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The significance of content endorsement values in suicide notes the use of control protocol sentences as reference data.

Stewart Glenn. Plotnick

University of Windsor

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The Significance of Content Endorsement Values in Suicide Notes: The use of Control Protocol Sentences as Reference Data

by Stewart Glenn Plotnick

B.Sc., McGill University, 1985

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of Psychology in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor
Windsor, Ontario, Canada
1988
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to demonstrate the application of a methodological innovation in the study of suicide notes. Thirty three genuine notes and 33 simulated notes were investigated. The method involved blind judges' endorsements of protocol sentences derived from Aaron Beck's theory of suicide, as being represented in the genuine and simulated notes, and endorsements by the same judges of control protocol sentences as being represented in the same notes. Henry Murray's broad system of normal personality traits was used as a basis for deriving the control protocol sentences, since unlike Beck's formulations, Murray's system was not intended to focus on suicide. The innovation involved using the judge's ratings of Murray's formulations as reference data with which to statistically infer which of Beck's statements were endorsed highly enough to be considered a statistically significant finding. Six independent judges, unaware of the presence of the simulated notes and the purpose of the study, participated in this investigation. The results yielded a reliability coefficient of .720, indicating adequate agreement amongst the judges in discriminating between the statements in each theory. The collection of Beck statements, as a set, received significantly higher endorsement values relative to the Murray standard. This was true of the genuine and simulated notes tested.
separately and when combined. Tests of the significance of the difference between individual Beck statements and the collection of Murray sentences were conducted. Five Beck statements received significantly higher mean endorsement values relative to the Murray standard in both the genuine and simulated notes (as tested separately). Those statements reflect the following ideas: manifesting gross errors in evaluation, expressing negative expectations, drawing general conclusions on the basis of single incidents, regarding suicide as the only possible solution to his "desperate" situation, and demonstrating thoughts about escaping the problems of life. Four Beck statements received higher mean endorsement values as compared to the Murray standard in the genuine notes only. Those sentences reflect: feeling his suffering as intolerable, feeling alienated from the world, blaming himself for perceived shortcomings, and not contemplating the accuracy of his reasoning. Two Beck statements received significantly higher mean endorsement values relative to the Murray standard in the simulated notes only. Those statements reflect misconstruing experiences in a negative way and interpreting experiences in terms of a few stereotyped ideas. Further analyses on direct comparisons of genuine vs simulated differences for the set of Beck statements and for individual Beck statements were conducted and reported. Discussion of the results and their relation to previous
research on suicide notes was offered. The clinical relevance of the findings to treatment and counselling of suicidal people was indicated, and suggestions for future research were offered.
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I would also like to thank the graduate students who served as judges for this project. It was a great deal of work that I imposed upon them, and they all did a terrific job. My thanks go out to Joe, Olga, Rhonda, Ian, Andrea, and Fred, who as judges and friends are warmly regarded.

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not only to sustain me during difficult times but has motivated me to excel during others. I love them all, very dearly.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION.

"To anyone who reviews any considerable number of suicides, it is unmistakably clear that the assigning of 'the cause' or 'the causes' for the act is naively absurd and grossly misleading. But the nature and degree of the internal stress and the external evidence of it—these are a different matter. These can be found if searched for...." (Menninger, 1957)

In the spirit of those words, researchers from many different disciplines, including psychology, psychiatry, sociology, social work and others, have labored to contribute to our understanding of suicidal phenomena.

In the field of psychology, the literature is replete with contributions from renowned theorists and psychotherapists. Included are Freud (1910, 1917, 1923), Adler (1929, 1967), Horney (1942, 1945, 1950), Fenichel (1945), Sullivan (1953, 1956), Stengel (1964) as well as many others. Despite this attention, we have not yet achieved an understanding of why some individuals have perceived their lives as so meaningless or painful as to cause them to end it by suicide. Perhaps Freud's caution to the audience at a meeting of The Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in 1910 is still true today. He said "I have an impression that in spite of all the valuable material that has been brought before us in this discussion, we have not reached a decision on the problem that interests us" (Friedman, 1967).
Much of the 'valuable material' offered by psychologists has come from a number of different avenues of study. Included are psychological tests, case histories, psychological autopsies, and suicide notes (Shneidman and Farberow, 1957) This latter method of inquiry represents the topic of concern in this thesis.

Suicide notes may be considered a unique form of communication (Hayakawa, 1957; Murphy and Robbins, 1961; Beall, 1967). Their importance lies in the assumption held by this author and many others, that "they contain an unsolicited account of the victim's thoughts and emotions regarding his intended act, and often what he felt was responsible for it" (Jacobs, 1967). The suicide note is written in the absence of any specific guidelines, and as such, it is commonly held that the note can aid in the understanding of the circumstances, thoughts and feelings which were salient to the individual shortly before his self-intentioned death. Most suicide notes are written shortly before and many during the act (Stephens, 1984) and are considered as powerful reflectors of the individual's subjective state immediately prior to committing the act (Chynoweth, 1977). One assumes for instance, that the emotional content of the note represents the person's true emotions at the time of the suicide (Tuckman, Kleiner and Lavell, 1959).
Thus the study of suicide notes has substantial theoretical and practical significance (Cohen and Fiedler, 1974). From a theoretical standpoint, researchers study suicide notes as a means of evaluating theories of suicide (e.g. Tuckman et al 1959) and towards searching for lines of evidence in support of theories of suicide (Leenaars and Balance, 1981). Similarly investigators analyze suicide notes for practical purposes, such as refining risk scales and improving efforts to predict suicide (Beck, Morris, and Lester, 1974), recommending appropriate treatment techniques for different subgroups of potential committers (Darbonne, 1969), and counselling surviving friends and relatives (Henslin, 1970).

Nonetheless, the importance of suicide notes in the investigation of suicidal phenomena is a controversial issue. Detractors caution against using suicide notes in the scientific study of suicide because of two main concerns. The first concern is that the notewriters may not be representative of committers in general. Shneidman (1973) observed that various researchers reported that only 2 to 30% of committers leave behind a suicide note and he stated that 15% is considered an accurate estimate as the average of the figures given in these reports. Similarly, Edlaní and Duncan (1973) found that in a 23 year period from 1959 to 1972, 23% of committers left suicide notes. Cohen and Fiedler (1974) pointed out that if those who
leave notes and those who do not are not comparable, then it is fallacious to generalize findings from notewriters to all who commit suicide.

One project which addressed this question is a study by Tuckman, et al. (1959). This study involved a comparison of the 24% of committers in their sample who left a suicide note with those committers in their sample who did not. The authors found no significant differences between these groups on age, race, sex, employment, marital status, physical condition, history of mental illness, place of suicide, reported causes or unusual circumstances preceding the suicide, medical care and supervision and history of previous attempts or threats. The only variable in which Tuckman et al. (1959) obtained significant differences is the method of suicide. The authors' general conclusion is that their findings reflect a lack of significant differences in the social, mental, or physical condition between persons leaving notes and those not doing so.

In a similar study, Cohen and Fiedler (1974) also found few characteristics to differentiate the two groups. The authors did find, however, that in their sample, writers of suicide notes were more likely to be white women, and that notewriters were underrepresented among married and widowed women (there were no such differences for men). The authors cautioned, however, that these differences may represent
relatively fixed regional or temporal differences, and suggested that follow-up studies should be undertaken to test the reliability of their findings. The authors also noted that at the very least, "the minds of male and female notewriters seem highly similar."

In sum, whether notewriters are representative of committers in general has yet to be decided. As Stengel (1949) wrote: "Whether the writers of suicide notes differ in their attitudes from those who leave no notes behind, it is impossible to say. Possibly they differ from the majority only in being good correspondents".

A second question of concern to researchers, is whether or not the notes are valid and credible sources of information. Tuckman, Kleiner and Lavell (1960) concluded from their research that much credence may be given to the reason for the suicidal behavior as stated in the suicide note. Tuckman et al. (1960) compared reasons offered in suicide notes with the reasons offered by informants, finding 90% agreement. Thus the authors concluded that a suicide note is a valid communication concerning the suicidal act.

Still, researchers voice concerns over the credibility of the suicide notes. For instance, Leenaars (1979) pointed out that even though an informant concurs with the reason stated in the note one can still question how much credence may be given the informant. When
unconscious processes figure in the suicidal act, these determinants may not be reflected in what the informants tell us or in the information gleaned from the suicide note. Further, Shneidman (1973) suggested that little credence may be given to any suicide note, by virtue of the fact that it was written during a period of psychological constriction. Shneidman (1980) later admitted that his viewpoint has a "touch of 'overkill' in it" and suggested that suicide notes, though "neither bountiful nor banal," are valuable mainly when used in conjunction with case histories.

The present author believes that Shneidman's criticisms are unduly harsh. It is the present author's contention that the suicide note offers a certain amount of valid information, if only because it represents an unsolicited source of information. As Leenaar's (1979) wrote, there is likely some "phenomenological validity" to the notes. In addition, the present author believes that the study of suicide notes represents only one avenue for understanding a very serious and troubling phenomenon. Although the information derived from the study of suicide notes may be of extreme value in its own right, it is likely much more illuminating when combined with knowledge garnered from other sources. The present author believes that further advancements in the understanding of suicide will best be made when all available methods of study are,
employed and combined, including empirical investigations of suicide notes.

**Methodological Approaches to the Study of Suicide Notes**

The first recorded study of suicide notes was completed by Brière de Boismont in 1856. His work involved a subjective analysis of 1328 notes according to the prevailing moralistic attitudes of the time. Unlike Boismont, researchers in the twentieth century tend to use a different methodology in their investigations. More commonly, an investigator develops a set of hypotheses concerning some aspect of suicide and then analyzes a set of suicide notes in search of data to defend his thesis. The obtained results are then cited as evidence supporting or refuting that researcher's theory.

Numerous researchers have employed this method to study suicide from many different angles. Included is the study of: emotional content (Morganthaler, 1945; Tuckman, Kleiner & Lavell, 1959; Wagner, 1960; and Chynoweth, 1977), verbal content (Darbonne, 1969), motivational content (Tuckman, Kleiner & Lavell, 1960; and Stephens, 1984) and logical reasoning (Neuringer, 1976; and Shneidman, 1981). Still other researchers employed theoretical-conceptual approaches (Jacobs, 1971; and Bjerg, 1967), and classification approaches (Capstick, 1960; and Darbonne, 1969) to the suicide notes.
Researchers also analyzed suicide notes in numerous other studies of suicide. Topics studied include single and multiple notewriters (Tuckman and Ziegler, 1968), notewriters in suicide pacts (Fishbain et al., 1984), the relationship of method of suicide to personality (Lester, 1971), suicide and age (Lester and Reeve, 1982), suicide and the young (Shaffer, 1974), suicide and the elderly (Lester and Hummel, 1980), and suicide and socioeconomic levels (Shneidman & Farberow, 1960).

