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# Analysis Of Suicidal Ideations And Attempts Among University Freshmen

Emily A. Johnston

*Eastern Illinois University*

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ANALYSIS OF SUICIDAL IDEATIONS AND  
ATTEMPTS AMONG UNIVERSITY FRESHMEN

JOHNSTON

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Analysis of Suicidal Ideations and Attempts among

University Freshmen

(TITLE)

BY

Emily A. Johnston

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2006

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore freshmen Midwestern university students': (a) suicidal ideations and attempts, (b) help-seeking resources, and (c) relationships between suicide ideations/attempts and academic focus. Surveys were collected from 126 male and female university freshmen (n = 43 male; n = 83 female). A 15-question survey was designed to explore suicide attempts, ideations, academic majors, and help-seeking resources utilized by freshmen university students. The participants were a convenience sample from 8 freshmen introductory orientation classes. Results indicate: (a) a relationship between suicide ideations/attempts and academic college; (b) freshmen females rely on friends as a help-seeking resource; (c) freshmen males rely on parents as a help-seeking resource; and (d) students who have high school friends that attend the university are less likely to have suicide ideations. However, these relationships are not evident among all freshmen university populations and should be studied in more detail.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Tables .....	vi
List of Figures .....	vii
Chapter I    Introduction .....	2
Purpose.....	3
Research Questions .....	3
Objectives.....	4
Hypotheses .....	4
Definition of Terms.....	4
Conclusion .....	5
Chapter II    Review of Literature.....	6
Suicide Behavior Measures.....	7
Suicidal Behaviors of University/College Students: An Overview of Research in the 1970s.....	9
Suicidal Behaviors of University/College Students: An Overview of Research in the 1980s.....	11
Suicidal Behaviors of University/College Students: An Overview of Research in the 1990s.....	12
Suicidal Behaviors of University/College Students: An Overview of 2000-2005 Research .....	13
Conclusion .....	16

Chapter III	Methodology .....	18
	Design of Study.....	18
	Selection of Sample.....	18
	Description of the Sample.....	19
	Instrument .....	19
	Reliability and Validity.....	20
	Procedure for Data Collection.....	21
	Data Analysis .....	22
	Conclusion .....	23
Chapter IV	Results and Discussion.....	24
	Description of the Sample.....	24
	Suicidal Attempts Analysis.....	25
	Research Question One: Are Suicidal Ideations/Attempts Related to a Freshmen University Student's Choice About an Academic Major and It's Academic College? .....	26
	Research Question Two: What is the Comparison Between Freshmen Male and Female University Students' Help-Seeking Preferences Regardless of Whether They Have or Have Not had Previous Ideations?.....	29
	Conclusion .....	35
Chapter V	Summary, Limitations, Conclusions, and Implications .....	36
	Summary .....	36
	Limitations .....	38
	Conclusions .....	39
	Implications.....	39



References.....	41
-----------------	----

## Appendix A

Consent to Participate in Research .....	46
--	----

## Appendix B

Suicidal Ideations and Attempts Survey .....	49
--	----

## List of Tables

Table 1. Male and Female Suicidal Tendencies .....	25
Table 2. Frequency of Suicidal Ideations/Attempts in Relation to Academic Major/College .....	27
Table 3. Preferred Help-Seeking Resource Regarding the Topic of Suicide .....	30
Table 4. Suicidal Ideations Connection to High School Friends' Attendance at the University.....	33
Table 5. Male and Female Suicide Ideations in Relation to High School Friends' Attendance at the University.....	34

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Percentage of Students Confirming Either Ideations or Attempts of Suicide by Academic College.....	28
Figure 2. Preferred Help-Seeking Resource Regarding Suicide Ideations.....	31
Figure 3. Male and Female Suicidal Ideations Connection to High School Friends' University Attendance.....	34

Analysis of Suicidal Ideations and Attempts among University Freshmen

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Eastern Illinois University  
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## Chapter I: Introduction

Attending a university is a challenging and independent step for young adults. As they are moving from home and psychologically separating from their parents and friends, they are trying to maintain a dependent, yet independent self. They are being exposed to new freedoms and responsibilities while faced with academic and social pressures. These pressures leave a small percentage of university students across the country seriously contemplating, attempting, and committing suicide.

Suicide in the United States has tripled since 1960, making it the third leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year olds, and the second leading cause of death among the college-age population (Barrios, Everett, Simon, & Brenner, 2000; King, 2000; National Mental Health Association [NMHA], 2002; Wilburn & Smith, 2005). Among this population, suicide increased 202.2% between the years of 1950 and 1990 (Silverman, 1993). Suicide among college and university students is estimated to be 50% higher than for other Americans of comparable ages (King, 2000). In 1998, suicide killed more teenagers and young adults than AIDS, cancer, heart disease, pneumonia, birth defects, stroke, influenza and chronic lung disease combined (Ellen, 2002).

According to a study by the American Association of Suicidology (AAS), 29,350 Americans ended their own lives in 2000, making suicide the ninth leading cause of death in the country (2000). Of these thousands of suicides, those under the age of 25 committed 13.6%. Suicidal ideation has been, and continues to be, the most prominent among young adults ages 18 to 24 years of age. In addition, this population has the highest rate of hospital emergency visits for attempted suicides than all other ages (Barrios et al., 2000).

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) indicated 90% of college students who take their own lives have a diagnosable mental illness and one in 12 develop a suicide plan (2001). There are four male suicides for every one female suicide, but there are twice as many attempts by females. Those who have committed suicide mainly take their lives by an overdose of drugs or pills, shooting, hanging, poisoning, drowning, or intentional car accidents. Women tend to use less violent methods such as drugs and carbon monoxide, while men use more violent methods such as firearms (Denning, Conwell, King, & Cox, 2000). According to the AFSP, firearms account for 60% of all completed suicides in the United States resulting in more than 18,000 deaths each year (2001).

#### *Purpose*

The purpose of this study was to explore freshmen Midwestern university students': (a) suicidal ideations and attempts; (b) help-seeking resources; and (c) relationships between suicide ideations/attempts and academic focus. The definition of the university population varies from study to study; ages can range as narrow as 19 to 22 years of age and as wide as 18 to 45 years of age. Among this Midwestern university population, only freshmen university students were included in the sample, regardless of their age.

#### *Research Questions*

The specific research questions were as follows:

1. Are suicide ideations/attempts related to a freshman university student's choice about an academic major and its academic college?
2. What is the comparison between freshmen male and female university

students' help-seeking preferences regardless of whether they have or have not had previous suicide ideations?

### *Objectives*

The following primary objectives were addressed: (a) to research suicide ideations and attempts between freshmen male and female university students, (b) to identify help-seeking resources preferred and used by university freshmen, and (c) to analyze suicidal ideations/attempts in relation to students' academic college.

### *Hypotheses*

1. Academic majors will influence the frequencies of students' suicidal thoughts.
2. University males and females will seek help differently regarding suicide.

### *Definition of Terms*

*Suicide*: the human act of self-inflicted, self-intentioned cessation. This definition implies that committing suicide involves a conceptualization of death; that it combines an individual's conscious wish to be dead and the action to carry out that wish; that it focuses on intention (which may have to be inferred by others); that the goal of action relates to death (rather than self-injury or self-mutilation); and that it focuses on the concept of the cessation of the individual's conscious, introspective life ("Suicide," 1981, p. 199).

*Attempted Suicide*: should refer only to those who sought to commit suicide and fortuitously survived. "A suicide attempt is an event where the risk of death is extremely high and the probability of rescue or intervention is extremely low" (Shneidman, 1985, pp. 17-18).

*Suicide Ideation*: cognition that can vary from fleeting thoughts that life is not worth living, via very concrete, well-thought-out plans for killing oneself, to an intense delusional preoccupation with self-destruction (Diekstra & Garnefski, 1995).

*Suicidal Behavior*: any deliberate action with potentially life-threatening consequences, such as taking a drug overdose or deliberately crashing a car (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001554.htm>, 2001).

