Understanding the Mind of Violent Aggressors: Review of a Ten-Year Study Depicting a Pathway to Destructive, Anti-Social Mannerisms and Mental Dysfunction

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Abstract

Violence can be considered among the most far-reaching conditions now confronting the nation and its school-age children. Nationwide, schools are showing an increase in violent acts since the tragic, 1999 Columbine shootings. Since Columbine, there has been a surge in violence and aggressive behavior in students across the nation with high-profile tragedies at Sandy Hook and the most recent deadly shooting in Parkland, Florida.

This article will review the findings from a ten-year study (1999–2010) in which data from this longitudinal investigation identified a pattern of behavioral characteristics common to individual(s) who commit different levels of violent acts. Along with this pattern surfaced a series of stages that progressed from the least violent stage to the most destructive stage of aggressive behavior—the stage in which a purging of conscience occurs and where conditions are conducive for a violent act(s) to be carried out.

The research presented in this article was conducted not long after the 1999 Columbine incident and concluded at the end of 2010. Results were presented in 2012 at the 19th World Congress of International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions held in Beijing, China (see Appendix A). While the study focused on elementary, middle, high school, and early college students, outcomes can also be integrated into adult aggressive behavior and stage advancement as compatible effects.

Background

Students of all ages deserve to feel safe in school. Since the Columbine tragedy of 1999, violence among peers is a growing, widespread issue. Dodge and Pettit (2003) further observed that this, "chronic anti-social conduct represent a major dilemma for American society" (p. 350) but especially within school boundaries of teachers, administrators, parents, and students alike. The disturbing reality from the literature suggests that these aggressive acts are also filtering to the elementary school level at an alarming rate with students as young as 5 and 6 years of age becoming more hostile (DeMoulin, 2012). A few researchers have linked the apparent rise in aggressive and violent behavior in elementary school age children to the increase in high school violence (Spade, 2007; Van Aker, 2007) which unfortunately can develop over time from the middle-school years, with adverse effects, and extending into the high-school years as in the case of many of the violent school shootings (Bell, 2007; Toppo, 2003).

Sadly, school violence is nothing new to educational institutions. For decades, safety experts and school administrators have reported a concern for violence and aggressive behavior in students at all levels of the school. To this end, one cannot pick up a news piece today without reference to some type of school tragedy.

After the Columbine shooting, researchers began to analyze issues of cause and effect. However, the cause(s) of these violent behaviors is complex and varied, and linked to many factors (DeMoulin, 2012; Van Acker, 2007). Moreover, even a greater concern is how school administration deals with this type of aggressive behavior possibilities and keeps students safe.

Violence in students can also be linked to many social, emotional, and physical factors. These factors, overtime, can lead to a lack of control over one's self and can be a large indictor of aggressive behavior where a person that acts and reacts impulsively tends to disregard future consequences (DeMoulin, 2012; Van Acker, 2007). This lack of self-control has been shown to increase violent behavioral reactions (Bettencourt, Talley, Benjamin, & Valentine, 2006). Different independent studies highlighted mini profiles for potentially violent students which indicated that they tend to be loners, have little remorse, frequently are victims of abuse or have witnessed abuse in their home, have stored-up anger, and low frustration levels (DeMoulin, 2012; Estell, 2007; Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2007). Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, and Modzeleski (2002) additionally found that students who participated in school shootings had one common key factor—unremittent bullying prior to the shooting rampages. Although this is not always the case in current violence situations, it is a commonality to be considered.

Another issue is an acceptance of aggressive behavior as the 'norm' for a person of interest. Aggressive juveniles see their world as a violent, hostile environment and view others as having negative or unreceptive intentions towards them. They believe that handling situations in an aggressive manner is appropriate because it has become their behavioral norm. It is vital that these aggressive behaviors are identified and acted upon immediately so these individuals know that aggression will not be tolerated. This can only happen when the culture of the school changes from watchers and by-standers to contributors and engagers (Boxer & Tisak, 2005, Dodge et al., 2003; Schwartz, 2000).

Analysis of the Ten-Year Study

Unfortunately, what the Columbine tragedy did accomplish was to bring the nature, reason, and a desire for understanding aggressive and violent behavior of adolescents to the national forefront and a heightened awareness to communities. There is agreement in the research community that violent acts of aggression are usually the result of a brewing, internal struggle.

In the Columbine incidence, and in each of the devastating violent cases since (including the mass tragedy at Sandy Hook and the most recent deadly mass shooting in Parkland, Florida), much of mainstream media has attempted to provide a profile of the person(s) who carried out the violent act. Regrettably, there is a misunderstanding of what goes through the mind of one who commits these types of extremely violent acts. So, with this misunderstanding, the media uses descriptors that are believed to be universal, but most cases are totally different in context. Terms such as delusional, scary, loner, withdrawn, outcast, detachment, hostile, isolated, creepy, and anti-social were used somewhat interchangeably, but they missed the mark on being categorical.

Unfortunately, with these various attempts to define a shooter and all the media hype on

guns, gun control, political agendas, and political correctness, what is missing is a huge piece to the violence puzzle. It is the answer to the most basic of questions, *"How can we more effectively identify individuals who may possess these types of aggressive tendencies and intervene before a tragedy occurs?"*

The Study

A decade-long series of studies was undertaken to answer this question as a result of the events at Columbine. Since the Columbine High School massacre in 1999, the nature, reason, and a desire for understanding aggressive and violent behavior of adolescents has been brought to the national forefront. Findings from this ten-year research investigation of violent instances provided information for identifiable behaviors of commonality that emerged and provided a definable behavioral patter that, when pieced together, offered more precise descriptions of those who carried out the violence. Along with this pattern surfaced a series of categorical stages where unique behavioral characteristics became distinctive to each stage. These stages progress from the least violent stage (Social Awareness/Defiance) to the most destructive of the aggressive behavioral stage—Social Rebellion—a stage where a purging of conscience occurs and where conditions are conducive for a violent act(s) to be carried out