In their classic book, Clues to Suicide (1957), Shneidman and Farberow presented a methodological advance in the study of suicide notes. Their method involved a comparison of 33 genuine suicide notes with a matched group of simulated notes written by non-suicidal individuals. The simulated notewriters were simply asked to "write the suicide note that they would leave if they were going to take their own lives" (Shneidman and Farberow, 1957).

The simulated notes are treated as control material for use in analyzing the genuine notes. The basic methodology is for the investigator first to tabulate the frequency of any theoretically relevant content in both sets of notes, and second, to determine whether these frequencies differ significantly between the matched sets of notes. If the investigator obtains significant differences, then in accord with the technique specified,
certain psychological traits or meaningful observations are associated with the genuine notewriter.

Researchers employ this basic approach to study writers of genuine and of simulated notes along various dimensions. Researchers have studied the emotional content of suicide notes (Shneidman and Farberow, 1957; Lester, 1971/1973; Tuckman and Ziegler, 1966; and Spiegel and Neuringer, 1963), the logical content of suicide notes (Shneidman and Farberow, 1957; Tripodes, 1976) and the verbal content of suicide notes (Osgood and Walker, 1959; and Gottschalk and Glasser, 1960). As a whole these studies have indicated that it is possible to distinguish between genuine and simulated notes. Further the genuine notes have the following characteristics: dichotomous logic, a greater amount of hostility and blame, more use of very specific names and instructions to the survivors, less evidence of thinking about how one is thinking, and more use of the various meanings of the word love (Shneidman, 1973).

One difficulty inherent in these studies is that the researchers themselves typically code and tabulate both sets of notes for the particular constructs or variables that they are searching for. To defend against possible experimenter bias, researchers have proposed two additional methodological advances.

The first innovation involves computer-based analyses of suicide notes. For instance, Ogilvie, Stone and
Shneidman (1969) utilized The General Inquirer Procedure with a dictionary of tag words, comparing the matched sets of notes. Other researchers employing computer-based methods include Henkin (1976) and Edelman & Renshaw (1982). The procedure in these experiments is to code and mark both sets of notes and to computer process them according to a program written by the researcher. In effect, the 'unbiased' computer scores the notes in place of the researcher. Collectively, researchers using computers to score the notes have found that the genuine notes contain more references to concrete things, persons, and places, more frequent use of the word love, less process of thought and decision, are more more narrowly focussed and typically involve a need to structure the world in static action.

The second methodological innovation is the logical-empirical procedure of Leenaars and Balance (1981). This method involves blind judges' endorsements of protocol sentences derived from theoretical formulations about suicide, as represented in the genuine and simulated notes.

The basic premise of this research is to treat the suicide notes as an archival source. This methodology incorporates recommendations by Balance (1973) and Bringman (1975) for historical investigations, in which the investigator subjects the notes to the scrutiny of control hypotheses. These control hypotheses are developed
according to Carnap's (1932) logical and empirical procedures for developing protocol sentences from abstract formulations, such as theories of suicide. In effect, this method may be used to test the 'predictive validity' of any theory of suicide, and thus, considerably augments the effectiveness of previous controls.

For instance, Leenaars and Balance (1981) applied this method to the major aspects of the personality theories of Ludwig Binswanger (1944/1958, 1963), Sigmund Freud (1917, 1923, 1930), and George Kelly (1955, 1965) which pertain to suicide. In their study, the authors developed 10 classes of content, or protocol sentences, for each theory of suicide. Three independent judges were then asked to try to verify whether each statement provided corresponded to or may be compared with the contents of the suicide notes. The judges selected were blind as to the purpose of the experiment, and naive as to the presence of both genuine and simulated notes.

In this study, Leenaars and Balance (1981) found that only the protocol sentences derived from Freud discriminated as a set in favor of the genuine notes. In a subsequent study, Leenaars and Balance (1984) developed 25 protocol sentences from Freud's theory of suicide, and utilized the same procedure as outlined above. The findings of this study are twofold. First, the authors replicated their previous finding in that comparisons between genuine
and simulated notes indicated that the protocol sentences discriminate significantly as a set in favor of the genuine notes. Second the authors noted the individual statements which they found significantly more frequently in the genuine notes. Those statements include: Loss and/or rejection, preoccupation with a lost person, ambivalence toward a lost person, identification with a lost person, communicating feelings of anger towards oneself but appearing to be angry toward someone else, turning back upon oneself murderous wishes or impulses, and seeing the act as a fulfillment of self-punishment. A frequency count of the judge's endorsement of these sentences, indicated that these statements occurred quite frequently, that is, at least 1/3 of the time in the genuine notes.

Leenaars and Balance (1984) also found a high frequency count (rater endorsement at least 1/3 of the time) occurring in both the real and simulated conditions for 4 additional protocol sentences. These sentences are: consciously choosing the time, means and/or opportunity to kill oneself; consciously planning to kill oneself although the act appears to be motivated by unconscious intentions; feelings and/or ideas of vengefulness and aggression toward another person; and experiencing a sense of guilt or criticism. Since a high frequency count existed for these sentences in both conditions, the authors fail to obtain significant differences. The authors suggested however,
that the data are still worth noting because they provide us with some pertinent information.

In effect, the findings of this study suggest that in attempting to describe the content of simulated and genuine suicide notes, one finds that individuals in both conditions very frequently describe their behavior as highly similar in some critical respects and significantly different in others (Leenaars and Balance, 1984). The authors reasoned that the similarities likely point to areas where people in general can more accurately imagine what it is like to honestly seek suicide. In contrast the differences are thought to reveal thoughts and ideas which are more idiosyncratic to people who actually commit suicide, and by extension likely are more difficult for others to understand.

Statement of the Problem

The present author believes that there are two problems with the research outlined above, specifically as involves the significance of content frequencies in the suicide notes. The first difficulty involves those instances when a protocol sentence was rated with a similar degree of frequency so that the authors failed to obtain a significant difference. As the authors indicated, the data are still important. Second, and perhaps more important, there is currently no method for determining when the
frequency of endorsement is significant, even in those cases when the ratings of a protocol statement occurred more frequently in a genuine than in a simulated note. For instance, Leenaars and Balance (1984) arbitrarily chose a cut-off point of at least 1/3 of the time. The difficulty, therefore, lies in the absence of available reference data, with which to determine when the protocol sentences occur frequently enough in the genuine or simulated notes, to be considered a statistically significant finding. The purpose of this thesis therefore, is to implement a methodology which addresses this problem.

The methodological innovation which the present author proposes is the development and use of control protocol sentences. Specifically this methodological innovation involves comparing blind judges' endorsements of protocol sentences derived from theoretical formulations about suicide and endorsements by the same judges of control protocol sentences which pertain to general personality functioning, as being represented in the same notes. In effect, the ratings of the control protocol sentences can be used as reference data with which to statistically infer the significance of the same rater's endorsement of protocol sentences derived from a theory of suicide. In that way, the arbitrary cutoff selected by Leenaars and Balance (1981) can be replaced with estimates of statistical significance.
In this study, the protocol sentences tested are those developed by Balance and Leenaars (1987) for Aaron Beck's theory of suicide. In brief, Beck's focus in the area of suicide involves the cognitive aspects of depression and its relationship to suicidal ideation and intent. In Beck's view, suicidal wishes and attempts are considered the ultimate expression of a desire to escape life. The depressed individual's cognitions are such that he perceives both his current situation and his future prospects as being full of pain, anguish, and failure. He seems unable to visualize any positive change in his life and feels his predicament to be hopeless. Influenced by many cognitive distortions, the suicidal person considers suicide to be a logical, rational course of action. Further, as the individual begins to hold death in higher regard than he holds life, the attraction to suicide increases. The more painful and hopeless he perceives his life to be, and the more insoluble he considers his problems to be, the stronger is his desire to end his life (Beck, 1979). (An extensive review of Beck's theory in the form of protocol sentences is offered in Appendix B.)

The theoretical formulations representing Beck's analysis and understanding of suicide was selected in this study because his theory focusses on the various cognitive distortions and illogical deductions that suicidal people formulate. Beck's theory centers on the suicidal
individual's tendency towards misperception, miscalculation, and illogical reasoning, which he believes leads towards a pessimistic and hopeless outlook on life and eventually to suicide. As such, this author believes that Beck's orientation is an appropriate perspective with which to study writers of suicide notes, since previous research on notewriters indicates that the presence of confused or bizarre logic and faulty reasoning (e.g. Tripodes, 1976).

An additional reason for choosing Beck's cognitive theory of suicide in this study involved the hope that it would reveal pertinent clues as to why individuals commit suicide. Beck has been at the forefront of research and theory into suicide and has admittedly sought those elusive clues. Beck (1979) writes;

"Therapists as well as friends and family members are often surprised by a patient's suicidal attempt because they are aware only of the factors that would (according to their perspective) favor his desire to continue living. Following his suicidal attempt they may say 'he seemed to be in good spirits' or 'he had everything to live for' or 'he was making real progress in therapy'. Such statements indicate that the therapist and the persons in the immediate social environment were either oblivious to the clues to suicidal wishes, or that the individual was adept at concealing his suicidal thoughts."

As this passage suggests, one hopes by using Beck's theoretical formulations in an analysis of suicide notes, that the hidden clues to suicide, will be found.
The control protocol sentences used in this study were derived from Henry Murray's (1938) need-trait system, Murray's Personology, which he outlined in Explorations in Personality (1938), represented an attempt to discover and study the basic structure of normal personality. He proposed that one of the main functions of personality was to reduce inner tension, and since the reduction of inner tension often revolves around the satisfaction of inner demands, the concept of "needs" and the motivational aspects of psychological life became a central focus of Murray's Personology. In short, needs were deemed necessary to account for observed behavior which reflected introspectively reportable inner tensions. Murray's formulations then, outline a diverse array of these needs covering a broad range of normal personality characteristics.

Douglas Jackson (1967) incorporated these trait dimensions developed by Murray and his coworkers at the Harvard Psychological Institute, into the scales of the Personality Research Form (PRF). This self-report inventory enables a multidimensional assessment of normal persons in a wide variety of settings. Bringmann, Balance, and Sandberg (1971) subsequently developed an interpretative guide for the 20 trait scales of the PRF. Their library of statements, statements that have been used and validated by Bringmann et al. (1971), is to be used as the source of
control protocol sentences. (An extensive review of all 20 scales in the form of protocol sentences is offered in appendix C.)