### *Conclusion*

Gaining knowledge about freshmen university students' suicide attempts and ideations can benefit university educators in developing preventions to address these issues. Information concerning these issues between students' suicidal ideations/attempts and their academic college can better prepare educators to concentrate on male and female differences. Comparing suicide ideations/attempts among academic colleges may help administrators and personnel gain awareness of these issues. Campus personnel who are close to students, such as student advisors, resident hall advisors, faculty, coaches, and peers need to be informed about warning signs, as well as how to advise students on seeking support. The results of this study will provide advisors, faculty, and students with a better understanding of suicide ideations and attempts among university freshmen. The remaining chapters focus on a review of literature, methodology, results and discussion, conclusions, limitations, and implications.



## Chapter II: Review of Literature

Undertaking the problem of university student suicide completion and suicide attempts was infrequently studied before 1960. Prior to 1968, only six reports provided data on suicide among students at American colleges and universities (Schwartz, 1990). In the decade of 1970 to 1979, a search of professional journal articles in the *PsychINFO* database yielded 474 articles focused on college students and young adults that included "suicide" as the subject heading. The number of articles increased to 693 during the years 1980 to 1989 and 1210 during 1990 to 1999. Months before the year 2005 was over numbers had already reached 986. Choron (1972) stated, "One of the most interesting and significant facts about present day suicide is the number of people who try to kill themselves but survive is far greater than that of actual suicides" (p. 43). This review of literature will focus on suicide behavior measures as well, as past decades of research involving suicide on college and university campuses.

Suicide is an action that ends in death. These actions can be attempted or considered several times before being acted upon. Shneidman (1989) believed, "Suicide is a way out of a problem, a dilemma, a bind, a challenge, a difficulty, a crisis, an unbearable situation" (p. 16). Suicide may be the result of seeking a solution to an issue or solving a problem. "It has been described as the endpoint of a continuum that begins with suicide ideation, followed by planning and preparing for suicide, and then finally by threatening, attempting, and contemplating suicide" (Barrios et al., 229). Suicide attempts may be seen as a cry for help or attention, and those who attempt suicide are usually searching for an answer. "In general, it is probably accurate to say that suicide almost always involves an individual's tortured and tunneled logic in a state of inner-felt,

intolerable emotion" ("Suicide," 1981, p. 198). Those who attempt suicide usually want to live under changed circumstances. They are willing to give up their lives if they believe certain factors may never improve. It has been shown that suicidal people report four times as many negative life events, such as a death in the family, preceding their suicide attempts than nonsuicidal people in a similar time period (Payne & Range, 1995).

When looking at the past history of suicides, it has been documented between 20 and 50 percent of those that committed suicides have made a previous attempt, and those who have made a previous attempt are at a higher risk to commit suicide (American Foundation of Suicide Prevention [AFSP] 2001). With this caution in mind, many aspects of the university campus have been thought to affect suicide rates and attempts among students, such as depression, hopelessness, academic success, and stress.

The purpose of this study was to examine a sample of Midwestern university freshmen students' suicide ideations and attempts, help-seeking resources, and academic majors/colleges in relation to suicide ideations/attempts. Of the numerous studies conducted on suicidal behaviors on university campuses, relatively little research exists relating suicide ideations/attempts among university freshmen to their academic focus, as well as help-seeking resources preferred by freshmen university males and females. This literature review will summarize suicide behavior measures and past history on the topic of suicide.

### *Suicide Behavior Measures*

Various measurements in conducting research on the topic of suicide, attempts, ideation, and behavior among university students have been implemented. The Suicidal

Behaviors Questionnaire (SBQ) developed by Lienehan and Nielsen (1981) contains 45 items used to assess a range of suicidal behaviors. Items on the questionnaire relate to suicide ideation, attempts, and threats. According to Osman, Barrios, Grittmann, and Osman (1994), The Suicide Probability Scale (SPS) developed by Cull and Gill in 1982 is a 36-item self-report inventory designed to evaluate self-described behaviors and attitudes related to suicidal tendencies. Individuals indicate how often each statement applies using a 4-point scale. This questionnaire provides four clinical subscales: hopelessness, negative self-evaluation, suicide ideation, and hostility. A total SPS score can be obtained by summing across the 36 items.

According to Wilburn & Smith (2005), the Suicide Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ), developed in 1987 by Reynolds, is a self-administered 25-item measure to assess an individual's preoccupation with suicidal thoughts. It is a useful instrument to screen late adolescents for suicidal ideation. This measure requires participants to indicate their thoughts of suicide by identifying them on a 6-point Likert scale.

The Multi-Attitude Suicidal Tendency Scale (MAST) for Adolescents consists of 30 Likert self-report items to assess suicidal tendencies (Orbach, Milstein, Har-Even, Apter, Tiano, & Elizur, 1991). This scale also can be used as a measure with young adults. The scale has four types of attitudes: attraction to life, repulsion by life, attraction to death, and repulsion by death. Each measure is rated on a 5-point scale (Osman et al., 1994). The College Student Reason for Living Inventory (CS-RFL), (Westefeld, Cardin, & Deaton, 1992), is a measure for the college population that has been modeled after Linehan, Goodstein, Nielsen, and Chiles' (1983) Reason for Living Inventory: a measure for adults. This inventory contains 46 items that measure the extent to which college

students place emphasis on different reasons for living, as reported in Buelow, Schreiber, & Range (2000). The Student Health Questionnaire (SHQ) identifies students at risk for suicide and is accessible through a secure online website ("College Screening," 2003). Within this questionnaire, students are asked about symptoms such as depression, suicide ideations, suicide attempts, and anxiety. Based on their responses, a computer analysis places them in one of three categories and sends a message to the university's health services if their level of psychological problems is deemed severe.

Suicidal behavior measures are seen throughout numerous studies in past history. These instrumentations and measurements assist in the understanding of suicidal ideations, attempts, and behaviors among university/college students. Given the rapid world demographic changes, and increased suicidal behaviors among Americans and other countries, these instrumentations provide reliability for various cross sectional studies. The following section will focus on the 1970s history of university/college suicidal behaviors.

*Suicidal Behaviors of University/College Students: An Overview of Research in the 1970s*

Studies reviewed throughout the 1970s decade investigated thoughts and attempts of suicide. Murray (1973) and Craig & Senter (1972) conducted two studies that specifically measured thoughts and feelings about suicide. It was found by Murray (1973) that one-third of the 30% of subjects who thought about suicide were very serious in relation to 15% of subjects who had serious thoughts about suicide in Craig & Senter (1972). There was no substantial difference in suicidal thoughts among males and females in both studies. Murray found subjects seriously considered suicide more often during their teen years as compared to their adult years. Sims and Ball (1973) studied

suicide rates at the University of Alberta in Canada during the years of 1968 to 1970.

They recorded 15 deaths among 1,217 university medical records and a population of 52,000 at-risk individuals. Of the 15 deaths that occurred, three were suicides and two of these individuals had a history of a previous attempt.

Knott (1973) reviewed numerous studies and literature on suicidal behavior among American college students. Knott stated, "At best, one could conclude that very little patterning can be established to identify the suicidal risk beforehand, particularly on demographic dimensions" (p. 68). Knott concluded that, of the studies he reviewed, adequate information was not found to identify exactly what causes suicidal risks and behaviors. On the contrary, Murray (1973) found depression to be one indicator of suicidal risk.

