



Shane Todd: Document Analysis

Is there Support of Suicide as a Manner of Death?

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Executive Summary

Based on a variety of analytical approaches as conducted by expert in deception and deviant Behavior David A Camp, PhD, there is very little to no support that Shane Todd's manner of death was suicide. Multiple forms of analysis were conducted to assure reliability and the methods have all been reviewed in peer review journals for their veracity. Using a multimodal approach to the evaluation the validity and reliability can be considered significant in support for these conclusions.

Overview

The untimely death of engineer Shane Todd has produced a great deal of concern much of which has been focused on the conclusion that his death was a suicide. The engineer's death was ruled a suicide despite numerous claims and evidence that his death was a murder.

This report identifies and documents evidence that the main piece of evidence for a conclusion of suicide was not written by Shane Todd and thus his death was not suicide. As a specialist at revealing deception and hidden information this investigation was initiated to determine relevant aspects of the case and whether the conclusion of suicide was in error based on comparative evaluations of his writings and the reports that were considered relevant to the case. This investigation evaluates the characteristics of the available information and without a hypothesis of the evidence being true or not. In research based jargon, the hypothesis is that the evidence is supported and factual. Any other conclusions must therefore be supported by that same evidence.

Reviewer

David A Camp, PhD., is department chair and tenured Professor of Criminal Justice at Blackburn College, founder and senior analyst of EnSol LLC, a deception evaluation and instruction company and a founding member of LEADDS (the Linguistic Evidence Analysis and Deception Detection Solutions) group whose mission is to assist investigations through the specialized skill sets of its members. Dr. Camp is also responsible for the creation of the only fully academic college course on deception (Deception Management). A complete resume for Dr. Camp is available upon request.

Methods Employed

There are several approaches that can be employed when evaluating interpersonal communications for hidden or deceptive information. These forms of analysis are incorporated and used in concert to enhance the validity of any findings. The methods involve analysis of syntax and grammar with respect to the anthropological, cultural, sociological and psychological information from the available records. This multiple method approach is used to reduce the error rates inherent in any one investigative approach. In the field of deception and hidden information identification inherent error rates are generally around 30%. To reduce this, the standard research approach of methodological triangulation is used. This mixture of methods is also known as Multi-Modal research and is used to greatly increase the confidence in reported findings. In brief, the multi-modal method works as follows: Although the accuracy of any deception identification approach is generally around 70%, using overlapping methods where weaknesses of each approach are covered by the strengths of the other approaches. For example, if each method were only 50% accurate we could suggest that the odds of a correct determination is 50/50 or one in two; a poor result by any standard. However, if 4 different indicators were found and reinforced on the same topic then we now have reduced the error rate from 50% to a mere 4%.

The methods that are used in this evaluation include discourse analysis (criterion based content analysis and statement analysis), statistical characteristics of suicidal ideation and outcomes, cultural variations in communication styles and contents and the style variations of the authors of the documents included.

These methods were selected based on the information made available for analysis; specifically the various communications provided for comparison which include personal and professional letters, the suicide note, scientific papers, personal notes and other personal documents.

The evaluation requires reliance on research supported behavioral characteristics. The following concepts are those used when evaluating communications such as those provided:

- Everything we do, we do for a reason (consciously or subconsciously, there is always a reason).
- Most people behave in accordance to what they think others are thinking about them.
- Stress indicators (autonomic nervous system responses) are limited but measurable and can support findings when clustered around common topics and concepts. However, stress or ANS indicators must be used with respect that they do not identify deception but provide indications a person's body is reacting to stressful factors.
- Most humans are socialized to believe honesty is the most important of personal characteristics and as a result, humans have the tendency to provide honest responses unless they possess a reason for choosing to be deceptive.
- Behavioral indicators include verbal (or written tactics such as qualifiers, avoidance, denials and objections and many others).
- Statement structural components that include subsection content balance and proportions, interpersonal references, personal definitions and other behavioral variations identifiable through the contents of interpersonal communications such as writing samples.