In conclusion, Murray's formulations represent a broad system designed to cover a wide range of personality characteristics, formulations that, as Bringmann et al. (1971) have demonstrated, may be used to assess personality characteristics with considerable precision. Accordingly, the present author believes that the protocol sentences derived from Murray's theory of personality can serve as a representation of personality theory in general. As suggested above, Murray's theory of personality is broad based, with variations of need activity changing as a result of inner and outer circumstances. As such, variable endorsement of the control protocol sentences is expected. The judges' ratings of these control protocol statements, then, may be used as a standard or reference against which to compare the endorsement values for the protocol sentences derived from Beck's formulations regarding suicide. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate this procedure.
Chapter II

METHOD

Judges

The judges employed in this study were six graduate students currently working on the Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario. Using graduate students as judges was considered advisable by the present author, taking into account moral and ethical concerns associated with asking an individual who is unfamiliar with material of this nature, to think about suicide and to work with suicide notes, as this study calls for.

Materials

The suicide notes studied in this project are those previously published by Shneidman and Farberow (1957). The total sample of notes is 66, of which 33 notes are genuine, and 33 are simulated. The genuine notes were obtained from the files of the office of the Coroner, Los Angeles County, while the simulated notes were created for experimental purposes. As noted earlier, the procedure that has been devised to offer a method of controlled study in the investigation of suicide notes, is the comparison of genuine notes with simulated notes.

The total sample therefore includes 33 pairs of notes. All notewriters were native-born Americans, male, caucasian, and Protestant. Further, the simulated and genuine notewriters were individually matched for age and
occupational level. (The data are reproduced in Appendix A.)

Additional materials used in this study include 20 control protocol sentences previously developed and validated as a library of feedback statements for the PRF (Bringmann et al., 1971). These statements were modified to be more appropriate to notes written by suicidal persons rather than to general descriptions of a person's traits. Specifically, the original library of statements was rewritten to reflect the past tense as well as third person masculine singular.

Additionally, 26 protocol sentences developed for Beck's formulations regarding suicide (Balance and Leenaars, 1987) were used. These protocol sentences were similarly modified to parallel the form of the control protocol statements. Further, both sets of statements were phrased in the form of declarative sentences.

Procedure

The procedure in this study involved asking the judges to rate each note according to the protocol sentences previously cited. The six raters were divided into 3 pairs of judges, and the complement of 46 protocol sentences was randomly divided into three sets. Hence, pairs of judges (each working separately) rated each of the 66 notes according to the 1/3 of the total number of protocol
sentences given to them. The protocol sentences were randomized, so that each set contained an approximately equal number formulations derived from Beck and from Murray. All judges were unaware of both the randomized procedures as well as the presence of both genuine and simulated notes.

The instruction to the judges were as follows:

Enclosed you will find a collection of suicide notes. Your task will be to verify whether the statements attached correspond or compare to the contents of the suicide notes. The statements are a classification of the possible contents of suicide notes. You are to determine whether the contents in the suicide notes are a particular or specific instance of that classification or not. Your comparison should be observable; however, the classification may be more abstract than the specific instances. Please indicate whether a classification appears present, there is some evidence of its presence, or it appears absent in a given note.
Chapter III

Results

A statistical analysis was conducted to assess differences between the endorsement values for Beck's statements regarding suicide and Murray's statements regarding normal personality traits. An issue which needed to be addressed however, was that although six judges were employed in this study, for any set of statements the study was based on two judges. That is, as indicated in the methods section, each pair of judges rated only a portion of the full complement of Beck and Murray statements; approximately 1/3 for each theorist. Presented in Table 1 there is a summary of the mean endorsement values for each set of Beck and Murray statements by judge and note type. Table 2 further presents a summary of the mean endorsement values for Beck's and Murray's formulation by note type only, the judges having been combined.

The problem involves determining whether another sample of judges would have arrived at the same results. The analysis of variance (anova) undertaken therefore, was a mixed model anova in which the judges were treated a a random variable (as if selected from a random sample of possible judges) while statement set and type of theory were treated as fixed variables.

Table 1 presents the data used in arriving at the computations and table 3 shows the anova results based
Table 1

Mean Endorsement Values for Individual Sets of Beck and Murray Statements by Note Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Beck</th>
<th>Murray</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J(A)</td>
<td>J(B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.233</td>
<td>1.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.893</td>
<td>1.743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.474</td>
<td>1.836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.352</td>
<td>1.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulated</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.833</td>
<td>1.749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.491</td>
<td>1.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Mean Endorsement Values for Complete Set of Beck and Murray Statements by Note Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Theory 1 Beck</th>
<th>Murray 1.155</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genuine</td>
<td>1.609</td>
<td>1.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulated</td>
<td>1.624</td>
<td>1.155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

Analysis of Variance of Beck vs. Murray Endorsement Ratings

(Genuine and Simulated Notes Combined)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>16.407*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge x Theory</td>
<td>.356</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.005

On this data, In this analysis a general linear model was derived in which the judges' mean endorsement values were used as the dependent measures. The variables employed in the model included tests for the variability of ratings assigned between pairs of judges and tests for the variability in judgements between sets of judges, since each set of judges received different portions of the Murray and Beck statements. No significant effects were obtained for either the pairs of judges or the set of statements, indicating that these two factors contributed only minimally to the variability in the judges endorsements. That is, the results could be expected to be the same irrespective of the statement set being rated or of the judge pair employed.
As such, an anova was conducted which involved comparing the endorsement values between the Beck statements (Mean=1.619) and the Murray sentences (Mean=1.171). As indicated in table 3, an F-ratio of 16.407 (d.f.=1,10 p<.005) was obtained. The results indicate that the collection of Beck statements received, on average, higher endorsement values as compared to Murray's set of statements. As indicated, the judge by theory interaction was used as the error term, rather than using the within cell error term (sentence by note) since that error term would not account for the variability in ratings due to judges. Differences in mean scores between judges were not of interest since this would not influence the results in comparisons between theories. Instead interest is focussed on the judge by theory interaction as the error term, since it is important to know that the theory effect overrides that interaction. This matter is explained in further detail by Cronbach, Gleser, Nanda, and Rajaratnam (1972). Further, one can also obtain a reliability coefficient based on the same F-ratio, as Cronbach et al (1972) explain. The reliability coefficient obtained was .720, indicating that the judges could, with adequate reliability, discriminate between the statements expressing the two theories.

The experimenter next conducted analyses to assess differences between the endorsement values of Beck's
statements and Murray's statements for the genuine and simulated notes separately. Analyses similar to the one mentioned above were undertaken, in which the theory effect was tested using the judge by theory interaction as the error term. Again the data used in this analysis are presented in table 1. Table 4 presents a summary of the anova for the genuine notes and Table 5 presents a similar summary for the simulated notes. As similar to the first analysis discussed above, and as indicated in tables 4 and 5, no significant judge pair or statement set differences were obtained. The F-ratio obtained for the genuine notes was 11.673 (d.f. = 1, 10 p < .01) and for the simulated notes was 22.762 (d.f. = 1, 10 p < .001). Hence for both the genuine notes and the simulated notes, Beck's formulations as a set, were found to have significantly higher mean endorsement values as compared to the endorsement values of the Murray statements.

Additional analyses were undertaken to evaluate differences in the mean endorsement values between individual Beck statements and the mean endorsement value of Murray's collection of statements. The analyses involved t-test comparisons, which were computed separately for each note type (genuine or simulated) and within each of the three judge pairs. This procedure was adopted since each pair of judges received different statements, and as such one cannot compare statements across different judge pairs.
### Table 4

**Analysis of Variance of Beck vs. Murray Scores (Genuine Notes)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td>11.673*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge x Theory</td>
<td>.441</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p(.01)

### Table 5

**Analysis of Variance of Beck vs. Murray Scores (Simulated Notes)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>.658</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.658</td>
<td>22.762*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge x Theory</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p(.001)
In the genuine notes, nine of Beck statements received mean scores which were significantly higher than the mean for the Murray statements. Table six presents a list of the statements and table 7 presents the means for each statement by note-type, the \( t \)-values and the associated levels of significance. Those statements which were rated by the first pair of judges and which achieved significance were: magnification and minimization \((t=5.457, \text{d.f.}=13.2, p<.001)\), suffering intolerable \((t=3.933, \text{d.f.}=14, p<.005)\) and negative expectations \((t=3.515, \text{d.f.}=14, p<.005)\). Those statements which were rated by the second set of judges and which achieved significance were: overgeneralization \((t=2.895, \text{d.f.}=14, p<.02)\), ideas of deprivation \((t=2.227, \text{d.f.}=14, p<.05)\) and self-criticism and self-blame \((t=5.071, \text{d.f.}=14, p<.001)\). Finally those statements rated by the third pair of judges and which achieved significance were: escape and suicidal wishes \((t=3.469, \text{d.f.}=12, p<.01)\) hopelessness \((t=2.727, \text{d.f.}=12, p<.05)\), and non-contemplation of accuracy \((t=4.385, \text{d.f.}=9.8, p<.005)\).

Within the simulated notes, seven Beck statements received significantly higher mean endorsement values as compared to the Murray standards. Table 8 presents a list of the statements and Table 9 indicates the associated mean values, \( t \)-test values and the estimated probabilities. Those statements rated by the first pair of judges and
Table 6

Beck Statements Achieving Higher Mean Endorsement Values Relative to the Murray Mean (Genuine Notes)

1. **Magnification and Minimization.** This person manifested errors in evaluation, which were so gross as to constitute distortions. These processes were manifested by underestimation of his performance, achievement, or ability, and a magnification of the magnitude of his problems and tasks. Other examples may have been the exaggeration of the intensity or significance of a traumatic event.

2. **Suffering Intolerable.** This person could not tolerate a continuation of his suffering.

3. **Negative Expectations.** This individual manifested hopelessness defined operationally in terms of negative expectations. This appeared as a stronger indication of suicidal intent than depression.

4. **Overgeneralization.** This individual drew a general conclusion about his ability, performance, or worth on the basis of a single incident.

5. **Ideas of Deprivation.** This person demonstrated thoughts of being alone, unwanted, unloved and perhaps materially deprived—often in the face of overt demonstrations of friendship and affection and evident material well being.

Table 6 Continues
Table 6 Cont'd

Beck Statements Achieving Higher Mean Endorsement Values

Relative to the Murray Mean (Genuine Notes)

6. **Self-Criticism and Self-Blame.** This person demonstrated reproaches leveled against himself for his perceived shortcomings with expressions of regret or guilt, which generally had no logical basis.

7. **Escape and Suicidal Wishes.** This individual demonstrated thoughts about escaping the problems of life. The desire to escape seemed related to viewing himself as at an impasse. On the one hand he saw himself as incurable, incompetent, and helpless. On the other hand, he saw his task as ponderous and formidable. His response was a wish to withdraw from the unsolvable problem.

