2011

Connecting the Dots: Threat assessment, depression and the troubled student

Valerie Harwood
University of Wollongong, vharwood@uow.edu.au

Connecting the Dots: Threat assessment, depression and the troubled student

Abstract

On April 18, 2007, a package containing over twenty digital videos arrived at the NBC building in New York city. Within a short time the material had been publicly broadcast, and images of Seung Hui Cho soon appeared on Youtube. Two days earlier the twenty-three year-old university student had been responsible for what has been claimed to be the worst mass shooting in the United States. Just days after the mass shooting, the Governor of Virginia, Timothy M. Kaine convened a review panel that was comprised of nine "nationally recognized individuals" across the disciplines of "law enforcement, security, governmental management, mental health, emergency care, victims' services, the Virginia court system, and higher education" (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p. viii). Six months later the panel released the comprehensive Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech, April 16, 2007: Report of the Review Panel (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Together with detailed psychological analysis of Cho, the report issued recommendations for threat assessment in higher education institutions. Almost twelve months after the shootings, the Government of Virginia instituted four new laws: 'Policies addressing suicidal students'; 'Institutional crisis and emergency management plan: review required'; 'Violence prevention committee, threat assessment team'; and 'First warning and emergency notification system required' §23-9.2:9.9,10,11; 2008, p. 28). Attending to key recommendations made in Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech (2007), the new laws included the mandate that all public higher education institutions in the State of Virginia establish threat assessment teams.

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

Valerie Harwood

Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong

Connecting the Dots: Threat assessment, depression and the troubled student[1]

On April 18, 2007, a package containing over twenty digital videos arrived at the NBC building in New York city. Within a short time the material had been publicly broadcast, and images of Seung Hui Cho soon appeared on *Youtube*. Two days earlier the twenty-three year-old university student had been responsible for what has been claimed to be the worst mass shooting in the United States. Just days after the mass shooting, the Governor of Virginia, Timothy M. Kaine convened a review panel that was comprised of nine "nationally recognized individuals" across the disciplines of "law enforcement, security, governmental management, mental health, emergency care, victims' services, the Virginia court system, and higher education" (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p. viii). Six months later the panel released the comprehensive *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech, April 16, 2007: Report of the Review Panel* (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Together with detailed psychological analysis of Cho, the report issued recommendations for threat assessment in higher education institutions. Almost twelve months after the shootings, the Government of Virginia instituted four new laws: 'Policies addressing suicidal students'; 'Institutional crisis and emergency management plan: review required'; 'Violence prevention committee, threat assessment team'; and 'First warning and emergency notification system required' §23-9.2:9.9,10,11; 2008, p. 28). Attending to key recommendations made in *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech* (2007), the new laws included

the mandate that all public higher education institutions in the State of Virginia establish threat assessment teams.

The responses to the mass shootings at Virginia Tech have been influential across the US (Fox, 2009), so much so that in this essay I take these as a pivotal turning point in the changing conceptualization of the troubled student. The growing numbers of threat assessment teams reveals the extent to which connecting the dots, a phrase that evocatively depicts the process for, and mandate to, detect the troubled student has reached into the fabric of higher educational institutions. Numbers of threat assessment teams have risen to the point that Kaaryn Sonan "spokeswoman for the US National Association of Student Personnel Administrators" (Rushman, 2008) stated: "You can't really go to a campus in this country post-Virginia Tech and not see a threat-assessment group" (Rushman, 2008). In tandem with this impetus for threat assessment procedures there has been a concerted drive to manage troubled students.[2] The report *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech* presses this point, stating that the shootings "have forced all concerned organizations and individuals to reevaluate the best approach for handling troubled students… armed with accurate guidance, amended laws, and a new sense of direction, it is an ideal time to establish best practices for intervening in the life of troubled students" (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p 70).

Identification of troubled students has become fundamental to this intervention and management. Yet, the changing conceptualization of the troubled student, and in particular the links made between depression and violence remains bereft of commentary and critique. With the link to violence presented as unequivocally fact, depression poses threats that cannot afford to be questioned or ignored. This claim of the potency of depression, and

by extension, description of the troubled student, rests on the assumption that it is what Hannah Arendt (1968b) terms a factual truth. Contrary to this interpretation, the point of departure in this essay is that perceptions of depression's violence and impotence are very far from factual truths.

Taking inspiration from a point made in *The History of Madness* (Foucault, 2006), the problem to be tackled is not the matter of precision in definition of the troubled student; but rather, how this definition manifests. Made with reference to melancholy and the 'melancholic experience', the significance of this differentiation is driven home by Foucault in the following sentence: "The key point is that this process did not go from observation to the construction of explanatory images, but that on the contrary images fulfilled the initial role of synthesis, and their organising force made possible a structure of perception where symptoms could finally take on their significant value, and be organized into the visible presence of the truth" (2006, p. 277).

Following this line of inquiry, my aim is to argue that there are significant shifts in the way that the troubled student is conceptualized in higher education institutions, and that this appears to have crystallized in the wake of Virginia Tech mass shooting. My purpose is not to dissect this tragic event, or to provide an analysis of the range of measures advocated in the report *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech* (2007). The intention is to contribute a critical perspective on the ways in which the troubled student is coming to be understood within higher educational institutions. We are witness to a configuration of the troubled student that positions depression and dangerousness together. This has formed, to quote Foucault, a "visible presence of truth" (2006, p. 277) that is producing a compelling and in the main unquestioned account of the troubled student. As I will outline, the truths of the

troubled student which are taken as facts, are quite the contrary; they belong to what

Hannah Arendt (1968b) describes as the domain of rational truths. Arendt's distinction

between factual and rational truths supports an analysis of the truths about dangerousness,

depression and the troubled student that can facilitate deeper appreciation of the complexity

of these truths as well as assisting our recognition of the reluctance to subject these to

critique.

Factual and Rational Truth, A Significant Distinction

The facts seem to be clear. As the opening statement on the report *Mass Shootings at*

Virginia Tech makes plain, "On April 16 2007, Seung Hui Cho, an angry and disturbed

student, shot to death 32 students and faculty of Virginia Tech, wounded 17 more, and then

killed himself" (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p.1). While it is indisputable that Cho

shot to death 32 students and faculty, wounded 17 more, and then killed himself, what I

want to call into question is how the depiction of Cho as "angry and disturbed" is presented

as fact. The reasoning for questioning this rests on the importance of grasping the use of the

terms "angry" and "disturbed." When these descriptions are cited as fact it is all too easy to

overlook how meanings are attributed. For this reason it is helpful to accentuate the

distinction between factual and rational truths.

Arendt (1968b) placed careful emphasis on the necessity of factual truths and the

importance of distinguishing these from rational truths. She offered the following as

examples of a factual truth: "in the night of August 4, 1914, German troops crossed the

frontier of Belgium" and "the earth moves around the sun" (1968b, p. 239). Rational truths,

by contrast, are typified by "philosophical reflection" (Sharpe, 2007, p.101) or "philosophical speculation" (Owens, 2007, p. 269). This type of truth "enlightens human understanding" (Arendt, 1968b, p. 242), and includes "mathematical, scientific or philosophical truth" (Arendt, 1968b, p. 231). Elaborating on the differences between the two types, Arendt depicts factual truths as "seen and witnessed with the eyes of the body, and not the eyes of the mind" (1968b, 237). Relying on facts, factual truths are "beyond agreement, dispute, opinion or consent" (1968b, p. 240); a point that Arendt underscores by citing Hugo Grotius, a seventeenth century legal philosopher, "even God cannot cause two times two should not make four" (1968b, p. 240).

