COLLEGE STUDENT PERSPECTIVES OF SUICIDE
TYPOLOGIES OF STUDENTS RELATED TO SUICIDE EXPERIENCE, LITERACY, AND ATTITUDES

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BACKGROUND

Suicidality among college students poses a significant social problem as the second leading cause of death for this age group, with around 1,100 college student suicide deaths each year (Arria et al., 2009). Alarmingly, 31% of college students have seriously considered suicide, and 9% have made a suicide attempt (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2015).

Understanding college students' perceptions of suicide and suicide literacy is an important step in developing interventions to reduce suicide among college students and help those students experiencing suicidality.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study aimed to identify typologies of students related to experience, suicide literacy, and perceptions of suicide.

? What student typologies can be determined based on suicide experience, literacy, and attitudes?

METHODS

The sample consisted of 501 college students in an "introduction to the university" course at a medium-sized university in the Midwestern United States.

Characteristic		n (%)
Gender	Female	365 (72.6%)
	Male	134 (26.4%)
Race and Ethnicity	White	399 (79.6%)
	Black	42 (8.4%)
	Other	60 (12%)

Average **Age** of Participants: 18.5
SD=2.6; Min=17; Max=69

45% had experience with suicide
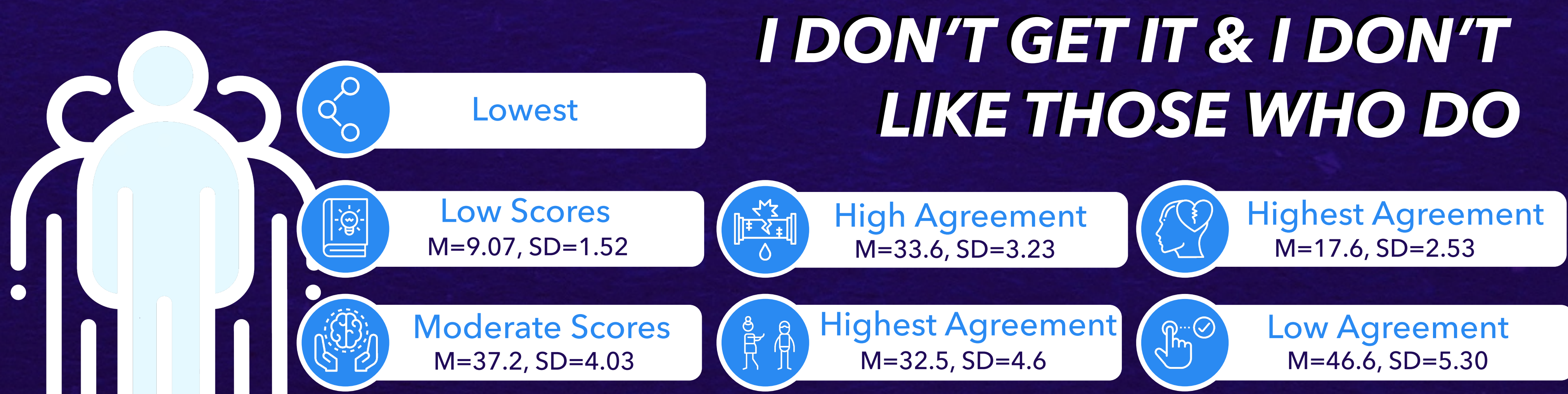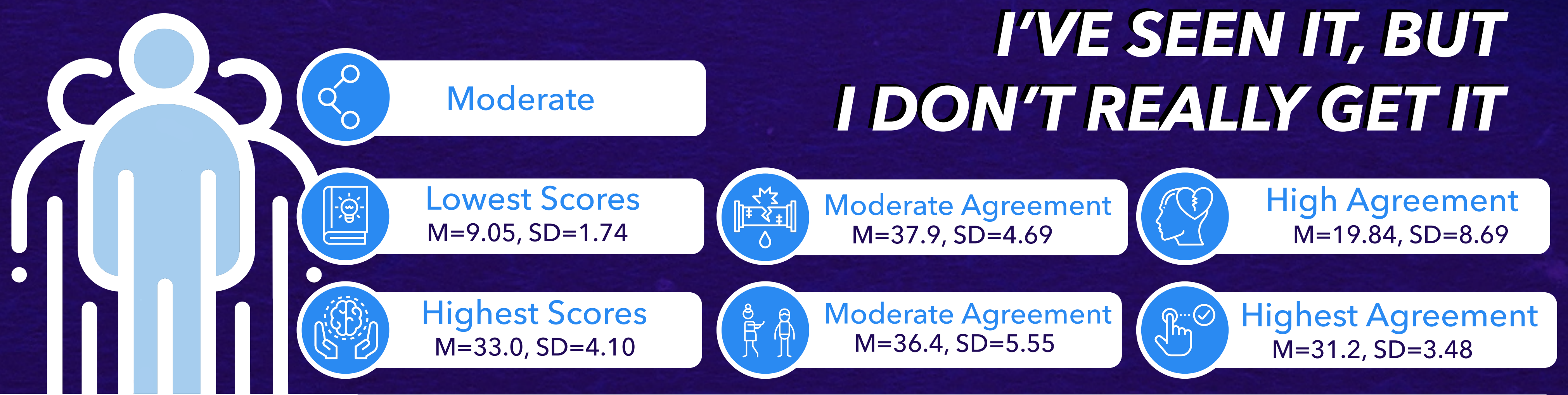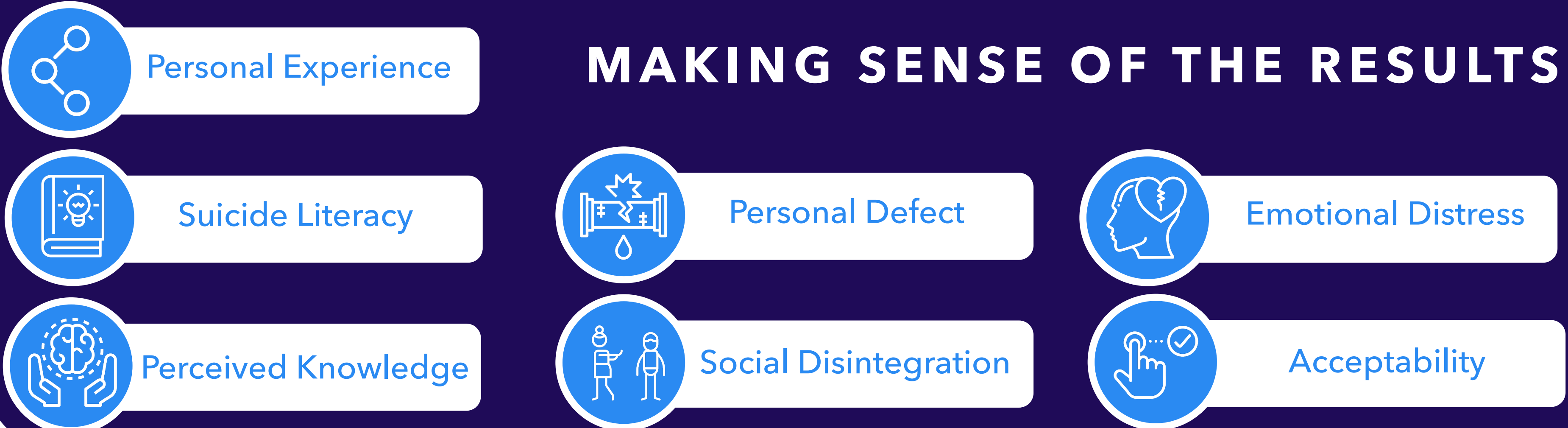
Suicide Opinion Questionnaire
Rogers & Deshon, 1992