8. **Hopelessness.** This individual regarded suicide as the only possible solution for his "desperate" and "hopeless" situation.

9. **Non-Contemplation of Accuracy.** This individual did not contemplate the possibility that his reasoning could be inaccurate.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magnification &amp; Minimization</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.315</td>
<td>1.091</td>
<td>5.457</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffering</td>
<td>Intolerable</td>
<td>1.530</td>
<td>1.091</td>
<td>3.933</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.465</td>
<td>1.091</td>
<td>3.515</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-generalization</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.535</td>
<td>1.206</td>
<td>2.895</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas of</td>
<td>Deprivation</td>
<td>1.470</td>
<td>1.206</td>
<td>2.227</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Criticism &amp; Self Blame</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.805</td>
<td>1.206</td>
<td>5.071</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape and</td>
<td>Suicidal wishes</td>
<td>2.335</td>
<td>1.312</td>
<td>3.469</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.120</td>
<td>1.312</td>
<td>2.727</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-contemplation of accuracy</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.880</td>
<td>1.312</td>
<td>4.385</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mean values for Murray statements vary according to the set of statements given to each of the three pairs of judges.
Table 8:

Beck Statements Achieving Higher Mean Endorsement Values Relative to the Murray Mean (Simulated Notes)

1. **Magnification and Minimization.** This person manifested errors in evaluation, which were so gross as to constitute distortion. These processes were manifested by underestimation of his performance, achievement, or ability, and a magnification of the magnitude of his problems and tasks. Other examples may have been the exaggeration of the intensity or significance of a traumatic event.

2. **Negative Expectations.** This individual manifested hopelessness defined operationally in terms of negative expectations. This appeared as a stronger indication of suicidal intent than depression.

3. **Negative Bias.** This individual systematically misconstrued experiences in a negative way and, without objective bases, anticipated a negative outcome to any attempts to attain major objectives and goals.

4. **Perseveration.** Despite the multiplicity and complexity of life situations, this individual was prone to interpret a wide range of experiences in terms of a few stereotyped ideas. These idiosyncratic cognitions tended to occur repetitively in his ruminations and associations.

5. **Overgeneralization.** This individual drew a general conclusion about his ability, performance, or worth on the basis of a single incident.

6. **Escape and Suicidal Wishes.** This individual demonstrated thoughts about escaping the problems of life. The desire to escape seemed related to viewing himself as at an impasse. On the one hand he saw himself as incurable, incompetent, and helpless. On the other hand, he saw his task as ponderous and formidable. His response was a wish to withdraw from the unsolvable problem.

7. **Hopelessness.** This individual regarded suicide as the only possible solution for his "desperate" and "hopeless" situation.
Table 9
Mean values and t-test statistics for Beck Statements
Receiving Significantly Higher Mean Endorsement Values
Relative to Murray Statements (Simulated Notes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Beck</th>
<th>Murray*</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magnification &amp; Minimization</td>
<td>1.285</td>
<td>1.028</td>
<td>8.101</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Expectations</td>
<td>1.760</td>
<td>1.028</td>
<td>47.947</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Bias</td>
<td>1.135</td>
<td>1.028</td>
<td>3.375</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseveration</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>1.028</td>
<td>2.430</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-generalization</td>
<td>1.345</td>
<td>1.120</td>
<td>5.988</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape and Suicidal wishes</td>
<td>2.535</td>
<td>1.302</td>
<td>4.533</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td>2.425</td>
<td>1.302</td>
<td>4.128</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mean values for Murray statements vary according to the sets of statements given to each of the three pairs of judges.
achieving significance were: magnification and minimization ($t=8.101$, d.f.=14 $p<.001$), negative expectations ($t=23.183$, d.f.=14 $p<.001$), negative bias ($t=3.375$, d.f.=14 $p<.01$) and perseveration ($t=2.430$, d.f.=14 $p<.05$). One statement rated by the second set of judges and which achieved significance was overgeneralization ($t=2.394$, d.f.=14 $p<.05$). Finally the sentences rated by the third pair of judges and which achieved significance were: escape and suicidal wishes ($t=10.642$, d.f.=11.3 $p<.001$) and hopelessness ($t=4.128$, d.f.=12 $p<.001$).

Finally, a series of analyses was undertaken to assess the degree to which either Beck's theory of suicide or Murray's personality statements received higher ratings within either the genuine or the simulated notes. This type of analysis is in essence, more traditional, in which one determines whether either of the theories discriminated in favor of the genuine or the simulated notes. A general linear model was determined in which the judges' ratings of the genuine and simulated notes were used as the dependent measures. Tests of effects were conducted for the following variables employed in the model: genuine-simulated notes, variability amongst pairs of judges, and variability amongst sets of statements. No significant results were obtained, indicating that as a set, neither the statements reflecting Beck's formulations nor the sentences derived
from Murray broad personality theory discriminated in favor of the genuine or simulated notes.

In subsequent analyses, the matched notepairs were used to generate difference scores between the genuine and the simulated notes. For each set of statements, one way analyses of variance were performed using the genuine minus simulated difference scores as the dependent measure. This analysis was conducted for both the Murray statements and the Beck sentences. For the Murray sentences, the resulting F-ratio was not found to be significant, suggesting only slight and insignificant variability in the ratings of the individual Murray statements by type of note. Hence the Murray Statements do not differ in their ability to discriminate genuine from simulated notes and therefore it does not appear worthwhile to identify statements which are better at doing this.

For each set of Beck statements, however, significant differences were obtained. For the first set of statements $F=6.825$ (d.f. = $8.512$, $p<.001$), for the second set of statements $F=5.340$ (d.f. = $7.480$, $p<.001$) and for the third set of statements $F=2.973$ (d.f. = $8.480$, $p<.005$). These results suggest that within each set of Beck statements, there exists variability with regards to the extent to which individual sentences discriminate in favor of the genuine or simulated notes; thus it appears worthwhile to identify those statements. Hence, individual $t$-tests were
performed to assess whether individual Beck statements were rated significantly more often in favor of the genuine or simulated notes. The error term employed in each \( t \)-test was calculated according to the interaction of the variability of judges ratings by type of note, so as to avoid capitalizing on the variability between judges. Two statements were found to have significantly higher mean endorsement values in the genuine as compared to the simulated notes. Table 10 presents a list of those statements. The statements were: Ideas of Deprivation, \( (t=2.410, \text{d.f.}=33, p(.05) ) \) and Non Contemplation of Accuracy \( (t=4.054, \text{d.f.}=33, p(.01) ) \).

Five statements were found to have significantly higher mean endorsement values in the simulated as compared to the genuine notes. Those statements are listed in Table 11. The \( t \)-values degrees of freedom and probabilities of those statements were as follows: suffering intolerable \( (t=-3.71, \text{d.f.}=33 p(.01) ) \), death preferable \( (t=-4.448, \text{d.f.}=33 p(.01) ) \), hopelessness as a bridge to suicide intent \( (t=-2.709, \text{d.f.}=33 p(.02) ) \), selective abstraction, \( (t=-5.017, \text{d.f.}=33 p(.01) ) \), and hopelessness \( (t=-2.544, \text{d.f.}=33, p(.05) ) \).
Table 10

Beck Statements Receiving Higher Mean Endorsement Values in the Genuine vs. the Simulated Notes

1. **Ideas of Deprivation.** This person demonstrated thoughts of being alone, unwanted, unloved and often materially deprived often in the face of overt demonstrations of friendship, love and material well being.

2. **Non-Contemplation of Accuracy.** This individual did not contemplate the possibility that his reasoning could be inaccurate.

Table 11

Beck Statements Receiving Higher Mean Endorsement Values in the Simulated vs. the Genuine Notes

1. **Suffering Intolerable.** This person could not tolerate a continuation of his suffering.

2. **Death Preferable.** This person believed that death was more desirable than life.

3. **Hopelessness as a Bridge to Suicide Intent.** This individual expressed hopelessness which accounted for the relationship between depression and his suicidal intent.

4. **Selective Abstraction.** This individual focussed on details taken out of context, ignored other more salient features of the situation, and conceptualized the whole experience on the basis of this element.

5. **Hopelessness.** This individual regarded suicide as the only possible solution for his "desperate" and "hopeless" situation.
Chapter IV

DISCUSSION

The results of this study support the application of this new method for empirically analyzing the content of suicide notes. Moreover, this methodological innovation in the study of suicide notes represents a marked advance over previous approaches. There appear to be three distinct advantages to employing, in this case, a standard or reference point other than the simulated notes as was used in previous research (Leenaars et al., 1981).

First, an important and distinctive advantage of this method is that it allows for the application of inferential statistics. Specifically, this method offers a means by which probability statistics may be assigned to specific findings of the contents in suicide notes. By employing a standard or reference other than the simulated notes, the question of how highly a protocol sentence (or set of sentences) needs to be verified in the genuine notes in order to be considered important can at least be conditionally addressed. That is, one can determine, relative to the degree of endorsement of the Murray statements, whether an individual statement or a set of statements was endorsed highly enough to be considered both statistically significant and worthy of comment and analysis. Further the elimination of the use of arbitrary cut-off points, allows the researcher to assign probability
statistics to the results of the genuine and simulated notes separately. This may be of particular relevance for the clinician or suicide prevention counsellor, as typically it is only the findings from the genuine notes which are of concern to these mental health care persons.

Second, this method eliminates the use of an arbitrary cut-off point such as that used by Leenaars et al (1981). In that study a statement (or set of statements) was considered to be endorsed 'significantly', if the judges endorsement frequency exceeded a predetermined level of "at least 1/3 of the time". This criterion may be too insensitive, and as indicated earlier, is at risk of excluding protocol sentences or information which may well be important to the clinician or crisis intervention worker. For instance, as Leenaars et al (1984) observed, some protocol sentences in Freud's theory of suicide, were found to have approximately equal endorsement frequencies in both the genuine and simulated notes and had both surpassed the preestablished criterion level. Hence tests for the significance of the difference in endorsement frequencies were not found to be significant. The authors indicated, however, the possible relevance or importance of those sentences nonetheless. The implementation of this method eliminates the occurrence of such findings in that the genuine and simulated notes can now be treated.
independently of each other, thereby including all important and statistically significant information.

Finally, in the previous method, no allowance could be made toward controlling for the varying endorsement tendencies of the judges. More specifically, one could not adequately account for the judges' biases in applying the rules when formulating their rating decisions. In this method, however, one can capitalize on the fact that the judges were asked to rate sentences pertaining to both Murray's and Beck's classification. That is, in determining the difference in endorsement values between the Beck and Murray statements, each judge's ratings may be referenced in terms of his own endorsement tendencies.