The correctness of facts is of great importance. For this reason it is vital that factual truths such as the frontier of Belgium example lack any form of appraisal of the individuals that crossed that frontier or of the events involved. In the Arendtian formulation facts belong to the political realm where they have a crucial function:

> Facts inform opinions, and various opinions, inspired by different interests and passions, can differ widely and still be legitimate so long as they respect factual truth. Freedom of opinion is a farce unless factual information is guaranteed and the facts themselves are not in dispute. In other words, factual truth informs political thought just as rational truth informs philosophical speculation. (Arendt, 1968b, p. 238)

There is, then, much at stake should facts become confused. This issue is stressed by Maurizio Passerin D'Entrevès, "if opinions were not based on correct information and the

free access to all relevant facts they could scarcely claim any validity" (2000, p.257). This, as Mathew Sharpe points out, signals the need for a cautionary approach to the acceptance of facts, "I suspect Arendt would counsel us to be hesitant in principle about political action based on conjectures whose factual basis at the time is impossible to establish or refute (2007, p. 101). While Arendt does concede to using the distinction between factual and rational truth for "convenience's sake without discussing its intrinsic legitimacy" (1968b, p. 231), her point is to draw attention to the difference of the two forms of truth. In so doing, she emphasises the importance of each, as well as their place in the political realm. In a similar vein, my intent is not to dive into discussion of this legitimacy. Rather my objective is to work from Arendt's point of distinction to examine how these two forms of truth are confused and the consequences of blending these truths.

When the relationship between dangerousness, depression and the troubled student is presented as fact we are at risk of confusing rational and factual truth. From an Arendtian perspective, merging these types of truths has considerable implication for generating debate about campus violence and its prevention. This is because when taken as fact our opinions (which relies on facts) are misinformed. There is also the sobering observation that the threat to facts is none other than lying (Arendt, 1968b), which helps us to grasp why disputing these interpretations of the troubled student is risky, given the stakes. I will return to this point toward the close of this essay. Responding to these concerns, my purpose is to try to demonstrate how the descriptions and mental health profiles of Cho following the Virginia Tech mass shooting confuse these truths. Foucault's (2006, p. 277) emphasis on the "structure of perception" enables me to pursue a line of reasoning that takes as its object how depression and melancholia are perceived. While there is contention

regarding the proposition that melancholy is the historical antecedent of depression, there is good justification for considering the cultural understanding attributed to the emblematic features of melancholy and depression. To consider these concepts together is not to stake a claim as to the continuity of melancholy or depression. The suggestion of a relationship between the concepts melancholy and depression is rigorously analysed by Jennifer Radden (2003) who differentiates between the two on the basis of descriptive versus causal accounts, concluding that they are distinct. This view explicitly questions the attribution of melancholia as an historical precursor to contemporary depression. As I will maintain, changes in the perception of depression between impotency and potency point to its status as a rational truth. To establish the assertion of the rational nature of the truth of the troubled student, in the sections that follow I discuss the conceptualization of the impotency of depression, conceptualizing depression and potency, and lastly, the urge to connect the dots and detect the troubled student. Drawing on historical and contemporary material, including works of visual art, I hope to demonstrate that these are rational truths and in so doing emphasize the importance of making this vitally important distinction.

Rational Truths I, The Impotency of Depression

For a very long time the image of physical lack has pervaded as a signature of melancholy, and arguably, depression. This image is famously portrayed in Albrecht Dürer's engraving, *Melancholia I*.

Figure 1: Melancholia I by Albrecht Dürer (1514)

Signed and dated AD 1514 © Trustees of the British Museum]

In *Melancholia I* the central figure sits limp and forelorn, lacking energy or motivation, and unable to move.[3] In this woodcut engraving Dürer famously depicted the tension between "melancholy, creativity, knowledge" (Sullivan, 2008). Strewn aside, the tools and implements surrounding melancholia tell of the vanished creativity, and the star on the horizon is suggestive of the role of divine inspiration. Drawing on Hippocrate's humoral theory, Dürer's engraving portrays immobility; the figure's potency lost from within. This is an image that echoes across the interpretations of melancholy. Analysing a period that repeats the rational truth of melancholy's immobility, Foucault's *The History of Madness* contributes instructive observations on melancholy. Based on his researches into seventeenth century medicine, Foucault announces that "melancholy never attains frenzy; it is a madness always at the limits of its own impotence" (2006, p. 266). This statement signals what has been a long held assumption of melancholy and depression. Both are, to paraphrase Foucault, limited by their own impotence.

Coined in the mid-nineteenth century, and replacing melancholy, the term depression came from usage that was "popular in middle nineteenth century cardiovascular medicine to refer to a reduction in function" (Berrios, 1995, p. 386). Under this name, depression was characterized as "reflected loss, inhibition, reduction, and decline" (Berrios, 1995, p. 386). In *The Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (Baldwin, 1901) Joseph Jastrow defined depression as "A condition characterized by a sinking of spirits, lack of courage or initiative, and tendency to gloomy thoughts" (1901, p. 270). Here the word 'sinking' conjures the distinct image of deflation. The sense of impotence is brought to the fore when Jastrow distinguishes depression from dejection, "depression refers more

definitely to the lowered vitality of physical and mental life, dejection to the despondency

of the mental mood" (Jastrow, 1901, p. 270). In the *Anatomy of Melancholy,* first published

in 1621, Robert Burton, who by his own admission busied himself writing his book as a

means to avoid melancholy, describes the affliction as either "disposition or habit" (p. 83).

Disposition refers to a "transitory melancholy which goes and comes upon every small

occasion of sorrow, need, sickness, trouble, fear, grief, passion, or perturbation of the mind,

any manner of care, discontent, or thought, which causeth anguish, dullness, heaviness and

vexation of spirit" (1621/2004, p. 218). It is marked by its opposition to specific emotions,

including feelings such as "pleasure, mirth, joy, delight" and can cause "frowardness in us,

or a dislike" (p. 219).[4] To describe melancholy of habit, Burton says: "we call him

melancholy that is dull, sad, sour, lumpish, ill disposed, solitary, any way moved, or

displeased" (Burton, 2004, 219). *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* encyclopaedic in its

references across literature, mentions violence, but it is overwhelmingly violence directed

upon the self. Instances of violence toward others are few; the picture of melancholy is one

of impotence, a vexing problem that Burton could famously ward off by the process of

writing and rewriting his lengthy tome.