In 1976, the frequency of suicide attempts was explored through retrospective reports of college students (Mirshara, Baker, & Mirshara, 1976). Data were collected over a period of several years. It was found that a high percentage of students had thoughts of suicide, as reported earlier (Craig & Senter, 1972; Murray, 1973). Furthermore, 44 students of the 293 total students had attempted suicide sometime prior to age 20 (Mirshara et al., 1976). This study concurs with Murray (1973) who found serious thoughts of suicide during the teen years. Hawton, Crowle, Simkin, and Bancroft (1978) examined suicide at Oxford University in England by means of investigating recent suicide rates, comparing attempted rates to people of the same age in Oxford City, and identifying characteristics of individuals who had attempted suicide. This study was conducted for two 1-year periods, between the years of 1972 to 1973 and 1975 to 1976. For the duration of 1972 to 1973, 22 students made 28 suicide attempts, and throughout

1975 to 1976, 14 students made 17 attempts (Hawton et al., 1978). More females than males (13 to 10) attempted suicide. The mean age of students who attempted suicide was 22.1 for females and 20.8 for males. These studies provide an awareness of past suicidal behaviors among colleges and universities throughout several countries. They focus on suicidal thoughts and attempts of students, as well as suicidal rates. The 1970s history leads to further university/college suicidal behavior studies of the 1980s.

*Suicidal Behaviors of University/College Students: An Overview of Research in the 1980s*

Further studies in the 1980s researched aspects of suicide and the effects on the university/college population. Bernard and Bernard (1982) investigated factors related to suicidal behavior and the impact of the response from the institution. The students, unaware of the subject matter, completed a questionnaire in groups. Of the 838 valid questionnaires, 20% reported suicidal threats or attempts. Bernard & Bernard's (1982) findings further support past studies (Craig & Senter, 1972; Murray, 1973). Of these students, three-fourths stated social or family problems were the cause of their behaviors, conflicting with the notion of Westefeld & Furr (1987), where academic pressures were the cause. The participants who experienced suicidal behaviors saw the institution as playing an insignificant role.

Depression and suicidal behavior were explored in the early 1970s with further research in the mid to late 1980s (Murray, 1973; Sherer, 1985; Westefeld & Furr, 1987). Sherer (1985) found no significant differences among males' and females' thoughts of suicide, as reported earlier (Craig & Senter, 1972; Murray, 1973). However, Sherer (1985) reported depression in 11.4% of participants compared to 81% of participants experiencing depression in Westefeld & Furr's study (1987).

Bonner and Rich (1987) believed suicidal thoughts led to suicide threats and attempts, which finally led to committing suicide. They believed examining suicidal behavior in the context of the environmental and personological factors would enhance understanding rather than always conceptualizing suicide as a statistic. The Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire was dispensed to students, and the results of this study indicated 50% of subjects considered suicide and 13% reported seriously considering suicide. Suicidal behavior was the main focus throughout these studies of the 1980s, which further supported studies from the previous decade. The following section will highlight studies on the university/college population researched during the 1990s.

*Suicidal Behaviors of University/College Students: An Overview of Research in the 1990s*

As decades progressed, more studies were conducted with a focus on the college/university population and suicide. Schwartz (1990) analyzed data from different studies by researching the epidemiology of student suicide among colleges and universities in the United States. He found institutional size and academic class standing do not necessarily affect suicide rates and the presence of psychosis and depression increases the risk of suicide. Schwartz's work corresponds with research conducted in earlier studies (Murray, 1973; Sherer, 1985; Westefeld & Furr, 1987). Schwartz did find the months of September, January, and March, and the hours between midnight and 6:00 a.m. as the most prevalent times of student suicide. Students were also more likely to attempt or commit suicide throughout the week rather than on the weekend. In 1991, the Multi-Attitude Suicide Tendency Scale (MAST) for Adolescents was developed. This scale distinguished participants who were suicidal from nonsuicidal participants, suicide ideators from attempters, and suicidal inpatients from outpatients (Orbach et al., 1991).

The scale reflected four attitudes, including attraction toward and repulsion by life and death.

Suicide attempts and threats on college campuses have been a concern in the past decades and this concern continues in the current decade (Hawton et al., 1978; Meilman, Pattis, & Kraus-Zeilmann, 1994). Policy and practice within college institutions were interests for Meilman et al. (1994) who found that one counseling center recorded 60 incidents that caused concern for students at risk for suicide. Of these 60 incidents, 11 included students who attempted suicide and 14 who had made threats of suicide.

Difficulty in a romantic relationship was found to be the most prevalent cause of threatened or attempted suicide, followed by depression. The Suicide Probability Scale, The Multi-Attitude Suicidal Tendency Scale (MAST), the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI), the Suicidal Behavior Questionnaire (SBQ), and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) were measures completed by a group of 408 college students from a Midwestern university (Osman et al., 1994). The purpose of Osman et al. (1994) study was to explore the MAST and its relevancy amid youth. The factors from the study were similar to the MAST factors reported by Orbach et al. (1991).

Research from the 1990s utilized various suicidal behavior measures and compared data to prior studies that further aid in reliability for future research. The following section will highlight university/college suicide behaviors between the years of 2000 and 2005.

#### *Suicidal Behaviors of University/College Students: An Overview of 2000-2005 Research*

According to the National Mental Health Association (NMHA), (<http://www.afsp.org/index-1.htm>), the 2000 American College Health Association (ACHA) Assessment found that 9.5% of their sample of college students had seriously



considered suicide in the past year and 1.5% had attempted suicide, which paralleled prior studies (Bonner & Rich, 1987; Craig & Senter, 1972; Murray, 1973). Buelow, et al. (2000) investigated the relationships between attachments, reasons for living, and suicide risks among college students. The Suicidal Behavior Questionnaire (SBQ), The College Student Reason for Living Inventory (CS-FRL), and the Attachment and Objective Relations Inventory (AORI) were administered to 163 undergraduates. Their results determined the Survival and Coping Skills subscale of the CS-FRL as the best predictor of suicidal thought and behavior. It was also found the strength of the attachment among peers was more important than attachment to parents when it came to suicidal thoughts. This study suggested that it is of importance to assess students' attachment relationships with parents and their sense of security in peer or romantic relationships. King (2000) also identified the importance of an emotional connection between students and their families and friends. The students, who felt emotionally close to at least one family member, or one friend, were less likely to have ever considered or attempted suicide.

The 1995 National College Health Risk Behavior Survey (NCDRBS) was administered in a 2000 study that investigated the relationship between suicide ideation and other injury-related risk behaviors among United States college students 18 to 24 years of age (Barrios et al., 2000). Of the 2,857 respondents, 11.4% seriously considered suicide, 7.9% made a suicide plan, and 1.7% attempted suicide. The frequency of suicide ideation did not vary by sex in several studies (Barrios et al., 2000; Craig & Senter, 1972; Murray, 1973; Sherer, 1985). The students who reported suicidal ideations were more likely to participate in injury-risk behaviors when compared to students who did not engage in suicidal behaviors. In 2004, 383 college students were distributed a self-report

survey that examined suicidal behavior, negative effects, and delinquency (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Arata, Bowers, O'Brien, & Morgan, 2004). As found in previous studies (Craig & Senter, 1972; Meilman et al., 1994; Murray, 1973; Sherer, 1985), there were no gender differences in rates of suicide ideation and attempts. It was noted that 22% of the student sample admitted to having serious thoughts about suicide, 9% had tried to kill themselves, and 14.9% had previously been diagnosed with depression at some point in their lives. Those who engaged in suicidal behaviors were more likely to display delinquent behaviors than peers without a history of suicidal behaviors.

The latest findings in 2005 report suicide on university campuses as a problem that needs a solution. Westefeld's (2005) survey examined the degree to which students believed suicide was a problem and if they were aware of campus resources. Forty-two percent of the students surveyed identified suicide as a problem, but only 10% believed it was a problem on their campus. Of these students, 40% said they had known someone who had attempted suicide and 28% had known someone who committed suicide. As with past studies, there were no significant differences in suicidal thoughts and attempts among gender. Wilburn and Smith (2005) examined stress, self-esteem, and suicidal ideation in late adolescents. The 88-student sample was given a packet of three questionnaires including the Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ), Life Experiences Survey (LES), and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Results found student suicide thoughts decreased when their self-esteem increased, and when suicide thoughts increased their self-esteem decreased. Persistent life experiences compared to acute stress had a stronger negative effect on self-esteem. It was distinguished that 86% of the

sample had experienced thoughts of suicide at some time in their lives. Research on the topic of suicide between the years of 2000 and 2005 doubled the entire decade of the 1970s. These studies from the decade of 2000 provide a base apprehension of the increase concern on the topic of suicide among the university/college population.