Analyses also suggested a progressive set of destructive behaviors which distinguish one stage from another and further indicated that regardless of whether the violent act appears to happen suddenly or emerges over time, each person will go through these stages with the length of time spent within each stage varying depending on a variety of factors. For example, one could spend a short period of time and progress rather abruptly given the appropriate catalyst or spend a period of years in each stage—slowly building to a premeditated or random act of violence to be carried out (DeMoulin, 2012)

The identified stage also corresponded to one of several types of suggested intervention strategies that can be implemented to maximize success in behavioral reform and retard the progression through the stages before the behavior becomes violent and before conscience awareness is diminished. School personnel, parents and community members need to understand each of the research-identified stages, the unique set of behavioral characteristics associated with each stage, and the importance for early identification of the appropriate stage-specific anti-social behaviors. In essence, recognizing the interrelationships of these stages and behavioral characteristics is critical so early intervention strategies can be put into action before any violent act can be carried out in the 4th stage—a stage where it is not 'if' an extremely violent act will occur, but 'when' it will happen.

Progressive Behavior Dysfunction

One of the findings of this study provided a comprehensive behavioral analysis from the interrelationships of exhibited anti-social behaviors and the degree of migration down a research-identified path leading to extreme violent behavior. This further led to the classification and definition as Progressive Behavior Dysfunction (PBD). From the findings of this study, Progressive Behavior Dysfunction is defined as:

> A negative movement down an anti-social path resulting in an increased display of harmful and destructive behaviors towards others through the continual removal of emotions and conscience by replacing pro-social behaviors with anti-social behaviors (DeMoulin, 2012, p.28).

For Progressive Behavior Dysfunction to stand alone and be studied:

- Take Away Those Aggressive Behaviors That Result From Brain Damage/Trauma (Difficult Birth/Traumatic Accident, etc.);
- Take Away Those Aggressive Behaviors That Are Drug-Induced—Legal (Prescription/Non-Prescription, Over the Counter Meds, Alcohol, etc.) and Illegal (Heroin, Uppers, Downers, Cocaine, etc.);
- Take Away Those Aggressive Behaviors Resulting From Spontaneous, Impulsive Actions (Situation-Induced Anger, Jealousy, Betrayal, etc.);
- Take Away Those Aggressive Behaviors Resulting From Health Issues (Stroke, Tumor, etc.); and
- What You Have Left is Progressive Behavior Dysfunction (DeMoulin, 2012, p.29).

Pro-Social and Anti-Social Paths

Catalano and Hawkins (1996) stipulated that a youth's behavior will be pro-social or anti-social depending on the predominant behaviors, norms, and values held by those to whom they are bonded. To understand the nature of this statement, we must understand differences between pro-social and anti-social behaviors. When we begin viewing how we look at these different paths that we, as humans, choose to go, it can shed some light on aggressive behavioral acts. In the realm of this article, most of the focus will be directed to the anti-social path since it was the focus of the study; however, a short description will be given to the pro-social side.

In Table 1, both paths are provided. In the pro-social side, there are four identified stages of this development—social awareness/compliance, social affiliation, social integration, and social enculturation (DeMoulin, 2012).

Table 1

Pro-Social Path Progression
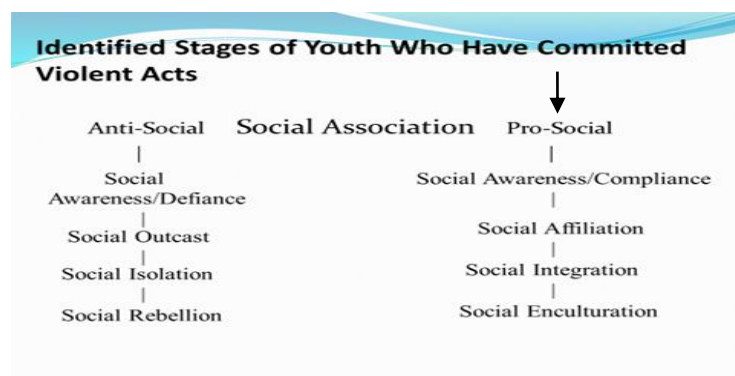
Social Awareness/Compliance

We understand (and are aware), for the most part, the basics of what society gives us in rules and regulations and people, in general, know and recognize the need for laws and policies

and comply accordingly with them. Perrson (2007) found that pro-social, cognitive behavior is the ability to understand, relate, and accept social situations and expectations in a civilized society. As we practice and comply with these social expectations we move to social affiliation.

Social Affiliation

One of the basic needs of people is a social connection with others. Hill and Werner (2006) refer to this connection as 'affiliation orientation' which is when an individual wants to form and maintain close bonds with others. These bonds are a necessary component for emotional healthiness. Individuals that are accepted by their peers tend to be less aggressive, more empathetic, more cooperative, more social, and better at reading social expectations (Dodge et al., 2003). To this end, where constructive affiliations are made, people are less likely to select aggressive acts to solve problems and are less likely to become violent, especially in school environments (Emond, Ormel, Veenstra, & Oldehinkel, 2007; Hill & Werner, 2006). Positive peer relationships, then, play a pivotal role in developing non-aggressive behaviors (Dodge et al., 2003; Schwartz, 1999). As the pro-social movement continues, people become socially integrated in activities and engagements that reflect positive contributions to society.

Social Integration

Once affiliated with proper, positive affiliations with others, pro-social people become integrated into society which comes through understanding and practicing the proper social courtesies and societal expectations over time. Crick and Dodge (1994), through their research, found that as a child grows and develops, these evolving changes impact the child's cognitive understanding and, as they mature, develop certain social reasoning skills where their information-processing abilities improve over time. They, then, become integrated into society as a way of life. Once integrated into the different aspects of society, the tendency is to make positive contributions to people and communities.