The idea that melancholy cannot attain the vigour possible in other ailments is

clearly demonstrated in Foucault's recount of the descriptions provided by the seventeenth

century anatomist and physician Thomas Willis (1672, 1683). Foucault describes Willis's

account of melancholy, in which "the spirits are carried away by an agitation, but a weak

agitation that lacks power or violence a sort of impotent upset that follows neither a

particular path nor the *aperta opercula* [open ways] but traverses the cerebral matter

constantly creating new pores" (2006, p. 266). The description draws a picture of

movement without direction but with a telos of dissipation. In this movement, "the spirits do not wander far on the new paths they create, and their agitation dies down rapidly, as their strength is quickly spent and motion comes to a halt" (2006, p. 266). This 'melancholic experience' extends from the physiological to the soul, a view that prompts Jeremy Schmidt (2007) to conclude that for Willis, the mind and the body are both involved in the melancholic condition. The melancholy described by Willis is one of diminishing strength, reduction in agitation. It is, again, one of impotence.

Essential to grasp in Foucault's account of Willis's analyses is not what we would now view as an extraordinary theory of causes – extraordinary certainly by twenty-first century medicine. What is necessary to contemplate is the emphasis on the conceptualization of experience. Thus in Foucault's words, for Willis the physician, "the guiding principle mostly reflects the immediate qualities of melancholic illness: an impotent disorder, and the shadow that comes over the spirit with an acrid acidity that slowly corrodes the heart and the mind" (2006, p. 267). This comment is followed by a tremendously insightful observation, "The chemistry of acids is not an explanation of the symptoms, but a qualitative option: a whole phenomenology of melancholic experience" (Foucault, 2006, p. 267). What Foucault is directing our attention toward is the description of how the experience of melancholia is conceptualized. In this sense it is not the elaborate experiences that we need to dwell upon, but rather the efforts that are made to conceptualize these; an emphasis that draws our attention toward the processes of making these truths. Returning to my discussion of Arendt's distinction between rational and factual truths, Foucault's analysis assists with recognizing the processes that produce

rational truths. This serves to upset the stability of concepts that, from an Arendtian point of view, might be at risk of being termed facts.

Surveying medical accounts of the eighteenth century from the work of English physician Robert James (1743) and Paris physician Anne-Charles Lorry (1765) Foucault points out that while certain explanations vary and symptoms shift, there is a conceptual unity that writes the story of melancholy. What we have is an organizational apparatus that assembles symptoms, one that crafts explanations and faithfully portrays the idea of melancholy. This is, as outlined in the introduction to this essay, a "process" whereby an "organising force made possible a structure of perception where symptoms could finally take on their significant value, and be organized into the visible presence of the truth" (Foucault, 2006, p. 277). The image of melancholy as impotent pervades, one of immobility, reduction, and loss of power. This particular structuring of perception that has held sway for so long is the very antithesis of the depression that has come to be associated in contemporary depictions of the troubled student.

Foucault made the observation on melancholy's impotence with reference to the seventeenth century. While it is not the case that melancholy became, as it were, what was defined as depression in the later (1980, 1987, 1994, 2000) versions of American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, this characteristic of impotence is a point to labour upon. The kinship of melancholy and depression might be more usefully portrayed as their similar reliance on the idea of impotence. The two also share the status of being rational truths. They are truths that belong very much in the domain of speculation, of philosophical reflection, of scientific deliberation.

In contemporary psychiatric knowledge depression is most authoritatively defined in the American Psychiatric Association's *DSM* (APA, 2000). The current edition includes depression in the section on 'Mood Disorders' under the category 'Depressive Disorders', which includes 'Major Depressive Disorder', 'Dysthymic Disorder', 'Depressive Disorder Not Otherwise Specified' (APA, 2000). Major Depressive Episode is the category with which the colloquial term 'depression' is most commonly associated. As enumerated in the *DSM*, for a Major Depressive Episode to be diagnosed, "Five (or more) of the following symptoms have been present during the same 2-week period and represent a change from previous functioning; at least one of the symptoms is either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure" (APA, 2000, p. 356).

Although the description for Major Depressive Episode appears to place emphasis on an emblematic impotence, criteria for the Specifier[5] 'Psychotic Features' includes either delusions or hallucinations (APA, 2000), and these may point towards violence to others.[6] The Specifier is differentiated into either 'Mood-Congruent Psychotic Features' or 'Mood-Incongruent Psychotic Features', with the latter defined as "content [that] does not involve typical depressive themes of personal inadequacy, guilt disease, death, nihilism, or deserved punishment" but that does include "persecutory delusions, thought insertion, thought broadcasting, and delusions of control" (APA, 2000, p. 413). Inclusion of persecutory delusions does render the possibility that, within a diagnosis of Major Depressive Episode, there is scope for potency.[7] That said, this has been a less emphasised characteristic of depression. What remains to be seen is whether, if depression is linked more and more to dangerousness, this conceptualization comes to the fore.

A further point to note is that the *DSM* description of Major Depressive Disorder departs in relation to children and adolescents. In "prepubertal children," for example, "Major Depressive Episodes occur more frequently in conjunction with other mental disorders (especially Disruptive Behavior Disorders, Attention-Deficit Disorders, and Anxiety Disorders) than in isolation" (APA, 2000, p. 354). In adolescents, the association between depression and other disorders is expanded to include the group of disruptive behaviour disorders as well as "Anxiety Disorders, Substance-Related Disorders, and Eating Disorders" (APA, 2000, p. 354). Although it would appear that this link between depression and disruptive behaviour disorders signals potency, this would be a mistaken interpretation. While this is an association with what are considered potent disorders, it is not a definitional change in depression per se. This is a subtle, yet essential distinction.

The lexicon of depression as it is defined in the *DSM* adheres to a tradition of generating knowledge as described by Foucault (2006). It is a "structure of perception" (2006, p. 277) discernible via the imagery of impotence. What perhaps earmarks depression as appearing as though it has a "continuous history" (Foucault, 1977) and thereby appearing as fact, is the association with recurring depictions of impotency. As I go on to outline, heightened attention to depression/dangerousness shifts the imagery from one of impotency to that of potency.

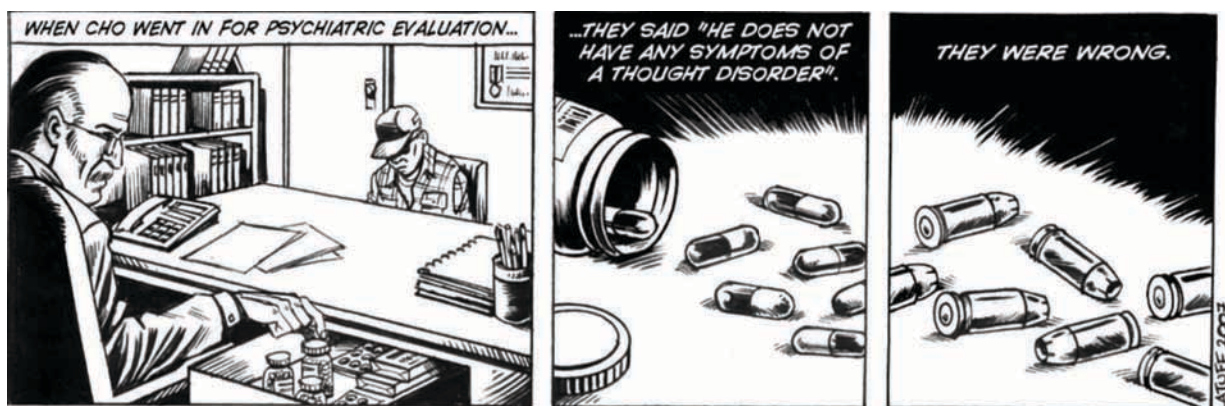**Rational Truths II, Depression and Potency**

Figure 2: Carlos Latuff, (2007) "Cho Seung Hui comics 3 by Latuff2". Permission to reproduce image granted by artist.