### *Conclusion*

Over 30,000 people in the United States end their lives by suicide annually and an additional 500,000 attempt suicide annually. About 1,500 people attempt suicide daily. A person dies by suicide about every 18 minutes in the United States while it is estimated an attempt is made once every minute (AFSP, 2001). Ellen (2000) stated, "For every completed suicide there are untold numbers of suicide attempts and an even larger pool of individuals who have considered suicide."

Every university student has a different frame of thought and perspective. Self-esteem, depression, hopelessness, stress, and attachment are all factors that effect students differently. According to a review of relevant literature, these factors play a major role in university students' ideations and perceptions of the world and themselves. Other factors such as age, gender, and academic standing also impact students' ideations and perceptions.

This literature review regarding suicide, attempts, ideations, and behaviors suggests the need for prevention and support from institutions of higher education. Institutions must take all of these factors into consideration when choosing methods to assist students in need. Suicide and suicide attempts have been an issue on college and university campuses for decades. However, there has not been a comprehensive study determining the relationship between academic majors and colleges in comparison to suicidal

ideations/attempts among university freshmen. There has also been insufficient research among freshmen university student suicide ideations in relation to attending the university with or without a friend. This current study addresses university freshmen suicidal ideation/attempts in relation to academic majors/colleges and attending the university with or without a friend.

### Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine freshmen Midwestern university students' (a) suicidal ideations and attempts; (b) help-seeking resources; and (c) academic college in relation to suicidal ideations/attempts. It was hypothesized there would be link between freshmen university students' academic focus and suicide ideations and/or attempts. It was also hypothesized freshmen university male and female students would prefer different help-seeking resources regarding suicide. This chapter will explain the design of the study, selection of the sample, description of the sample, instrument, procedure for data collection, and data analysis.

#### *Design of Study*

A quantitative research design provided the foundation for this study. This quantitative research design was descriptive and non-experimental. This research only established associations between variables, and did not address cause and effect. This quantitative research design was cross-sectional; participants were surveyed once and no attempts were made to change behaviors or conditions.

#### *Selection of Sample*

A convenience sample of 126 Midwestern university freshmen students (n = 43 male; n = 83 female) was surveyed from a total of 1,707 freshmen that attended the university during fall semester 2005. Students were surveyed after providing a signed consent form indicating voluntary participation. Students had the opportunity to decline participation with no repercussions. All surveys were kept confidential by excluding personal identification. The signed consent forms were separated from individual surveys to ensure confidentiality. The survey was administered to eight of 26

fall semester freshmen orientation classes at a Midwestern university. This course was designed to familiarize students with the expectations, policies, resources, and traditions of the university, engage students in the educational and social life of the university, enrich students' perspectives on personal, academic, and moral issues in higher education, and develop students' critical thinking, learning, and communication skills. Data collection commenced in November 2005 and concluded in December 2005. It was assumed multiple disciplines would be represented in this sample because the course was an elective course taken by 25% of freshmen university students of many different majors.

#### *Description of the Sample*

A total of 126 freshmen students voluntarily participated in this study: 43 male (34%) and 83 female (66%). The ages of the university freshmen ranged from 18 to 20 ( $m = 18$ ,  $n = 93$ , 74%).

#### *Instrument*

The width and depth of this exploratory research did not merit the use of a comprehensive instrument. Therefore, the shortened version of the Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire (Cole, 1988) modified from Linehan (1981) was adapted due to distinctive variables being explored. For further reliability the researcher focused and construed on Cole's (1988) research question one: Have you ever thought about or attempted to kill yourself? This question was elaborated to form a 15-question survey (see Appendix A), which was administered to 126 university freshmen. The questionnaire was designed to explore suicide attempts, ideations, academic majors, and help-seeking resources utilized by freshmen university students. The instrument addressed the objectives by including

demographic questions, such as age and gender, as well as personal questions with regard to suicide. Items included multiple choice, yes/no, rank-order, circle and fill-in-the blank questions.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts, part A and part B. Every student was required to complete the first five questions, which included demographic questions (1-3) and personal questions (4-5). The first three demographic questions addressed students' age, gender, and academic major. Students' ages were addressed to examine the mean age of freshmen students who have suicidal ideations or who have attempted; gender to compare suicidal tendencies among sex; and students' major to examine relations between academic focus and suicidal ideations/attempts. Questions four and five addressed whether students had ever thought about or attempted suicide, which helped distinguish student suicidal ideators from attempters. Students were then directed to complete part A or part B depending on their answers to questions four and five. Those students who had never attempted suicide were indicated to complete part A and were directed to not read questions regarding suicide attempts from part B.

All questionnaires were answered completely with no missing data. However, 12 individual students incorrectly answered question ten from part A resulting in the exclusion of analysis of question ten from those twelve surveys. Question ten from part B was also not fully analyzed due to the majority of questionnaires incorrectly answered by not following directions. It took the students an average of 8 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

#### *Reliability and Validity*

In order to establish reliability and validity, content from the survey was

supported by the researchers' modifications of the shortened Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire (Cole, 1988). Items one, two, and four on the shortened version of the Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire were the same indices used by Linehan and Nielsen (1981). The researcher elaborated on Cole's (1988) research question one: Have you ever thought about or attempted to kill yourself? Several questions were added to the shortened Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire to help address the specific objectives of this study. The Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire was used more as a guideline to better match the studies' objectives. For further reliability, results from this study (7% suicidal attempts) compared to studies by Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2004) who found 9% of students surveyed had attempted suicide as well as 15% in the study by Mirshara et al. (1976).

Four Family and Consumer Sciences faculty members, three graduate students, and personnel from the university's counseling center examined the survey to establish content validity. The survey was evaluated for general format and clarity of items relating to topic of concern and was revised accordingly.

#### *Procedure for Data Collection*

The researcher's instrument was reviewed and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the commencement of the data collection. This signifies that the procedure adequately protected the rights and welfare of the subjects. The survey was administered to eight sections of the Midwestern University's introductory freshmen course. The questionnaire was administered during regular class hours during the months of November and December 2005. The researcher was present to provide instructions, answer questions, and insure the completeness of surveys. The



researcher, prior to the distribution of the questionnaires, provided detailed instructions and verbally highlighted the fact that the survey was completely voluntary. Chairs in the classroom were spaced out and students were directed to alternate locations for additional privacy.

For better understanding of the survey instrument, the researcher's definitions of 'attempted suicide' and 'suicide ideation' were stated before the survey was administered. The students were directed to read the Consent to Participate in Research form and were required to sign the form before voluntarily participating in the completion of the questionnaire. Questionnaires that were turned in without a signed consent form were excluded from data collection. None of the completed questionnaires needed to be discarded. The time allowed for the completion of the questionnaire was approximately 20 minutes, with an average completion time of 8 to 10 minutes in each class. To keep information confidential the signed consent form was detached from students' surveys when given to the researcher and students did not record any personal identification, such as name and/or social security number, on the questionnaire.

#### *Data Analysis*

To run the majority of statistical tests for this study, the researcher chose to calculate chi-square formulas and cross tabulation tables by hand to get an enhanced understanding of how the variables were distributed. Frequency data such as the mean, median, mode, range, minimum, and maximum were conducted. General frequency counts and percentages were used to construct path analysis such as tables, bar graphs, and pie charts in order to form visual representation of frequency data.

### *Conclusion*

The purpose of this study was to examine freshmen male and female university students' preferred help-seeking resource and students' suicidal ideations and/or attempts in relation to their academic focus. This chapter described the design of the study, selection of the sample, description of the sample, instrument, reliability and validity, procedure for data collection, and the data analysis. The following chapters will include the results and discussion, summary, limitations, conclusions, and implications.