These activities positively impact those in the same level and promote a healthy set of behaviors that are non-aggressive in nature. Through the passage of time, people then become enculturated into society.

Social Enculturation

In general, people who become enculturated have positive values, principles, and beliefs—seeing the environment in a pro-social manner because they learn the culture that they are surrounded by is vital to function as contributory members. As a result, they tend to believe that violent, aggressive behaviors are harmful to societal expectations and view that type of behavior as morally wrong and live their life accordingly.

Pro-Social Descriptors

With the movement through the pro-social stages, certain behavioral characteristics become evident. Examples of these include, but not limited to, are that the person:

- understands and practices 'social courtesies';

- understand and practices a positive role in society;
- understands the necessity for the need for rules, regulations, and policies in a democratic society;
- becomes an active and productive member of society;
- understands that there are limitations to negative behavior;
- understands that there are consequences for their choices;
- demonstrates a knowledge of expectation of him/her is a democratic society;
- values appropriate and meaningful associations and relationships;
- strives to improve self and others;
- is respectful of people and their property and space; and
- has an active conscience (which is critical for keeping a pro-social path).

Anti-Social Descriptors

Schwartz (1999) discovered that social rejection tends to develop aggression and can lead to anti-social behavior. Also important is that children who are constantly targeted for verbal and physical bullying are at a high risk for psychological maladjustment leading to anti-social behavior (Bates, Dodge, McFayden-Ketchem, Petit, & Schwartz, 1999; Dodge et al., 2003).

As people, we constantly move back and forth between social awareness/ compliance and social awareness/defiance. We know what is right, but there are times we do things, as people, that are not totally or socially accepted. For example, many people may cheat on income tax information or 'pad' resumes to make a better impression or may go above the recommended speed limit for a period of time, or angrily protest some event or occurrence, or become belligerent at times with people or maybe with referees at games. Although these are somewhat defiant in nature, they typically do not lead to chronic violent behaviors. It is when there is more defiance of social expectations than compliance that the anti-social path begins and continues. And, as analysis of data indicated, the further one moves down the anti-social path, the more difficult it is to bring that person back to pro-social behaviors. In the end, people that migrate down the anti-social path see aggressive acts as the way to achieve their goal (DeMoulin, 2012).

With the movement through the anti-social stages, certain behavioral characteristics became evident. Examples of these include, but are not limited to, that the person who:

- demonstrates a lack of courtesy toward people;
- has a notable change in his/her circle of friends;
- changes role models to more aggressive, destructive people;
- defies authority at all levels;
- displays aggressive behavior toward others;
- engages in damaging, injurious and destructive use of drugs and alcohol;
- demonstrates a lack of respect for other's property and space;
- withdraws from society in appearance (rings, violent-appearing tattoos, distinctive hair style, color, etc.);
- tends to listen more to demonic/destructive music;
- believes that there are no limitations of what s/he can do and disregards any rules and laws that prevents him/her from personal gratification;
- has an increased interest in and/or use of different types of weaponry;

- tends to violently abuse animals;
- once angered, is often difficult to calm down;
- moves from Anxiety to Chronic Depression—Social Withdrawal with alarming frequency;
- tends to 'Bully' others to demonstrate his/her dominance, especially if s/he was the previous target of bullying or indirect aggression;
- tends to find others in the same situation and entice them to join his/her mode of conduct as a clique; and
- displays minimal active conscience which is deteriorating significantly.

Certainly not all of these behaviors are evident for any one person, but they provide various descriptors for association. As the person becomes more defiant to social expectations, rules, and regulations, behavior then becomes more insolent, rude, disrespectful, and aggressive. As these aggressive behaviors become a dominant part of the person's conduct and if left unchecked, movement down the anti-social path progresses toward a more destructive set of mannerisms (see Table 2). These anti-social stages include: social awareness/defiance, social outcast, social isolation, and social rebellion. The research-identified descriptive behaviors become more destructive and aggressive as one progresses from stage to stage and are linked to the research-identified ABI stages from the study to be discussed later in this article.

Table 2

Anti-Social Path Progression
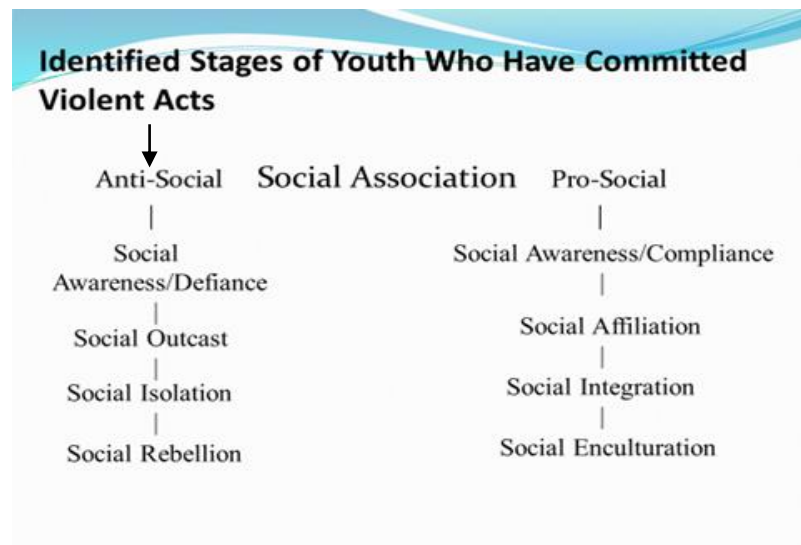
Aggressive Behavior Index (ABI)

The ABI is a research-based instrument that predicts a level of aggression for a person of interest that is linked to a specific stage within an anti-social path (DeMoulin, 2012). The ABI is designed to measure interactions of overt aggressive behavior characteristics and stage of progression as identified in the study and provides a logical answer to the most basic question discussed earlier, "How can we more effectively identify individuals who may possess these types of aggressive tendencies and intervene before a tragedy occurs?"