Cho Seung Hui comics 3 was originally published on April 28, 2007 on the website "DeviantArt" by Carlos Latuff, and is available on *The April 16 Archive*, an online archive that "collects and preserves the stories of the Virginia Tech tragedy" (CDDC & CHNM, 2008). The artist produced a series of comics described as "Experimental black and white comics on Cho Seung Hui, the Virginia Tech gunman" (Latuff, 2007). While *Cho Seung Hui comics 3* is one example, it is germane to this analysis as it provocatively underscores how the devices of psychiatric intervention, violence and depression are brought together. In this sense it is of consequence to attend to the impacts and influences of popular culture in the production of discourses about psychopathologization (Harwood, 2010c). From this perspective it is useful to consider the archived online discussions of the shootings at Virginia Tech as these likewise offer insight into how dangerousness and depression can be brought together.

In the above piece Cho is depicted in a psychiatric evaluation. The comic strip then moves in a sequence from pills spilling from a bottle to several live bullets in a pattern

reminiscent of the pills. This sequence was commented on by 'OptikalIlluzion' May 7, 2007, who wrote, "The transformation of the pills into bullets was a brilliant statement. Wonderful work as always, Latuff" (deviantart, 2009). Another comment by 'Catoninetails' commends Latuff2's depiction of Cho, "I had a class with Cho in my Sophomore year. You did a real good job of capturing his lack of expression and emotion. He looked like that every day" (deviantart, 2009). While the depiction of Cho, as commented on by Catoninetails (see above) may have certain resemblance to Dürer's (1514) depiction of Melancholia, there is a startling difference. While both may have their heads lowered, Cho is depicted in the first of three frames in a psychiatrist's office, which is then followed by the corollary of pills with bullets. This linking pills with bullets evokes the debate concerning the relationship between Selective Serotonin Uptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) and violence, an issue discussed in Henry and Demotes-Mainard (2006). Dürer's Melancholia is a stark contrast to the depiction of Cho with pills and bullets. Melancholia is surrounded by the tools of creativity; forlorn yet appearing to await her creative inspiration. The depiction of Cho as depressed and violent is illustrative of the potency of depression that became familiar following the Virginia Tech mass shootings.

The range of material that emerged following the massacre, the news media reports, blogs, footage and commentary released on the internet, through to the emerging artwork tends to draw together two threads: violence and the troubled student. Seven years prior to the mass shootings at Virginia Tech the Federal Bureau of Investigation released *The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective* (O'Toole, 2000). Published shortly after the Columbine Massacre, this document provides "a systematic procedure for threat assessment and intervention", but clearly states that it is "not a profile of the 'school

shooter'" (O'Toole, 2000, p. 1).[8] What is notable is the reference to depression made in this document differs markedly from the way depression is linked with violence and the troubled student following the mass shootings at Virginia Tech. In *The School Shooter* depression is first discussed under the heading of "pre-disposing factors." These factors include "underlying personality traits, characteristics, and temperament that predispose an adolescent to fantasize about violence or act violently" and mention "underlying factors such as a student's vulnerability to loss and depression" (O'Toole, 2000, p. 8). Although depression is implicated with violence in *The School Shooter,* this is done through 'predisposing factors', and not via a shift from a state limited by its own impotence to a state that is potent.

While references to depression and violent actions occur, it is the responses following the Virginia Tech mass shootings where the association becomes crystallized in a new form. Rumors about college student Seung Hui Cho's mental state promptly generated questions about connections between depression and violence. In the immediate aftermath of the mass shootings there were authoritative counter-narratives that advised against such conjecture. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from *CBS* news published two days after the Virginia Tech Massacre. The article, poses the question, "Might underlying depression be to blame?" (DeNoon, 2007). Quoting a perceived medical expert (Robert Irvin a medical doctor and director at Harvard's McLean Hospital) this association is then denied: "People who are hopeless, who don't experience any joy or happiness, their thoughts are far more likely to tend toward self-harm than harm to anyone else," Irvin says. "If they are moved to violence, they are far and away more frequently the victims" (DeNoon, 2007). This rebuttal refutes a direct link between depression and violence

directed toward others and maintains the depressed individual as more likely to be a victim of violence than its perpetrator. This echoes what a reader of Burton's seventeenth century *Anatomy of Melancholy* might find: where words such as violence occur, the action is in the main directed toward the self.

Some months later, however, following the release of *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech*, discussion regarding a link between violence and depression had quietened. The emphasis seems to shift to being on the watch for people who have mental health problems, including quite explicitly, depression. News media articles published after the release of the report rapidly fixed on the question of this new range of mental problems. For example, an article in *Medpage Today,* published the day of the release of *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech,* carried the title, "Virginia Tech Missed Clear "Warning Signs" of Shooter's Mental Instability" (Osterwell, 2007). In this instance depression is treated as potency, a 'warning sign' that institutions need to be alert for, monitor and act upon. Here there is a tangible move from the vigorous defence of links between violence and depression to one where it is viewed as a 'red flag'. This turnabout casts depression at extremities, with the resultant loss of possibilities for depression to be imagined as complex, multifaceted and particular.[9]

With the rise in shootings in higher education institutions there has been speculation that perpetrators of this form of violence "have far more depth to their histories of mental illness" and that "comparing the college cases post-2002 to the majority of the high school cases, we see that their more advanced age means they are much further along in the trajectory of developing serious psychiatric conditions" (Newman & Fox, 2009, p. 1304). This may well help to explain the increase in the reporting of psychiatric diagnosis, the subsequent attention to the range of disorders, and the pressing need to be vigilant and

'connect the dots' to detect troubled students. However, without a critical gaze such attention risks treating this phenomenon as a factual truth (Arendt, 1968b). Positioned as factual, we are at risk of missing the crucial knowledge that these understandings are arrived at via speculation, that they are rational truths. When assumed to be factual, the only mode of opposition is "neither error nor illusion nor opinion… but the deliberate falsehood or lie" (Arendt, 1968b, p. 249). This effectively creates a non-refutable explanation of the trajectories and histories of mental illness as well as the duty to connect the dots. Treating these as facts makes it difficult to discern how the "structure of perception" (Foucault, 2006) is implicated in the assembling of changing forms of knowledge. For this reason it is paramount to be, as Arendt (1968b) implores, cautious in our acceptance of facts, and as is the case here, cautious of facts that would have us obey directives to connect the dots.
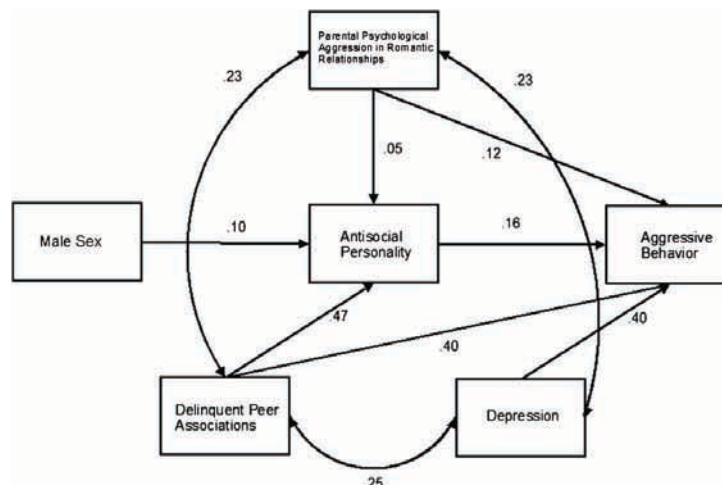
Rational Truths III, 'Connecting the dots'