The obtained reliability coefficient was .720, indicating adequate agreement amongst judges ratings. Moreover the calculation of this statistic reflects the degree to which the judges could reliably discriminate between the statements of each theory, while controlling for the judge's individual endorsement tendencies. (Further, this was true irrespective of the set of statements rated or the judge pair used, indicating full and appropriate randomization of the statement sets.)

The results indicate general support for Beck's theory of suicide, in that the complete collection of Beck statements received, on average, higher endorsement values as compared to the complete set of Murray statements. This
was true for the analyses of the genuine and simulated notes separately and combined. Hence, within the context of this study, Beck's formulations, as a collection, appear to be more descriptive of suicide notewriters (whether genuine or simulated notes) than do Murray's statements. This result is obvious and was expected, since it is reasonable to assume that genuine (or simulated) notewriters would be accorded unique or different characteristics as compared to normal personality functioning. Following Carnap's View (1932), it is the individual statements which may be considered as most important. Within the genuine notes, nine Beck statements achieved significantly higher mean endorsement values relative to the mean endorsement value of Murray's statements. Given Beck's cognitive orientation, these sentences collectively, indicate that the genuine notewriter is plagued by faulty reasoning and fallacious logic. It is the type of reasoning which Shneidman (1985) refers to as being catalogical, that is, destructive "not only in the sense that they abrogate the rules for logical and semantic clarity, but they also destroy the logician who thinks them".

A review of those individual Beck sentences suggests the following description of the genuine notewriter. He is apt to commit gross errors in evaluation, such that he underestimates positive attributes, achievements, or abilities and overestimates negative circumstances,
characteristics or problems (Magnification and Minimization). Further these evaluations may be formulated on the basis of a single incident (Overgeneralization). These two findings are consistent with the previous literature on suicide notes, in which the genuine notewriter has displayed more evidence of dichotomous thinking (Neuringer, 1976) and is described as being more narrowly focussed (Edelman and Renshaw, 1982).

Interpersonally, the genuine notewriter indicated that he felt alone, unwanted and unloved, although to an objective observer, obvious expressions of friendship and affection were evident (Ideas of Deprivation). Further, given his propensity to appraise himself in a negative context, to evaluate his situation in an invalidiating manner, and to continually expect aversive conditions (Negative Expectations), the genuine notewriter additionally incorporated self-critical and self-blaming behaviors, in which he condemned himself for his perceived shortcomings (Self-Criticism and Self-Blame). At some point, the perceived suffering becomes intolerable (Intolerable Suffering). It is this "intolerable emotion, unendurable pain, unacceptable anguish" (Shneidman, 1985) which one may speculate leads to the suicide. As Beck (1979) notes, "their inner, mental or emotional distress is intolerable; they see no way out of their problematic situations and are 'tired of fighting'".
Finally, the genuine notewriter, perceiving himself as incurable, incompetent and helpless, begins to regard suicide as the only possible solution for his situation (Escape and Suicidal Wishes, Hopelessness). In the end, sometimes too late, we can say that he did not contemplate the possibility that his reasoning was inaccurate (Non-Contemplation of Accuracy). Perhaps, locked in by his arbitrary conclusions, and mired in his feelings of hopelessness, it does not occur to him to question his commitment to suicide.

This description has incorporated all of the significant findings from the genuine notewriters' notes and the order of presentation is in keeping with Beck's theoretical position and description of suicide. The picture offered by the writers of the simulated notes was as follows; the simulated notewriter tended to incorporate material reflecting a exaggeration of problems and a minimization of positive attributes or achievements (Magnification and Minimization), again perhaps evaluated on the basis of one incident (Overgeneralization). He demonstrated a systematic bias towards misconstruing experiences in a negative way (Negative Bias) and towards continually expecting a negative outcome (Negative Expectations). He further was found to repeat these idiosyncratic cognitions in his ruminations and associations (Perseveration). Finally, finding his life at
an impasse, his problems unsolvable, and himself helpless and incurable. (Escape and Suicidal Wishes) he turns to suicide as the only way out (Hopelessness).

The reader will doubtless have noted that the two scenarios bear a strong resemblance to one another and that similar protocol sentences appear within each description. At this point only a general explanation for this finding is appropriate. It is likely the case, that the similarities point to features of suicide which are fairly obvious and easily recognizable; features that people writing simulated notes can readily empathize with and understand. Offering explanations based on indirect comparisons is tempting, but not appropriate at this time. It is best to avoid this error of inference since it is statistically incorrect to directly compare individual sentences tested in separate analyses. For instance, the finding that the sentence Suffering Intolerable reached significance within the genuine notes (as compared to the Murray standard) but did not reach significance within the simulated notes, does not necessarily imply significantly different endorsement ratings between genuine and simulated notes. In fact in the latter case, the sentence approached significance in the simulated notes but failed to achieve significance owing to heterogeneity of variance. Further, in a test directly comparing the endorsement values for this sentence between genuine and simulated notes, it was
found to discriminate in favor of the simulated notes. In short, to make such inferences would be both erroneous and misleading. Hence, direct comparisons of the endorsement values for the set of sentences and the individual sentences between genuine and simulated notes were undertaken.

The results indicate that Beck's complete set of statements do not discriminate in favor of the genuine or simulated notes. This failure to obtain set differences appears to be the norm, as previous research investigating the theories of suicide of Binswanger and Kelly (Leenaars et al., 1981) and Shneidman (Leenaars, Balance, Wenckstern and Rudzinski, 1984) have yielded similar results. Only Freud's collection of protocol statements, as a set, has successfully discriminated in favor of the genuine notes (Leenaars, 1981). As compared to these theorists, Freud's theoretical orientation differs in that he deals with fairly latent or non-obvious aspects of suicide. Hence, the success with which Freud's theory of suicide discriminates in favor of the genuine notes is likely a function of his focussing on latent, hidden or unconscious aspects, features which are not readily imaginable to the simulated notewriter and therefore less often included in their notes. This appears less true of Beck's statements, or of the statements derived from the other theorists studied to date.
The results indicate that five individual Beck statements discriminated in favor of the simulated notes as compared to the genuine notes. Those sentences reflect the person as not being able to tolerate a continuation of his suffering (Suffering Intolerable), the person's believing death to be more desirable than life (Death Preferable), the individual's expressing hopelessness which accounted for the relationship between depression and his suicidal intent (Hopelessness as a Bridge to Suicide Intent), the individual's considering suicide as the only solution to his "desperate" situation (Hopelessness), the individual's focussing on details taken out of context, ignoring more salient features of the situation, and conceptualizing the whole experience on the basis of this element (Selective Abstraction).

It is important to note that finding statements verified more strongly in the simulated notes does not indicate that these statements are not true of genuine notewriters. Instead, it is more likely that these features play a major role in the popular conceptualization of suicide or are aspects with which it is easy to empathize. For instance based on these findings, one would not assert that genuinely suicidal people are not suffering considerable psychological pain or not feeling almost completely hopeless. Indeed those aspects are true of the genuine notewriter as evidenced in the earlier analyses.
However, these ideas may play a salient role in popular stereotypes of suicide, thereby accounting for their being more highly endorsed in the simulated notes. In fact, two of the five statements endorsed significantly more highly in the simulated notes were also significantly present in the genuine notes (when compared to the Murray standard).

The results indicate that two Beck sentences discriminated in favor of the genuine notes as directly compared to the simulated notes. Those sentences reflect themes of feeling isolated, alone and unloved, even in the face of overt demonstrations of love and friendship (Ideas of deprivation) and not contemplating the possibility that his reasoning was inaccurate (Non-contemplation of Accuracy). Both findings suggest areas where the simulated notewriter, and in all likelihood, the average person, has difficulties in genuinely imagining the cognitive and emotional state of the truly suicidal person.

Feelings of loneliness and alienation are ones which have similarly been noticed in studies of suicide notes. For instance, Edelman and Renshaw (1982), in investigating the verbal behaviors of the suicidal person (using the notes they left behind) found that the genuine notewriter indicated a pervasive feeling of being alienated from the world. Shneidman (1985) considers this an important factor in suicide. He writes:

"Closely related to hopelessness/helplessness, is
the overpowering feeling of loneliness. To be alone in the world is an existential truth, but to feel alone in the universe can be a totally unnerving experience. Perhaps it is the unnerving quality of such thoughts which makes them a difficult subject for empathy.

Statements reflecting distorted thinking and fallacious logic would appear to be well captured and imagined by the simulated notewriter, with one exception. For the genuine notewriters the category of not contemplating the accuracy of one's thinking was more highly endorsed in the genuine notes relative to the simulated notes. The implication of this finding perhaps reflects the cognitive orientation of the simulated notewriter in that the idea that his logic was or might be, erroneous was obvious to him, something which can not be said of the genuine notewriter. It is as if the simulated notewriter knows or suspects that he is illogocal; where as the genuine notewriter less frequently can see the fault in his reasoning. The advice which seems warranted here is not to take the irrational beliefs for granted but rather to confront and deal with them. As Beck (1979) writes:

"The particular therapeutic strategy used in dealing with the patient's hopelessness is based on the premise that he is locked in by arbitrary conclusions. It does not occur to him to question
these beliefs. Even when they are questioned by the therapist, they appear reasonable to him. However by engaging his interests in exploring his fixed notions, we can unlock this closed system.

In sum, the author believes that the findings from the genuine notes are important and at least worthy of concern. From my own experience as a volunteer counsellor at a suicide prevention center, and that of colleagues, these features of genuine notewriters have often been central to counselling suicidal people. Further, in light of the findings from this study, the author believes that in dealing with suicidal people, special attention should be paid to the individual's feelings of loneliness and deprivation and his/her inadequate contemplation of the accuracy of their thinking. Often, counselling suicidal individuals involves stepping into their world, as they experience it. The findings of this study suggest that, given this premise, these two facets of the suicidal person may be of particular importance although perhaps the most difficult for the helper to phenomenologically experience. This suggestion is offered bearing in mind that even genuinely suicidal people may evidence neither of these characteristics as many individual genuine notes could serve to illustrate.

In conclusion, this new method of analyzing genuine suicide notes has proven to be of great value. Whereas the
previous method of analyzing genuine suicide notes (using the simulated notes as control material), posed major problems for generalizability, this new method of using control protocol sentences can be applied to any archive of suicide notes. Hence generalizability of results (across different samples of genuine notes) can more easily be assessed. Further, to the extent that this method controls for the endorsement tendencies of judges, this will allow for comparisons across groups of judges in different studies.

