

2020

Suicide Attempt Impact on United States Coast Guard Career Retention

James Woodrow Bailey
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Walden University

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James W. Bailey

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Suicide Attempt Impact on United States Coast Guard Career Retention

by

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MSW, University of Houston, 2004

BSW, University of Washington, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

February 2020

Abstract

Suicide is of great concern nationally and has become a significant social problem within the last 10 years. One group of growing concern is those who served in the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and the impact of a suicide attempt on their career retention. Previous studies had focused on potential risk factors that may lead an individual to attempt suicide, but there was limited research on the impact of a suicide attempt on an individual's career retention. It was unknown if the desire of USCG veterans to retain their career can primarily influence their decision not to attempt suicide. The experiential impact of suicide on the career retention of the participants was examined in this study. The study method was planned to be a qualitative phenomenological study but changed to a qualitative descriptive design. The theoretical framework comprised an application of Joiner's interpersonal psychological theory of suicidal behavior and Tinto's integration model for retention relevance and practical implications. Semistructured interviews were used to collect data from 12 USCG veterans to address the primary research question as to the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty that are currently veterans. NVivo analysis indicated that participants experienced difficulties with career, work, and personal relationships before their suicide attempt. Themes were similar for participants who stayed or left service after a suicide attempt. The results also indicated that all participants needed to receive support from people in their life after the attempts. Data suggested peer support was critical for retention and contributed to the promotion of a confident, healthy workforce and social growth in communities and society after an attempted suicide.

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Dedication

Dedicated to the men and women who know that “Sometimes even to live is an act of courage” (Lucius Annaeus Seneca).

Acknowledgments

Thank the Lord God above for guiding me every step of the way through the Ph.D. process. I wish to thank my adoring wife, Dr. Pauline Monsegue-Bailey, for starting and ending with me in this process and helping me see this through and encouraging me to “Keep Moving Forward.” I could not have completed this without her. I want to thank my son, Malcolm, for being my beacon in life and filling me with the strength to live a purposeful life. I would also like to thank my Mentor/Committee Chair, Dr. Yoly Zentella, for her tenacious feedback and positive direction. I could not have completed this process without her thought-provoking insight, query, and constructive feedback. You are hard, but you are fair. I would also like to thank 2nd Chair Member, Dr. Toni Hobson, for his knowledge and expertise on the methods portion. Thanks to all other committee members for their support and feedback to include University Research Reviewer, Dr. Jimmy Brown. Finally, I would like to thank my mothers and fathers for this life to serve others.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I provide an overview of this qualitative phenomenological study that explored the impact of a suicide attempt on members' career retention in the United States Coast Guard (USCG). I focused on participants' lived experiences and persistent themes that may support or thwart career retention after a suicide attempt. The importance of the study centered on providing empirical evidence to mitigate the lack of research in the psychology literature that explores the impact of a suicide attempt on the career retention of USCG members (Newell, Whittam, &Uriel, 2009; RAND Corporation, 2011; Tester &McNichol, 2004). The study was necessary to understand the participants' lived experiences, persistent themes that directly affect the human condition after a suicide attempt, and their interaction to create a pathway to retention or loss of USCG members. The study revealed factors that contribute to emerging themes, for example, fatalistic institution regulations and responses to the individual's suicide attempt unknowingly reinforced by leadership and systematic reaction, which may affect career retention (Durkheim, 1951; Tinto, 1993). The potential social implications of the study can contribute to the understanding of the human condition, resilience, and hardiness of the individual to continue employment after a suicide attempt. The benefits of the research findings and results could be transferable to other members of the armed forces and employees in similar professions as the USCG. For example, law enforcement in Texas and maritime employees who have continued careers after a suicide attempt. The findings of this study provide research data to support the application of Joiner's

(2005) interpersonal psychological theory of suicidal behavior (IPTSB) and Tinto's (1993) integration model for retention (IMR) relevance and practical implications for future research (Selby, E. A., Anestis, M. D., Bender, T. W., Ribeiro, J. D., Nock, M. K., Rudd, M. D., & Shento, A. K. 2004).

In this chapter, I introduce the topic, provide background information about the problem, and discuss the purpose of the study while defining the study and research question. Chapter 1 also includes an overview of the theoretical framework, methodology, nature of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with the significance of the study, the main points of Chapter 1, and a transition to Chapter 2.

Suicide is a large problem in the United States and the military. According to the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (2012), between the years of 2001 and 2009, an average of 33,000 suicide deaths occurred in the United States. The suicide rate among the armed forces increased and exceeded the civilian suicide rate in 2008 and climbed to 22 deaths per day in 2010, with veterans having twice the risk of death by suicide as civilians (Lazar, 2014). Members of the armed forces provided a similar distribution of genders, age, and ethnicity as that of the civilian population but appeared at higher risk for suicide with the current wars (McCarl, 2013). It was my hope that the results of this study would influence current knowledge of the effects of a suicide attempt on a person's ability to preserve their career and discourage another suicide attempt because of contributing factors, such as unemployment, lack of clinical care, and social support (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

Suicide is among the top five causes of death for adults in America and the 10th leading cause of death for all ages in 2013 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). In 2012, the U.S. Surgeon General, Jerome Adams labeled suicide as a matter of national concern among those who serve in the armed forces; this problem knows no boundaries and affects all genders, ages, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic statuses throughout society (National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, 2012) Suicide is of great concern nationally and globally and has become a significant social problem among many men, women, the elderly, and young in society (Huisman, A., Pirkis, J., & Robinson, J. 2010).

Members in the armed forces, particularly members in the USCG, represent one group whose increased suicide rates represent an area of growing concern. Although the impact of a suicide attempt on a USCG service member's career has not been widely addressed in literature, there was evidence of the effects of a suicide attempt on the careers of those who may want to serve in the military (Army Regulation 40-501, Rapid Action Revision Issue Date: 2011; Bergmans, Y., Carruthers, A., Ewanchuk, E., James, J., Wren, K., & Yager, C. 2009; USCG, 2011b). There was a lack of research that addressed the impact of a suicide attempt on the career retention of USCG members present in the literature (Anestis M.D., & Joiner T.E. 2011; Tester, F. J., & McNicoll, P. 2004). Several researchers conceptualized the problem of the effects of a suicide attempt on career retention in civilian occupations and among students in university settings, but few researchers studied members in the Armed Forces (Newell, C., K. Whittam, & Z. Uriell 2009); RAND Corporation 2011; Tinto, 1993).

I found little to no research literature on the effects of a suicide attempt on career retention in the USCG. The USCG has not researched the topic. The USCG is part of the Department of Defense (DoD) and has not been included in DoD research on suicide attempts. This oversight may explain the gap in literature and research on the phenomenon. The USCG falls under Homeland Security while still being referred to as one of the Armed Forces (RAND Corporation, 2011). Despite this classification, military literature on the phenomenon does not include the USCG. I address the little to no extant research literature in the literature search strategy in Chapter 2.

The results of this study added to the limited research literature on the impact of suicide attempts on the career retention of those who serve in the USCG. Additionally, the study increased the body of knowledge by using qualitative research methodology to study the topic. Using the qualitative phenomenological design helped collect data about the lived experience of these individuals and why suicide attempts could thwart career retention. This study design allowed participants to contribute data that may advance institutional, agency responses, and the development of prevention, intervention, and postvention program targeting retention. The phenomenological results can be used to learn more about the lived experiences of how USCG members cope and experience exposure to painful and traumatic experiences that lead to a suicide attempt, and how the attempt affects USCG members' career retention.

Background

I analyzed background literature relating to the problem of the effect of suicide attempts on career retention and which theoretical model constructs based on the

psychology of suicide applied to this issue. Although Tinto's model was dated, it was nevertheless congruent with Joiner's (2005, 2009) theory. Since the development of the IPTSB, a growing body of literature has emerged, testing different aspects of the theory. For example, Ma, Batterham, Calear, and Han (2016) completed a systematic review from January 2005 through July 2015 that directly assessed the IPTSB model constructs as predictors of suicidal ideation or suicide attempt. Alschuler and Yarab (2016) used Tinto's model in a phenomenological study on veteran college students' success and assessed themes that included medical or psychiatric issues that interfere with retention. These studies using Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR supported the idea of how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members back into their units after a suicide attempt affected their continued career retention, which suggests a link between career retention and the ability to assimilate back into the institution after an absence. Tinto's model complements Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB to demonstrate how the unsuccessful integration of USCG men and women back into their units after a suicide attempt affects their continued career success. The IMR had been used in studies on academic institutions but not in military studies (Tinto, 1993). However, the IMR constructs may apply to military personnel institutional integration. Tinto also found this application was possible because the model builds on individuals' abilities to assimilate back into academic institutions after an absence, such as a suicide attempt, and focus on social integration and membership in an institutional environment to avoid attrition. Chapter 2 contains an in-depth discussion of this topic.