Figure 3: Final theoretical model of serious youth aggression (Ferguson *et al*., 2009).[10]

The above diagram situates depression amongst several other variables viewed as risk factors for youth violence, with the authors reporting that across "most measures of youth violence and aggression, depressed mood and delinquent peer associations were the most consistent and strongest predictors" (Ferguson et al., 2009, p. 4). Here again I have chosen to illustrate my argument through the use of an example linked to knowledge on depression; in this instance, it is neither a famous engraving from the sixteenth century or an online comic from the twenty first, but a diagrammatic representation that, via a sequence of lines, arrows and numbers situates depression with violence as fact. While the diagram represents a model with "path estimates" to aggressive behaviour, it is also evocative of the current impetus to "connect the dots" on depression, violence, and the troubled student. To illustrate this phenomenon, in what follows I draw selective examples from across the contemporary discussion in higher education in response to campus violence and the detection of the troubled student. While not an exhaustive survey, these instances are suggestive of the ways in which linking depression and violent acts has become more commonplace, and gained momentum following Virginia Tech. Particular weight is given to the report *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech* because it has been important in prompting responses to prevent campus violence (Dunkle, Silverstein, & Warner, 2008), responses that prompts questions as to the responsibility or "duty" of higher education institutions for "connecting the dots" (Williamson, 2008). Taken together these examples make a case that provides good motive for interrogating how the troubled student is perceived as factual rather than rational truth.

The idea, indeed, the force of the mandate to 'connect the dots' relies on acceptance of the 'dots' as facts. This relationship is demonstrated in the following excerpt, which clearly situates them as facts and, as a consequence, the need for action based on these facts. Reflecting on the use of the "connecting the dots." Gordon K. Davies, member of the Virginia Tech Review Panel that produced the report, *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech*, elaborated:

One of the metaphors that recurred during the panel's discussions and in public testimony was that "no one connected all the dots." It is true that there were dots all over the map, but the way Virginia Tech is organized virtually ensured that no one ever was in a position to see them all and intervene in a potentially dangerous situation that eventually spiralled into disaster. (Davies, 2008)

"Connecting the dots" occurs prominently in *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech*, being mentioned in the 'Summary of the Key Findings,' situated at the front of this extensive document. In discussing the "numerous incidents" that "were clear warnings of mental instability" the document draws a compelling conclusion: "[a]lthough various individuals and departments within the university knew about each of these incidents, the university did not intervene effectively. No one knew all the information and no one connected all the dots" (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p. 2). In other sections of *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech* the dots are seen as "red flags." Chapter four, titled 'Cho's Mental Health History', includes commentary on the services involved with Cho. The document states that

the Care Team at Virginia Tech "was established as a means of identifying and working with students who have problems. That resource, however, was ineffective in connecting the dots or heeding the red flags that were so apparent with Cho" (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p. 52). Failure is attributed to not connecting the dots; the problem of missing the red flags, that taken together, signify the troubled (depressed and dangerous) student.

The credible exercise of this metaphor implies two premises: firstly that the dots are facts, and secondly, that these facts can and must be drawn together in order to detect the troubled student. In relation to the first, situating depression alongside violence as a 'fact' (or as it were, one of the 'dots') renders depression with potency. In the recommendations issued to Virginian higher education institutions, mental health assessment includes both assessment for, and treatment of, depression (Connell, 2009). Depression is included in the list of problems along with "psychotic symptoms," "jealousy or mistreatment" and "personality disorder," and included in reference to the "prevention of interpersonal violence" (Connell, 2009, p. 28). Locating depression in this list of problems instils potency in depression, one that links depression with the potential for serious violence. Added to this, when a relationship between depression and violence is treated as a factual truth (as opposed to a rational one) we have set before us a 'fact'. Presented in this way we are not encouraged to question, but rather to comply, and take responsibility for connecting the dots. This responsibility places the onus on educational institutions, one that gives rise to the imprimatur: do what is required to accomplish the collection and aggregation of the "factual" dots.

Emphasis on connecting the dots has lead to threat assessment in higher education being enshrined in legislation in the State of Virginia. Recommendations for

implementation of this requirement places emphasis on "threat assessment as violence prevention," where "[t]hreat assessment is a strategy for preventing violence through identification and evaluation of individuals or groups that pose a threat to harm someone, followed by intervention designed to reduce the risk of violence" (Connell, 2009, p. 4). The document also distinguishes between threat assessment and criminal profiling. While the latter focussed on perpetrators, the former "explicitly recognizes the diversity of individuals who may engage in a violent act and focuses on behavioral indications of preparation to carry out a violent act" (Connell, 2009, p. 4).

Moves to connect the dots to prevent potential campus violence have been made beyond the State of Virginia, with institutions across the US prompted to establish threat assessment teams (using this or a similar name) (Dunkle *et al.*, 2009). This spread is discussed in a recent article in the British publication *Times Higher Education* titled 'Watching the Disaffected' (2008), which reports on threat assessment at Cornell University. [11] The article cites Kaaryn Sanon, a representative from an US Higher Education association: "Many of these were in place prior to the more recent violent tragedies on various campuses, but they have been formalised and put in place almost everywhere that lacked such a system" ('Watching the disaffected', 2008).[12] The article also cites the director of counselling and psychological services at Cornell, who explains an important distinction, "There aren't really profiles (of students prone to violence or suicide), but there are characteristics you can look at: depression, suspiciousness, grandiosity, social isolation" ('Watching the disaffected', 2008). Treated here as facts, these characteristics are taken as testimony to factual truth of the relationship between depression

and violence. This has the considerable effect of concealing their speculative nature and status as rational truths.