## Chapter IV: Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore freshmen Midwestern university students': (a) suicidal ideations and attempts; (b) help-seeking resources; and (c) relationships between suicide ideations/attempts and academic focus. This chapter will concentrate on the description of the sample, suicidal attempts analysis, results of research question one and two, and a brief conclusion.

### *Description of the Sample*

The sample in this study was male and female freshmen university students enrolled in a freshmen orientation course in a Midwestern university. The total number of participants involved in this study was 126: 43 male (34%) and 83 female (66%). The ages of the university freshmen ranged from 18 to 20 years old ( $m = 18$ ;  $n = 93$ , 74%). Of the 126 participants, 15.8% ( $n = 20$ ) had undeclared majors, 27.8% ( $n = 35$ ) were enrolled in the College of Business and Applied Sciences, 24.6% ( $n = 31$ ) were enrolled in the College of Sciences, 18.3% ( $n = 23$ ) were enrolled in the College of Education and Professional Studies, and 11.9% ( $n = 15$ ) were enrolled in the College of Arts and Humanities. There were two surveys discarded in this count because they were enrolled in more than one college (1.6%).

Of the 126 participants, 58.7% ( $n = 74$ ) had never thought about or attempted suicide ( $n = 28$  male, 22.2%;  $n = 46$  female, 36.5%); 34.1% ( $n = 43$ ) had thought about suicide but had never attempted suicide, ( $n = 13$  male, 10.3%;  $n = 30$  female, 23.8%); 7% ( $n = 9$ ) had thought about suicide and had attempted suicide at least once in their lives ( $n = 2$  male, 1.5%;  $n = 7$  female, 5.5%), ( see Table 1).

Table 1

Male and Female Suicidal Tendencies

Male			Female		
No Suicidal Ideations/Attempts	Suicidal Ideations	Suicidal Attempts	No Suicidal Ideations/Attempts	Suicidal Ideations	Suicidal Attempts
28 (22.2%)	13 (10.3%)	2 (1.5%)	46 (36.5%)	30 (23.8%)	7 (5.5%)

*Suicidal Attempts Analysis*

When analyzing the 126 questionnaires, there were 9 (7%) who had thought about and attempted suicide at least once ( $n = 2$  male;  $n = 7$  female). More females than males attempted suicide, which corresponds to the study by Hawton et al. (1978). Of these nine surveys, each participant had a different academic major. Therefore, it was concluded a student's major was not a contributing factor for suicide attempts in the present study. The mean age of participants for these nine surveys was 18.

Question six part B (see Appendix B) concluded 33.3% ( $n = 3$ ) had attempted suicide once, 44.4% ( $n = 4$ ) had attempted suicide twice, and 22.2% ( $n = 2$ ) had attempted suicide three or more times. The age of first suicide attempts ranged from 10 to 19 years old ( $m = 14.6$ , median = 15). Question eight part B concludes 77.8% ( $n = 7$ ) had attempted suicide by a drug and alcohol overdose, cutting of the wrists, or both combined. One participant had attempted suicide by a drug and alcohol overdose and once by hanging, and another participant attempted suicide that involved risk-taking behaviors. The most common method used in freshmen university students' suicide attempts, among these nine surveys, was alcohol or drug overdose.

Question nine part B determined that 6 of the 9 participants (66.7%) have sought help from a mental health specialist regarding suicidal thoughts and attempts. Help seeking resources also included friends, parents or relatives, clergy, and university counseling center, advisor, or faculty. Question ten part B was not fully analyzed due to the majority of questionnaires incorrectly answered, as students did not follow directions.

No conclusive evidence was found between suicide attempts and academic majors among suicide attempters. No statistical tests were run for this category. In general, due to the limited number of participants there were not efficient data that could be used for future studies and the understanding of freshmen university students' suicide attempts. However, the data 7% of the sample having attempted suicide were significant when compared to past research studies. Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2004) found 9% of students surveyed had attempted suicide: Mirshara et al. (1976) found 15% of students had attempted suicide.

*Research Question One: Are Suicide Ideations/Attempts Related to a Freshman University Student's Choice About an Academic Major and It's Academic College?*

This research question was asked to help determine if freshmen university students' thoughts and attempts of suicide were related to their choice of an academic major, which may help indicate the pressure of certain majors or academic colleges. The chi-square test was used to determine if these nominal variables had statistically significant differences. Chi-square was used to examine the numerical rates of occurrence of students' suicidal ideations and/or attempts for five different academic colleges (see Table 2). The chi-square analysis included  $H_1$  that proposed academic majors do influence the frequencies of students' suicidal thoughts and  $H_0$  as no

differences in the subjects,  $\chi^2 (4, n = 56) = 7.04, p > .05$ . Results rejected the  $H_1$  and accepted the  $H_0$ . In this case, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was accepted because the results showed no differences among students' suicidal ideations and/or attempts among academic colleges. It was found that the sample was not large enough to compare to the entire freshmen university population.

Table 2

Frequency of Suicidal Ideations/Attempts in Relation to Academic College

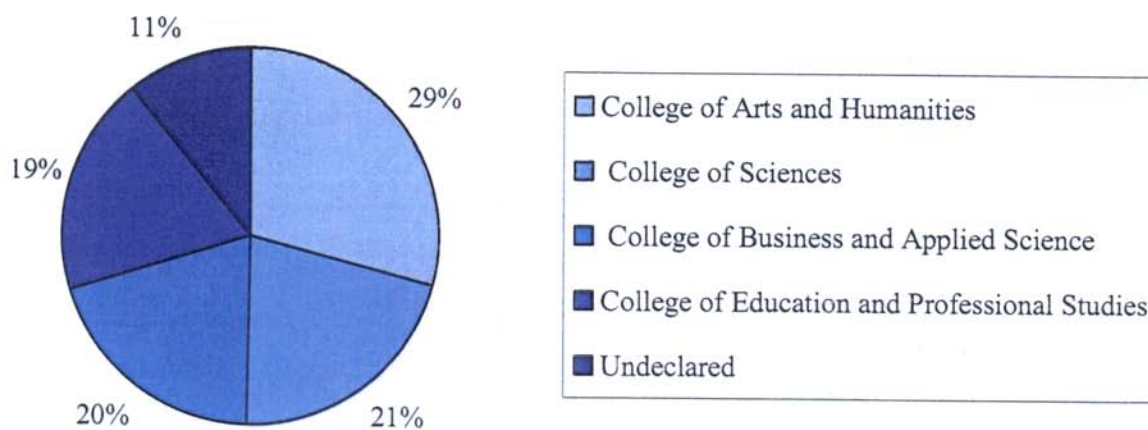
<u>Academic College</u>	<u>Frequency of Suicidal Ideations/Attempts (n =)</u>
Undeclared	5
College of Business & Applied Sciences	16
College of Sciences	15
College of Professional Education & Studies	10
College of Arts & Humanities	10
Total	51

To find the percentage of students in their academic college who had suicidal ideations/attempts, the researcher divided the frequency of suicide ideations/attempts by the maximum number of suicide ideations/attempts each academic college could obtain. Of those that had suicide ideations 33.3% ( $n = 43$ ) and suicide ideations/attempts 7.1% ( $n = 9$ ), 12.5% had undeclared majors, 22.9% were enrolled in the College of Business and Applied Sciences, 24.2% were enrolled in the College of Sciences, 21.7% were enrolled in the College of Education and Professional Studies, and 33.3% were enrolled

in the College of Arts and Humanities (see Figure 1). This showed the College of Arts and Humanities to have the highest percentage of students who have had suicide ideations/attempts in relation to the number of students who belonged to each academic college. The academic majors of Engineering, Pre-optometry, Pre-physical therapy, Sociology, Middle Level Education, and English had the highest percentage of students who had suicide ideations and/or attempts (50%) when compared to the maximum number of suicide ideations/attempts possible for their major. However, only one to three participants belonged to each one of these majors. The academic major of Communication Studies had the second highest percentage (42%,  $n = 7$ ) followed by Special Education and Pre-Engineering (33.3%,  $n = 6$ ).