Signs of Suicidal Association

When writing a suicide note, statistically there are common patterns consistently found. These include the following:

- Signs Of Unbearable Psychological Pain
- Direct Comments Related To Interpersonal Concerns
- Rejection-Aggression
- Inability To Adjust Giving The Perception Of No Viable Options
- Indirect Expressions
- Identification Regression
- Ego Structure Imbalance
- Cognitive Constriction

After evaluating the suicide letter the following can be said with confidence.

In the evaluation these were considered as markers. Normally when you find such a marker, there are indicators of similar thinking in other communications, though often not as obvious. With respect to these documents, the sought behaviors were notably absent and neither were they detected in any other writings. The specific findings in this approach are as follows:

- Unbearable Psychological Pain – The closest inference to such a perception is a brief reference to the subject's friends concerning the unethical practices he had concerns about. This is not sufficient to meet the criteria implicated in the category. If this were a real indication of such, the documents would have placed much more time and space on the topic and included wording emphasizing the problem in emotional terms. This indicator is very weakly supported.
- Problems with Interpersonal Relations – There are no indications of interpersonal/relational problems whatsoever. There is no identifiable support for this attribute.
- Rejection/Aggression – There is no indication of intent or wording that suggests any emotional concerns that could be considered as a precursor to such intent. There is no identifiable support for this attribute.
- Inability to Adjust – There is no indication of such an inability. However, there are indicators that very specifically the subject is looking forward to changing circumstances. There is no identifiable support for this attribute.
- Indirect Expressions – As previously indicated, the wording provides no examples, allusions, inferences or references suggesting such. There is no identifiable support for this attribute.
- Identification Regression – The subject provides multiple instances indicating the presence of a strong ego and a balanced ego structure. His numerous friendships and the contents of the communications related to those relationships indicate a strong positive set of expectations toward upcoming events. There is no identifiable support for this attribute.

- Ego Structure – The subject indicates a strong and balanced ego structure. A suicidal person would be expected to have a weak ego and id with an overpowering super-ego driving behavior. There is no identifiable support for this attribute.
- Cognitive Constriction- In verified suicide notes and psychological reports the existence of a narrowly focused cognition, especially in relation to the lack of alternative opportunities (hopelessness) are expected. The documentation provided indicates no such narrowing of focus or concerns and in fact suggests the subject was looking forward to the opportunities awaiting him already in evidence. There is no identifiable support for this attribute.

Summary

With the exception of a weak reference to psychological pain there is no evidence any of these expected indicators exist in any of the communications. As a psychological profile, there is no support for claiming the subject was exhibiting any aspect of suicidal ideation. Further the notes made by the referred to psychiatrist reached the same conclusion. Similarly, while some view anyone that sees a mental health professional as an indicator of a problematic personality, there is no support for this myth and there is support for exactly the opposite. This is only contradicted if the professional identifies relevant indicators, which were not in evidence in this case. Concerns over a past level of stress being an indication of suicidal ideation is not only unfounded, it is common for graduate students under intense academic demands to seek psychological counseling and is not an indicator of suicide. Similarly, unless a specific blood analysis indicates a chemical imbalance, the fact of extended relation and relatives having ever been depressed is irrelevant and any assumption beyond that is purely speculative and lacking any support.

In short, these well-established indicators suggest a complete lack of suicidal ideation and lead to a conclusion that suicide was not previously considered.

Statistical Analysis of Writings

A person that has been literate for much of their life develops a style of writing that is consistent throughout their communications. This set of indicators is particularly open to subjective analysis. That is, the evaluation of style is based on measurable characteristics such as word usage, word complexity, use of active and passive voice, etc. The section on the statistical analysis of the letters elaborates on determining frequencies, statistical distributions, standard deviations and the statistical likelihood of the variations being so far afield from the normative examples they must be considered as being written by another author.

In order to establish whether Shane Todd wrote the suicide notes, an analysis of the comparative statistics common to the writing samples was conducted. As outlined below, several of Shane Todd's personal letters and notes were obtained and compared to the suicide notes attributed to him.

With the limited sample of writings available and only two potential options of authorship (they are or they are not Shane Todd's writings) common measures were determined and evaluated numerically. To control the comparisons for overt differences of length (notes versus letters) and content (personal messages versus suicide focused) the documents were divided as follows:

- Length of Writing:

- Documents more than 6 lines in length referred to as letters
- Documents with 6 or less lines in length referred to as notes
- Contents:
 - Verified Todd Documents
 - Suicide Documents

The process used the following measure: sentences per paragraph, words per sentence, characters per word, percentage of passive sentences, Flesch Reading Ease Test and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test.