There are many cases of the new threat assessment team initiatives, and to my knowledge, critical research is yet to be undertaken into this phenomenon. While it is not possible in this essay to report on the range and numbers of these teams, it is instructive to consider some examples of how threat assessment, depression, and the troubled student are discussed. For instance, Emory University in Atlanta Georgia established a threat assessment team. Reporting on this initiative in the *Emory Report*, Amy Adelman, member of the Threat Assessment Team (TAT), is cited explaining "Students lead diffuse lives, making it easier to miss a pattern of behavior that could indicate they are in crisis… A faculty member may see just one piece of the puzzle, while a roommate and a friend may see other pieces. The TAT is a way to bring the pieces together" (Clark, 2008, p. 1). At the University of Iowa, the threat assessment team "has two full-time threat assessment specialists" and "signs of depression/severe mood swings" is included under the list of "warning signs" in the section "behavioural/physical clues" (HRWebTeam, 2009). In *Keeping our Campus Safe* a document provided by Rutgers Newark, the need for threat assessment explicitly references the Virginia Tech mass shootings. The document commences with the statement that "the 2007 tragedy at Virginia Tech reminds all in higher education of the vulnerability of our college campuses" (Office of Student and Community Affairs, 2008-09). Members of the Rutgers Newark campus can refer a threat to the Threat Assessment Team by using a referral form that is available online. This form uses a list of thirty-one tick-box items divided into section 1, 'Imminent Warning Signs' and section 2,

'Troubling Behaviour'. Depression is item 29 in the second category. In this inventory, other items immediately precede depression. Numbers 21-29 are included below:

21. Inappropriate access, possession, use of firearms

22. Threats of violence (direct or indirect)

23. Talking about weapons or bombs

24. Ruminating over perceived injustices

25. Seeing self as victim of a particular individual

26. General statements of distorted, bizarre thoughts

27. Feelings of being persecuted

28. Obsession with particular person

29. Depression   (Rutgers Newark, 2009)

Scrolling down this list of items it becomes apparent how the placement of depression alongside these other items can be generative for structuring our perceptions of the troubled student as both violent and depressed. The presentation of this material, together with the spread of threat assessment teams points to the possibility of significant changes to how depression is understood as linked to violence. For instance, with threat assessment teams promoted as part of the normal structure of the university, the troubled student is increasingly described using terms that bring forth depression into a common parlance with violence prevention.

Measures to connect the dots include mandating which files are to be kept, lists of the behaviours to be on the alert for, people charged with administration of the threat

assessment, and the induction and training of higher education staff into vigilance for troubled students. Staff members at US higher education institutions are obliged to keep on the lookout for the 'signs of trouble', where vigilance garners support precisely because it is seen to be in accord with the urgency to connect the dots. For instance, "[m]ore professors and others on campus are consulting with counseling centers about "students of concern" since Virginia Tech, according to 66% of center directors in a new survey of 272 colleges" (Elias, 2008). In the State of Virginia the recent legislation has made it easier to share information between health, school and higher education authorities and has instigated measures that make it mandatory to report student mental health problems to parents (Kaine, 2008). Amendments have subsequently been made to FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. These came into effect on January 8, 2009 and effectively provide for the sharing of information between education institutions.[13] Mental health records, with their detailed histories, are viewed as potentially revealing and a source important for preventative action (Newman & Fox, 2009).

The matter of student privacy raises the vexed question of how much information about students' personal histories should be made available to institutions, within institutions, between institutions, and to parents. Further, such incursions into privacy are premised on the problematic of the degree of success of threat assessment, with threat assessment likely to yield far more false positives than true positives (Heilibrun et al. 2009, Fox, 2009). This means that many students who are not violent are likely to experience intrusion on the premise of threat assessment. Such investigations may well have the effect of promoting and defining conceptualizations of dangerousness, which could, depending on how this is received, move in one of two possible directions. It could for example, reinforce

the attribution of dangerousness to depression, thereby influencing depictions of the troubled student. Conversely, the number of false positives could create a phenomenon of 'crying wolf', and lead to distrust in the processes that are designed to improve faith in campus safety. In either case, by linking depression and violence there remains the serious question of stigmatizing the human experience of depression in directions that link it to the spectre of extreme dangerousness.

Conclusion

Watching for the signs of the troubled student becomes part of a mechanism of connecting the dots that, while it is directed at the laudable undertaking to prevent violence, at the same time gathers depression into a net that situates it in a relationship to violence. What is especially problematic, as I have contended throughout this discussion, are the ways the new truths of depression are treated as fact. In her discussion of factual and rational truths, Arendt maintained that "factual truth is so much less open to argument than philosophical [rational] truth" (1968b, p. 237). She also points to the vulnerability of these truths. As I outlined earlier, the opposite of 'factual truth' is the "deliberate falsehood or lie" (Arendt, 1968b, p. 249). This positions the opposition of factual truth in tricky terrain since challenging the new configurations of the troubled student will mean denying supposed facts. To question burgeoning practices such as surveillance, identification, and reporting can imply betrayal of collective efforts in higher education to protect. The rationale that dots can *and must* be connected, together with reliance on these dots being "facts" places the entire process above critique.

Factual truths are crucial for Arendt's conception of the political realm (d'Entrèves, 2000). We rely on facts to form our opinions, and in Arendt's (1968b) vision, opinion is crucial for political dialogue – which is of ongoing importance for inclusive practices in education (Harwood, 2010a, 2010b). From these factual truths we form opinions and can engage in debate. I would add here, that, by drawing on Foucault, we can also inform our discussions with the knowledge of processes that formulate rational truths. That many people were killed at Virginia Tech is not in dispute, neither is the fact that it was committed by Cho. When we begin to interpret and explain, this is where we enter the realm of rational truths. When these truths are confused we run the risk of initiating actions that are bereft of the benefit of debate. Linda Zerilli (2006) mounts a persuasive case for reconsidering Arendt's analyses of truth, politics and opinion. For Zerilli, the point is not to "be delivered of one's opinions, as if opinion were the opposite of truth… Rather it is to find, by means of public debate, what in one's opinions is true" (2006, paragraph 17). Given that opinion is vital to the political, and factual truth is crucial for opinions, the implications of 'wrong facts' are considerable. Obfuscation of rational truths is thus a threat to the open dialogue required in order to develop responses to the problems of violence on campuses. To give an example, if debate over the troubled student is premised on the assumption of factual truth, the very point that they are taken as facts will mean that the processes contributing to the making of the truth go unchallenged. This will make it all the more difficult to foster robust debate of the new practices of threat assessment in higher education institutions. We need to be able to ask how is it that these new measures have spread so quickly and with such reach and effect. To not do so is to fall to a precarious silence; one that may well miss insightful considerations about on the one hand, responding

to issues on campus, and on the other grasping what is being created in these emerging configurations of the troubled student.

Drawing attention to the way these truths about the troubled student have been construed is crucial to the effort to introduce balanced debate on the measures to prevent campus violence. In the event that an individual who has acted violently meets the diagnostic criteria for Major Depressive Episode, need for balanced debate is not mitigated. While it may be the case that an individual can fit the *DSM* criteria, this does not provide warrant to represent this as factual truth: we would be better positioned to treat it as a rational truth. This would involve paying close attention to how this truth is produced, the speculation that is involved and how our conceptualizations are drawn. For this reason, identifying the shift from impotency to potency demonstrates how the structuring of perception structures depression, and this, importantly, clarifies that these are rational truths. Foucault's (2006, p. 277) remark that the "image fulfilled the initial role of synthesis" tells us a great deal about how images of the troubled student affect what we have come to understand and how we now focus attention on threat assessment. It also gives pause to reconsider what Dodge (2008) calls the "metaphors for youth violence" (p. 573) and how these get taken up and drive interpretations of violent youth behaviour.