The ABI conducts systematic comparisons of anti-social behaviors, provides item analysis which identifies those behaviors of concern, and categorizes an appropriate stage classification so proper and proper intervention strategies can be implemented. Behavioral characteristics for the ABI of various level-descriptors of anti-social behaviors were established by a panel of experts. Utilizing the Delphi technique, these behavioral characteristics were then returned to the panel of experts who rated them from 1 – 4 according to aggressive tendencies with 1 being the least aggressive behavior descriptor to 4 being the most aggressive behavior descriptor (DeMoulin, 2012).

Once rated, data were subjected to Principle Component Factor Analysis with Orthogonal Rotation. Behavioral characteristics were then analyzed for stage identification where loading factors indicated 4 distinct stages. Each of the behavioral characteristics within the ABI was then weighted with the average of the loading factors synonymous with that identified stage. Questions concerning content and construct validity were answered by the panel of experts and through Principle Component Factor Analysis.

Instrumentation

The ABI instrument (see Table 3) uses a multi-rater approach and then analyzes the interrelated responses from participants. The ABI measures:

- the level of conscience regressions as one progresses down the anti-social path;
- the identifiable stage within the anti-social path;
- involvement groups that can make a positive impact within the identified stage;
- the ABI score next to the ABI scoring range representative for each identifiable stage; and
- the recommended counseling, therapy or intervention strategies that are needed to help initiate behavioral improvement to reverse the anti-social progression (DeMoulin, 2012).

Once completed, the ratings of the 40 items are subjected to interrelated comparisons which produce a computer-generated, graphic representation based on previously assigned weights. Results are then color-coded as provided in Table 3. A **red code** indicates a universally strong agreement among raters for the person of interest, are primary behavioral characteristics to be analyzed, and are first-tier behavioral depictions to be addressed in therapy. A **yellow code** indicates high agreement among raters for the person of interest and are secondary behavioral depictions to be analyzed providing a second-tier review. These codes set the foundation for psychological profile analysis and a starting point to begin preparing effective intervention strategies so the more raters utilized in the analyses, the more accurate the profile of the person of interest (DeMoulin, 2012).

Table 3

40-Item Rating Coding

Anti-Social Pathway Index		
Directions: Please Place indicator according to the following scale:		

A	B	C	D	E	F	Test Result	Avg
Do Not Know	Not A Description of Person	Poor Description	Fair Description	Very Accurate Description	Completely Accurate Description	1	
1	Demonstrates a lack of courtesy toward people					A	0.0
2	Demonstrate a lack of respect for other's property and space					B	0.0
3	Noticeable change in his/her circle of friends					C	1.0
4	Tendency to listen to music that promotes violence with demonic, hate, or anti-social lyrics					D	2.0
5	Begins separation from pro-social society in appearance (rings, tattoos, hair, etc.)					E	3.0
6	Role models change to more aggressive, anti-social, destructive people					F	4.0
7	Tendency to move from Anxiety to Chronic Depression (noticeable mood swings)					D	2.0
8	Severe defiance to any type of authority					F	4.0
9	Tendency to find others in the same situation and entice them to join his/her mode of conduct					F	4.0
10	Repeatedly displays aggressive behavior toward others e.g., pushing, wanting to fight, verbal abuse					E	3.0
11	Demonstration of hateful attitude toward others (schoolmates, friends, family, teachers, etc.					D	2.0
12	Damaging, injurious and destructive use of drugs and/or alcohol					F	4.0
13	Belief that there are no limitations of what s/he can do with a total disregard for any rules and laws					D	2.0
14	Increased interest in and/or use of weaponry					E	3.0
15	Demonstrates an unhealthy obsession toward a person, group, ideal, law, government, etc.					A	0.0
16	Once angered, s/he is difficult to calm down					B	0.0
17	Repeatedly displays an attitude which shows no conscience, feelings or remorse for his/her actions					C	1.0
18	Increased interest and/or use of violent video games, magazines, etc.					F	4.0
19	Withdrawn from 'normal' activities for a person of that age					E	3.0
20	Defiance of basic rules and/or authority such a parents, siblings, teachers, administration, etc.					D	2.0
21	Withdrawn from family and friends--becoming a 'loner'					F	4.0
22	Demonstrates a lack of feeling when someone is hurt					D	2.0
23	Repeated defiance of public laws, organizational policies that define rules of conduct					E	3.0
24	Repeated bullying others to demonstrate dominance or is repeatedly bullied					D	2.0
25	Tortue or killing of animals e.g., swerving of car to hit an animal, or no feeling when a pet dies, etc.					F	4.0
26	Noticeable self-abuse -- pulling out of hair, stabbing or cutting self, biting lip, etc.					C	1.0
27	Venting by hitting, kicking or throwing of objects					B	0.0
28	Noticeable decline in grades in school or performance at work					A	0.0
29	Repeated absence from school or work					C	1.0
30	Harsh treatment and/or language toward parents, siblings or 'friends'					D	2.0
31	Sleeps more during the day					F	4.0
32	Peer abuse at school or work					E	3.0
33	Becoming secretive in activities					D	2.0
34	Blames others for his/her actions					E	3.0
35	Has trouble making friends					F	4.0
36	Easily angered over the most trivial of things					D	2.0
37	Displays an attitude of superiority over others					F	4.0
38	Extremely irritable					D	2.0
39	Cannot take part in organized group activities without disruption					E	3.0
40	Repeated use of profanity when talking in conversation					A	0.0
							222

Computer-Generated Stage Analysis Representation

The cumulative, multi-rater instrument provides a comprehensive, computer-generated behavioral analysis (See Appendix B) that will be used as examples in tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 to indicate a level of anti-social behaviors and the degree of migration down a simulated path leading to extreme violent behavior. The identified stage also corresponds to one of several types of intervention strategies that can be successfully implemented. This early-intervention tool is critical for identifying aggressive behavior in suspected adolescents, youth, and adults before the behavior becomes extremely violent (DeMoulin, 2012).

