavior, he was referred to the Student Behavioral Team and Conduct Office, and was ultimately banned from the faculty office building, where the professor’s office was located. A no-contact order was also issued. Despite the ban, the faculty member remained fearful that the behavior would continue.

Academic Implications: “A” was unable to get needed tutoring or visit other professors during their office hours in the restricted building and as a result, he failed a major subject. This contributed to him leaving the college without earning a degree.

Case Study B

Overview: “B” is a 22-year-old male student majoring in biology. He

appeared socially awkward though grandiose when discussing his academic prowess. He perceived himself to be a serious scholar and strong student, while in reality, his grades were average to slightly above average.

Incidents and Team’s Response: “B” developed a growing romantic interest in a fellow classmate and laboratory assistant, but she did not reciprocate. In response, “B” harassed the female student by sending numerous texts, emails, and posts on social media to her and her friends. In his posts and texts, he frequently referred to the woman as stupid and promiscuous, and implied that she should not be in a science major.

Academic Implications: The ability to enforce the no-contact order was limited despite employing all standard strategies because the academic department is quite small. To complicate the issue, the two students had to take classes together because there was typically only one section of each required course offered during the semester. In addition, parents on both sides became very engaged in the situation, leading to difficulties enforcing the sanctions. Also, the female student faced academic challenges, as she felt threatened in class though the communication from “B” was not perceived as overtly threatening. Ultimately, the female student took classes outside her major for a semester and later returned to finish her Biology major and graduated. “B” left the college without degree completion.

Case Study C

Overview: “C” is a 21-year-old female majoring in mathematics.

Incidents and Team Response: “C” developed a negative attitude toward a male professor in her discipline and made vague threats and disparaging remarks about the professor in public. As a result, the professor did not feel comfortable working with the student outside of class during office hours or in the mathematics lab. After reviewing the situation, a no-contact order was issued even though the student had to continue to take courses from this professor because no one in the department taught this required subject area. “C” was banned from working in the computer lab and had to make alternative arrangements to complete assignments.

Academic Implications: The student was unable to access appropriate tutoring and subsequently was placed on academic probation.

Case Study D

Overview: “D” is a male student in his mid 20s. He majored in accounting and was close to graduation when the behavioral referral took place.

Incidents and Team's Response: Faculty, students, and department assistants felt threatened by the student, who barged into the departmental office and started shouting at the staff. He was rude, disruptive, and aggressive during classes and in interactions with professional staff. As a result, he was banned from classroom buildings, the departmental offices, and faculty offices. A behavioral agreement that included mandated counseling and conduct meetings was required.

Academic Implications: As a result of the building bans, "D" was unable to receive tutoring and failed his last class. Alternate arrangements for completion of the capstone course and the degree were made, despite the department's standard requirement that the capstone course had to be taken at the campus. "D" successfully took the course at another campus and graduated.

Case Management Challenges

Overall, the management of students with sanctions can be a challenge from both a Behavioral Intervention Team and an academic perspective. These students, while creating problems for the campus, remain students and have academic needs that may not be met due to their sanctions. The team needs to work closely with academic affairs to develop a plan that enables the sanctioned students to have access to the facilities and services needed to enable academic success within the confines of the sanction.

While there are confidentiality issues, deans, department chairs, and faculty members may need to be aware of no-contact orders or other restrictions placed on sanctioned students, as they are in a position to assist the student conduct office and/or Title IX coordinator in monitoring these orders. This can be achieved by sharing with instructors that no-contact orders exist without sharing specific information about the cases. A no-contact order might involve moving students from one section of a course to another to prevent contact with another student or faculty member. While this is not always possible, as indicated in Case Study B, it may be feasible in other, similar situations.

A building restriction might require students to meet their advisors or tutors in different buildings or in a neutral space, similar to what occurred in Case Study B. The student in that situation was able to find support in the college's tutoring center but still was unable to pass all his courses. Students who need to work in laboratories might have to consult with their instructors to schedule a specific time to avoid students with whom they have been ordered to avoid contact.

All of these plans were developed by members of the BIT members working with colleagues in academic affairs.