Thus, this new method of analyzing suicide notes opens up the door to a great many future research projects. An initial pilot project could involve selecting out a smaller set of Murray statements, since using an entire set of Murray statements virtually forces one to use several groups of judges which greatly complicates the statistical analyses, and to some degree the interpretation of results. This reduced set could be chosen to closely approximate the mean of the larger sample and can be used in a similar fashion to allow for individual judges and groups of judges to be calibrated against a common Murray standard. Following this, other theories of suicide (as well as the previous theories) may be tested using the method outlined above. Moreover the results of these separate, or combined studies can be compared to one another thereby testing
relative success or predictive validity of each of the theorists.

Of perhaps greater significance is the applicability of the 'control protocol-sentences' method to any adequate archive of suicide notes. This readily offers the possibility of cooperative studies of suicide throughout the life span and across sex and other demographic variables.
APPENDIX A

SUICIDE NOTES
1. To the Police. No note-one was written before this. Los Angeles Police already have a record of one attempt. Notify- Anne M. Jones, 100 Main Street., Los Angeles, tel. BA 00000. I live at 100 Spring St., Los Angeles. I work at Ford, 100 Broadway. That is all. I can't find my place in life. J. William Smith

2. Dear Mom, In the last week a number of occurrances have forced me into the position where I feel my life is not worth continuing. Friday I lost the job I have held for the past seven years. When I told my wife she packed her bags and left me. For six years she has been living with me, not for me but for my money. Mom please take care of Mary for me. I'm leaving and I don't want Betty to have her.

I have nothing left to live for so I'm just checking out.

I love you Mom, Bill

3. I hope this is what you wanted.

4. Dear, please forgive me for leaving you with all the responsibilities that this is certain to bring you. If there is anything of me that can be used in any medical or scientific way please don't refuse to let them as my last request. I am very proud of our son, and his high potential in his chosen field for which he has real talent. Bye for the last time, and never forget that you were the best thing that ever happened to me. Have my brother help you, I know he will want to very much.

5. Dearest Mary. This is to say goodbye. I have not told you because I did not want you to worry, but I have been feeling bad for 2 years, with my heart. I knew that if I went to a doctor I would lose my job. I think this is the best for all concerned. I am in the car in the garage. Call the police but please don't come out there. I love you very much darling.

Goodbye, Bill

6. I am tired of living so I decided to end it all, hope this will not distress anybody.
7. Dear Mary. I regret that things have reached such a state that this is the only way out for me and my family. I apologize for the trouble I've caused.

8. This is the last note I shall ever write. No one should feel bad about my going as I am not worth it. I don't want to go but there is nothing else to do. My Love kept after me until I lost control and struck at the only one I ever loved. The only thing that meant anything to me. Then I got tight. When I struck at her something snapped inside my head. I could feel it. I didn't want to hurt her ever. She is Mary Jones of 100 Main St. Los Angeles. Her aunt's phone number is BA 00000. She lives close by. Please get in touch with them at once. She kepted after me until this is all I can do. I must.

My last request is not to be put 6 ft. under but burned and my ashes scattered over the mountains. Please don't let my brother know why I died. To her it must be an accident. Mary is the most wonderful person on earth. I just wasn't the right one for her. It is not her fault I fell so madly in Love with her.

I have never been much good. I have only hurt everyone.

Well at least I have loved. I loved her and her two girls more than words could ever tell. They were like my own girls to me.

Well, that's it.

John W. Smith

Get in touch with Mary Jones at once. Call BA 00000. Tell Mrs. Brown. She will see Mary. Thank you.

John William Smith

9. Dearest: Not being of sound mind I have decided to leave this world by electrocuting myself.

10. Honey I got you into this thing and it was no fault of yours—so I am taking the only way out and I leave everything which has all been acquired since we were married to you my darling wife—Mary Smith—and God Bless You Darling. Forgive me—goodbye dear. You trusted me and I thought I was doing everything for the best but I used poor judgement and poor management on my part and bit off more than I could chew but didn't know it at the time I did it. Sell
everything before winter sets in— I leave everything of value of any kind or nature including real estate— home— and all to my darling wife. Tell my mothersister I said God bless them all and forgive me— goodbye darling and God bless you all.

Your loving husband always, William J. Smith

11. Dear Mary, The reason for my despondency is that you'd prefer the company of almost anyone to mine. 2. You told me you had nothing to look forward to on week ends. You told me you preferred living alone. This led to more sedatives. I have lost the love of my two children. You blamed me for your vaginal bleeding. Your first husband was denied normal sexual intercourse because you said it hurt. I received the same accuse. You said it hurt even out of wedlock. This you can't help. But affection would have been harmless. I had little of that. But gaiety you saved for strangers, but even so I loved you. My salary wasn't enough for a large family, with the car upkeep. I was happy regardless. So were you between moods also. You are free now to frequent the places where they drink and indulge in loose talk. Please refrain from giving Betty sips of beer, after all she is only 12. Make her love you some other way. Soon she'll dominate you and one things leads to another. You don't want another child where your boy is. Your love for me would have endured if it had been the real thing.

Dr. Jones did all he could for my internal trouble. When we quarrel over other and younger men it was silly but you would have been hurt too. It's O.K. to be friendly but not hilarious. Nembutal has a tendency to make you tolerant rather than jealous. It headed off many a quarrel because its quieting to the nerves. As you know I took them for sleep and spastic colon at nite; also migraine headache. Well, I've loved you through 3 years of quarreling, adjusting the sex angle the way you said it pleased you. Your word for it was "ecstasy". Farewell and good fortune. I hope you find someone who doesn't "hurt" you as you said 3 of us did. All the love I have.

Bill

Notify my kin by mail. Call Georgia St. Hosp. Ambulance.

12. Dear Mary: I am sorry to cause you a lot of trouble and grife but I think this is best for all of us.

Dad
13. Dear Mary. I don't know why I am doing this unless my reasoning has gone all to pot. Something must have slipped.

Bill

14. My Dearest Wife: I cannot endure this situation any longer. I cannot believe I have been so bad a husband as to merit this. Something is certainly wrong. I honestly don't know what it is.

Whatever you may be searching for I hope with all my heart you find. Please be good to little Betty, our daughter, I love her so.

I am talking over this cyanide deal to myself. God knows what I'll do. I have it here. Possibly 20 grains–5 more than is necessary. I still love you. Be good to Betty Please.

15. Dear Mary. You have been the best wife a man could want and I still love you after fifteen years. Don't think to badly of me for taking this way out but I can't take much more pain and sickness alos I may get to much pain or so weak that I can't go this easy way. With all my love forever–

Bill

16. Goodbye dear wife. I cannot stand the suffering any longer. I am doing this by my own free will. You will be well taken care of.

Love and goodbye

17. My Darling: I'm sorry to leave you this way, but it looks like the only way out for me. Things have become so uncertain and unbearable, that I believe it will be better this way. Have the kids remember me, and don't be grieved because I took this way out. Never forget that I love you with all my heart and soul.

Bill

18. Dear Mother. I just cannot take it anymore this is no way out but this has me down. I Joseph William Smith give ever thing to Henry Jones my car and whatever I have.

Joseph Smith
19. This is the end. I've had enough. Can't take anymore.

20. Dear Mother and Mary, I am sorry to tell you this but I told you that I was drinking again. I won't lie about it. Because I quit for 5 weeks and never taken a drink. But Jo came home two nights after she got off from work and she would stay with me. But ever since she came up she was drunk and I would put her to bed. And on the night of 12 of March she came drunk and when I went to work I left her in my bed and when she got up that was on Wed. She went home and she told me. But she didn't go home, and I give her money before I went that morning. But she go to the tavern and she got drunk and she got in a fight. I don't no who with, but it was on the street and she either fell or got nook down and she got a black and blue place on her hip big as a teacup. I asked her how she got that but she said she done it on the ice box and she said it was like that and I no difference. The one that told me didn't no Jo was my wife. He seen it and told her she could do better then that. He said she was to drunk. I saw this and this made me mad and I did start drinking because she told me that she love me and I was so nice to give her money. I do love her and she love me. But I can't stand for her to drink like she does and do the way she do. Jo was up at my house Sun March 31, and she went home about 4 o'clock to go to work and I tryed to get strating up. But she won't. If you can do anything with her I wish you would. Because I love her so much and she is killing herself. I wouldn't write you this if she hadn't told you I had started to drink again. I told her Sun. I would help her and I will if she will be half way write with me.

21. Dearest darling I want you to know that you are the only one in my life I love you so much I could do without you please forgive me I drove myself sick. Honey please believe me I love you again and the baby honey don't be mean with me please I have lived fifty years since I met you. I love you—I love you. Dearest darling I love you I love you. Please don't discriminat me darling I know that I will die dont be mean with me please I love you more than you will ever know darling please an honey Tom I know don't tell Tom why his daddy said good by honey. Can't stand it any more. Darling I love you. Darling I love you.
22. I am sorry Mary But I just can't stand life any longer
William Smith

23. To Mary Jones. Please take care of my bills. Tell Tom I made enough money for him. He can take care of these small bills. Mary, I love Betty and I can't stand being without her. She's something I spoiled myself.
Love, Bill
Mary take this pen as Helen gave it to me when I went to the army.

24. Dear Mary. Although in the past you may have thought the idea of suicide had never entered my mind, I will tell you now that it has. I have given every other way my utmost but this seems to be the only solution.
No doubt you remember times in the past when I have said, "I am worth a lot more dead than alive". Well, I wasn't just kidding—My insurance will leave you well provided for and you now can have all those things I could never give you—you see, I know now that I can never hope to really make a success of life and I see no use to continue and drag you down with me, although the years we have been together have been the happiest of my life, I want it to stop here. I want you to marry again as soon as possible and the next time choose someone who can make it. I love you deeply.

Bill

25. Dear Mary. I'm sorry for all the trouble I've caused you. I guess I can't say any more. I love you forever and give Tom my love. I guess I've disgraced myself and John I hope it doesn't reflect on you.

26. Darling: It's been great but I just can't go on for reasons you may know but I can't explain. There's enough insurance for all of you. Be happy and all my love always to you and our three.
Remember me as your adoring

Bill

27. Mary Darling. It's all my fault. I've thought this over a million times and this seems to be the only way I
can settle all the trouble I have caused you and
others. This is only a sample of how sorry I am. This
should cancel all.

Bill

28. Dear Mary. I can go on no longer so will take the easy
way out. I've taken care of everything. Sorry

Bill

29. I'm tired. There must be something fine for you. Love.

Bill

30. Darling: All of my life I have looked upon suicide as a
weak and cowardly way out but after thinking it out
carefully I honestly believe that this is the best
way. I realize that this will be quite a shock to you
but as you know, time heals all wounds, and as time
goes on I hope you will realize that this was the
best solution of our problems. Please try to explain
to Tom and teach him to grow into a fine man, far
better I haope than his Dad has been.