The USCG population had a low number of suicides and attempts in comparison to some of the other branches of the armed forces; however, current DoD annual reports did not provide suicide data on the USCG (RAND Corporation, 2011). Suicide attempts that occurred in the USCG appear to receive little attention nationally compared to the other armed forces, i.e., Army, Air Force, and Navy (RAND Corporation, 2011). The literature searches for quantitative or qualitative studies on the phenomena provided few results. Researchers of suicides in the armed forces have speculated that many of the suicide attempts among those in the USCG and armed forces are underreported (RAND Corporation, 2011).

The potential uses of qualitative phenomenological research were helpful when formulating research questions on topics to explore the lived experiences of how people cope and experience events that lead to a suicide attempt and career retention (Agee, 2009). The formulated research questions explored the lived experience of how people coped with events that led to a suicide attempted. The questions explored how career retention potential developed through exposure to painful and traumatic experiences. This condition was required for the IPTSB to be necessary; overcoming powerful self-preservation pressures may be a reason that some members of the USCG can continue their career after a suicide attempt (Joiner, 2005). This study was needed due to the underreporting of suicide attempts and the lack of qualitative phenomenological research in the literature that explores the impact of a suicide attempt on the career retention of USCG members (Newell et al., 2009; RAND Corporation, 2011; Tester et al., 2004; USCG 2011a).

Suicide is of great concern nationally and globally. Suicide has become a significant social problem among men, women, the elderly, and the young in society (Huisman et al., 2010). Suicide is the second most common cause of death among people who serve in the armed forces (Pruitt et al., 2015; Selby et al., 2011); thus, concern about this group has grown. The relatively low rate of suicide attempts in the USCG may be underreported and need a further inquiry to understand the lived experience of its members who are affected by this phenomenon. Although the impact of a suicide attempt on the careers of military members has not been widely addressed in literature, there is evidence that demonstrated the effects of a suicide attempt on a person's career retention (Bergmans et al., 2009; Brenner et al., 2008; Rajeev et al., 2011; Ventrice, Valach, Reisch, & Michel, 2010). In the past two decades, some researchers sought to determine how a suicide attempt impacted retention or attrition using both qualitative and quantitative methodology theoretical frameworks (Gutierrez et al., 2013; Ireland et al., 2012).

Bergmans et al. (2009) and Ventrice et al. (2010) used phenomenological inquiry and semistructured interviews as a strategy to approach content, thematic statement analysis, coding of a suicide attempt, and coding of the impact of the suicide attempt on a participant returning to work. Bergmans et al. found that experiences and barriers associated with the return to employment following a suicide attempt had not been addressed in the literature. Brenner et al. (2008) provided information on the potential suicide risk factors that military personnel may experience, while Drum et al. (2009) provided insight into the full spectrum of suicide thought, intent, and the implications for

conceptualizing the problem for guiding multiple points along the continuum of suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Rajeev et al. (2011) asserted that there was a need for studies aimed at looking at life events and themes rather than just quantitative data on the impact of suicide attempts on military personnel. Ventrice et al. (2010) conducted a study that utilized a narrative approach and semistructured interviewing techniques and found that direct exposure to suicide behaviors might leave memory traces that increase an individual's vulnerability to suicidal behavior but presented no evidence of the impact of an attempted suicide on a person's career. Englander (2012) provided relevance of the importance of interviewing during a phenomenological study, reflecting on primary concerns of data collection procedures, selection, and some participants and criteria. My study adds to the limited qualitative phenomenological research available on the lived experiences and impact of a suicide attempt on the career retention of USCG members (Newell et al., 2009; RAND Corporation, 2011; Tester et al., 2004).

Problem Statement

Suicide was the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, is of great concern globally, and has become a relevant and significant social problem (CDC, 2015; Huisman et al., 2010). During the fiscal year 2010 through 2012, there were 38 hospitalizations for suicide attempts in the USCG (USCG, 2013). The U.S. Surgeon General declared suicide a "serious public health problem" (p. 3) that knows no boundaries and affects all genders, ages, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic statuses throughout society (National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, 2012). Certain groups and

individuals may be more susceptible to attempting suicide, including service members of the USCG. According to the CDC (2008), the total suicide rates in 2008 were estimated to be 20.2 per 100,000 soldiers, compared to 19.5 per 100,000 civilians in the United States with similar demographics. In 2010, there were 43,167 members of the USCG serving on active duty, and eight members completed suicide (USCG, 2011a). In 2010, approximately 1.7% of USCG members answered positively when asked if they had attempted suicide in the past, a number which represented about 719 active duty members (USCG, 2011a). This number was higher than the recorded 38 suicide attempts that resulted in hospitalization from 2010 through 2012. The World Health Organization (2012) asserted that approximately 1 million individuals died by suicide and estimated that 10 to 20 times more individuals attempted suicide.

Military personnel represent a cross-section of the larger population within the United States and appear at higher risk for suicide with the current war(s) than the total civilian population. Bergmans et al. (2009) asserted that barriers exist with the return to the employment of individuals who attempt suicide, but this situation was not widely addressed in the literature. Although the impact of a suicide attempt has not been widely dealt with in the literature, there was evidence of the effects of a suicide attempt on the careers of those who may want to serve in the military. According to Army Regulations (AR 40-501, 2007 & Rapid Action Revision Issue Date 2011), individuals who have previously attempted suicide are at significant risk for a repeat attempt in the future. Therefore, a history of attempted suicide or suicidal behavior was and could be a disqualifier from service. USCG members' retention was affected if a suicide attempt

associated with a mood disorder required hospitalization or treatment (including medication, counseling, psychological, or psychiatric therapy) for more than 12 months (Commandant Instruction (COMDTINST) M6000.1E, 2011b). When there was a substantial issue with the physical or mental fitness of a USCG member for duty, the issue will affect retention, which was defined per an examination by the direction of the commanding officer when there was substantial doubt as to the member's physical or mental fitness for duty (COMDTINST M6000.1E, 2011b). A tentative operational definition for the term *career retention* for this population was those USCG members from October 2010 to October 2012 who remained in service after the end of their service obligation past their suicide attempt and was stated to be mentally fit for duty.

The USCG (2013) collects quantitative data in regards to the number of suicide attempts, completions, and hospitalizations but does not provide the effects of suicide attempts on its members' career retention, thereby failing to add to current research and the increase the base of knowledge into the impact of a suicide attempt on its members. Several studies have conceptualized the problem of a suicide attempt's effect on career retention in the armed forces. In the Behavioral Health Quick Poll of Navy personnel, Newell et al. (2009) asserted that there was a belief among members that a suicide attempt has a significant negative impact on their career retention. In a study conducted by the RAND Corporation (2011), there was a vast amount of quantitative information provided on the impact of a suicide attempt on members of the armed forces that include mostly those that fall under the DoD, excluding the USCG. The RAND Corporation (2012) provided quantitative data of evidence detailing suicide epidemiology in the

military without focusing on the USCG or providing information regarding the impact of suicide attempts on an individual's career. Career retention was discussed primarily in the context of services and programs that focus on suicide prevention.

In Chapter 2, I provide an introduction of how the results of this study made an important contribution to the literature on suicide impact and career retention in the military and employment. There was an important gap in the current psychology literature of qualitative and quantitative studies conducted on the problem of the impact of suicide attempts on career retention. The literature search identified four clinical cohort studies. Platt and Kretman (1990) and Morton (1993) examined the employment status of those individuals hospitalized after engaging in suicidal behaviors. There was also earlier literature, which found higher rates of suicide among the long-term unemployed versus short-term unemployed suicide attempters (Platt et al., 1985, 1993). There were two population-based cohort studies of attempted suicide in young people under 25 years of age conducted in New Zealand (Fergusson et al., 2007). My searches yielded no other studies conducted by academics on the phenomena, showing a void in research due to the underreporting of suicide attempts among those in the USCG and armed forces.

The findings of this study contributed to the literature by providing additional knowledge to researchers and practitioners in the field of psychology about the lived experiences of the individuals and underlying themes that affect individuals' capacity to maintain a career after a suicide attempt. The study provides future data and information that may support the use and application of the concepts of Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR in

conjunction with Joiner's (2009) IPTSB. The results of this study could also be used to assist with current institutional programs and policies focused on the exploration of precipitating themes that prevent career retention. Tinto (1993) and Joiner both asserted that individuals might possess a series of characteristics (e.g., demographics and social support networks) that influence institutional retention but not the sustainability of a career after a suicide attempt. This assertion represented a significant gap in the current literature.

Purpose of the Study

The suicide rate among active-duty military members during 2012 increased to an average of one per day (Thompson & Gibbs, 2012), with 2012 having the highest military suicide rates on record (Briggs, 2013). In the U.S. Military, the high suicide rate was a critical social dilemma that demonstrates the need for broader study and research that explores the impact of a suicide attempt beyond quantitative research of the problem to understand the impact a suicide attempt has on the career retention of service members that survive an attempt. Little phenomenological research had been conducted on members of the armed forces exploring their lived experiences, perceptions, and perceived impact on their career retention following a suicide attempt, which were the intentions of this study (Bergmans et al., 2009; Brenner et al., 2008; Rajeev et al., 2011; Ventrice et al., 2010).