Summary and Conclusion

As disruptive and potentially serious behavioral incidents on campus increase, the corresponding number of sanctions rises. These sanctions may have a negative impact on students' academic progress and may result in students failing to graduate. The case studies presented here demonstrate that the individuals highlighted are not simply "cases" of difficult students with behavioral issues, but also students with multiple challenges, including the need for academic support. BITs will likely encounter an increasing number of these issues, and the challenge will be to protect the campus community while preserving the ability of the institution to provide the best possible academic support to all its students.

BITs may need to collaborate more strategically with academic departments and student conduct professionals in order to work as a team to educate students about appropriate behavior and foster a community environment in which academic success can occur. Faculty training must include information on how to address behavioral concerns early on to minimize the impact that such behaviors may have on the classroom environment. This training should also include classroom management skills, a review of recommended syllabi content in order to establish clear expectations and boundaries at the beginning of every semester, and information on the college's BIT and student conduct system. Through this collaborative approach, BITs can lead the problem-solving and decision-making processes needed to address the complexities of students' behaviors and provide the mechanisms to ensure academic success.

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A First-Person Reflection of Learning from The International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services (IAFMHS) 15th Annual Meeting and Conference

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Abstract

As concerns involving students with mental health issues continue to come increasingly to the attention of campus administrators and Behavioral Intervention Teams, this article outlines and explores some of the major themes that emerged during the 15th Annual Meeting and Conference of the International Association of Forensic Mental Health, held in Manchester, U.K., this past June. It also explains how the information presented around these themes can impact and support our day-to-day work with students of concern.

Author's Note:

More and more often, myself, my U.K. peers and NaBITA peers encounter or are likely to encounter students with a mental health disorder who are deemed a threat or are capable of carrying out unlawful, violent acts. Earlier this year, I was invited by NaBITA to write a paper that reflected my learning from a conference I attended focusing on this topic, which featured some of the best academics and practitioners from Europe, the U.S., and Canada, and to share some key themes of universal interest, namely:

- Improvements in risk assessment
- The dynamics and theory behind intimate partner violence;
- How law enforcement professionals manage mental health risk in custody;
- The rise in numbers of ex-military personnel who break the law; and
- The forensic assessment of juveniles and people with intellectual disabilities;

and how the information I listened to around these themes can impact and support us in our day-to-day roles.

All references will be listed numerically at the end of this paper.

The International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services (IAFMHS) Conference "Risks — Rights — Responsibilities: Innovations in Forensic Mental Health Services" took place in Manchester, U.K., on the June 16–18, 2015. [1]

1. Moving from Risk Assessment to Management: Searching for Causes of Violence and The Relationship Between Delusions and Violence

With the experience of being asked to risk assess students deemed to be a risk to either themselves or others, specifically in threatening behaviours targeted at others, I was keen to listen to evidence-based and evidence-generating theory around this tricky subject. The two speakers of most interest on this topic were Professor Jeremy Coid, the director of the Violence Prevention Research Unit and a forensic psychiatrist at Queen Mary's University, London; and Dr. Simone Ullrich, also of the Violence Prevention Research Unit.

What is the main purpose of risk assessment? Surely, the key purpose of undertaking a risk assessment is to provide a formulation that will inform us and hopefully prevent something awful from happening. Very often, we find ourselves being asked to undertake a risk assessment on a person deemed to be dangerous, and for many of us, we just hope that we "call it" right.

Professor Coid was clear in his message that no risk assessment should ever be carried out without a risk management plan or strategy

being in place. He expressed the opinion that good risk assessment should consist of a combination of evidence-based risk assessment tools, and within his session, he highlighted the benefits of tools used in the U.K., Western Europe, and Canada, such as the PCL-R (for detecting psychopathy and predicting violent behaviour) [2], the VRAG (Violence Risk Appraisal Guide) [3], and the HCR-20 (Historical Risk Management 20) [4], commonly used in forensic psychiatry in combination with clinical judgement based on experience.

For the benefit of my NaBITA colleagues, it might be helpful to reflect and to compare and contrast the items in the above tools with that of The Structured Interview for Violence Risk Assessment (SIVRA-35), a 35-item inventory designed by Dr. Brian Van Brunt [5].