In each measure the averages and standard deviations of each group was calculated. Standard deviations identify the range around the calculated averages that variations may fall into without being significantly outside acceptable limits of similarity.

When the average of a test group exceeds the range identified it is a significant deviation from the writing style associated with that measure. If they do not exceed the range they are not significantly different. This means if they exceed the calculated limits there is significant reason to consider that document to be the product of another author. If they fall within that range, they may be by the same author.

Measures Used

Calculated Averages

Sentences per paragraph, words per sentence and characters per word are simple, calculated averages. In brief, adding all the values and dividing them by the number of them present.

Percentage of passive sentences

This is a comparison of passive sentences to active sentences. Again a simple calculation that compares the percentages of all sentences that were structured as a passive sentence. A sentence is considered 'active' when the subject performs the action and 'passive' when the subject receives the action.

Flesch Reading Ease test

This rates the text on a 100-point scale. A higher score means the document is easier to read. The formula for calculating the Flesch Reading Ease score is: $206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW})$ where: ASL is the average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences) and ASW is the average number of syllables per word (# of syllables divided by # of words)

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test

This rates the text on a U.S. school grade level where the integer equals the grade level. The formula for the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score is: $(.39 \times \text{ASL}) + (11.8 \times \text{ASW}) - 15.59$

where: The ASL = average sentence length (# of words divided by # number of sentences) and the ASW is average number of syllables per word (# of syllables divided by number of words).

Table 1 & 2 - Letter Length

Verified Todd Letters

	Average s	Standard Deviation	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Average Sentences/Paragraph	6.16	2.134	4.026	8.294
Average Words/Sentence	16.22	4.310	11.910	20.530
Average Characters per word	4.44	0.329	4.111	4.769
Percent Passive Sentences	6.2	NA	NA	NA
Flesch Readability Ease	62.98	12.455	50.525	75.435
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	8.46	2.364	6.096	10.824

Suicide Letters		
	Average es	Significant Difference ?
Average Sentences per Paragraph	4.14	Borderline
Average Words per sentence	15.4	No
Average Characters per word	3.68	Yes
Percent Passive Sentences	0	Yes
Flesch Readability Ease	88.4	Yes
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	4.72	Yes

Tables 3 & 4 - Note Length*

Verified Todd Notes				
	Average s	Standard Deviation	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Average Sentences/Paragraph	3.333	0.577	2.756	3.911
Average Words/Sentence	12.4	2.553	9.847	14.953
Average Characters/Word	4.333	0.306	4.028	4.639
Percent Passive Sentences	0	NA	NA	NA
Flesch Readability Ease	65.4	10.748	54.652	76.148
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	7.167	2.113	5.054	9.279

Suicide Notes		
	Average es	Significant Difference ?
Average Sentences per Paragraph	2.75	Yes
Average Words per sentence	9.9	Borderline
Average Characters per word	3.6	Yes
Percent Passive Sentences	0	NO
Flesch Readability Ease	98.6	Yes
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	1.95	Yes

* Although the short length reduces validity, the overall trend still suggests a significant difference.

Structural Content Analysis

Details concerning the structural content analysis:

- With the exception of very formal writings (and even often among them) a person tends to be consistent in their style. Although style is not necessarily a major

indicator, it can be used for authentication. Handwriting experts often rely on the scrutiny of small details within a person's writing style as support or rejection of authentication. With Todd's informal writings, each paragraph was initiated with seven spaces indent. In the suicide letter this pattern was not present. If anything it represented a preset default. The spacing difference is a minor event but in many ways is strongly suggestive of a different author.