Figure 1

Percentage of Students Confirming Either Ideations or Attempts of  
Suicide by Academic College



It was found that freshmen university students who had engaged in suicidal ideations and/or attempts were more likely to have a declared major (92.3%,  $n = 48$ ). Results showed only 7.7% ( $n = 4$ ) of students with an undeclared major had thoughts

and/or attempts of suicide suggesting students with an undeclared major were more likely to not have suicide ideations when compared to students who had a declared major. Students with an undeclared major were the least likely to have suicide ideations or attempt suicide when compared to those who had a declared major. These findings imply that students who have undeclared majors may be less stressed and worried than those freshmen who have already declared a major.

Even though this research question was analyzed correctly, statistical analysis could not effectively indicate, when compared to the entire freshmen population, which academic major/college was the most prone to freshmen university students' suicide ideations and attempts. This was due to the unequal number of academic majors and students surveyed. The formula used to calculate data was found by comparing the number of students in each college to the number of suicide ideations/attempts for each college. Even though the data were found insignificant, the assessment may help university staff and personnel gain an increased awareness of academic colleges and their affect on student suicidal behavior.

*Research Question Two: What is the Comparison Between Freshmen Male and Female University Students' Help-Seeking Preferences Regardless of Whether They Have or Have Not had Previous Suicide Ideations?*

This question was asked to help determine if male and female freshmen university students sought different help-seeking resources regarding the topic of suicide (see Table 3). The chi-square test was used to determine if there was a difference of help-seeking resources between university freshmen males and females. This question was found in part A of the survey (see Appendix B) and was only examined by those who



had never attempted suicide. Twelve surveys were discarded from this test due to incorrectly followed directions by students. These twelve students selected more than one choice as their most preferred help-seeking resource; these surveys were not included in the study.

Table 3

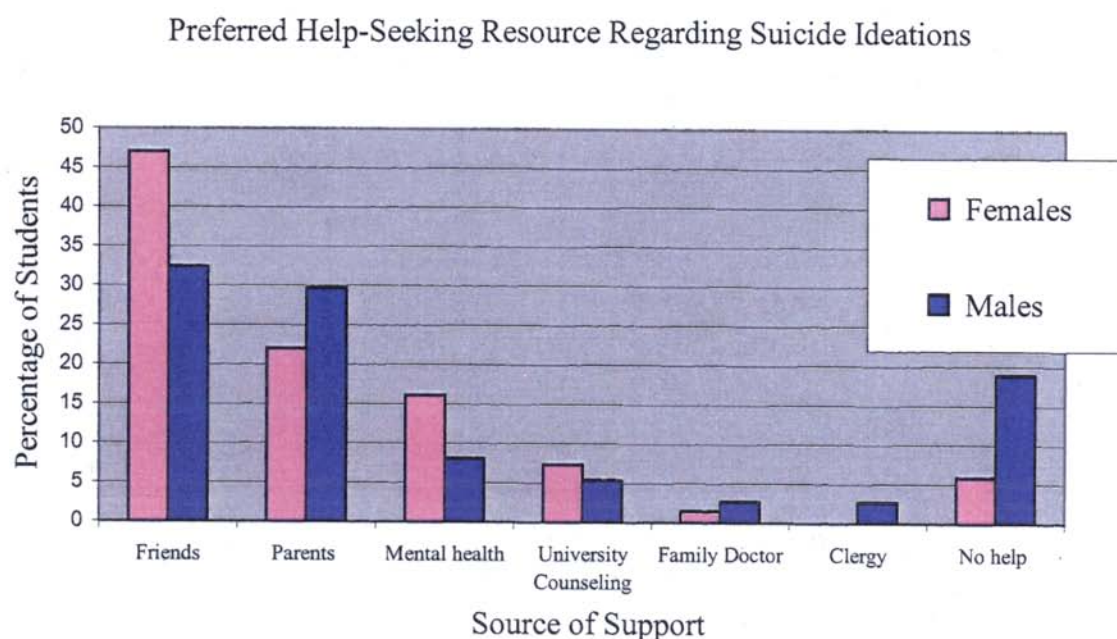
Preferred Help-Seeking Resource Regarding the Topic of Suicide

	Male	Female
<u>Preferred Source</u>		
Friends	12	32
Parents or Relatives	11	15
Mental Health Specialist	3	11
University Staff	2	5
Family Doctor	1	1
Clergy	1	0
No Help	7	4
Total	37	68

The chi-square analysis included  $H_1$  that proposed university males and females would seek help differently regarding suicide and  $H_0$  that stated no differences among males and females preferences of help-seeking resources. Results rejected the  $H_0$  and accepted the  $H_1$ . The results significantly showed that university males and females seek help differently regarding suicide,  $\chi^2 (7, n = 105) = 141.76, p < .01$ . This validates the importance of understanding the difference between how university freshmen males and females seek help regarding thoughts of suicide.

It was hypothesized freshmen university male and female students would prefer different help-seeking resources regarding suicide. This hypothesis was supported by the chi-square analysis that showed different help-seeking preferences among males and females (see Figure 2). It was shown that 29.7% ( $n = 11$ ) of males prefer seeking help from their parents compared to 22.1% ( $n = 15$ ) of females.

Figure 2



This research question also showed 47.1% ( $n = 32$ ) of females prefer seeking help from their friends regarding suicide compared to 32.4% ( $n = 12$ ) of males. These results were similar to Buelow, Schreiber, and Range (2000) who found the strength of attachment among peers as more important than the attachment to parents for those who had suicidal ideations. This shows the potential importance of female freshmen attending the university with a friend when suicidal ideations are involved. When exploring freshmen male suicide ideations, it would be important to make inquiries about their

relationship with their parents. Furthermore, more females ( $n = 11$ , 16.2%) prefer seeking help from a mental health specialist than males ( $n = 3$ , 8%). This is also shown in the surveys of students who had attempted suicide ( $n = 6$  female, 66.7%). This may pose certain questions regarding how females and males perceive mental health specialists. An assumption could be made that females were more comfortable discussing their personal problems than males. It was found that freshmen university males were more likely not to seek help regarding suicide ( $n = 7$ , 18.9%) when compared to freshmen university females ( $n = 4$ , 5.9%). This comparison may help university educators/advisors comprehend how females and males cope with personal issues regarding suicide and seek to make resources more user-friendly to males.

After analyzing research question number two, a strong connection was found between freshmen university students' suicidal ideations and nonsuicidal ideations and the attendance of their high school friends at the university. Therefore, the researcher pursued this area of interest. The researcher then asked the question if students were more likely to have thoughts of suicide if they attended the university with or without a friend from high school (see Table 4). This individual question was found in part A of the survey (see Appendix B) and was only asked of those who had never attempted suicide. A chi-square test was used to determine if there was a difference between two distributions, students' suicidal ideations and their friends' attendance at the university. The chi-square analysis included  $H_1$  proposing friends' attendance at the university does influence freshmen university suicidal ideations and  $H_0$  as stating there are no differences among friends attendance at the university. Results rejected the  $H_0$  and accepted the  $H_1$ . The results indicated that friends' attendance at the university does influence freshmen

university suicidal ideations,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 117) = 55.8, p < .01$ . This substantiates the importance of friends among freshmen male and female university students. Friends seem to be an important support group for university freshmen's first year and may help in minimizing suicidal ideations among this population.