Furthermore, Professor Coid observed that risk assessment as a standalone activity is not necessarily effective in reducing the chance of something happening, and only one study comes to mind — The Brøset Study — that successfully predicted a violent incident. The Brøset Violence Checklist (BVC) is a six-item inventory that posited that risk assessment alone reduces violence. The BVC specifically assesses three patient characteristics (confusion, irritability, and boisterousness) and three patient behaviours (verbal threats, physical threats, and attacks on objects) as present or absent. It is hypothesized that an individual displaying two or more of these behaviours is more likely to become violent within the subsequent 24-hour period than the patient who does not display these behaviours. A patient scoring 0 is at very low risk for violence, whereas a score between 3 and 6 (the maximum) would indicate immediate need for preventive measures. The instrument has been shown to be more reliable in predicting violence than clinical judgment or intuition in inpatient populations for the first 72-hour, post-admission [6].

However, Professor Coid asserted that predictive models of risk assessment have been found to be wrong 30–40 percent of the time, and that more work should be done in the field of developing causal models of risk assessment.

Listening to Simone Ullrich's exploration of the relationship between delusions and violence was fascinating. Particularly noteworthy was her observation that there is little to no evidence base supporting the generally-held belief that people who are experiencing a psychotic episode are violent unless there is a co-morbid alcohol/substance misuse state in the mix. In other words, we should not assume that when we come into contact with a person experiencing a psychotic episode, the individual will be violent. Instead, we should revise our assumptions and be wary of violent behaviour if we know that such individuals are additionally misusing alcohol or illicit substances [7].

2. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Three speakers in particular stood out for me within this theme. First was Dr. Jennifer Storey of Mid Sweden University, who presented a session titled, “Investigating the Influence of Victim Vulnerability and Gender on the Assessment of Intimate Partner Violence.” Dr. Storey explained that Sweden has put in place legislation to mandate their police forces to routinely use the Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk (B-SAFER) [8] when IPV is suspected at any incident to which the police is called.

Interestingly, while there seems to be a rise in the numbers of female perpetrators of IPV in Western Europe, there are no gender-specific assessment tools for female perpetrators of IPV in existence. This leads me to consider that there is a gap in the market for such a tool to be created, perhaps one with similarities to SIVRA-35.

In Sweden, incidences of IPV in same-sex relationships are not coded as IPV, but as “between friends,” which led me to reflect on the fact that same-sex couples perhaps do not receive the same standard of recognition as their heterosexual counterparts when it comes to the reporting and mitigating of risk in relation to IPV.

Also of particular interest was “Anxiety and Intimate Partner Violence: Can their Association be Explained by Coexisting Conditions or Borderline Personality Traits?” by Dr. Mary Davoren of the Violence Prevention Research Unit at Queen Mary’s University. Dr. Davoren’s presentation was probably one of the highlights of this conference for me. She asserted that in IPV perpetrators, antisocial personality disorder (ASPD), anxiety disorders, and drug/alcohol dependency are common, and recommends that if you are assessing an IPV perpetrator, you should also be assessing them for anxiety.

In self-report studies, male perpetrators who reported incidents of IPV were found to be violent men generally. In other words, their violence is not restricted to the IPV context. This left me with a future research idea: exploring the causal pathways of IPV (e.g., rejection, abandonment, and jealousy), and I would encourage anyone interested in collaborating with me on this subject to contact me.

Finally, in “Differentiating Intimate Partner Homicide — a Swedish Register-Based Study of Homicides in Sweden, 2007–2009,” Dr. Shilan Caman from Karolinska Institute in Sweden explained that in Western Europe, between 25 and 30 percent of all homicides are coded as Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH). In the study that Dr. Caman presented, of 264 incidents of homicide (36 unsolved), 56 were coded as IPH (25 percent) with 80 percent of the victims being female and 86 percent of the perpetrators being male. Homicide Suicide is highly prevalent within IPH scenarios, Dr. Caman noted, and again I

was left considering the potential for a rigorous investigation of this. Anyone interested in discussing this area of research interest is also encouraged to contact me.

3. U.K. Developments in Police-Based Mental Health Assessment and Treatment

This was a particularly interesting subject to share, particularly for those colleagues who have law enforcement officers on campus or who regularly escort students to a place of custody or investigation. “Mental Health Screening in Police Custody,” by Dr. Jane Senior, the director of the Offender Health Research Network at the University of Manchester, primarily focused her attention on mental health screening tools currently being used in custody suites in the U.K. Citing Lord Bradley’s 2009 report [9], she observed that figures available are variable but range between 2 and 20 percent of detainees in U.K. custody suites have a mental illness.