This study was unique because it addressed an under-researched area of focus: the impact of suicide attempts on the career retention USCG service members. The shared lived experiences of USCG members who attempted suicide and their ability to maintain

their military career after receiving mental/emotional health services through their commands and work-life programs may provide information that assists with program assessment and dispelling the attitudes and beliefs that may interfere with the USCG members' career retention and reintegration into their units after a suicide attempt. The findings of this study could enable work-life professionals and USCG leadership to provide a positive social change in the lives of the service members by mitigating factors and negative themes that may prevent a service member from accessing post-care and help USCG members focus towards maintaining their career status after a suicide attempt.

The results of this study impact social change in the nation by furthering knowledge in the field of psychology and on the use of Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR in conjunction with Joiner's (2009) IPTSB to reduce economic strain and promote well-being for individuals who have attempted suicide in other professions. Additionally, the findings of this study may assist with improving prevention and postvention services, as well as adding to the professional literature in a manner that may become a significant template to address this social problem globally. The results of this study added to the limited theoretical literature on the impact of suicide attempts on the career retention of those who serve in the armed forces. A systematic review of the theoretical literature published from 2005 to 2015 completed by Ma et al. (2016) assessed the use of the IPTSB constructs as predictors of suicidal ideation or suicide attempt. They reviewed 58 articles reporting on 66 studies. Their review of the theoretical literature showed that the most tested component of the model was the effect of perceived burdensomeness on

suicide ideation and attempt. Alschuler and Yarab (2016) used Tinto's model in a phenomenological study on military veteran college students' issues related to college success. The researchers identified the emerging theme of medical or psychiatric issues that may interfere with retention or persistence. Consequently, retention rates were indicators of institutional success, and it was noted that suicide attempt rates seem to elevate after a person was discharged from military service (Brenner et al., 2008).

In this study, I focused on the impact of a suicide attempt on career retention, and the findings contribute to the understanding of the human condition, resilience, and hardiness to continue employment. My goal was to provide data supporting relevant practical implications and knowledge. Suicide is a large problem in society, and it is even more of a concern in the military. Members of the armed forces provide a similar distribution of genders, age, and ethnicity as that of the civilian population but appear at higher risk for suicide with the current wars (RAND Corporation, 2011). Additionally, I hoped the results of this study would influence current knowledge of the effects of a suicide attempt on a person's ability to preserve their career and discourage another suicide attempt because of contributing factors, such as unemployment and lack of clinical care and social support (see CDC, 2010).

Research Question

In this phenomenological study, I examined the experiential impact of how a suicide attempt affects the career retention of both active duty and discharged USCG members who remain in service after the end of their service obligation and who are stated to be mentally fit for duty. The research question that guided this study was: What

is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty? The interview questions developed to address the research question are in Appendix B.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

While I discuss the framework in detail in Chapter 2, it was necessary to provide an overview of the theoretical framework for this study of Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR and Joiner's (2009) IPTSB. Tinto's integration model supports retention and how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members back into their units after a suicide attempt affects the members continued career retention. Tinto's IMR suggested that career retention links to the members 'ability to assimilate back into the institution after an absence focusing on social integration and membership with the community or society. The IMR implied that a match was imperative between the institutional environment and the person (Tinto, 1993).

Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB provided a theoretical framework that aligned with the phenomenological methodologies and use of Tinto's (1993,1975) IMR that supported how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members back into their units after a suicide attempt affects their continued career success. Joiner's model made two overarching propositions:

- (a) That perceptions of burdening others and of social alienation combine to instill the wish for death and (b) that individuals would not act on the desire for death unless they have developed the capability to do so. This capability developed through exposure to painful and traumatic experiences and hypothesized by the

theory to be necessary for overcoming powerful self-preservation pressures (Joiner et al., 2009, p. 634).

Additionally, Joiner propositioned that this capability may be a reason that some members of the USCG can integrate or match with their units or commands to continue their career after a suicide attempt. Chapter 2 contains a detailed discussion of this proposition.

The Selby (2010) study served as a framework for understanding the uses of how Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB relates to the current study by demonstrating the application and use of major constructs of the theoretical model in the military. Conceptualization of the Selby et al. study related to the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty? Additionally, I believed that the results of this study might provide information that could aid in their reintegration and retention of USCG members by signifying how themes and factors that participants may experience while continuing their career in the USCG after a suicide attempt impact the individual. The implications of the Selby et al. study and this study's findings may assist leadership with maintaining a mentally and emotionally healthy workforce and add to the currently limited base of knowledge related to the impact of suicide attempts on the armed forces and society.

Nature of the Study

The focus of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of how a suicide attempt affects the career retention of both active duty and discharged USCG members who remain in service after the end of their service

obligation and who are stated to be mentally fit for duty. I used semistructured interviewing as a data collection strategy. I developed an interview protocol that included the research question and 11 open-ended questions and prompts (see Appendix B). The semistructured questions were used to obtain demographic information to reorganize into a chronological framework identifying key elements and epiphanies of the participants' personal lived experiences that led to their suicide attempts. The study was an exploration of the personal experiences of participants' as they navigate a military environment.

My rationale for using the phenomenological approach was to analyze the participants' lived experiences for persistent themes after a suicide attempt. I achieved this goal by providing additional knowledge on their lived human experiences that led up to a suicide attempt and its impact on their career retention. Qualitative phenomenological research provides an integrative perspective and understanding of the individuals' lived experience compared with other methods (Agee, 2009; Bruner, 1986; Englander, 2012; Hauser, Golden, & Allen, 2006).

I used a semistructured interviewing questionnaire to collect demographic information, including mean age, ethnicity, gender, diagnosis, if any; education level, military rank, and suicide attempts before the study. Additional interviews obtained responses from the participants about their suicide attempt and its impact on their careers. Data gathered were used to determine the shared lived experiences and differences between the impact of a suicide attempt on active duty USCG members' career retention. I collected information from participants' interviews and reorganized them into a chronological framework identifying key elements and epiphanies of the personal lived

experiences that led to their suicide attempts. During phenomenological interviewing, the researcher asks probing questions to gain more meaning of the phenomenon as lived by the participants besides the primary research question (Englander, 2012). For example, “Do you recall any suicide behavior in school or during prior employment before your entry into the USCG?” Friedman (2014) found that the suicide attempts of some 60% of members in the armed forces traceable to prior attempts before service in the military. I also reviewed background information obtained from the Suicide-Related Behavior Incident Reports, Form CG-1734, supplied by the USCG for all study participants, after receiving written consent from the USCG and respondents as well as approval from both the USCG and Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Suicide-Related Behavior Incident Reports provided information regarding prior diagnosis, medication history, and self-disclosed possible causes of a suicide attempt as disclosed by participants at the time of intake by USCG medical personnel (USCG, 2012). This information was used to assist with developing open-ended interview questions.

There are two approaches to the qualitative phenomenological analytic process. The approaches are similar to most phenomenological data analysis that builds from primary and secondary research questions (Creswell, 2012). The first approach was to analyze interview transcripts and highlight statements from the participants that answer the research question (Creswell, 2012). The second approach, the researcher develops a cluster of themes from the respondents’ statements (Creswell, 2012). The analysis of statements and themes are used to write structural descriptions that provide an understanding of how the individuals experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012).

These descriptions are then used to support data interpretation (Creswell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). I used these approaches in this study.

I selected participants from the 43,000 service members who were serving on active duty in the USCG from October 2010 to October 2012, who attempted suicide during this timeframe. Thirty-eight members attempted suicide in the USCG during the timeframe listed above (USCG, 2012). Purposive sampling selected twelve respondents to interview. Creswell (2011) asserted that several individuals or participants are needed to conduct a phenomenological study. Polkinghorne (1989) recommended using five to 25 individuals who experienced the phenomenon for a study. I sought 12 respondents to participate in the study from the eligible 38 participants, which was an appropriate sample size for the qualitative phenomenological study. I used a nonprobability sampling strategy (i.e., purposive sampling) until reaching data saturation and variability (Bowen, 2008; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Data saturation is achieved when the information occurs repeatedly, and the researcher anticipates that the collection of more data has no interpretive worth, or no new themes surface from the participants (Morse, 2000).

I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed data collected from participants and the Suicide-Related Behavior Incident Report, Form CG 1734, using a computer program, QSR NVivo, for emerging themes. In a qualitative research study conducted by Kral et al. (2011), 50 Inuit participants ranging in age of 14 to 94 years old were interviewed, yielding 48 themes across the 50 participants. In a qualitative research study conducted by Chung (2010), 31 participants were used to determine prevalent themes regarding their experiences preceding suicide attempts. These studies add to the relevance of the

use of qualitative research methods of recording and transcribing interviews for emerging themes during research studies of suicide attempts.

The phenomenological research tradition was most appropriate for answering the research question in this study specifically because this research approach focuses on the lived experiences of individuals. The phenomenological research method may entail questioning of five or more individuals to provide a complete view of the lived experiences of the participants who experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The information gathered from the participants' acts as a collaboration between data and the participants' lived experiences, leading to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through interviews and statements retold/restored to provide an account of significant statements research question that guides the study (Creswell, 2012). Tester et al. (2004) asserted that Inuit suicide was one of the most significant mental health issues in the Nunavut Territory of Canada's eastern Arctic. Suicide rates are six times those of Canada's southern provinces in this group (Tester et al., 2004). Tester et al. stated that the social constructions used to analyze Inuit suicide offered incomplete explanations of the current problem. Tester et al. used a phenomenological approach that combined narrative study and intergenerational communication with community action to address the problem. The phenomenological approach is appropriate to study problems such as suicide. The Tester et al. study presented a platform for the basis of using this methodology to address the problem of suicide more adequately than socio-psychological models, which may pathologize individuals.