My insurance will take care of both of you
atleast until Tom is through school. God bless and
keep you both. All of my love is for you and Tome
Forever and ever.

Bill

31. To Tom, Betty, John- The stigma I bring upon you cannot
be much more than has already been done. Be good to
your mother and do all you can to help as she is a
wonderful person. Tom- a rather gruesome though-
remember when we worked in the yard and you asked to
see a cadaver at the College? Little did we know
that I would be the first deceased for you to
encounter. I love you and know you will make a
wonderful man. Betty-We have been very close to each
other. Please don't think too harshly of my actions.
Stabilization takes place in time, and I know you
will grow up to be one of the best women in the
world. My love, dear. Johnny-You came last in our
offspring so couldn't know me as well as your brother
and sister. Just follow your brother's example, love
your sister and help Mother. Remember, I love you.
Johnny.
32. Dear Mary: As we both might reasonably recognize this is not the right way to solve any situation. Lord how I wish it could be done in any other way. No use of thinking about that now, it's like a dead end road in the middle of the night. Confusion, bewilderment, questions with no answers. What can a person say? How do you lift yourself up again and try to keep going? The will is gone, reason is gone, there is only one answer. You'll probably ask why over and over again— I've been doing that and only creating more confusion. Continue with your will to live, fill any emptiness with your love for our children, find a new live for yourself and forgive me for whatever results to you from this.

Love,

Bill

33. Dear Wife; I am sorry to cause you this embarrassment but I can't seem to stand life this way. This is the easy way for me. You will get over it in time too.

34. Dearest Mary—I just can't go on without Tom, John and you. I hope some day you can forgive me. I know you will find someone better for you and the boys. God bless you all.

Love,

Bill

35. My dear wife: I never thought I'd write a suicide note but life can throw some unexpected curves. This note has two purposes, first, to make certain that this is a suicide note and not murder so that in no way can some unforeseen circumstantial evidence point suspicion at some innocent person. Secondly, to give you my reasons for this drastic action and to assure you that you are in no way responsible for my action. As you will recall, I've always said that I'd rather be dead than be a hopeless and helpless burden upon you. Fate has decreed that I be just that. I have considered this action carefully and prayerfully. I know that you, in your greatest unselfish love, would have voted against me in this.

My continued living, though you would be quick to deny this, would be a continuing depressant, because of my condition, upon you and the kids. Facts are facts and a "head in the sand" attitude is only kidding ourselves. After the first shock of my death has worn away, I'm sure that you will see the logic
of my decision— even though you may not admit it—and
life will be much easier and happier for you.
My undying love to you and the kids. Please tell them
I'm doing this because I think it is best for all of
us.

With my love,

Bill

36. Dearest Mary: Well, dear— it's the end of the trail for
me. It has been a fairly long and reasonably pleasant
life, all in all— especially fine that part in which
you played a part. You have been wonderful. No man
could have asked for a better wife than you have
been.

Please understand that if I didn't feel that
this course would be the best for you and the girls I
certainly would have waited for nature to take her
course. It would not have been long anyhow, for the
clot I coughed up was from the lungs and I know
there's activity there— of an ominous nature.

Be good to your mother girls. You have the
finest mother in the world; even as I have had the
most wonderful wife and two wonderful daughters. Bye-
by Mary, Betty, and Helen. How I do love you all. And
may God help and guide you from here on in.

"Daddy"

37. Dearest Wife. I am writing this to explain why I am
going to end it all. I know that this is a cowardly
way and I am sorry but I just haven't the will to do
otherwise. Please forgive me if you can and believe
that I loved you to the end.

Bill

38. Dear Mary. Since you are convinced that you are an
invalid and no one can help you. I hope my $3000
insurance will help you see the truth about yourself
and get rid of your mental sickness. You are now free
to marry Joe. Remember you will never have any
happiness with anyone until you can learn to help
yourself. I have no regrets and hold no malice or
unkind thoughts towards you. We would have had a
happy life together if you had wanted to help
yourself. I hope you eventually will find happiness.

Love, Bill

Tell my folks I'm sorry I couldn't see them before I
went.
39. I'm tired of being sick and in pain and can see no use in prolonging at as they say there is no hope for recovery.

40. I specifically request that my body be disposed of by cremation. To my good friends, Joe Smith and Mary Jones I give my deep and undying affection. My dear parents, Henry W. and Betty C. Brown have done their best for me and it is my failure rather than anything they have failed to offer that has brought this about. My sister, Helen White of 100 Main Street, New York, is closest and dearest to me and, with her consent, I ask that she take and raise my son. My phono graph records now in storage with my parents, I give to my former wife, Wilma Brown, 200 Broadway, Los Angeles, Calif.

Explanations would be useless, suffice to say I have tried and failed. Given unto my hand this ninth day of June in the year of 1943, A.D., in the city of Los Angeles, California.

Jack Brown

41. Some where in this pile is your answers. I couldn't find it. Mom, you should have known this was about to happen after I told you my troubles now I will get my rest.

Dad, I am in this jam because I trusted people (namely you) and some people trusted me, because I am, in my present state a menace to me and my customers I think this is the best way out, and out of my insurance if you ever take a drink I hope you drown yourself with it.

42. Dear Mary. Things are piling up too high for me. I love you but I know our basic difficulties are not soluable. Please don't think too harshly of me if I take this way out. You have your insurance and your health to help get started again. Tell the kids I had an accident do they wont be ashamed of their daddy.

Love, Bill

43. Dearest Wife: I'm sorry I had to do this but I know you will be happier as a result. I hope you will be
married as soon as it is proper to be, and I feel sure that you and Fred will have a full and happy life together.

Love always,

Bill

44. My dearest family: I am terribly sick and it is all my fault. I blame no one but myself. I know it is going to go hard with Tommy and Sister. Please see that Tommy gets a Mickey Mouse Watch for his birthday. Helen I am counting on you to take care of Mother. Please do not follow on my footsteps.

Mary my darling I know you did everything possible to avoid this, but please forgive me, as I think it is the only way out. God forgive me and help take care of my family.

45. Dear Mary: 'Honey I hope you will forgive me for being the way I was this AM. I honestly love you with all my heart and I thought we would understand things together. I didn't know you felt the way you did about everything. I really thought we were the "happily married couple". Too bad you just keep everything inside you.

For the first time in my life I was really in love, and I thought you were too. I had hopes that you would forget your feelings and we would try to be happy together.

My bonus should take care of things so you contact Joe. Sorry to end things this way to now-I wish you the best of everything.

I did and do think you the nicest person ever. Good by and thanks for everything.

Bill

46. Dearest One, This world is too cruel for me. I am in search of peace—eternal peace where I will not be burden to you and all the world. This world was not meant for me. I was never wanted or able to place myself in any good position. I am only a handicap to you and your life will be better without me. I love you, but my love has brought you nothing but sadness and despair.

Forgive, Dearest, but since I was very young, everyone considered me a failure and over the years it has proven to be so. I have done nothing to make life seem worthwhile. Mother meant good, but she drove me to my grave. Forgive me for not being what
you expected. I do love you. Do not think badly of me. I am better off dead, no one will miss me. Until later, when we can be happy.

Your Desperate Husband, Bill Smith

47. My Dearest Mary. For many months now the pain of my illness has been unberable and since none of the specialists could give me any hope whatsoever I have decided to end my suffering forever. I Love You.

Bill

48. To my wife Mary: As you know, like we've talked over before our situation, I'll always love you with all my heart and soul. It could have been so simple if you had given me the help that you alone knew I needed.

This is not an easy thing I am about to do, but when a person makes a few mistakes and later tried to say in his own small way with a small vocabulary that he is sorry for what has happened and promises to remember what has happened and will try to make the old Bill come home again, and do his best to start all over again, and make things at home much better for all concerned, you still refuse to have me when you as well as I know that I can't do it by myself, then there's only one thing to do.

I'm sorry honey, but please believe me this is the only way out for me as long as you feel as you do—This will put you in good shape. Please always take care of Betty and tell her that her Daddy wasn't too bad a guy after all. With all the love that's in me.

Bill

Yes, Mommie, now you have your car and a lot more too, even more than you had hoped for. At least you are better off financially than you were 6 years ago. The only pitiful thing about the whole situation is the baby and the nice car that I bought with blood money. I only hope I do a good job of it. Then your troubles will be over with. 'I know this is what you have been hoping for a long time. I'm not crazy, I just love you too much!!!

I love you—Daddy—Goodbye forever.

49. To the Police. I can see no reason to battle the elements of life any longer with no progress being made.
50. Mary: The only thing you never called me was crazy. Now you can do that. I loved you so. Bill

51. Dear Mary. Everything is kind of mixed up with me and what I am doing is the only way but I guess I can think of no other I am very sorry I got you in the shape we are in but I did I love you very much. It is going to hurt my mother and Dad to and also you I think. I hope you all the luck in the world.

With all my love, Bill. Goodbye

52. Dear Mary. I have decide to end my life. Things are not going right and don't look as though they ever will. I'm doing this to help you, so that you may continue unhampred.

Love, Bill

53. To my kids—This is a lousy way to leave you, but I can no longer help you in any way. It's better for us all that the burden of caring for me be lifted— you will have sufficient problems of your own. You must face these problems intelligently, squarely, courageously, rather than running away from them; as I am from this one insolvable problem of my disability. Remember me as I was— as we enjoyed life together—as we worked out our small problems—which seemed so large—and above all remember I would never under any circumstances run out on you if there remained any chance that I could be of help to you.

Daddy

54. Mary dear. I'm sorry that I have been making you unhappy—I'm all twisted up inside. You and Joe will be better off this way—start over.

Love, Bill

55. Darling wife, Mary Helen Smith I'm sorry for everything I did please don't be angry at me sweet wife. You left me and did not say anything So darling this is your divorce my darling wife Mary. I wish you get the rings back my dear wife. Goodby my dear wife. I love you more than anything in the hold world my sweet wife.

William Smith
56. Dear wife. It seems that fate has destined me to be a failure. All at once it appears that I can no longer face the problems and responsibility of trying to get ahead only to see us struggle along in poverty. So as usual I have taken the easy way out and left you to finish the job I have so poorly started. With money from our Life Insurance program you will be able to give the children and yourself the things you have always wanted for us all. Possibly we will meet again sometime where we will be able to live in the peaceful way we all deserved so much here on earth.

Your ever loving husband.

57. Mary- I know this is a terrible thing to do but believe me, dear, it is for the best. The events of the last few months have left me at my wit's end and I see no other way out. I am sorry I was such a trial to you and the children, please forgive me.