1. Social awareness/defiance stage. Continuous disruptive behavior can lead to poor social relationships among peers. Positive relationships form the basis for pro-social understanding so troublesome relationships could inhibit a person from developing the constructive, pro-social skills necessary for the final pro-social stage—social enculturation—and lead one into negative feelings about future experiences with peer relations. Peer acceptance is such an important part of relationships that peer rejection can play a significant role in strengthening anti-social behavior. Peer rejection, no matter at any age, can be the catalyst that increases the difficulties of interpreting social expectations and in developing an understanding of the appropriate socializing process.

Edmond et. al. (2007) discovered that students who do not gain a positive experience from their peers react to others aggressively to achieve their goal of obtaining some type of relationship—even if the relationship is confrontational. In these environments, aggressive students begin to incorporate acts of indirect aggression or bullying which can include negative behaviors such as gossip, exclusion from group, avoidance of person by group members, tormenting, and mocking or labeling.

Also, as victims of indirect aggression or bullying, low self-esteem, frustration, anxiety, depression, and tension are some of the by-products. Being a victim of constant indirect aggression or bullying can become overwhelming and drive the targeted person to recklessness or retaliatory aggression or even suicide if s/he cannot fully cope (Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2001; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001). The literature further reveals that victims of indirect aggression or bullying have the potential to become, over time, as violent as those who have bullied them (Brendtro, 2005; Estell, 2007; Holt, Finkelhoe, & Kantor, 2007; Warren & Anderson-Butcher, 2005).

In Table 4, the stage identification of the person of interest (ABI score of 68 and colored light grey) is categorized as Social Awareness/Defiance. Necessary involvement groups include, but not limited to, parents, peers, church, teachers, etc., that can be influential in early intervention. It is at this level that positive, ongoing intercession and active engagement of these reinforcement-based groups are needed to keep the person of interest from declining further.

Table 4

Analysis of Social Awareness/Defiance Stage

Conscience Regression	Anti-Social				
	Behavioral Path	Involvement	Score	Range	**Recommended Counseling Strategies**
Conscience Sensitivity	**Social Defiance** Level	Parents		0	
		Peers		30	**Family Therapy--1st Level Counseling Intervention**
		Church	68	75	
Potential Conscience Vulnerability	1	Teachers		100	
	Social Outcast	Role Model		140	**Individual and/or Group Therapy--Restoring the Foundations**
		Support Groups		175	
	1	Counselors		200	
Potential Conscience Desentization		Psychologist		240	**Behaviorial Modification Therapy--2nd Level Restoring the Foundations Counseling**
	Social Isolation	Psychiatrist		275	
	2	Clinician		300	
Likely Purging of Conscience	**Social Rebellion**	Clinical Specialist for Extreme Mental Evaluation		340	**Intense Behaviorial and Psychological Reprogramming Through Psycho-Therapy and Clinical Observations With Confinement and/or Isolation**
				375	
	3			400	
Absence of Conscience	**Social Dysfunction**				

Counseling, therapy, or intervention strategies to be considered include, but not limited to, family therapy and 1st level counseling. These strategies need to be focused and constant as conscience sensitivity is still active and essential to achieve and to maintain the necessary behavioral results crucial to move the person of interest back to a more pro-social set of behaviors. Defiance of rules, disrespect to authority, abusive language, and unsuitable conduct can be associated with this stage (DeMoulin, 2012).

2. Social outcast stage. Another element in behavioral theory is that there is a relationship between aggressive mannerisms and a lack of peer acceptance. When peer-acceptance needs are not met, a person of interest can be labeled an 'outcast' from the school norm at which students avoid this person to the point where high-levels of frustration may result in personal rejection leading to a detachment from peers and school. For support, they turn to others in the same condition, establish a bond with these individuals, and begin to form a self-identification conglomerate or clique which can be quite large at this level.

On average, these individuals tend to conduct themselves in ways that draws attention while demonstrating defiant behavior as a group to retaliate against a system they believe forced them outside the realm of normal school functions and operations. The behavioral action for social outcasts is usually one of aggressive, defiant, and hostile behavior with negative interpersonal relationships with those outside their group.

As an example, in the Columbine tragedy, the 'outcast' group identified themselves as the 'Trench-Coat Mafia' and had distinct actions, wardrobe, hats, fingernails, etc., that brought attention to them. Although they were feared, most students left them alone in their cluster even as they disregarded expected school conduct.

On average, social outcasts act and react impulsively, and demonstrate a lack of thinking about outcomes of actions or consequences from their actions. Social outcasts display noticeable aggressiveness to a perceived hostile world in intimidating and defiant ways (Boxer & Tisak, 2005; Dodge, 1980; Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch, & Monshouwer, 2002; Nelson & Crick, 1999).

In Table 5, the stage identification of the person of interest is categorized as Social Outcast (ABI score of 170 and yellow coded). Necessary involvement groups include, but not limited to, positive role models, support groups, counselors, etc., that can be influential in intervention. Identification in this level suggests that the previous involvement groups, counseling or intervention strategies, would not be successful due to the nature of a heightened behavioral aggression. Although the aggression is more highly defiant and abusive, it is not designated as life-threatening actions. However, intervention needs to be swift and direct to stop further migration down the anti-social path (DeMoulin, 2012).