The figure is still seen to be high and therefore, there has been a resurgence of attention to this subject of how mentally ill “offenders” are treated while in custody. It is vital to remember that in the U.K., a custody suite is not a prison. The person detained at a custody suite may never actually be charged. A custody suite is a place of secure detention following arrest on the suspicion of a crime while being questioned.

Historically, mental health screening in the custody setting has been patchy at best in the U.K., and it is typical that the mental health screening tools used may not have been validated and are being used by police personnel who have received no mental health training. The most commonly used screening tool used in custody suites had been the “Prison Screening Questionnaire” (PriSnQuest, Shaw et al, 2009), an eight-item, yes/no questionnaire. If three or more questions are answered affirmatively, then further assessment is deemed to be warranted. By its name, you can surmise that this tool was created for use within prison populations, and was not designed for pre-charged or pre-sentenced detainees.

To address this matter, Senior et. al (2013) produced “The Police Mental Health Screening Questionnaire” (PolQuest,) [10], the new generation and successor to PriSnQuest, which was designed for the specific use of custody sergeants. PolQuest is a 13-plus-one-item mental health screening questionnaire that can be administered in five minutes and links into local mental health referral pathways.

The questions are colour-coded, whereby red questions require an urgent and immediate response to the risk posed, while amber questions are routine. Red questions relate to risk posed by psychosis or suicidal ideation/harm to others.

Interestingly, the rules of administration state that PolQuest must only be administered to individuals over 18 years of age who are sober during interview. This left me with a question: What happens to 16–18 year olds? The U.K. government has issued guidelines on young people's custody rights in the U.K. [11], but these guidelines make no mention of mental illness and so how young people are to be screened. This may present an opportunity for a gap to be bridged and for an age range-specific mental health screening tool to be designed for use prior to police interviews.

In "Health Screening of People in Police Custody: HELP-PC Project," by Dr. Iain McKinnon, a consultant psychiatrist at Newcastle University's Institute of Health and Society, explained that under U.K. PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984), a custody sergeant is legally responsible for the welfare of detainees, and owes a duty of care to detainees while they are in a custody suite of which s/he is in charge. On arrival at a custody suite, it is usual practice for a detainee to be assessed for physical and mental health conditions, intoxication/withdrawal, injury, and what is termed a "mentally vulnerable" state. Although there is no clear definition of this term, it is usually thought to include intellectual disabilities.

This assessment/screening/risk assessment is undertaken in a public area, very often with other people in very close proximity, and with little or no privacy and little or no concern for the dignity of the detainee [12] [13] [14] [15]. This led me to reflect on the human rights violations and the lack of dignity often demonstrated within detention settings universally, not just in the U.K. Even within an educational setting, how mindful are we to the privacy and dignity rights of someone suspected of having committed an unlawful act, when Western democracy dictates that individuals are innocent until found guilty by a jury of their peers?

In "Service Users' Experiences of Detention in Police Custody," Dr. Heather Noga of Simon Fraser University in Canada was keen to point out that for vulnerable people taken into police custody, of primary importance was that their interactions with people in authoritative roles be ones where they were afforded respect, dignity, trust, legitimacy, and a voice. She went on to observe that, "better (more respectful, empathic, and dignified) treatment of detainees usually leads to adherence to treatment protocols further upstream." Does this principle of Dr. Noga's not also relate to how we interact with vulnerable students who require our assistance in times of trouble? How many times have we been asked to interview or assess vulnerable young adults who have been labelled as "trouble-makers" or "resistant" by figures of "authority," and when you take the time to get to know them and understand their perspective, turn out to be neither troublesome nor resistant, but usually just scared and

confused as to what is happening? And to which approach is the so called "trouble-maker" more responsive to — the authoritarian or the caring and empathic?

4. Military Personnel Who Offend: Understanding the Needs of a New Forensic Population

"Offending within the Military," by Dr. Deirdre MacManus, a consultant psychiatrist and senior lecturer at Kings College London, pointed out that ex-military personnel are the largest single occupation group in prisons in England. To help understand how and why ex-military personnel offend, Dr. MacManus advised us to consider the possibility that many may have had a predisposition to anti-social behaviour before joining up.