Bill

58. Dear Mary; I'm just too tired and too sick of trying to continue. Sorry it had to be this way. I'm sure everything will work out for the best. Keep everything quiet as possible. Say I had a heart attack.

As Ever, Bill

God forgive me. God bless you and John.

59. Dear Wife. My health has broken and I no longer feel that I can be of help in the Support of the family therefore becoming a burden-So I'm ending it all. Sorry to leave in this manner but feel that it is best for all concerned-Love

60. Honey. I am sorry this is the only way I know. I am all wrong. I love you very much.

Bill

61. Dear Mary. I am writing you, as our divorce is not final, and will not be till next month, so the way things stand now you are still my wife, which makes you entitled to the things which belong to me, and I want you to have them. Don't let anyone take them from you as they are yours. Please see a lawyer and get them as soon as you can. I am listing some of the things, they are: A Blue Davenport and chair, a Magic Chef Stove, a large mattress, an Electrolux cleaner,
a 9 x 12 Rug reddish flower design and pad. All the things listed above are all most new. Then there is my 30-30 rifle, books, typewriter, tools and a hand contract for a house in Chicago, a savings account in Boston, Mass.

Your husband, William H. Smith

62. Dearest Mary. As I sit here with this gun in my hand, which in a few minutes I will take my life I am thinking of all the wonderful minutes, days, years, I have spent with you. I know that if I talked all this over again with you, you would talk me out of what I am about to do.

I know the mistakes I have made are not in the least bit your fault. But as you know in my small way I will always try to place part of the blame on you. So I hope you will forgive me all or partly for what I am about to do.

Goodbye dear I hope we will meet again in some other place, where we can be as happy as I have been since I have been married to you. Goodbye sweetheart. Yours as always,

Bill

63. I'm tired of it all. I Love you and God Bless you.

64. Goodbye my dear. I am sorry but it is just too hard to breathe.

Love, Bill

Dearest have someone at the Legion call the V.A. I think they will take care of me.

65. To the police. please tell family that I love them. why say more.

66. Goodbye Kid. You couldn't help it. Tell that brother of yours, when he gets where I'm going, I hope I'm a foreman down there. I might be able to do something for him.

Bill
APPENDIX B

CONTROL PROTOCOL SENTENCES DERIVED FROM
HENRY MURRAY'S PERSONALITY THEORY
1. **Abasement**: This person showed a high degree of humility and accepted blame and criticism even when not deserved. He sought situations in which he was a subordinate and disliked being in charge. He was self-effacing.

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2. **Achievement**: This person was strongly motivated by challenge and liked competition. He was eager to excel, and was willing to put forth a major effort to attain distant goals.

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3. **Affiliation**: This person accepted people readily and made an effort to win friendships and maintain associations with people. He enjoyed being with friends and with people in general.

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4. **Aggression**: This person enjoyed combat and argument and insisted on getting his own way even at the expense
of others. He was easily annoyed by others and would not tolerate affronts.

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5. Autonomy: This individual enjoyed being free and not tied to people, places, or obligations. When faced with restraints and restrictions, he tried to break away and may have become rebellious.

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6. Change: He liked new and different experiences and became quickly bored with routine activities. He was a flexible person who adapted readily to changes in his environment; however, this readiness to change in the face of altered circumstances may have resulted in inconsistent opinions and values.

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7. Cognitive Structure: He insisted upon clarity and completeness of information, because he wanted to base his decision on definite knowledge rather than on what was probably true. He was distrustful of his hunches. When confronted with the need to make
decisions regarding ambiguous or uncertain situations, he became uncomfortable and irritable.

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8. Defensiveness: He was a defensive person who took offense easily. He was quick to view others as against him. He was apt to view criticism as an attack. When faced with difficulties he tended to minimize or rationalize any role he may have played in bringing about the difficulties.

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9. Dominance: This individual forcefully expressed his opinions. He enjoyed influencing and directing other people and tended to assume leadership roles.

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10. Endurance: This individual did not give up easily on a problem in the face of great difficulties. He was willing to work long hours and was unrelenting in his ability to continue working at a task.

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11. **Exhibition:** This individual enjoyed situations in which he was the center of attention. He tended to engage in behaviour which attracted the notice of others and may have tried to be dramatic and witty.

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12. **Avoidance:** This person sought to maximize personal safety and to avoid risks of bodily harm. When he regarded an activity as dangerous he would not enjoy it even if others found it exciting.

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13. **Impulsivity:** This individual tended to react spontaneously and without deliberation. He vented his feelings and wished freely and was volatile in emotional expression.

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14. **Nurturance:** This person readily performed for others and assisted whenever possible. He gave sympathy and
comfort and assumed a caring role for children and others who may have been in need.

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15. **Order:** This individual was concerned with keeping personal effects and surroundings neat and organized and was interested in developing methods for keeping materials methodically organized. He disliked clutter, confusion and lack of organization.

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16. **Play:** This individual did many things just for fun. He spent a good deal of time participating in games, sports, social activities and other amusements. In social situations, he enjoyed jokes and funny stories and generally maintained a light-hearted easy-going attitude toward life.

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17. **Sentience:** This individual remembered sensations of sounds, sights, tastes, and smells, and regarded them as an important part of life. He was sensitive to
many forms of experience and maintained an
especially hedonistic or aesthetic view of life.

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18. Social Recognition: This person desired to be held in
high esteem by acquaintances and was concerned about
his reputation and what other people thought of him.
He worked hard at gaining the approval and
recognition of others.

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19. Succorance: This individual confided his difficulties
readily and frequently sought reassurance and help
from other people. Without the support and help of
others he felt insecure and anxious.

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20. Understanding: This individual enjoyed exploring many
areas of knowledge and inquiry. He valued the
synthesis of ideas, generalizations and logical
thought, especially if directed at satisfying
intellectual curiosity.

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APPENDIX C

PROTOCOL SENTENCES DERIVED FROM AARON

BECK'S THEORY OF SUICIDE
1. **Perseveration:** Despite the multiplicity and complexity of life situations, this individual was prone to interpret a wide range of experiences in terms of a few stereotyped ideas. These idiosyncratic cognitions tended to occur repetitively in his ruminations and associations.

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2. **Overgeneralization:** This individual drew a general conclusion about his ability, performance, or worth on the basis of a single incident.

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3. **Overwhelming Problems and Duties:** This individual magnified his problems or responsibilities. He perceived minor or insignificant undertakings as gigantic.

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4. **Low Self-Regard:** This individual had a low self-evaluation when appraising himself relative to his
comparison group or his own standards. This usually consisted of an unrealistic down grading of himself in an area of particular importance to him.

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5. **Hopelessness as a Bridge to Suicide Intent:** This individual expressed hopelessness which accounted for the relationship between depression and his suicidal intent.

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6. **Inaccurate Perception of Consequences:** This individual did not appear to have an accurate perception of the consequences of their suicide.

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7. **Depression:** This individual demonstrated suicidal wishes which were associated with a depressed state.

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8. Inexact Labelling: This individual's affective reaction was proportional to the labelling of the event rather than the actual intensity of the traumatic situation.

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9. Automatic Depressive Thoughts: This person demonstrated depressive thoughts which appeared as though they were automatic responses, i.e., without any apparent antecedent reflection or reasoning.

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10. Self-Commands and Injunctions: This individual demonstrated self-coercive cognitions, which consist of "nagging" or prodding to do particular things, that persist even though it was impractical, undesirable, or impossible for the person to implement these self-instructions.

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11. Involuntary Depressive Thoughts: This person reported that these thoughts would occur even when he had resolved not to have them.
12. **Non-Contemplation of Accuracy:** This individual did not contemplate the possibility that their reasoning could be inaccurate.

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13. **Worthlessness:** This individual believed that everybody would be better off if he were dead, since he saw himself as worthless and as a burden.

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14. **Negative Expectations:** This individual manifested hopelessness defined operationally in terms of negative expectations. This appeared as a stronger indication of suicidal intent than depression.

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15. **Death Preferable:** This individual believed that death was more desirable than life.

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16. **Selective Abstraction:** This individual focussed on details taken out of context, ignoring other more salient features of the situation, and conceptualizing the whole experience on the basis of this element.

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17. **Magnification and Minimization:** This person manifested errors in evaluation, which are so gross as to constitute distortions. These processes are manifested by underestimation of his performance, achievement, or ability, and a magnification of the magnitude of his problems and tasks. Other examples may be the exaggeration of the intensity or significance of a traumatic event.

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18. **Negative Bias:** This individual systematically misconstrued experiences in a negative way and, without objective bases, anticipated a negative outcome to any attempts to attain major objectives and goals.

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19. **Hopelessness:** This individual regarded suicide as the only possible solution for his "desperate" and "hopeless" situation.

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20. **Arbitrary Interpretation:** This individual tended to form an interpretation of a situation, event, or experience when there is no factual basis or, when the conclusion is contrary to the evidence. Intrinsic to this type of thinking is the lack of consideration of the alternative explanations that are more plausible and more probable.

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21. Self-Criticism and Self-Blame: This person demonstrated reproaches leveled against themselves for his perceived shortcomings with expressions of regret or guilt, which generally had no logical basis.

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22. Negative View of Future: This individual anticipated that difficulties and suffering would continue indefinitely. As he looked ahead he saw a life of unremitting hardship, frustration and deprivation.

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23. Ideas of Deprivation: This person demonstrated thoughts of being alone, unwanted, unloved and perhaps materially deprived—often in the face of overt demonstrations of friendship and affection and evident material well being.

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24. **Suffering Intolerable**: This person could not tolerate a continuation of his suffering.

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25. **Plausibility**: This individual accepted the validity of cognitions uncritically. Irrespective of whether the affect was sadness, anger, anxiety, or euphoria, the more intense the affect the greater the perceived plausibility of the associated cognitions.

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26. **Escape and Suicidal Wishes**: This person demonstrated thoughts about escaping the problems of life. The desire to escape seemed related to viewing themselves as at an impasse. On the one hand he saw themselves as incurable, incompetent, and helpless. On the other hand, he saw his tasks as ponderous and formidable. His response was a wish to withdraw from the unsolvable problem.

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REFERENCES


VITA AUCToris

Stewart Glenn Plotnick was born on June 26, 1963 in Montreal, Quebec to Bernie and Betty Plotnick. In June 1980, he received his High School Diploma from Herzliah High School. In June 1982, he received his Diplome D'etude Collegiale from Vanier College. In June 1985, he graduated from McGill University with a Bachelor of Science degree, major in Psychology. Since the fall of 1986, he has been enrolled in the Doctoral programme in Adult Clinical Psychology at the University of Windsor. He spent the summer of 1987 as a practicum student at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, Ontario. He obtained a Master of Arts degree in the fall of 1988 from the University of Windsor.