Through phenomenological research, a researcher can explore the lived experiences of how people cope with exposure to painful and traumatic experiences. In this study, determining the impact of an individual's suicide attempts was supported by the IPTSB, which was necessary to understand a person's ability to overcome powerful self-preservation pressures. The ability to overcome self-preservation may be a reason that some members of the USCG can continue their careers after a suicide attempt (Joiner, 2005). Qualitative phenomenological research to address potential research questions focuses on the theoretical methods of attitude formation, and help-seeking behaviors may reveal statements and themes of the lived experiences by members of the USCG who attempted suicide (Drum et al., 2009). When using the qualitative phenomenological approach, research findings emerge when participants answer questions that explore their lived experiences of coping with events that lead to a suicide attempt and career retention (Agee, 2009). Additionally, Agee found that studies should articulate what the researcher wants to know about the phenomenon, the researcher's intentions, and the perspectives of individuals, which is supported by the qualitative research method.

Definitions

I used the following operational definitions in this study. Key concepts and constructs may have multiple meanings, which warrant operational definitions supported by the literature. The following definitions are provided to lend understanding to the context of the study and the research informing this dissertation:

Acquired capability: The degree an individual habituate the pain and fear of death against self-preservation motives to live and the capacity to take their life (Joiner et al., 2005, 2009; Selby et al., 2009).

Career retention: The USCG members from October 2010 to October 2012 who remained in services after the end of their service obligation past their suicide attempt and was stated to be mentally fit for duty (USCG COMDTINST M6000, 2011b).

Coast Guard support: A contract resource under the scope of the USCG Work-Life Program/Employee Assistance Program that provides comprehensive mental/emotional counseling for a variety of issues for members and affiliates of the organization (Coast Guard Support, 2013).

Demographic information: An individual's mean age, ethnicity, gender, diagnosis if any; education level, military rank, military occupation, number of suicide attempts before the study, and the date of discharge, if any (COMDTINST 1734.1A, 2011).

Resilience: A set of habits, actions, and attitudes that prepare individuals to adapt to challenging situations, find a *new normal*, and potentially grow as a result. Improving psychological resilience would enhance mission effectiveness and decrease the adverse effects of difficult missions. Resilience-building training was a proactive prevention effort that can reduce the risk of suicide, the ultimate expression of feeling overwhelmed and hopeless (USCG COMDTINST 1734.14, 2009).

Suicide attempt: Self-inflicted potentially injurious behavior with a nonfatal outcome for which there was evidence, either explicit or implicit, of intent to die. A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury. For reporting purposes, Suicide Attempt

Level 1 = no injury and Suicide Attempt Level 2 = injury (USCG COMDTINST 1734.14, 2009).

Thwarted belongingness: A person's unmet need to belong due to barriers that lead to alienation and lack of being an integral part of a social support network (e.g., family or membership within a group or community; Joiner et al., 2009; Selby et al., 2010).

Perceived burdensomeness: An individual's sense that their existence was perceived as a burden to others and society as opposed to their death (Joiner et al., 2009; Selby et al., 2010).

Unit integration: A person's process of integration into a military unit or group that provides a sense of purpose and social acceptance among peers and leaders. This process leads to social support networks and sufficient moral integration (Tinto, 1993). The definition was derived from Tinto's (1993) student integration model (SIM), which recognizes academic integration, social integration, and membership with community or society as vital to academic institutions' influence on students' persistence. Tinto's theory may not be congruent with military units, but elements may serve as advancement in career retention within the context of the armed forces.

Work-Life: A conceptual framework of programs consisting of support services and benefits offered to employees to address work and personal stressors (e.g., dependency referrals, counseling, training, and incentives that mitigate special family needs) that may affect career retention (Lytell & Drasgow, 2009; Peck, 2001).

Assumptions

Assumptions were necessary for the context of this study to understand the relevance of the individuals' lived experiences and the experiences' impact on the research problem as those experiences relate to the phenomenon of the impact of a suicide attempt on career retention (Bendersky & McGinn, 2010). Assumptions are self-evident truths, and in this study, I assumed that participants answered my questions truthfully and accurately based on their individual experiences and provided information to the best of their abilities. I also assumed that a sample size of 12 respondents would be large enough to establish data saturation (Creswell, 2011).

Scope and Delimitations

Several researchers have described specific aspects of the problem of the effects of attempted suicide on career retention in the armed forces and the belief among members that a suicide attempt has a significant negative impact on their career retention (Newell et al., 2009). I chose this specific focus because, in earlier years, research encompassed matters of a suicide attempt and retention in academic settings, leaving a void in populations such as those of the armed services (Tinto, 1993). There was a need for studies that explored the life events and themes surrounding the issue of a suicide attempt rather than just quantitative data (Rajeev et al., 2011).

Use of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB, in combination with Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR, advances the understanding of the effect of an attempted suicide on the career retention of those in the military. A theory that could have been applied to this study, but was not, is Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide. Numerous quantitative researches and

some qualitative studies on the impact of suicide in institutional settings and society used Durkheim's theory. I did not use Durkheim's theory because Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR theory and Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB use concepts derived from Durkheim's theory of suicide as a basis within institutional settings. Durkheim's theory was based mainly on the assertion that an individual may attempt suicide due to insufficient integration into society, while Tinto expanded the model to apply to different aspects of institutional life and social settings. Tinto acknowledged that both the IMR and Durkheim's model failed to consider an individual's psychological characteristics that may predispose some to suicide (McCubbin, 2003). Joiner's model addressed the impact of interpersonal and psychological characteristics that affect an individual's capacity to attempt suicide.

This study was an exploration of the lived experiences of USCG members who navigate a rigorous environment during wartime, attempting to reintegrate into their units and stay on a career path. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that personal experiences grow out of others to bring forth limitations and practical aspects of analysis. Analysis of themes from the participants' lived experiences provides the basis of qualitative phenomenological research focusing on the structural description that presents the essence of the phenomenon as described by the individual (Polkinghorne, 1989). Additionally, there are limited extant studies in which this methodology was used on this segment of the armed forces and population (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Selby et al., 2010).

I interviewed the 12 participants in this study in a private location selected by the participants within the state of Texas. All participants had the option to participate in the

interview via telephone or in-person. To be included in the study, respondents needed to have attempted suicide from October 2010 to October 2012, had a Suicide-Related Behavior Incident Report, Form CG-1734, completed treatment, and returned to their unit after being diagnosed fit for duty.

A significant boundary of the study was gaining access to 12 respondents who were willing to voluntarily participate in the study from the possible 38 eligible participants who served on active duty in the USCG from October 2010 to October 2012. This condition may have limited the collection of data to interviews. The method of secondary analysis used in other qualitative and quantitative research would have been a valid approach but would have presented a gap in the study and added to the study's limitations. I also performed a secondary analysis of the USCG supplied Suicide-Related Behavior Incident Reports, Form CG-1734. The form provides information regarding prior diagnosis, medication history, and self-disclosed causes of a suicide attempt at the time of intake to USCG medical personnel. I used the form to determine possible persistent themes without a follow-up questioning of the participants. The lack of using follow-up questions would negate the nature of the phenomenological study, which was to seek the participant's lived experience of the event.

The findings of this study are transferable to other members of the armed forces who (a) received treatment during October 2010 to 2012 and were (b) diagnosed as fit employees in similar professions as the USCG (e.g., law enforcement in Texas and maritime employees who have continued career retention after a suicide attempt). Individuals who received treatment from October 2010 to 2012 after a suicide attempt

and diagnosed as fit for duty would be included in the study. The study included geographically accessible participants. Individuals who were discharged from service after treatment and were deemed not medically fit for duty, as well as individuals who were not geographically accessible, were excluded from the study.

Limitations

I identified limitations to this study in light of the assumptions I made. The small sample size used during phenomenological inquiry may have affected the identification of individuals who experienced the same phenomenon and shared emerging relationships between factors and themes in the data. The small sample size may have also affected the transferability of the findings to a broader population outside of members of the armed forces.

Biases that could have influenced my ability to remain objective in response to the participants' experiences and beliefs concerning suicide could have also been a limitation. I used data transcription as a triangulation device to ensure that the findings were a result of the respondents' experiences. For triangulation to be used, strict transcription of data collected from interviews must be maintained (Creswell, 2013).

Despite the limitations, a reliable and valid research protocol for phenomenological inquiry strengthened the study; all individuals experienced the phenomenon in question (i.e., suicide attempt). Additionally, I used the computer program, QSR NVivo, to assist with my bracketing personal experiences and data management. The comparison of results from two or more different methods of data

collection, and respondent validation crosschecking of interim findings strengthened the validity of the analysis (Barbour, 2001).