Table 4

Suicidal Ideations Connection to High School Friends' Attendance at the University

<u>Friends' Attendance</u>	<u>Suicidal Ideations (n =)</u>	<u>No Suicidal Ideations (n =)</u>
Do Attend	30 (25.6%)	62 (53%)
Do Not Attend	13 (11.1%)	12 (10.3%)

A bivariate table and graph were constructed to compare freshmen male and female suicide ideations in relation to high school friends' attendance or nonattendance at the University (see Table 5, see Figure 3). It was found 53% ( $n = 25$  males,  $n = 37$  females) of participants did not have suicidal ideations if they attended college with a friend and 25.6% ( $n = 8$  males,  $n = 22$  females) did have suicidal ideations if they attended college with a friend. It was also found that 10.3% ( $n = 3$  males,  $n = 9$  females) of participants did not have suicidal ideations if they attended college without a friend and 11.1% ( $n = 5$  males,  $n = 8$  female) did have suicidal ideations if they attended college without a friend. These results reveal that freshmen university students were more likely have suicidal ideations if they attended college without a high school friend and were less likely to have suicidal ideations if they attended college with a friend. However, there were a very limited number of students who had suicidal ideations who attended the

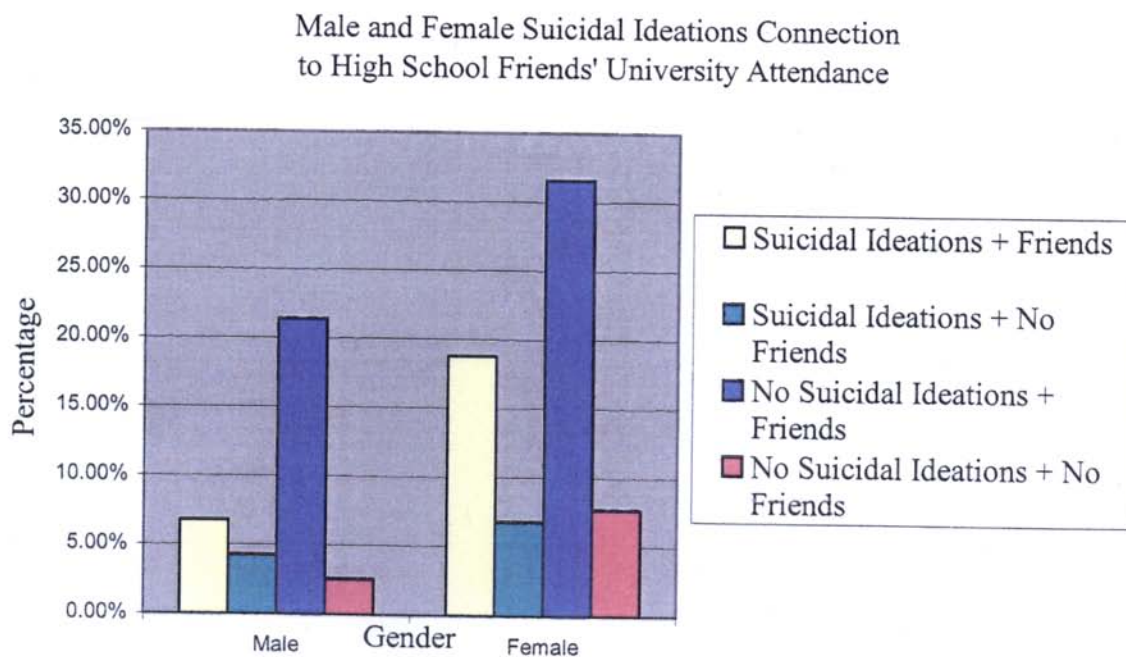
university without a friend due to the overwhelming number of students who attend the university with a friend and do not have suicidal ideations.

Table 5

Male and Female Suicide Ideations Connections to High School Friends' Attendance at the University

Suicidal Ideations	Male		Female	
	Friends' Attend	Do Not Attend	Friend's Attend	Do Not Attend
Ideations	8 (6.8%)	5 (4.3%)	22 (18.8%)	8 (6.8%)
No Ideations	25 (21.4%)	3 (2.6%)	37 (31.6%)	9 (7.7%)

Figure 3



When comparing males and females, data were inconclusive because there were more females than males who participated in the survey. In this case, the chi-square test

combined both male and female results to assist in the rejection of the null hypothesis.

However, both males and females remained similarly consistent with their answers.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter explained the results of this study by focusing on the description of the sample, the analysis of suicidal attempts, and the answers to research questions one and two. Further limitations, conclusions, and implications are described in chapter five.

## Chapter V: Summary, Limitations, Conclusion, and Implications

### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to examine freshmen male and female university students' suicidal ideations and attempts in relation to their academic major and preferred help-seeking resource. The results of this study will be helpful for staff and personnel at the university/college level. It will help enhance a professional's understanding of characteristics related to suicidal ideations/attempts and differences among university freshmen students. The data will also help university staff discuss help-seeking resources with students who have suicidal behaviors.

Data were collected from a sample of 126 freshmen male and female students attending a small Midwestern university. Forty-eight freshmen males (34%) and 83 freshmen females (66%) were present during the administration of the questionnaire and opted to participate in the study. The students' ages ranged from 18 to 20 years old ( $m = 18$ ). The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire modified and adapted by the researcher (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was divided into two parts, part A and part B. Every student was required to complete the first five questions, which included demographic questions (1-3) and personal questions (4-5). The first three demographic questions addressed students' age, gender, and academic major, which helped to address the objective that males and females would respond differently and that there would be a relation between academic focus. Questions four and five addressed whether students had ever thought about or attempted suicide, which helped distinguish student suicidal ideators and attempters in comparison to students' academic focus. Students were then directed to complete part A or part B depending on their answers to



questions four and five. Those students who had never attempted suicide were directed to complete part A and were not confronted with questions regarding suicide attempts from part B. The students were primarily asked personal questions regarding their thoughts about suicide. Examples of these questions included, if they had ever thought about or attempted suicide, if they attended the university with a friend from high school, and who they would most likely seek help from regarding suicide.

There was not a significant difference between males and females who had never attempted suicide but had had suicide ideations. Of the 126 students who participated in the study, 30% of the males ( $n = 13$ ) and 36% of the females ( $n = 30$ ) had thought about suicide. The data were also found in various preceding studies (Craig & Senter 1972; Murray 1973; Sherer 1985; Barrios, Everett, Simon, & Brener, 2000).

Varieties of majors were represented in this study and were grouped into academic colleges. Of the 126 participants, 15.8% ( $n = 20$ ) had undeclared majors, 27.8% ( $n = 35$ ) were enrolled in the College of Business and Applied Sciences, 24.6% ( $n = 31$ ) were enrolled in the College of Sciences, 18.3% ( $n = 23$ ) were enrolled in the College of Education and Professional Studies, and 11.9% ( $n = 15$ ) were enrolled in the College of Arts and Humanities. There were two surveys discarded because they were enrolled in more than one college (1.6%). It was found that the highest percentage of suicidal ideations was among the College of Arts and Humanities, but this result was measured insignificant and could not reject the null hypothesis. This is because the number of students in each college varied considerably and comparison was inadequate.

There were eight different categories the students could select regarding help-seeking resources. These categories were family doctor, mental health specialists (such



as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers), university counseling center, advisor, or faculty, clergy, friends, parents or relatives, other, or they could choose not to seek help. The highest percentages of help-seeking resources included friends (47.1% female, 32.4% male) and parents (22.1% female, 29.7% male). These results suggested females would more likely confide in friends regarding suicide ideations and males would more likely confide in their parents. A strong connection was found between freshmen university students' suicidal ideations and nonsuicidal ideations and the attendance of their high school friends at the university. Results indicated freshmen university students were more likely to have suicidal ideations if they attended the university without a high school friend (11.1%), and were less likely to have suicidal ideations if they attended the university with a friend (53%). This result puts emphasis on the importance of friends for both males and females, but was found especially important for females.

### *Limitations*

There were various limitations to this study. One limitation was the disproportionate number of males ( $n = 43$ ) and females ( $n = 83$ ). With this limitation, it was hard to compare results by gender. This was especially true when exploring suicidal attempts among the freshmen university students. The results may have been more substantial if the data were collected from a larger sample size.

A second limitation included the few participants ( $n = 2$  male,  $n = 7$  female) that had attempted suicide. With this small sample it was impossible to run statistical tests to determine relationships between variables. This sample was also not large enough to compare to the entire freshmen university population. As a result, this information is inadequate to use for future studies of suicidal attempts among university students.