Table 5

Analysis of Social Outcast Stage

Conscience Regression	Anti-Social				
	Behavioral Path	Involvement	Score	Range	Recommended Counseling Strategies
Conscience Sensitivity	Social Defiance	Parents		0	
	Level	Peers		30	Family Therapy--1st Level Counseling Intervention
		Church		75	
Potential Conscience Vulnerability	1	Teachers		100	
	Social Outcast	Role Model		140	Individual and/or Group Therapy--Restoring the Foundations
		Support Groups	170	175	
	1	Counselors		200	
Potential Conscience Desentization		Psychologist		240	Behaviorial Modification Therapy--2nd Level Restoring the Foundations Counseling
	Social Isolation	Psychiatrist		275	
	2	Clinician		300	
Likely Purging of Conscience		Clinical Specialist for Extreme Mental Evaluation		340	Intense Behaviorial and Psychological Reprogramming Through Psycho-Therapy and Clinical Observations With Confinement and/or Isolation
	Social Rebellion			375	
	3			400	
Absence of Conscience	Social Dysfunction				

It is critical that the person of interest or the identified leader of this 'group' engages in the various involvement strategies. The counseling or intervention strategies become more intense and include, but not limited to, individual/group therapy and 1st level of Restoring The Foundations (RTF). RTF seeks to uncover previous activities or experiences that may be contributing factors to current hostile and defiant behaviors. It is at this social-outcast level that a more focused and directed set of intervention strategies be incorporated as there are indications of a potential conscience vulnerability where feelings and emotions concerning individual hostility and aggression to others are beginning to decline (DeMoulin, 2012).

These intervention strategies need to be intensive, detailed, and constant to regain

conscience sensitivity and to achieve the necessary behavioral results needed to move the person of interest back to a more pro-social path. Vandalism, property destruction, bullying, minor theft, verbal/physical abuse, etc., can be linked to this stage (DeMoulin, 2012).

3.   Social isolation stage. Anti-social behavior escalates in this stage with those that are totally rejected by peers. As social outcasts, those in the normal school functions or operations tend to shun these individuals. A long-term consequence of the effect of peer rejection is that often, one will become more socially isolated and more socially aggressive as indicated in this stage. The rejected person(s) will become increasingly inept at pro-social interaction that intensifies to elevated frustration levels in various social situations and functions which can lead to hostile responses. As a result of continual rejection by peer groups, the excluded person may further isolate himself/herself from others and experience persistent aggressive problems (DeMoulin, 2012; Dodge et al., 2003). Those with heightened aggressive tendencies are seen as less likable and are deemed deserving of other's vetted anger against him/her which can lead to further rejection by peers, thus causing total isolation from the established school norm— oftentimes becoming a recluse or loner at home.

If applicable, the number from the previous Social Outcast Stage may be reduced due to a more hostile transformation with heightened aggression and hostility synonymous with this stage. Some in the Social Outcast Stage may not migrate to this level for those very reasons. However, those who do fall within this stage, on average, become more hostile, more aggressive and more uncontrollable, and, if left unchecked, will lead to a further downslide in the anti-social path (DeMoulin, 2012).

In Table 6, the stage identification of the person of interest is categorized as Social Isolation (ABI score of 265 and brown coded). The counseling, therapy, or intervention strategies that are now critical with involved parties include, but not limited to, psychologists, psychiatrists, and clinicians. Identification in this level suggests that the previous intervention strategies stipulated for stages 1 and 2 would not be successful due to the more violent nature of aggression of the person of interest (DeMoulin, 2012).

Aggressive behavior is more frequent, more noticeable, and more violent so it is critical that the person of interest begins to receive in-depth investigations from the involvement groups. If there are members left from the previous Social Outcast Stage, they are moving into increasingly violent aggression directed mostly toward innocent bystanders or specifically targeted groups or individuals. This isolation stage indicates an extreme removal from the pro-social culture and where separate rules are developed that virtually opposes any pro-social values and morals (DeMoulin, 2012).

Table 6

Analysis of Social Isolation Stage

	Behavioral Path	Involvement	Score	Range	Recommended Counseling Strategies
Conscience Regression	Anti-Social				
	Social Defiance	Parents		0	
Conscience Sensitivity	Level	Peers		30	**Family Therapy--1st Level Counseling Intervention**
		Church		75	
Potential Conscience Vulnerability	1	Teachers		100	
	Social Outcast	Role Model		140	**Individual and/or Group Therapy--Restoring the Foundations**
		Support Groups		175	
Potential Conscience Desentization	1	Counselors		200	
		Psychologist		240	Behaviorial Modification Therapy--2nd Level Restoring the Foundations Counseling
	Social Isolation	Psychiatrist	265	275	
	2	Clinician		300	
Likely Purging of Conscience		Clinical Specialist for Extreme Mental Evaluation		340	Intense Behaviorial and Psychological Reprogramming Through Psycho-Therapy and Clinical Observations With Confinement and/or Isolation
	Social Rebellion			375	
	3			400	
Absence of Conscience	**Social Dysfunction**				

Counseling, therapy, or intervention strategies need to become more concentrated, intense, and fixed to include, but not limited to, directed and extreme behavioral modification strategies along with 2nd level RTF which probes even further and deeper into the life of the person of interest to uncover situations that could be identified as catalysts to the heightened aggressive behavior (DeMoulin, 2012).

It is at this stage that, along with the more intense set of intervention strategies, psychological testing must begin at all levels as there are indications of a potential conscience desensitization occurring where feelings and emotions are being purged to the point where the person of interest can conduct extremely aggressive acts without feelings or sensitivity to others. Only success in behavioral modification strategies will keep the person of interest from slipping into the 4th and most dangerous stage. Car jackings, the 'knockout' game, intentially targeting people for violent abuse, high-level robbery, arson, drug-related scenarios, etc., can be considered synomynous with this stage (DeMoulin, 2012).

4. Social rebellion stage. In this stage, there is a total denial of the system that the person of interest believes is the cause of his/her troubles and lack of success. Violent behaviors, associated within this ABI identified stage can be long lasting and get out of hand as in the case of extreme violence associated with mass shooting in schools, stabbings, beatings, and bombings to cause loss of life. On average, people in this stage believe it is their right to purposely harm someone because they perceive to have been threatened in some manner. This type of retaliatory anger results in intentional acts of harm to someone or to masses of people (DeMoulin, 2012 and

supported by Bell, 2007; Toppo, 2003). Angry or aggressive people in this stage believe the action(s) taken is warranted which can be fueled by hatred, revenge, or contempt (DeMoulin, 2012). This follows previous inferences by Bandura (1978) and DiGiuseppe and Tafrate (2007).