Significance

The significance of this study lies in assessing the intervention and retention practices in the USCG for members who have attempted suicide and member career retention. The ways and means by which individuals who have attempted suicide navigate reintegration, negotiate belongingness, and rebuild their careers are important to the practice of career retention and the recovery from the traumatic experience that led to suicide. Knowledge attained from the interviews of USCG members who attempted suicide and the impact on their career retention can inform practitioners and policymakers on the individual's perspectives and lived experiences during their service for this country.

The responses and themes obtained from participants' interviews linked Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB and Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR and may catalyze new developments in addressing the issue of suicide, a significant national and global concern. The findings also add to the extant literature by providing valuable combined approaches to understanding the phenomenon of the impact of an attempted suicide on an individual's career retention in an alternative institutional setting to academia and educational institutions. Potential implications for positive social change that are consistent with the phenomenological research method employed in this study provide a voice for the individual who has experienced career conflict and loss of confidence in their abilities due to a suicide attempt. The results of this study provide awareness of the impact of a

suicide attempt on individuals' focusing on the key elements and the epiphanies of the lived personal experiences.

Information that emerged from this study may contribute to the development of the policies and practices of health personnel as well as the development of programs that promote a confident, healthy workforce and encourage career retention, contributing to positive social change (Creswell, 2012). A confident, healthy workforce that is productive and gainfully employed can promote social growth in communities and society. Unemployment has a major impact on society in the sense that individuals who are without work long-term run a greater risk of depression and hopelessness, putting them at risk for suicide (Milner, Page, & LaMontagne, 2013). A confident, healthy, employed community can lead to social growth and a lower risk for suicide.

Summary

In 2012, military suicides increased by an average of one per day, with 2012 being the highest on record in the U.S. Military (Briggs, 2013). In Chapter 1, I introduced the problem of the high suicide rate in the U.S. Military and focused on the significant impact of the effects of attempted suicide on the careers of those who served in the USCG. Understanding this current social dilemma provided the basis for broader study and research that relates to the research question: How does a suicide attempt impact/affect the retention of USCG members?

In Chapter 1, I identified the use of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB and Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR as a foundation from which to address the research question and validated the use of the qualitative phenomenological research method. Furthermore, the

chapter contains definitions of terms. I discussed the assumptions, scope of delimitations, and limitations of the study. In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature on the themes and theoretical foundations relevant to the impact of a suicide attempt on career retention. Chapter 2 also includes the introduction, literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, literature review of key concepts, summary, and conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the impact of a USCG service member's suicide attempt and to understand the effects the attempt has on the career retention of those who survive an attempt. In 2012, "every 24 hours, a member of the United States (U.S.) Armed Forces committed suicide" (Briggs, 2013, p. 2). In 2010, there were 43,167 members of the USCG serving on active duty, and eight members completed suicide (USCG, 2011a). In 2010, approximately 1.7% of USCG members answered positively when asked if they had attempted suicide in the past, which represents about 719 active duty members (USCG, 2011a). This number was higher than the recorded 38 suicide attempts that resulted in hospitalization from 2010 through 2012, which was of great concern. The World Health Organization (2012) asserted that approximately 1 million individuals died by suicide and estimated that 10 to 20 times more individuals attempted suicide.

Military personnel represented a cross-section of the larger population of the United States and appeared at higher risk for suicide with the current war(s) than the total civilian population (RAND Corporation, 2011). Bergmans et al. (2009) asserted that barriers exist with the return to the employment of individuals who attempt suicide, but this assertion has not been widely addressed in the literature. Although the impact of a suicide attempt has not been widely addressed in the literature, there was evidence of the effects of a suicide attempt on the careers of those who may want to serve in the military.

Current literature that established the relevance of the problem can be supported by Selby et al. (2010). The Selby et al. study served as a framework for understanding the applications of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB and the use of major constructs of the theoretical model in the military as well as studies completed by Nademin et al. (2008). Mixed method studies by DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008) and Livingston, Havice, Cawthon, and Fleming (2011) used Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR to explore the transitional experiences of military service members, their feelings of ambivalence, and a sense of perceived burdensomeness to others while dealing with social integration stressors that may lead to a suicide attempt. Olsen, Badger, and McCuddy (2014), Bergmans et al., (2009), and Ventrice et al. (2010) addressed the relevance of qualitative inquiry and semistructured interviews as a strategy to approach content, the thematic analysis, and coding of a suicide attempt, and its impact on career retention. The use of the interview from a phenomenological perspective was addressed using Englander's (2012) examination of the interview as a data collection method.

In Chapter 2, I provide a review of current literature that identifies and establishes the relevance of the use of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB and Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR as a foundation to answer the research question. Additionally, the chapter provides validation of the use of a qualitative phenomenological research method to address the problem of attempted suicide and its impact on the career retention of USCG members. Chapter 2 contains an introduction, literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, and conceptual framework, a literature review related to key variables and concepts in current literature, summary, conclusion, and a transition to Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

Library Databases and Search Engines Used

For two years, I conducted a search of library database search engines through Google Scholar, Walden University Library search engines, and uscg.mil search engines for literature concerning the problem, theoretical foundation, and conceptual frameworks on suicide attempt and career retention of USCG members and related topics in the armed forces. The initial search was limited to peer-reviewed articles dating back to 1975. Due to the limited number of studies and articles found published in the last five years that supported the research question, the literature search had to be extended, using the following search key terms and combinations of search terms: *suicide ideation and self-inflicted injuries, armed forces, military retention and suicide attempts, unemployment, and suicide attempts, and institutional theories of suicide*. A combination of keywords, such as *qualitative research on suicide and retention, phenomenological and narrative research inquiry and suicide study, attitudes of leadership and suicide attempt, armed force, and narrative research, lived experiences, suicide and career retention, and QSR-NVivo and narrative and phenomenological research*, were used to identify germane scholarship in books and research journals articles relevant to this research study. I searched the following databases: EBSCO, National Archives, Department of Defense Medical Mortality Registry, Google Scholar, ERIC Institute of Education Science, American Psychological Association PsycNet, Social Science Research Network, Inc., ProQuest, PsycINFO, PubPsych, WorldWideScience, and uscg.mil. The literature search yielded 76 research journal articles, armed forces regulations, other publications, and

studies that I synthesized and analyzed to support the theoretical framework of this qualitative phenomenological study. The criteria utilized for inclusion and exclusion of articles, journals, and dissertations included current publication date and importance to the purpose, research method, and theoretical foundation of the study.

Lack of Phenomenological Research Available

The literature search revealed that few researchers conducted phenomenological research on members of the armed forces exploring member experiences, perceptions, and the perceived impact on their career retention following a suicide attempt. Most extant research on the topic was located in the nursing and medical care professionals' fields and focused on case study research methods. I found 11 dissertations that used phenomenological research methods to address issues involving suicide. The dissertations of Buechler (2007), Johnson (2013), Moody (2010), and Smigowski (2015) used the phenomenological research approach and were reviewed for research articles to support the theoretical foundation and use of phenomenological research in the current study.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this study comprised Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR and Joiner's (2009) IPTSB. I used Tinto's integration model as a lens through which to view retention and how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members back into their units after an attempted suicide affected their career retention. Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB provided a theoretical framework that aligned with the phenomenological design employed in the study.

Origin of Tinto's IMR and Joiners IPTSB Theories

The origins of Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR and Joiner's (2009) IPTSB link to Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide. Many researchers have used Durkheim's work in quantitative research and some qualitative studies on the impact of suicide in institutional settings and society. Durkheim's theory was based mainly on the assertion that an individual may attempt suicide due to insufficient integration into society. Durkheim's theory of suicide provided the basis of factors that contribute to emerging themes (e.g., fatalistic institution regulations and responses to the individual's suicide attempt unknowingly reinforced by leadership and systematic reaction), which may affect career retention. Tinto's IMR theory and Joiner's IPTSB use concepts derived from Durkheim's theory. Tinto expanded the model to apply to different aspects of institutional life and social settings and acknowledges that both the IMR and Durkheim's model fail to take into account an individual's psychological characteristics that may predispose some individuals to suicide (McCubbin, 2003). Tinto's IMR deviates from the SIM, which explained the attrition of students from academic institutions. Tinto later developed the SIM to address individual attempts at suicide as a form of withdrawal from institutions and society. These changes became the IMR.

Major Theoretical Propositions of Tinto's IMR

Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR suggested that career retention linked to the ability of an individual to assimilate back into the institution after an absence by focusing on social integration and membership with the community or society. The IMR implied that a match was imperative between the institutional environment and the person focusing on

the social and institutional integration of the individual. Tinto (1975) used an adaptation of Durkheim's concepts as the source of institutional and social integration as key components of retention. These adaptations became the core of Tinto's longitudinal model of retention in the academic institutional environment and settings. Tinto (1987) asserted that a match between the individual and the institution was paramount for social integration and congruence of the individual in the institution. This assertion paved the way for an explanation for applying Tinto's work in a different institutional environment. Tinto's approach proposed that individuals fail (a) to separate from a previous socializing agent, (b) to negotiate a transitional period, (c) and to incorporate new values into their lived experiences at the institution. Tinto's integration model influences retention programming focused on institutional practices that lead to increased social integration and programs that may increase social integration and reduce attrition or suicide attempts (Bean & Eaton, 2002).