A final limitation of this study was the uneven number of academic majors represented. It was difficult analyzing this information due to certain majors only having one to two students and other majors consisting of no students among those surveyed. Also, when grouping these majors into academic colleges, there were still an uneven number of students who belonged to each academic college, which resulted in interesting but insignificant data and results.

### *Conclusion*

Several conclusions about freshmen male and female university students' suicidal ideations were drawn from this study and the hypotheses:

1. Freshmen university students are less likely to have suicidal ideations if they have an undeclared major.
2. There is a significant difference between freshmen male and female help-seeking preferences regarding suicide; freshmen females prefer to confide in friends and freshmen males more often prefer to confide in parents regarding suicide.
3. Freshmen university students' suicide ideations are linked with high school friends' attendance at the university.
4. There is no significant difference between the frequency of male and female suicidal ideations.

### *Implications*

Future research of suicidal ideations and suicidal attempts among freshmen male and female university students may be beneficial in helping to educate both male and female students, as well as university faculty and staff. Future research dealing with this

topic should include a larger sample size as well as a balanced number of male and female students to produce more generalizable results. It may also be helpful to determine students' ethnic, religious, and geographic background to understand suicide ideations among diverse populations. Since the 1960s, suicide has tripled in the United States making it the second leading cause of death among the university/college population. Suicide is 50% higher for university/college students than for other individuals the same age. In general, this research on suicide is an important topic to be studied due to the increasing percentage of students who commit or attempt suicide between the ages of 18 to 25.

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## Appendix A

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH****The Analysis of Suicidal Ideations and Attempts Among University Freshmen**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Emily Johnston and faculty sponsor Dr. Mikki Meadows, from the department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore freshmen midwestern university students': (a) suicide ideations and attempts (b) frequently used method(s) in attempts (c) help-seeking resources and (d) relationships between suicide ideation/attempts and academic majors.

- **PROCEDURES**

**If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:**

(a) Sign the current page of informed consent. You will then be asked to tear off the first page of informed consent and return both signed informed consent and completed survey in separately. This will keep all surveys anonymous by excluding personal identification.

(b) Complete a four -page, front and back, 16-question survey, which will **not** be used for diagnostic purposes.

**The following research definitions are to be reviewed before beginning the survey:**

Attempted Suicide: refers only to those who tried to commit suicide and accidentally survived. A suicide attempt is an event where the risk of death is extremely high and the likelihood of rescue or help is extremely low.

Suicide Ideation (thoughts): thinking that can vary from short thoughts that life is not worth living, to very real, well-thought-out plans for killing oneself, to intense imaginations of self-destruction.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

A short-term potential risk could include a relapse of thoughts and attempts of suicide. However, information included in this survey is readily available from Eastern Illinois University's Counseling Center web page, Eastern Illinois University classes, informal peer discussions, and the media. The questions are not intrusive but general in nature, and participants can withdraw or decline the survey at any time by returning the survey to the researcher; before the survey has been collected. The survey contains both a Part A

section and a Part B section, in which those who have never attempted suicide will be directed to complete Part A and will not be confronted with questions regarding suicide attempts from Part B. For health purposes, phone numbers of two different services that can aid in emotional and health problems will be provided with the survey. These services will include Eastern Illinois University's counseling center at 581-3413 and health services at 581-3013, if contacted please indicate if your call is an emergency.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

As a result of participating in this research participants may casually become aware of research needed on the topic of suicide. I believe the potential benefits to society will be of further knowledge on the issue of suicide among university students. Exploring the linkage between suicide ideations/attempts and academic majors may enhance the advising significance of the university in development of future plans.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All personal information obtained from the signed consent form will remain confidential and separated from the completed survey. To keep information anonymous, participants will not record any personal identification, such as name and/or social security number on the questionnaire. The front page, where signed consent is required, will be torn off separately from the questionnaire. Data will be stored and secured in the hands of the researcher. The only people who will have access to this data will be the researcher and the theses committee.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact the research personnel: Principal Investigator, Emily Johnston at 812.480.3618 or [cueaj@eiu.edu](mailto:cueaj@eiu.edu), and Faculty Sponsor Dr. Mikki Meadows at 217.581.6349 or [cfmlm@eiu.edu](mailto:cfmlm@eiu.edu).

## • RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board  
Eastern Illinois University  
600 Lincoln Ave.  
Charleston, IL 61920  
Telephone: (217) 581-8576  
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

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I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time before completed survey is returned to researcher.

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Printed Name of Participant

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Signature of Participant

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Date

### Definition References

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## Appendix B

1- What is your academic major (Please circle)? If you are an undeclared major, please circle undeclared.

### Majors

#### Undeclared

Accounting	Foreign Languages	Pre-Dentistry
African-American Studies	Geography	Pre-Engineering
Art	Geology	Pre-Medicine
Biological Sciences	Health Studies	Pre-Nursing
Board of Trustees	History	Pre-Occupational Therapy
Business Administration	Industrial Technology	Pre-Optometry
Career and Organizational Studies	Journalism	Pre-Pharmacy
Career and Technical Education	Management	Pre-Physical Therapy
Chemistry	Marketing	Pre-Physician Assistant
Clinical Laboratory Science	Mathematics	Pre-Veterinary Medicine
Communication Disorders and Sciences	Mathematics and computer sciences	
Communication Studies	MBA Program	Psychology
Computer Information Systems	Middle Level Education	Recreation Administration
Early Childhood Education	Music	Social Science Studies
Economics	Philosophy	Sociology
Elementary Education	Physical Education	Speech Pathology
Engineering	Physics	Special Education
Family and Consumer Sciences	Political Science	Theatre Arts
Finance	Pre-Chiropractic Medicine	

2 - How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years old

3 - Are you male or female?

- a) male
- b) female

4 - Have you ever had thoughts of suicide?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) sometimes

5 - Have you ever attempted suicide?

- a) yes
- a) no

If you answered **no** to question #5 please fill out only **Part A**

If you answered **yes** to question #5 please fill out only **Part B**

**Part A** (Complete only if you answered **no** to question #5)

**6 - Were you born and raised in Illinois?**

a) yes

b) no

**7 - Do one or more of your high school friends attend this university?**

a) yes

b) no

**8 - Do you currently enjoy the classes you are enrolled in?**

a) yes

b) no

**9 - Have you ever been acquainted with someone who committed suicide?**

a) yes

b) no

**10 - From whom would you most likely seek help regarding suicide? (please rank number in order of preference)**

\_\_\_ Family doctor

\_\_\_ Mental health specialists (such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers)

\_\_\_ University counseling center, advisor, or faculty

\_\_\_ Clergy

\_\_\_ Friends

\_\_\_ Parents or relatives

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I would not seek help

**DONE**

**Part B** (Complete only if you answered **yes** to question #5)

**6 - How many times have you attempted suicide?**

- a) 1 time
- b) 2 times
- c) 3 or more times
- d) Never

**7 - How old were you the first time you attempted suicide? \_\_\_\_\_ years old**

**8 - What method(s) did you use, or would you use, if attempting suicide?**

- a) gun
- b) hanging
- c) drug or alcohol overdose
- d) cutting of wrists
- e) self-mutilation-
- f) carbon monoxide poisoning
- g) risk-taking behavior ( e.g., intentional vehicle accident, Russian roulette etc.)
- h) other \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B****9 - From who have you sought help for thoughts/attempts of suicide?**

- a) Family doctor
- b) Mental health specialists (such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers)
- c) University counseling center, advisor, or faculty
- d) Clergy
- e) Friends
- f) Parents or relatives
- g) Other \_\_\_\_\_
- h) I have never sought help

**10 - From whom would you most likely seek help regarding suicide?  
(please rank number in order of preference)**

- \_\_\_ Family doctor
- \_\_\_ Mental health specialists (such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers)
- \_\_\_ University counseling center, advisor, or faculty
- \_\_\_ Clergy
- \_\_\_ Friends
- \_\_\_ Parents or relatives
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ I would not seek help

**DONE**