In Table 7, the stage identification of the person of interest is categorized as Social Rebellion (ABI score of 354 and red coded). Involved parties include clinical specialists for extreme mental and psychological evaluation as uncompromising and violent behavior are essentially vicious, cruel, and unremorseful at this stage so it is critical that the person of interest be identified and isolated (removed) from society to begin behavioral and mental reprogramming before s/he can carry out any threats or acts because it is at this stage where carnage happens on a small or massive scale (DeMoulin, 2012).

Table 7

Analysis of Social Rebellion Stage

Conscience Regression		Anti-Social				
		Behavioral Path	Involvement	Score	Range	Recommended Counseling Strategies
Conscience Sensitivity	Level	**Social Defiance**	Parents		0	
			Peers		30	**Family Therapy--1st Level Counseling Intervention**
			Church		75	
Potential Conscience Vulnerability	1		Teachers		100	
		Social Outcast	Role Model		140	**Individual and/or Group Therapy--Restoring the Foundations**
			Support Groups		175	
	1		Counselors		200	
Potential Conscience Desentization		**Social Isolation**	Psychologist		240	Behaviorial Modification Therapy--2nd Level Restoring the Foundations Counseling
			Psychiatrist		275	
	2		Clinician		300	
Likely Purging of Conscience		**Social Rebellion**	Clinical Specialist for Extreme Mental Evaluation	354	340	Intense Behaviorial and Psychological Reprogramming Through Psycho-Therapy and Clinical Observations With Confinement and/or Isolation
	3				375	
					400	
Absence of Conscience		**Social Dysfunction**				

Revolting against society, it is now a matter of when and how often a tragic, violent event will occur because the person of interest blames society s/he now shuns for his/her inability to be accepted and successful—society in general is now the large-scale focus from intense internal aggression. If there has been a lengthy time between stage progression, there is usually a devised plan of attack of specific, targeted individuals that is in place or it can be random depending on the individual. In any case, it is only a matter of the proper timing to evoke the most damage to obtain the personal satisfaction, revenge, and notice that the person of interest believes have been personally denied (DeMoulin, 2012).

At this level, there are only a few, if any, of the original members from the social outcast group left as the violence has become so extreme that many drop out due to the nature of the

violent expectations. That is why the violent acts committed usually encompasses one person, sometime two, but seldom more than that (Columbine = 2; Sandy Hook = 1; Parkland High School = 1; congresswoman shooter = 1; Aurora, Colorado theater shooter = 1, Austin, Texas bomber = 1, Virginia Tech shooter = 1, YouTube Shooter = 1, Parkland, Florida shooter = 1, Las Vegas, Nevada = 1 shooter, Santa Fe, Texas = 1, etc.). Even the group within social isolation realizes the extreme nature of violence and refuse to participate.

Intervention strategies must include powerful and, in some cases, extreme behavioral and psychological reprogramming as the conscience level has virtually been totally purged and severe violent acts can be committed without remorse, so it is critical that the person of interest be removed from society before an extremely violent attack can be carried out. Murder, rape, torture, mass killings, etc., are characteristic of this stage (DeMoulin, 2012).

Summary

In the realm of understanding, there are basically two types of anger: controlled and uncontrolled. Controlled anger is one that does not have a long-lasting, personal effect and can be constrained, regulated and contained—it is a natural part of behavior. However, uncontrolled anger without cause creates the energy that fuels aggression. Once that fueling happens, the aggression must be discharged in some manner (James, 1890/1965), which, as this study indicated, can become extremely violent as one progresses down a research-identified, anti-social path.

The literature reports that early aggressive acts tend to develop into a life-long pattern of chronic anti-social behavior and can give rise to lawless activities and abusive behaviors toward others (Boxer & Tisak, 2005). Vossekuil et. al. (2002) also found that those who focused violence toward their peers were previous recipients of relentless bullying or indirect aggression and later became forcefully violent to students, teachers, and administration once the bullying or indirect aggression became overbearing (Lawrence & Adams, 2006; Vossekuil et al.).

Many of the extreme, violent actions from the shooters such as, Columbine, Sandy Hook, Parkland High School, and the shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in Arizona and others could have been avoided if proper pro-active analyses would have occurred, appropriate stage categorization identified, and proper intervention strategies implemented (which in each of these stage 4 cases would call for the removal of the person of interest from society during analyses) before the tragedy could be carried out. Had this been done, the acts of violence could have been prevented. Instead, message after message after message, as the shooters in each of these situations displayed, went unnoticed or fell through the cracks. Ignoring these signs, messages, and behaviors can only lead to one heartbreaking outcome—massive violence on a vast scale.

Knowing and understanding the implications for each stage become crucial so proper and focused intervention strategies can be used. For instance, if a person of interest, after a series of threatening behaviors, violent actions or extreme hostility, would have had an ABI score to be identified in stage 3 (Social Isolation), but people who are unfamiliar with these levels of progression only recommend counseling, the effect of such an unsuccessful action would be virtually zero since counseling is only an applicable intervention strategy for stage 1 persons and not stage 3 persons where psychiatrists, psychologists, and clinicians are recommended. Thus, the underlying detection and intervention strategy would have been incorrect and the stimuli that

channel the inner hostility of the person of interest would still be alive, active, and disruptive.

In the end, students that display aggressive and violent behaviors cause apprehension and fear for those students who come to school to learn. Unacceptable aggression needs to be caught and dealt with immediately and not allowed to continue. If unchecked, a person of interest can become totally dysfunctional in society with an absence of conscience so all aggression, in 'their world' is justified.