In U.K. recruitment studies, 47 percent of males who join the military (particularly the Army) have deficient literary skills. The King's Centre for Military Health Research [16] was timed to start with the second Iraq war and has provided the only longitudinal study in existence in the U.K. evidencing higher violent offending in a military cohort than in a general public cohort. I asked Dr. MacManus if there is any significance in the public perception of deployment? For example, might the controversy surrounding the Iraq war and the perception that it is considered by many in the U.K. to as an illegal war, perhaps have a detrimental effect on military personnel morale? She responded that it appeared to be a complicating factor. It appears that alcohol and anger are the most commonly cited issues and common co-morbidities, which lead to externalised offending behaviours.

In her 2013 paper, "Veteran Mental Health: Are We Headed in the Right Direction?" [17], Dr. MacManus suggests that instead of focusing on short-term alcohol treatment or anger management courses, efforts should instead be focused on protective factors (e.g., employability, secure housing, debt management, and civilian transition) to reduce the levels of risk of offending.

In England today, there are 4.9 million military veterans and military dependents. Up until 2010, there were no specialised health services for ex-military personnel, despite an upsurge in reported PTSD and domestic violence within this population. Then came a report by the British Parliamentary Member Dr. Andrew Murrison in 2010, "Fighting Fit" [18], which campaigned for more and better specialised mental health services for ex-military personnel.

National Health Service England (which funds and provides specialised commissioned services in England) now funds these services. There are currently 10 regional specialised NHS services for ex-military personnel. However, only some of the services have in-reach to prisons, as this role falls mainly as a burden to the voluntary sector.

Dr. MacManus was adamant that there still remains a very real need for collaboration to support ex-military personnel in relation to their mental health, welfare, and housing needs (protective factors).

In “The Health Needs of Ex-Military in Prison,” Dr. Verity Wainwright of the University of Manchester, stated that early leavers from the military often cite mental ill health as being their primary reason for leaving. Studies undertaken by Dr. Wainwright identify violence (e.g., murder, manslaughter, and grievous bodily harm), drug offences, and sexual offences as the most common offence charges committed by ex-military personnel. The majority of men that Dr. Wainwright interviewed were first-time prisoners.

Mental health continues to have stigma surrounding it; this is thought by the research team to compound and maintain offending behaviour, as there are very few avenues open through which to speak of mental illness or seek out support, both in the military and in the penal system.

I was immensely saddened by Dr. Wainwright’s closing observation that many of the young men interviewed had experienced a profound sense of loss when leaving the “institutionalised” setting of the military and described a sense of “fitting in again” in a prison setting. “Military personnel make ideal prisoners,” because they “respond to a sense of order, discipline, and authority” commented a prison governor (warden) who appears in one of her studies.

Listening to Dr. MacManus and Dr. Wainwright, I found myself reflecting on the increase in numbers of ex-military personnel enrolling in colleges and universities, many of whom have multiple and complex needs, sometimes complicated by undiagnosed PTSD or other mental health conditions. How often is it the case that something has gone wrong before some of these vulnerable adults are brought to our attention? I am aware of a role at the University of Birmingham in England with the title “Vulnerable Students Officer.” More roles such as this one could go a long way in supporting ex-military personnel who enroll with risk factors rendering them vulnerable.

5. Forensic Assessment: Knowledge Exchange with Third Parties Such As Prosecutors and Judges

In “Prosecutorial Decision-Making Regarding Forensic Mental Health Assessments and its Relevance in Holland,” Dr. Maaike Kempes, who chairs the Netherlands Institute for Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology, described that in Holland, if individuals under the age of 18 offend, they are tried in accordance with juvenile law. However, since 2014, if it is deemed that development is “delayed,” then a person will be tried in accordance with juvenile law up to the age of 23. That led me to ponder the question of who assesses those

who may be “delayed.” Whose expert opinion is that? In Holland, there are around 4,000 forensic assessments completed per year, of which approximately 600 are for 18–23 year olds. A psychiatrist and a psychologist are both responsible for “applying juvenile law” assessment and advise judges accordingly.

This left me with another future research idea: Can criteria be developed to assess for the application of juvenile law in cases where “delayed development,” or what might be termed “intellectual disability,” is suspected? Again, anyone interested in this topic or collaborating with me on this is encouraged to contact me.

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The Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention (J-BIT)

is published annually by NaBITA, the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association, both in print and online.

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\$99.00 USD

ISBN-13: 978-0-9965138-3-8

PRINT ISSN: 2380-1107 | ONLINE ISSN: 2380-1115

DOI 10.17732/JBIT03