There are numerous consequences to the new configuration of the troubled student as depressed and dangerous, such as the lowering of privacy measures and the zealousness, regardless of good motivation, with which preventative measures are being taken up. For one, now that depression is considered one of the 'red flags' for the troubled student, we are forced to confront the paradox that the troubled student is inexorably like the rest of us. According to the US National Institute of Mental Health, "major depressive disorder is the

leading cause of disability in the US for ages 15-44" with over 14.8 million or 6.7% of the population affected (National Institute of Mental Health, 2008). With depression listed amongst the signs that may warn of trouble or disturbance in higher education institutions across the US, it now has the status of dangerousness. The sheer numbers of people diagnosed with depression, or the numbers of people prescribed anti-depressant medication attests – if we are to take this seriously – to the scale of the numbers of people among us who are now harbouring potency (as opposed to impotence).

In closing, I wish to bring into this conversation an observation made by Arendt that "the conviction that everything that happens on earth must be comprehensible to man can lead to interpreting history by commonplaces" (1968a, p. viii). This thought provoking statement encourages us to consider an uncomfortable reality in the ready application of diagnostic categories such as depression to these types of problems of social consequence. Diagnosis may well be motivated by the understandable desire to render the world comprehensible. To think otherwise, to find what occurred incomprehensible is, I would hazard to suggest, unacceptable. To remain inexplicable in an age of diagnosis requires us to remain undiagnosed, and a outcome of non-diagnosis would be to remain without cure. This raises a fundamental question: is it this that we find so uncomfortable, and what propels us forward in our preparedness to ascribe to depression such a worrisome association? Perhaps the practice of mental health diagnosis is the vehicle via which comprehensibility can be wrought. And this is why depression has so effortlessly become potent.

To respond to Arendt's (1981) view of the necessity for us to be thinking, judging people, people who are engaged with the political, we need to take careful account of this

emerging concept of the troubled student. Recognition that what lie beneath these apparent

facts are rational truths could open up the occasion for dialogue. It may well allow us to see

the precariousness of the dots we are connecting as well as the folly of believing too

naively that we will prevent disaster if we simply connect them.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (1980). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (3rd ed., DSM-III)*. Washington DC: Author.

American Psychiatric Association. (1987). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (3rd Rev. ed., DSM-III-R)*. Washington DC: Author.

American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (4th ed., DSM-IV)*. Washington DC: Author.

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th Rev. ed., DSM-IV-TR)*. Washington DC: Author.

Arendt, H. (1968a). *The origins of totalitarianism*. New York: Harvest Book, Harcourt Inc.

Arendt, H. (1968b). Truth and politics. In H. Arendt (Ed.), *Between past and future: Eight exercises in political thought* (pp. 227-264). New York: Penguin Books.

Arendt, H. (1981). *The life of the mind, One/Thinking, Two/Willing (One volume edition)*. New York: Harcourt.

Berrios, G. E. (1995). Mood disorders. In G. E. Berrios & R. Porter (Eds.), *A history of clinical psychiatry: The origin and history of psychiatric disorders* (pp. 384-408). London: Athlone Press.

Burton, R. (2004). The anatomy of melancholy [1624]. Oxford: Henry Cripps (Project Gutenberg Edition, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10800/10800-h/ampart1.html).

Callahan, C., & Berrios, G. E. (2004). *Reinventing depression: A history of the treatment of depression in primary care 1940-2004*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Center for Digital Discourse and Culture Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, & Center for History and New Media George Mason University. (2008). *The April 16 Archive*. from http://www.april16archive.org/.

Chapman, K. (2009). A preventable tragedy at Virginia Tech: Why confusion over FERPA's provisions prevents schools from addressing student violence. *The Boston University public interest law journal, 18*(Spring), 349-385.

Clark, C. (2008, June 23). Team formed to balance safety, privacy. *Emory Report*.

Connell, D. (2009). *Recommended practices for Virginia College threat assessment*. Virginia: Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

d'Entrèves, M. P. (2000). Arendt's theory of judgment. In D. R. Villa (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Hannah Arendt* (pp. 245-260). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davies, G. K. (2008). Connecting the dots: Lessons from the Virginia Tech shootings. *Change, the magazine of higher learning, January - February*. Retrieved September 12, 2009, from http:changmag.org/Archives/Back Issues/January-February 2008/full-connecting-the-dots.html.

DeNoon, D. (2007). V.A. Tech gunman warning signs?, *CBS News,* Retrieved August 8, 2008 from http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/04/18/health/webmd/main2698905.shtml).

deviantart. (2009). Cho Seung Hui comics 3. Retrieved September 10, 2009, from http://latuff2.deviantart.com/art/Cho-Seung-Hui-comics-3-54219309?offset=10#comments.

Dodge, K. A. (2008). Framing public policy and prevention of chronic violence in American youths. *American psychologist, 63*(7), 573-590.

Dunkle, J. H., Silverstein, Z. B., & Warner, S. L. (2009). Managing violent and other troubling students: The role of threat assessment teams on campus. *Journal of college and university law, 34*(3), 585-600.

Dürer, A. (Artist). (1514). *Melancholia I* [Engraving].

Elias, M. (2008, April 15). Colleges put out safety nets. *USA Today*   Retrieved May 15, 2008, from http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-04-15-college-safety_N.htm.

Farrell, E. (2008). Counseling centers lack resources to help troubled students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 54*(6), A1.

Ferguson, C. J., San Miguel, C., & Hartley, R. D. (2009). A multivariate analysis of youth violence and aggression: The influence of family, peers, depression, and media violence. *Journal of pediatrics, 155*(6), 904-908.e3.

Foucault, M. (1977). Nietzsche, genealogy, history. In D. F. Bouchard (Ed.), *Language, counter-memory, practice: Selected essays and interviews* (pp. 139-164). Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Foucault, M. (2006). *History of madness* (J. Murphy & J. Khalfa, Trans.). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Fox, J. A. (2009). Mass murder goes to college: An examination of changes on college campuses post Virginia Tech. *American behavioral scientist, 52*(10), 1465-1485.

Friedman, R. A. (2006). Violence and mental illness: How strong is the link? *New England journal of medicine, 355*(20), 2064-2066.

Harwood, V. (2010a). Political Acts? Toward the recuperation of opinion. *Educational theory*, *60*(1), pp. 117-128.

Harwood, V. (2010b). The place of imagination in inclusive pedagogy: Thinking with Maxine Greene & Hannah Arendt. *International journal of inclusive education*, *14*(4), 357-369.

Harwood, V. (2010c). Mobile asylums: Psychopathologisation as a personal, portable

psychiatric prison. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education, 31*(4), 437-451.

Heilbrun, K., Dvoskin, J., & Heilbrun, A. (2009). Toward preventing future tragedies: Mass killings on college campuses, public health and threat/risk assessment. *Psychological injury and the law, 2*(2), 93-99.

Henry, C., & Demotes-Mainard, J. (2006). SSRIs, suicide and violent behaviour: Is there a need for a better definition of the depressive state? *Current drug safety, 1*(1), 59-62.

Horwitz, A. V., & Wakefield, J. (2007). *The loss of Sadness: How psychiatry transformed normal sorrow into depressive disorder*. New York: Oxford University Press.

HRWebTeam. (2009). Threat assessment team (TAT). Retrieved September 6, 2009 from http://www.uiowa.edu/hr/tat/tat_program.html.

James, R. (1743). *A medicinal dictionary, including physic, surgery, anatomy, chymistry, and botany, in all their branches relative to medicine*. London: T. Osborne.

Jastrow, J. (1901). Depression. In Baldwin, J.M. (Ed.). *Dictionary of philosophy and psychology. Volume 2*. London: MacMillan.