The propositions of Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR are (a) individuals fail to separate from a previous socializing agent, (b) fail to negotiate a transitional period, (c) and fail to incorporate new values into their lived experiences at the institution may be attached to the background characteristics of the individual. Tinto acknowledged that his model failed to take into account the psychological and background characteristics of the individual and these characteristics' impact on retention. In a quantitative study conducted by Sandler (2000), a survey questionnaire and institutional records were developed and later used by Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, and Hengstler (1993) to enhance Tinto's model.

Cabrera et al. (1993) found an overlap between Tinto's and Bean's models of student attrition in a study that integrated major propositions supporting many of the links that the previous environment and background of the individual have a more complex role than Tinto's (1975, 1993) integrated model for retention theory. Cabrera et al. focused on the impact of career decision-making self-efficacy, perceived stressors, financial difficulties, and perception of one's future, attitudes, behavior, and career development in an institution that affects retention. In a qualitative ethnographic study by Tucker (1999), themes of institutional integration and social integration in the Tinto model were compared to develop programs that assisted retention. Tucker argued an individual's sense of community might be more useful as a theoretical consideration for developing retention programs more than Tinto himself, who asserted that retention programs alone are limited in their impact (Tinto, 1996).

Delineation and Assumptions of IMR Application

Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR deviates from his student integration model (SIM). The SIM explains the attrition of students from academic institutions and builds on an individual's ability to assimilate back into institutions after an attempted suicide, while the IMR states that some people commit suicide because their values are not congruent with those of their social group (McCubbin, 2003). Based on the perspective of assimilation as explained in the SIM, it can be assumed that a USCG member may attempt suicide due to insufficient social integration into the institutional settings and that interpersonal and psychological characteristics may impact an individual USCG retention capacity after an attempted suicide. Tinto later developed the SIM to address individual

attempts at suicide as a form of withdrawal from institutions and society, which developed into the integration model of retention.

The integration model of retention (IMR) was developed directly from the SIM and assumptions based on Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide. Durkheim asserted that an individual likelihood to attempt suicide was dependent on the level of the person's integration, adequate social support network, and moral integration into an institution. The dependence of these three levels reduces the probability of the individual to commit suicide (McCubbin, 2003). Tinto asserted that the act of committing suicide was an obstinate attempt by the individual to withdrawal from aspects of society while drawing attention to the individual's psychological characteristics that may predispose a person to attempt suicide. In an examination of criticisms made of Tinto's SIM of attrition, McCubbin (2003) asserted that Tinto's understanding of how individual characteristics affected attrition highlighted individual characteristics. The critique of Tinto's model focused on the importance of race, ethnicity, family background, and social and academic history but failed to acknowledge the past prevalence of mental illness, family history, finances, and other constructs of social and institutional integration that may impact attrition and retention of an individual who attempted suicide (McCubbin, 2003).

Tinto's model congruence with Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB can demonstrate how the unsuccessful integration of USCG men and women back into their units after a suicide attempt affects their continued career success. The IMR has been applied in studies focusing on students in academic institutions but not in military institutions (Tinto, 1993). However, the IMR constructs may apply to military personnel institutional

integration. Tinto also found this application was possible because the model builds on individuals' abilities to assimilate back into academic institutions after an absence, such as a suicide attempt, and focuses on social integration and membership in an institutional environment as the individual avoids attrition.

Major Theoretical Propositions of Joiner's IPTSB

Joiner's (2005, 2009) interpersonal psychological theory of suicidal behavior (IPTSB) supported how the unsuccessful integration of USCG men and women back into their units after a suicide attempt affects the members' continued career success. Joiner's model makes two overarching propositions described in the theoretical framework for the study: member perceptions of burdening others, social alienation, the wish for death, and that individuals would not act on the desire for death without the capability to do so (Joiner et al., 2009). This capability developed through exposure to painful and traumatic experiences and was hypothesized by the theory to be essential for overcoming prevailing self-preservation pressure (Joiner et al., 2009).

Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB distinguishes between two aspects of a suicide attempt. The primary aspect was that lethal suicide attempts involve methods that generate fearlessness and acceptance of pain by the individual. Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB argued that individuals developed an acquired capability for suicide before such an attempt. Acquired capability, comprised of increased fearlessness about death and pain tolerance, was developed from habituation to painful and traumatic events similar to those experienced by personnel in the armed forces (e.g., combat during the war, military sexual trauma, and career loss due to lack of job performance or other relevant discharge

issues). The second aspect of a suicide attempt was the two forms of suicide ideation, passive (i.e., thought of being better off dead) and active (i.e., desire for one's death). According to the IPTSB, the suicide attempt was motivated by perceived burdensomeness (perception by oneself that they are a liability to others), thwarted belongingness (perception or absence of reciprocal relationships), and hopelessness about status in an institution of a group (Joiner et al., 2009). Joiner asserted that the presence of either of the two overarching propositions, (a) perceived burdensomeness or (b) thwarted belongingness, converges to predict suicide risk factors believed to predict suicide attempts. Perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness are believed to be proximal causes of the suicide attempt, which can affect an individual's career retention.

In a case study conducted by Anestis, Bryan, Cornette, and Joiner (2009), Joiner's (2005) interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behavior constructs of perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired capability indicated that it was the interaction of these constructs that determines an individual's risk of a suicidal attempt. The study revealed that a sense of detachment from others might directly affect the degree to which individuals experience thwarted belongingness. The researchers posited that perceived burdensomeness directly affected an individual's belief and perception that the individual caused problems for others and failed at contributing to the world. Exposure to painful trauma or provocative events influenced the degree to which they would exhibit an acquired capability for suicide attempts (Van Orden et al., 2008).

A quantitative study conducted by Bryan et al. (2013) used structural equation modeling and Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB constructs on two separate samples of

military personnel. Interpersonal psychological theory of suicidal behavior constructs were used to determine the direct and indirect effects of combat exposure on suicide risk through depression symptom severity and posttraumatic stress disorder symptom severity. The study showed components of the IPTSB might not be as evident to support the interpersonal-psychological theory's hypothesis in regard to combat exposure as a single indicator of suicide risk, but from a theoretical perspective, the results provided consideration of the use of IPTSB in further studies (Bryan et al., 2013).

Delineation and Assumptions of IPTSB Application

Use of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB, in combination with Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR, advances the understanding of how an attempted suicide affects the career retention of those in the military. Joiner's model addressed the impact of interpersonal and psychological characteristics that affect an individual capacity to attempt suicide, which was supported in a study conducted by (Nademin, E., Jobes, D. A., Pflanz, S. E., Jacoby, A. M., Ghahramanlou-Holloway, M., Campise, R., & Johnson, L. 2008).

The Nademin et al. (2008) investigative study evaluated whether Joiner's (2005, 2009) theory could differentiate between living members of the United States Air Force and archived postmortem data of United States (U.S.) Air Force (AF) members ($n = 60$) who died by suicide while on active duty. The AF member comparison sample ($n = 122$) used several scales to assess Joiner's constructs. The researchers compared archive data to a random sample of postmortem investigatory files of AF members who died by suicide between 1996-2006. This research also introduced a newly designed measure, the Interpersonal-Psychological Survey (IPS). The researchers designed IPS to assess the

three components of Joiner's theory. Chapter 3 contains information about the importance and use of IPS. Bryan et al. (2013) criticized the use of Joiner's constructs in the Nademin et al. study, citing that the study showed how components of the IPTSB might not be as evident in support of the interpersonal-psychological theory's hypothesis.

In the study conducted by Nademin et al. (2008), Bryan et al. (2013) criticized the study's design. The Nademin et al. study samples used participants who did not live through a traumatic experience such as combat exposure and that the population of AF personnel of new graduates from basic training had not been deployed. In his research, Bryan et al. contended that the Nademin et al. study results did not support the IPTSB theory's hypothesis that thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness were precursors to suicide attempts or risk, but from a theoretical perspective, the results provide consideration of the use of IPTSB in further studies (Bryan et al., 2013). Both studies supported the use of measurements of acquired capability, thwarted belongingness, and perceived burdensomeness to a sufficient degree of reliability to assist in studies focusing on military personnel using Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTS along with understanding the application of Tinto's (1993, 1975) integration model of retention theory (IMR).

Application of Tinto's IMR in Studies

Background literature relating to the scope of the problem of the impact of suicide attempts on career retention was analyzed through an application of theoretical model constructs based on the psychology of suicide and research on the issue. Use of Tinto's (1993, 1975) IMR supported how the unsuccessful integration of USCG men and women

back into their units after an attempted suicide affects the members' continued career success. Olsen et al. (2014) conducted a mixed-methods study of students with active-duty military experience ($n=10$) on U.S. college campuses. The study explored perceptions of an individual's transition and experiences to gain an understanding of the perceived personal strengths, challenges, and factors impacting participation. Response from participants and semistructured interviews were used to reveal primary themes of the challenge of social interactions and social integration. Components of Tinto's (1993, 1975) IMR purport positive engagement and integration influenced retention, participant's sense of belongingness, and a strong correlation between the retention and perceived social integration.