Response Options Range from *Strongly Agree (1)* to *Strongly Disagree (5)*

Perceptions of suicide were measured using the

Perceived Factual Knowledge	Personal Defect	Emotional Perturbation	Acceptability	Social Disintegration
Self-perception of knowledge about suicide-related behaviors	Belief that suicide is related to a characterological weakness	Belief that suicide is the result of severe emotional upset	Belief that suicide is acceptable in some circumstances	Belief that suicide is related to poor social relationships

MAKING SENSE OF THE RESULTS

- Personal Experience
- Suicide Literacy
- Perceived Knowledge
- Personal Defect
- Social Disintegration
- Emotional Distress
- Acceptability

I SEE YOU & I GET IT

Highest

| Highest Scores M=10.1, SD=0.99 | Lowest Agreement M=55.2, SD=2.49 | High Agreement M=18.8, SD=3.71 |
| Lowest Scores M=40.3, SD=4.42 | Lowest Agreement M=45.6, SD=4.62 | Moderate Agreement M=34.4, SD=4.55 |

I SEE YOU & I KIND OF GET IT

High

| High Scores M=9.74, SD=1.33 | Low Agreement M=45.5, SD=5.39 | High Agreement M=19.75, SD=3.49 |
| Moderate Scores M=37.2, SD=4.03 | Low Agreement M=41.1, SD=4.99 | Lowest Agreement M=47.3, SD=5.62 |

I'VE SEEN IT, BUT I DON'T REALLY GET IT

Moderate

| Lowest Scores M=9.05, SD=1.74 | Moderate Agreement M=37.9, SD=4.69 | High Agreement M=19.84, SD=8.69 |
| Highest Scores M=33.0, SD=4.10 | Moderate Agreement M=36.4, SD=5.55 | Highest Agreement M=31.2, SD=3.48 |

I DON'T GET IT & I DON'T LIKE THOSE WHO DO

Lowest

| Low Scores M=9.07, SD=1.52 | High Agreement M=33.6, SD=3.23 | Highest Agreement M=17.6, SD=2.53 |
| Moderate Scores M=37.2, SD=4.03 | Highest Agreement M=32.5, SD=4.6 | Low Agreement M=46.6, SD=5.30 |

RESULTS

A cluster analysis was conducted using Stata/IC 15.1 for Mac to determine cluster typologies of students in relation to their experience with suicide, suicide literacy, and perceptions of suicide. A post-clustering dendogram indicated clustering into 7 groups would be optimal. Upon reviewing Calinksi/Harabasz pseudo-F scores for the clusters, 7 groups (pseudo-F=79.54) and 5 groups (pseudo-F=79.03) were the strongest clusters. Summary statistics for the 7 clusters indicated weakly-loaded clusters. To address this, the 5-cluster grouping (pseudo-F=79.03) was determined as the optimal clustering for this sample.

The 5th cluster seems to be anomalous, with only one individual who had no personal experience with suicide and very low scores across all examined measures. In contrast, the other 4 clusters have more interesting characteristics.

IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

Understanding the particular typologies of undergraduate students in relation to suicide literacy and attitudes is important in addressing the problem of suicidality among college students. We can see from this cluster analysis that *students with more personal experience of suicide were likely to possess more knowledge about suicide and have more accepting attitudes about individuals with suicidality.*

This sample is limited due to the demographics of the sample (e.g., very young, female, White). Future research should focus on more diverse samples of college students. Additionally, further research into specific perceptions of suicide in relationship to these groups is needed to advance our understanding of college student typologies.

These findings indicate the importance of providing suicide education to college students—as those with little or no personal experience were likely to report lower levels of knowledge.