- A default setting may be expected from someone emotionally writing content from the heart. However, this is not the case in the suicide letter. The letter would have carried on with the same intensity of emotion, which it did not. In fact the suicide letter contained very little emotion at all. Even if the author was emotional and became more rationale as they wrote, you would expect to see this changing as the emotions were reigned in. A progressive change in emotionally based words and such. However, while you would expect to see some direct emotional words or indirect emotional inferences, none were present. Since this was produced to implicate a distraught suicidal person in a severely depressed state as the author, the content should reflect that state.
- Since the suicide letters and notes were consistent in form and the content is not consistent with someone raised and socialized in Western culture it is clear the author was someone raised and socialized in a different culture. Indications suggest a person from an Eastern culture such as China. Americans are known as emotional people that come from a culture that re-enforces the expression of emotions; this is especially expected in an emotionally-based event such as a suicide. Americans are raised with the culturally embedded concept of individual importance overshadowing larger group references as seen in the constitution, legal rights, and throughout every level of the culture. As such, Americans are known to be very expressive emotionally in everyday interactions as compared to many other cultures. By comparison the British are known for 'having a stiff upper lip' referencing the cultural directive of controlling their emotions. Most Asian cultures are taught to hold emotion at bay lest it indicate weakness and a sign of disrespect. This attribute is so embedded that many Asian businesses employ instructors for courses designed to teach how to more expansively express emotions in their business interactions with westerners. Alternately, referencing just one the several examples of Todd's business letters (where it may be expected that efforts are made to restrain emotions), we find over a dozen emotional references. Examples include "I appreciate", "I would like", "I feel", "has bothered me", "stifling" and "I am very happy." This demonstrates that Shane Todd communicates in a manner typical of a westerner and that there is no evidence he has adopted and internalized cultural traditions to such an extent it has influenced his communications efforts. In short, the indications within the letters suggest a non-American authored the suicide notes and that Shane Todd could not have as the embedded lessons of American socialization are still fully intact.
- With respect to proportional content, a fundamental rule of human behavior is that we spend more time and space (in writings) and include more content in areas more important to us. Thus when considering a document, it is imperative to consider where the emphasis of the content is located. A statement is considered potentially deceptive when the proportion of content does not reflect the importance of that content. A very concerning issue in this document is the lack of emphasis, space, terminology, and value laden terminological content (emotional content) with respect to Todd's girlfriend. An American in a loving relationship tends to include much more content about the relationship and its importance as well as placing it

first and foremost. While there are several possible exceptions to this, none are shown to be applicable in this set of circumstances. Asian and Hispanic cultures tend to minimize the role of females in their interactions. The level of significance his romantic girlfriend had for Todd is not reflected in the suicide note where it would be especially expected. However, her importance is present in other communications. This is quite evident in the location of references to the girlfriend and the contents within every mention of her. Taken at face value this would seem (in the suicide note) to see her as a side issue and of little importance. However, there appears to be an effort to make it sound as though she is important. The other references provide a strong suggestion that she is in fact quite important to him. Further, in the letter to the parents it is clear his upbringing was primarily Western culture and specifically American in content and style.

- An American in typical fashion would place the all important suicide notification first and foremost to the people most important to them.
- When writing a letter to a loved one, a suicidal person that would fit the model presumed to be Todd's should contain a great deal more in the role the loved one played, the apologies to the loved one, and many references to their emotional connection. This is almost completely absent with the exception of a singular "I love you."
- In the first letter he refers first to everyone, then to people at work, then to parents AND family, then to his girlfriend. An American would be more likely to write girlfriend or parents first and second, then co-workers, then everyone.
- When Shane is referring to the girlfriend, he always mentions Singapore. Unless she was a mistress in that locale only, then the qualifier of that location is very suspicious in that it is added for a reason, but that reason does not fit with the perspectives given where she is addressed. For instance when he refers to her as an angel. This implies a close relationship, yet it is minimized throughout. A direct contradiction but likely if written by someone from an Asian upbringing. He makes reference to her being a constant support. This again does not fit with the qualified location of only Singapore.
- In this case, based on the contents of the supposed suicide letters, everyone comes first and is given the greatest amount of content. Asian cultures tend to value the collective more than the individual which is consistent with the approach provided in the suicide letters. In short, addressing such an emotionally grounded message "To Everyone," is inconsistent with his culture, the samples and other suicide notes. It is however completely consistent with someone socialized in Asian culture. Such a discrepancy is very significant and suggestive of deception, which, in this case, the deception is author of the suicide documents.
- Another issue strongly supported in deception research is that when honest people communicate in an emotional situation they use descriptions that are different in content than those that are dishonest. Specifically, falsified records include basic facts without elaboration. More advanced deceivers may provide efforts to include facts and elaborate on external objective details to be convincing. Alternately, when being honest, people often recall details that include significant, personally experienced sensory experiences (i.e. "it was so hot, I felt the waves of heat on my face"). Throughout these suicide letters, there is an effort to give "objective details" as expected in the deceptions of less advanced efforts at deception. However, the