People who migrate to stage 4 can harm, maim, mutilate, and kill without any feeling and without any remorse. Those identified as terrorists, assassins, and some political activists have a total disregard of any societal rules and regulations or any respect for human life and kill without remorse. These individuals go through the stages; however, minds are reprogrammed for destruction of human life and are moved through the stages to purge any conscience to achieve that goal. These are the persons of interest that, until caught or neutralized, will continue extreme patterns of destruction. Reasoning and rationalization do not work with people in stage 4 and the extreme boundary of stage 3 who are both unreasonable and irrational in thoughts and actions.

Conclusion

It is extremely important to understand that, for this pro-active, ABI measure to work, all involved parties surrounding a person of interest must begin to immediately act on any signals and messages sent from a person of interest. Once identified as such, everyone that has any familiarity with him/her, no matter at what level (family members, peers, teachers, counselors, administration, police, etc.,), must begin to activate the construction of a behavioral profile of this person of interest. The initial analysis from the ABI instrumentation would be an extremely powerful assessment tool in this evaluation and was designed for this purpose along with individual stage-level identification for proper intervention strategies. It is only when these pro-active engagements occur that early intervention strategies can be implemented to maximize the corrections needed before the person of interest can carry out his/her plans of attack.

By not taking any action, the wrong message of tolerance is given to the person of interest who will then continue disruption because his/her adverse behavior is not being challenged but reinforced through non-confrontation and non-punished actions. Avoidance of these responsibilities is more than likely to add fuel to the adverse behavior until, in stage 4; it becomes extreme to the point of relentless violence against others. Hence the call is for the application of these pro-active measures before loss of life occurs rather than continuing the current reactive measures where the avoidable cost is human lives.

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Appendix A

Presentation of Results at the 19th World Congress of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Profession Conference in Beijing, China
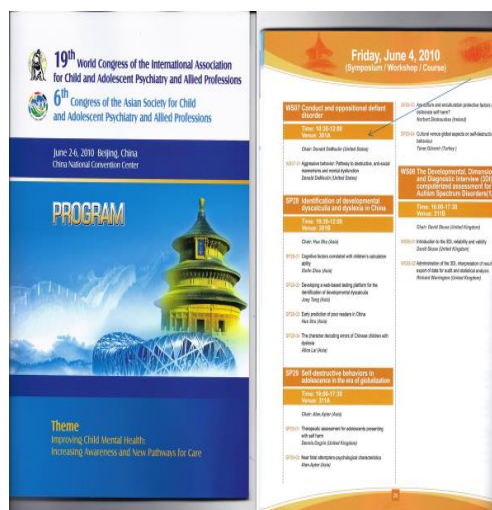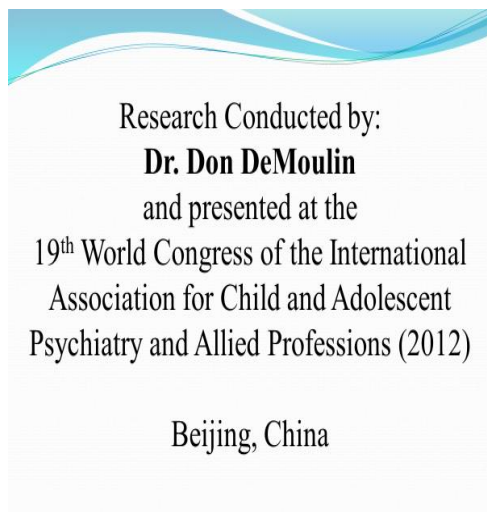
Appendix B

Cumulative, Multi-Rater Instrument for Comprehensive,
Computer-Generated Behavioral Analysis

Pathway to Destruction

Conscience Regression	Anti-Social				
	Behavioral Path	Involvement	Score	Range	**Recommended Counseling Strategies**
Conscience Sensitivity	**Social Defiance**	Parents	#DIV/0!	0	
	Level	Peers	#DIV/0!	30	**Family Therapy--1st Level Counseling Intervention**
		Church	#DIV/0!	75	
Potential Conscience Vulnerability	1	Teachers	#DIV/0!	100	
	Social Outcast	Role Model	#DIV/0!	140	**Individual and/or Group Therapy--Restoring the Foundations**
		Support Groups	#DIV/0!	175	
	1	Counselors	#DIV/0!	200	
Potential Conscience Desentization		Psychologist	#DIV/0!	240	Behaviorial Modification Therapy--2nd Level Restoring the Foundations Counseling
	Social Isolation	Psychiatrist	#DIV/0!	275	
	2	Clinician	#DIV/0!	300	
Likely Purging of Conscience	**Social Rebellion**	Clinical Specialist for Extreme Mental Evaluation	#DIV/0!	340	Intense Behaviorial and Psychological Reprogramming Through Psycho-Therapy and Clinical Observations With Confinement and/or Isolation
			#DIV/0!	375	
	3		#DIV/0!	400	

About the Author

Dr. DeMoulin is a veteran educator and researcher whose professional career encompasses a junior high teacher, an elementary school principal, a district superintendent, and a university professor He is a nationally recognized scholar in research including Diplomate from the American Board of Psychological Specialties.

He has either authored or co-authored more than 150 articles, books, and technical manuscripts in refereed journals. Dr. DeMoulin has developed five measurement instruments for national and international use, and has made over 250 keynote, seminar, and research presentations across the United States and in 11countries.

Dr. DeMoulin has received numerous honors and recognitions for his research. These include: early childhood self-concept development, for his research in the use of personalization to enhance reading skills and self-concept, for his distance-learning/technology training and online curriculum development, for his leadership development training and instrumentation, and for his national seminars with Dr. William Kritsonis on violence prevention strategies for schools (Project ISSAC—**I**mplementing **S**afe **S**chools **A**ssessment **C**riteria) which includes the ABI.

Currently, he a Senior Core Faculty member for American College of Education teaching doctoral-level statistics and research courses, a Six-Sigma Black Belt auditor for Toyota-Bodine in Jackson, TN. Dr. DeMoulin is a strong proponent for school and workplace violence prevention.