Kaine, T. (2008). Governor Kaine signs legislation in response to Virginia Tech shootings: Legislation includes bills to reform and fund mental health services, adjust legal commitment criteria, and improve campus security [Press Release].   Retrieved May 15, 2008, from http://www.governor.virginia.gov/mediarelations/newsreleases/viewRelease.cfm?id=637.

Latuff, C. (Artist). (2007). *Cho Seung Hui comics 3 by Latuff2* [Comic] Retrieved August 2, 2009, from http://latuff2.deviantart.com/art/Cho-Seung-Hui-comics-3-54219309?offset=10#comments.

Lorry, A.C. (1765). *De Melancholia et morbis melancholicis*. Paris: G. Cavelier.

Lucas, J. (2008, April 16). U.W. Madison focuses on safety post VA Tech: Tragedy

changes perspective on campus violence. *University of Wisconsin-Madison News*,

April 16.   Retrieved May 14, 2008, from http://www.news.wisc.edu/15051.

Mayne, R. G. (1860). *An expository lexicon of terms, ancient and modern, in medical and*

general science. London: Churchill.

National Institute of Mental Health. (2008). The numbers count: Mental disorders in

America. Retrieved June 5, 2008, from

http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-numbers-count-mental-disorders-

in-america.shtml.

Newman, K., & Fox, C. (2009). Repeat tragedy: Rampage shootings in American high

school and college settings, 2002-2008. *American behavioral scientist, 52*(1286),

1286-1308.

O'Toole, M. E. (2000). The school shooter: A threat assessment perspective. Retrieved

March 10, 2005, from www.fbi.gov/publications/school/school2.pdf

Office of Student and Community Affairs. (2008-09). *Keeping our campus safe*. Rutgers

Newark: Author.

Osterwell, N. (2007, August 30). Virginia Tech missed 'clear warnings' of shooter's mental

instability, *Medpage Today*. Retrieved April 2, 2008 from

http://www.medpagetoday.com/Psychiatry/AnxietyStress/6546.

Preti, A. (2008). School shooting as a culturally enforced way of expressing suicidal hostile

intentions. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 36*(4),

544-550.

Radden, J. (2003). Is this dame melancholy? Equating today's depression and past
melancholia. *Philosophy, psychiatry and psychology, 10*(1), 37-52.

Rinehart, K. A. (2007). Higher education's 9/11: Crisis management, *University business:
Solutions for higher education management* (Vol. December). Connecticut:
Professional Media Group.

Rushman, A. (2008, April 4). Threat Assessment Groups cropping up nationwide.
Minnesota Daily. Retrieved April 20, 2008 from
http://www.mndaily.com/2008/04/04/threat-assessment-groups-cropping-
nationwide.

Rutgers Newark. (2009). Threat assessment referral form.

Soanes, C., & Stevenson, A. (Eds.). (2010). *Oxford reference online*. Oxford University
Press. Retrieved May 1, 2010, from
http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e
29793.

Schmidt, J. (2007). *Melancholy and the care of the soul: Religion, moral philosophy and
madness in early modern England*. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Sharpe, M. (2007). A question of two truths? Remarks on *parrhesia* and the 'political-
philosophical' difference. *Parrhesia, 2,* 89-108.

Sullivan, E. (2008). The art of medicine: Melancholy, medicine and the arts. *The lancet,
372*(9642), 884-885.

Virginia General Assembly. (2008). Violence prevention committee: Threat assessment
team. Virginia, US: Government of Virginia.

Virginia Tech Review Panel. (2007). *Mass shootings at Virginia Tech, Report of the Review Panel*. Virginia, USA: Commonwealth of Virginia.

Watching the disaffected. (2008, 31 July). *Times Higher Education*. Retrieved 20 August, 2008 from

http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=402971&sectioncode =26.

Williamson, B. (2008). The gunslinger to the ivory tower came: Should universities have a duty to prevent rampage killings? *, Florida law review* (60), 895-914.

Willis, T. (1672). *De anima brutorum*. London: Typist E.F. impensis Ric. Davis, Oxon.

Willis, T. (1683). *Two discourses concerning the souls of brutes (English Trans of De anima brutorum)*. London: Thomas Dring.

Wolnick, E. (2007). Depression discrimination: Are suicidal college students protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act? . *Arizona law review, 4*, 989-1016.

Zerilli, L. (2006). Truth and politics. *Theory and Event, 9*, 4.

Notes

[1] Research for this paper was undertaken while a Visiting Scholar in the Department of the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge. My gratitude for the opportunity to present this paper to two research seminars; the School of Education, University of Nottingham and the Stirling Institute of Education, University of Stirling. My thanks to the Editors of *Curriculum Inquiry* and to the anonymous reviewers for their contributions.

[2] My focus is on responses within the higher education sector. Until the Virginia Tech mass shootings and the more recent shootings at Northern Illinois University, this sector had not been faced with security threats of this nature. The mass shootings at Virginia Tech has been referred to as "Higher Education's 9/11" (Rinehart, 2007).

[3] The artistic media, a woodcut engraving, could be said to reinforce the depiction of immobility. My thanks to the reviewer who commented on this effect.

[4] In the Oxford Dictionary 'Frowardness' is stated as having origins in Old English, meaning "leading away from" (Soanes & Stevenson, 2010).

[5] In the DSM 'Specifiers' are used to provide further detail for a diagnostic category, especially to designate subtypes of disorders.

[6] I wish to thank one of my reviewers for drawing my attention to this aspect of depression in the *DSM*.

[7] The relationship between mental illness and violence is contentious. For analysis of the relationship, see Friedman (2006), for critical analysis of discrimination and depression in US college settings, see Wolnick (2007).

[8] *The Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech* (2007) provides a list of 42 fatal shootings in the US, dating from 1966 to 2007. The majority of these events occurred at schools. The Columbine Massacre occurred on April 20 1999: "Students Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, killed 12 students and a teacher and wound 23 others at Columbine High School. They had plotted for a year to kill at least 500 and blow up their school. At the end of their hour-long rampage, they turned the guns on themselves. (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007: Appendix L-7).

[9] Questions of how depression is defined, and the ways in which it has become essentialized, with certain human experiences becoming disordered are discussed in recent works such as *The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder* (Horwitz & Wakefield, 2007). A shift toward depression and dangerousness raises newfound concerns about these issues.

[10] Reprinted from *The Journal of Pediatrics*, Vol 155(6), Ferguson, C.J., San Miguel, C. & Hartley, R.D. "A Multivariate Analysis of Youth Violence and Aggression: The Influence of Family, Peers, Depression, and Media Violence" pp. 904-908, Copyright 2009, with permission from Elsevier.

[11] Other names for Threat Assessment Team include: BART (Behavioral Assessment and Recommendation Team), Columbus State University; and BAIT (Behavior Assessment and Intervention Team), University of Dallas at Texas.

[12] Sanon is "a spokeswoman for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), which represents university administrators in charge of student affairs" ('Watching the Disaffected', 2008, online).

[13] See Chapman (2009) for legal analysis of FERPA provisions. As mentioned earlier, this has given rise to debate over student privacy, raising the question of private versus public interest (Dunkle et al., 2009).