Suicide is of great concern nationally and globally and has become a significant social problem among many men, women, the elderly, and the young in society (Huisman et al., 2010). Concern has been growing about those who serve in the armed forces due to suicide being the second most common cause of death (Selby et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Defense, 2007). Although the impact of a suicide attempt on the careers of military members has not been widely addressed in literature, there was evidence in past literature that demonstrated the effects of a suicide attempt on a person's career retention (Bergmans et al., 2009; Brenner et al., 2008; Rajeev et al., 2011; Ventrice et al., 2010). In the past two decades, some researchers had sought to determine how a suicide attempt impacts retention or attrition through qualitative and quantitative methodology theoretical frameworks (Gutierrez et al., 2013; Ireland et al., 2012).

Several quantitative studies conducted by Newell et al. (2009), RAND Corporation (2011), and Olsen et al. (2014) described specific aspects of the problem of how a suicide attempt affects career retention in the armed forces and the belief among members that a suicide attempt has a significant negative impact on the member's career retention. Newell et al. (2009) asserted in the Behavioral Health Quick Poll of Navy personnel that there was a belief among members that suicide attempt has a significant negative impact on their career retention. In a study conducted by the RAND Corporation (2011), there was a vast amount of quantitative information provided on the impact of a suicide attempt on members of the armed forces. These armed forces mostly fell under the Department of Defense (DoD) and excluded the USCG. The RAND Corporation (2012) provided quantitative data of evidence detailing suicide epidemiology in the military without focusing on the USCG or providing information regarding the impact of suicide attempts on individuals' careers. Career retention was discussed primarily in the context of services and programs that focus on prevention.

I chose the specific focus for this study because, in earlier years, research encompassed suicide attempts and member retention in academic settings, leaving a void in populations such as those of the armed services (Tinto, 1993). There was a need for studies that explore the life events and themes surrounding the issue of a suicide attempt rather than just quantitative data (Rajeev et al., 2011). The use of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB, in combination with Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR, advances the understanding of how an attempted suicide affects the career retention of those in the military. This study was an exploration of the lived experiences of USCG members who navigate a rigorous

environment during wartime, who attempt to reintegrate into their units and stay on a career path. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that personal experiences grow out of others to bring forth limitations and practical aspects of the analysis. Analysis of the themes and responses of the participants provide the basis for the use of a qualitative phenomenological research study, which focuses on individuals' life experience.

Additionally, few studies have used this qualitative analysis methodology in this segment of the armed forces and population (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Selby et al., 2010).

Application of Joiner's IPTSB in Studies

The USCG's low number of suicides and attempts in comparison to the United States Army, Air Force, and Navy, may be more conducive to phenomenological research versus quantitative methods (RAND Corporation, 2011; Thompson et al., 2012; USCG, 2011a). The potential uses of qualitative phenomenological research emerge when answering research topics that explore how people cope and experience events that lead to a suicide attempt and career retention (Agee, 2009). This potential developed through exposure to painful and traumatic experiences and was hypothesized by the IPTSB to be necessary for overcoming powerful self-preservation pressures that may be a reason that some members of the USCG can continue their career after a suicide attempt (Joiner, 2005). The current phenomenological research was needed because there was a lack of qualitative phenomenological research in the literature that explores the impact of a suicide attempt on the career retention of USCG members in the literature (Newell et al., 2009; RAND Corporation, 2011; Tester et al., 2004).

Most research studies that apply Joiner's (2005, 2009) interpersonal psychological theory of suicidal behavior are quantitatively focused or apply the model towards populations other than the USCG, which is part of Homeland Security and not part of the DoD. Bryan and Anestis (2011) asserted that most research on military suicide attempts was prompted due to suicide rates of military personnel exceeding those of the public and the growing efforts to focus on the IPTSB application. Bryan et al. (2011) conducted a study exploring the relationships of PTSD and the three components of the IPTSB in a sample of deployed military personnel that excluded USCG personnel. Results of the study indicated that traumatic experiences and symptoms relate to the acquired capability for suicide and interact with the perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness that statistically indicates that rehearsal of painful and provocative experiences may have an impact on suicide risk.

Bryan (2011) continued to assert the validity of applying IPTS concepts focused on the context, the use of perceived burdensomeness (PB), and thwarted belongingness (TB) as important indicators in the study of suicide risk but that there was still limited research applicable to military populations, and a need for translating Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB constructs into clinical tools. Bryan asserted the validity of a brief self-report survey of PB and TB, and the use of the Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ), on a sample of 219 deployed military personnel that confirmed that PB and TB are distinct, and are correlated with psychiatric symptomatology and scales significantly improved the ability to gauge suicide ideation among deployed service members. A similar use of the INQ was utilized in a study conducted by Nademin et al. (2008), who

developed the Interpersonal-Psychological Survey (IPS) to assess Joiner's theory using one administered instrument with Air Force personnel. The IPS demonstrated convergence validity and reliability with three scales: The Acquired Capability to Suicide Scale (ACSS), the Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ), and the IPTSB used by Joiner (2000; 2002; 2005) which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Rationale for the use of Joiner's IPTSB and Tinto's IMR in the Study

The rationale for the choice of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB, in combination with Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR, advances the understanding of the effect of an attempted suicide on the career retention of military members. Research conducted by Nademin et al. (2008) and Gutierrez et al. (2013) developed surveys inline with Joiner's IPTSB and relates to building upon the theory demonstrated in research conducted by the Nademin et al. survey of Air Force personnel. Nademin et al. (2008) developed the IPS to assess three components of Joiner's theory using one administered instrument with Air Force personnel. The IPS demonstrated convergence validity and reliability with three scales: the ACSS, the INQ, and the IPTB used by Joiner to assess the three constructs (PB, TB, and AC) of his theory in adults and college students (Van Orden et al., 2008). The IPS derives from the Suicide Death Investigation Template developed by Nademin and a team of Air Force Suicide Prevention Program suicidologist professionals. The results of the study were highly correlated to the three constructs (PB, TB, and AC) of Joiner's theory. The ACSS had good reliability to assess acquired capacity ($\alpha=.85$), the INQ internal consistency for the total scale was ($\alpha=.94$) for belongingness and burdensomeness. Correlation of the IPS and the INQ were high for burdensomeness and

thwarted belongingness. Qualitative phenomenological research provides a more integrative perspective and understanding of an individual's lived experience compared with other methods (Agee, 2009; Bruner, 1986; Hauser et al., 2006).

Gutierrez et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study among female veterans from recent conflicts to explore the women's experiences and potential suicide risk factors using the concepts of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB, including burdensomeness and failed belongingness, by using a qualitative descriptive design with hermeneutic hues. A survey and interviews were conducted with 19 women, aged 24–52 years, who had served in combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan. The results yielded transcripts of themes related to stressors that influenced participants' worldview and ways of coping, concluding preliminary support of Joiner's concepts and the application of therapeutic strategies, with interventions aimed at increasing distress tolerance.

In the qualitative study conducted by Olsen et al. (2014), participants' accounts and semistructured interviews yielded primary themes of the challenge of social interactions and social integration. Tinto's (1993, 1975) IMR contends that positive engagement and integration influenced retention, thus linking correlation to the importance of a participant's sense of belongingness and retention, thereby focusing on the importance of social integration. In several mixed method studies conducted by DiRamio et al. (2008), Tinto's model was used to study the experiences of 25 combat veterans who transitioned to college as full-time students. Another study conducted by Livingston et al. (2011) explored the transitional experiences of college students who returned to college after combat zone deployments or another active military service. The

study results yielded themes that described how veterans experienced feelings of ambivalence and a sense of perceived burdensomeness to others while dealing with social integration stressors (DiRamio et al., 2008; Livingston et al., 2011).

Tinto's model demonstrated how the unsuccessful integration of USCG men and women back into their units after a suicide attempt affects their continued career success. The IMR had been used in studies on academic institutions but not in military studies (Tinto, 1993). However, the IMR constructs may apply to military personnel's institutional integration. Tinto also found this application was possible because the model builds on individuals' abilities to assimilate back into academic institutions after an absence, such as a suicide attempt and focuses on social integration and membership in an institutional environment to avoid attrition.

How Tinto's IMR and Joiner's IPTSB relates to the Study

Tinto's IMR in relation to the Study

The IMR had been used in studies on academic institutions but not in military studies (Tinto, 1993). However, the IMR constructs may be applicable and relate to military personnel institutional integration. Tinto also found this application was possible because the model builds on individuals' abilities to assimilate back into academic institutions after an absence, such as a suicide attempt and focuses on social integration and membership in an institutional environment to avoid attrition. This consideration is part of the discovery for the answer to the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty?

Joiner's IPTSB in relation to the Study

In a study of female veterans by Gutierrez et al. (2008), elements of Joiner's (2005) IPTSB had been used to assess their experiences and their potential suicide risk by using structured and open-ended interview questions. During this qualitative study, researchers collected data on Joiner's three constructs (PB, TB, and AC). This design relates to the methods used in this qualitative phenomenological study. Joiner's model makes two overarching propositions described in the theoretical framework for the study: those perceptions of burdening others, social alienation, and the wish for death, and those individuals would not act on the desire for death without the capability to do so (Joiner et al., 2009). This capability developed through exposure to painful and traumatic experiences and was hypothesized by the researchers to be essential for overcoming prevailing self-preservation pressures (Joiner et al., 2009).