lack of emotional or sensory based content powerfully suggests the author is not experiencing what they claim they are experiencing, whomever they are. The claims of depression and other negative comments are not supportive of a person who is actually in the mindset of committing suicide.

- In the suicide letters Todd references the term “This” which is never defined. It is presumed the reference is to the suicide, but it is never mentioned. A person so distraught they wish to end their life is feeling pain and cannot see any solution. Yet, he leaves the most personal, emotionally provocative event a human can contemplate (suicide) as “This” and never any further or alternative reference. This is not consistent with any format of honesty this author is aware of.
- The use of details in requests as to what to do with him, his money etc. and the fact that suicide is illegal, seems to be extremely important to the author of the message. However, a suicidal person would be unlikely to focus on these issues unless they were involving serious amounts of property or money.
- The claim of having tried to get employment is in direct contradiction to the letters referencing his job efforts to his friends and even the fact that he can question the potential employer about perks etc. suggests an agreeable set of circumstances. A person with such low self-esteem would not be likely to make such requests. Doing so indicates a self perception of capability.
- Other contents of concern: The parents list is to his mom and dad with first and last names being given. This is unusual in that most people, especially those raised in western culture do not need to formally address their parents. A full introduction such as in the suicide letters is most usually provided when being presented to someone unknown to them for the first time. Finally, his references to God and church are not in a pattern that would be expected. Although he provides examples of religious involvement such as mentioning going to church with his parents being a highlight, yet in the context of a religion where suicide is strictly forbidden the references and content devoted to religion play a very small role in the overall letter.

While each of these (and all the others) can be explained away, the cluster of them, their multiple occurrences, their existence being identified from a variety of perspectives and their divergent styles, present very powerful support for the conclusion that the author(s) of the suicide notes was NOT Shane Todd but were produced by an author of Asian or middle eastern upbringing.

In an example of the deconstruction of the suicide letters (below) each line is separated and relevant comments are provided in the tables below. While there were additional pages not included, their presence is unnecessary because they are simply repeats of the flaws already presented.

Suicide Letter Contents	Notes/Conclusions/Comments
Dear Everyone,	<p>“Dear” – not used in this context by westerners who normally use “To:” when addressing a generic audience as is this.</p> <p>We also normally address emotionally based letters to those with whom we feel closest. In this regard, this letter suggests “Everyone” is most important. This makes no sense from a Western ideology, but from an Asian culture, it may fit quite well with the wellbeing of the larger group being the most important.</p>

I am very sorry it has come to this.	"This" is not defined and is abnormal when the topic is so serious and especially when not introduced.
I just want to make it clear that I do not blame anyone for my condition except myself.	Blame assignment is normal and expected. Reference to "condition" rather than situation is an odd use of the term and unexpected unless a specific medical state is being referenced, which it is not.
People at work have been patient and kind to me and have given me ample opportunity to succeed.	<p>When an American comments on people in a highly emotional statement, the company is not usually first on the list. Loved ones' close friends, and personal associates etc. come first. In Asian culture the role of one's business is often on equal standing with the role of the family. As such the Asian significance on saving face is as important to one's business relations as it is to one's family relations. It is uncommon in to do so in an American drafted document. The structure of the other letters provided for comparison show that the structure is exactly opposite what was expressed.</p> <p>This abnormal format (not placing an emphasis on individuals as the most important entity) is identified by "I" always takes precedence. "People at work" is vague and unexpected according to culture and style references in the verified letters. When someone is planning suicide they do not refrain from naming names as it is a personal document, possibly the most personal document the subject will have ever written; nothing to lose so to speak.</p>
My parents and family have given me more support than I could ask for.	Out of sync statement, appears to be in direct response to a previous unannounced comment not included here. Yet again another reference that is not only out of sync with the rest of the document but also vague and lacking emotion, relevance or content with respect to anything suggested.
My friends in Singapore have been very kind and understanding and have tried to help me through this.	Americans do not often use the word kind, they refer to such behaviors as nice, friendly, compassionate, etc. However, those that speak English as a second language often use the word kind in this context.
And my girlfriend Shirley has been always loving and supportive even when it was no fun to hang out with me.	<p>My girlfriend Shirley is concerning. It is normal for a name and introduction to be included as it is here, but it seems to give her little significance for an individualistic westerner, this is woefully understated given her role in his life. Unless they were not doing very well at the time as a couple this is not a comment that would be expected by an American.</p> <p>It should be noted that although Todd was living in an Asian culture, you would not expect a suicide note to reflect efforts to fit in by adopting the cultural ways. Instead as a final message to those most important to him any professional cultural behaviors would take second place to his ground state as a westerner when writing such a message.</p>

<p>She has been the most constant source of support, love, and friendship to me in Singapore and without her I wouldn't have made it this long. EP</p>	<p>The phrase "the most constant" is awkward phrasing. Also labeling her actions with a "the" is not typical to western styling. What would have been expected would be something like she was "a constant source of support", "She was constantly supportive" and so on. A simple variation that might escape someone not raised in western culture.</p> <p>It is also qualified to Singapore, if they were truly an 'item' there would not be a qualifier. Qualifiers are included to limit responsibility and reduce culpability. In a good relationship this would have been left out.</p>
<p>I understand that this is a crime in Singapore.</p>	<p>Totally irrelevant to an American, but not to a group-focused cultural member.</p>
<p>But for the sake of my family, I ask that you please be lenient and allow my family the ability to decide on what to do with me. If they wish to bring me back to the U.S. I ask you to please allow them to do so.</p>	<p>Multiple emphases on family about details, but not real emotion. Again real emotions are included when speaking of ending ones life, or any other highly emotionally impacting event.</p>
<p>I also ask that you allow them access to my bank account to pay for any expenses that arise.</p>	<p>To someone that is suicidal, this is generally an irrelevant concept unless the money was of great significance.</p>
<p>If you allow me to, I ask that my family decides what to do with any remaining money. I suggest giving the money to charity. EP</p>	<p>Asking permission. Most suicidal writers remark on feeling surrealistic and concrete minor issues are often left out unless very emotionally binding. I presume he had a good future but was not rich or from a very wealthy family.</p>
<p>I am very sorry for the pain and trouble this causes.</p>	<p>Such a minor emphasis. When deciding to kill oneself, the reasons for doing so tend to be in a narrow set of categories. All of them are due to some great distress and this sentence lacks any realistic instance of identifying distress. Just a comment almost as an afterthought, yet this was carefully constructed. Were it rambling here and there this may have been more reasonable, but the author did not do that.</p>
<p>I never wanted to hurt anyone and I hope that you forgive me. EP</p>	
<p>Love to all, Shane Todd</p>	

NOTE: The remaining suicide notes contain the same indicators and while they support the conclusions of this analysis, including their wording is unnecessary.

Summary and Conclusions:

Based on the evidence resulting from the analysis of provided documents, the following is considered as a valid and reliable set of conclusions concerning the manner of death of Shane Todd.

Statistical Signs of Suicidal Ideation – of the 8 accepted signs noted, only one was supported at all and that support was considered a very weak association at best.

Comparative Writing to Determine the Authorship of the Suicide Notes provided – Of the six measures, four were statistically significant in rejecting Shane Todd as the author; 1 (one) indicated that he may potentially be the author and 1 (one) was within the acceptable range but with was so close to the level of deviation (levels of significance) that it was listed as borderline and considered as not indicative in either direction.

Content Analysis – This approach uses many related measures from multiple fields of study. The consistent outcome was not only that the suicide was not written by Shane Todd; it was not written by a person that was socialized in the same culture or with the same linguistic patterns. More specifically the indications are that the note was written by a person who has learned or uses English as a second language and who had access to personal information about Shane Todd, although such information was incomplete and error prone.

Respectfully,

Dr. David A Camp