In a case study conducted by Anestis et al., (2009), Joiner's IPTSB constructs revealed that a sense of detachment from others might directly affect the degree to which individuals experience thwarted belongingness and the researchers theorized that perceived burdensomeness might be directly affected by an individual's belief and perception. Bryan et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative study of two separate samples of military personnel to determine the effects of trauma experienced in combat on suicide risk. In the study Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB constructs demonstrated they might not be as evident as hypothesized as a support indicator of suicide risk, but from a theoretical perspective, the results provided consideration of further research and use of IPTSB with other theories for the study of military personnel (Bryan et al., 2013).

The application of Joiner's IPTSB model with Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR could be used to advance the understanding of how attempted suicide affects the career retention of those in the military and add to the current literature. The use of these two theories in this study helped to answer the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty?

Literature Review Related to the Method used and Key Themes

I discuss the key themes under the following headings, the rationale for using the phenomenological approach in the study, the use of semistructured interviewing, studies supporting the use of suicide as a key theme, the rationale for studying suicide attempts, career retention studies supporting the use of suicide attempt, and career retention. Finally, the themes of integration and retention implication correspond to the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty?

Rationale for Using the Phenomenological Approach in the Study

The rationale for using the phenomenological approach was to analyze the lived experiences of participants to identify persistent themes embedded in the phenomenon. Analysis of persistent themes can be achieved by searching the transcripts of interviews for the human experience that leads up to a suicide attempt and the attempt's impact on career retention by examining the lived experiences of a participant who served in the USCG. Qualitative phenomenological research provides an integrative perspective and understanding of the individual's experience compared with other methods (Agee, 2009; Bruner, 1986; Hauser et al., 2006). The study provided information that assists with

program assessment, dispelling attitudes, and beliefs that may interfere with career retention and reintegration of USCG members into their units after a suicide attempt. The findings of this study enable work-life professionals and USCG leadership to provide a positive social change in the lives of the service members by identifying factors for mitigation and negative themes that may prevent the service member from accessing post-care and distracting the member from maintaining their career status after a suicide attempt.

Qualitative research uses multiple methods to gather data, for example, using open-ended responses, interviews, participant observations, field notes, and reflections. Creswell (2012) asserted that qualitative research could be in the form of narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Researchers' objectives for qualitative research may focus on understanding the concepts above, may expand into the natural environments of individuals, describe the behaviors of a culture-sharing group or focus on the case study (Creswell, 2012). The comparing and contrasting of the five traditions assisted with identifying why phenomenological research was the preferred study design for understanding the proposed research questions instead of the other methodologies such as narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study.

Narrative research is a qualitative tradition, in which the researcher initiates studies that focus on the lives of individuals. This research method may entail questioning of one or more individuals to provide a complete view of the lives of the participants. The information gathered from the participants, and researchers' life acts as

a collaborative narrative that is retold/restored to provide a chronology of events and content that may reveal patterns and answers to perplexing questions and issues in narrative format (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Researchers can conduct narrative research through interviews and observations, which are also traditionally used in other qualitative research methods, including a phenomenological research approach, the method chosen for this study.

The grounded theory method provides an analysis of data that assists with understanding the essence of structured qualitative theory concepts and new information from data collected in the field instead of relying on already existing theories while yielding a substantive theory. Gilgun (1992) asserted that there are 21 steps to analyzing qualitative data using the grounded theory approach to data analysis. As with the previous qualitative research approach (phenomenology), in-depth interviewing is the primary method of obtaining information. The grounded theory form of research may be useful to get information about data and tell the story of the lived experience of the individual and the impact the suicide attempt has on a USCG services members' career. Grounded theory methodology may be useful in the analysis of connections between emerging categories and themes between groups, for example, different groups of individuals in units, in comparison to various leadership groups and commands in the USCG.

The qualitative research method of ethnography is used in natural settings by researchers who observe cultural groups and collect interview data (Creswell, 2012). The process is flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the lived realities encountered in the field. Ethnography would be more appropriate if the focus was on a

particular ethnic group and may be a viable option if the researcher wants to branch into the difference between successfully retained ethnic groups after a suicide attempt (Creswell, 2012). This form of research was complimentary in describing the *emic* perspective through observation, interviewing individuals of various ethnic groups, cataloging behaviors, and identifying language through a long-term embedded study design similar to case study research.

Case study research is bound in time and activity by the researchers who use a broad range of data collection activities such as observations, interviews, and records review over a sustained period. The design may use more than one case. The researcher must establish justification for selecting cases. The case study method is a practical approach for research in medical settings (Creswell, 1998). Case study research has a certain appeal if the research question focused on the specific aspects of a suicide attempt, but phenomenological research allows the researcher to understand the lived experience of participants and provides a more favorable method of answering the research question (Creswell, 2012).

The phenomenological research tradition is appropriate for answering the research question specifically because this research strategy focuses on the lived experience of individuals, which was the chief criterion determined by the research question (Englander, 2010). The phenomenological study may entail questioning five or more persons to obtain a complete view of the lived experience of the phenomenon. The information gathered from the participants', and in some cases, the researchers' life acts as a collaborative statement that is retold/restored to provide an account of events and

content that may reveal patterns and answers to perplexing questions and issues in response format (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Phenomenology looks into the meaning of particular experiences of individuals, as described by the participants. Finding the meaning of the particular experience is achieved by bringing out the participants' everyday experiences through in-depth interviewing similar to the narrative research format, with the focus being to identify meaning in the experience (Creswell, 2012). This research method involves using a small group of subjects while observing patterns, relationships, and meaning (Lund, 2005). The researcher brackets or sets his or her experiences to understand the experiences of the participants in the study. As researchers observe phenomenological research participants, the information is cataloged, which may enable the use of grounded theory to provide a theoretical model for the analysis of data collected. Researchers can conduct phenomenological research through interviews and observations, methods that have been traditionally used in other qualitative research designs. Analyzing stories of participants who received existing post-intervention services and identifying what the participants considered instrumental in their healing as well as contributing to their resilience to continue their military careers may help establish regular postvention services.

Miller (1995) asserted that ethnographic methods could be used to research distinctive cultural patterns that may provide answers into differences between cultures. This method would be appropriate if the researcher wants to focus on the importance of culture on participants. A phenomenological research method focused on cultural implications appeared in a qualitative research study conducted by Tester and McNicoll

(2004) of Inuit suicides' cultural implications on social constructions through using interviewing. Tester and McNicoll asserted that Inuit suicide was one of the most significant mental health issues in the Nunavut Territory of Canada's eastern Arctic region. Suicide rates were six times in this group than those in Canada's southern provinces. Tester and McNicoll asserted that the social constructions used to analyze Inuit suicide offered incomplete explanations of the current problem. An approach that combined participants' accounts and intergenerational communication with community action was used to address the problem. The approach yielded positive results. Tester and McNicoll's study of Inuit suicides presents a platform for the basis of using interviews to collect statements of lived experiences to address the problem of suicide more adequately than organic or quasi-organic explanations, social explanations, and socio-psychological models, which may pathologize individuals.

Rajeev et al. (2011) asserted that there was a need for studies aimed at examining life events and themes rather than just quantitative data on the impact of suicide attempts on military personnel. Ventrice et al. (2010) conducted a study that utilized a narrative approach and semistructured interviewing techniques, which yielded results that suggested direct exposure to suicide behaviors, might leave memory traces that increase an individual's vulnerability to suicidal behavior but presented no evidence of the impact of a suicide attempt on a person's career. This study adds to the body of literature needed on the impact of a suicide attempt on the career retention of USCG members (Newell et al., 2009; RAND Corporation, 2011; Tester & McNicoll, 2004).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Phenomenological Research Approach

The strength of qualitative phenomenological research methods is that the method provides an integrative perspective and understanding of the individual's lived experience compared with other research methods (Agee, 2009; Bruner, 1986; Englander, 2012; Hauser et al., 2006). The weakness of most studies was that the researchers failed to present evidence that a suicide attempt affects a person's career. This study builds and utilizes the phenomenological approach to identify persistent themes after a suicide attempt and differs from other studies by providing additional knowledge on the lived human experience that leads to a suicide attempt and the attempt's impact on USCG career retention.

Use of Semistructured Interviewing

The phenomenological studies use interviews, specifically the method of semistructured interviewing, to gather information related to the factors that led to the suicide attempt, services rendered, and the support systems of the participants. Hersen et al. (2007) asserted that there are differences between structured and semistructured interviews and that the use of an interview format may be dependent on the theoretical model. A structured interview might be more beneficial if the goal is to achieve consistency among participants and to standardize the interview format. Englander (2012) asserts that researchers select the use of interviews because of the researcher's interest in studying the meaning of a phenomenon as the individual lives it. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) asserted that interviews in qualitative research are the most familiar method to collect data from individuals and vary in approaches. Most structured

interview strategies take the form of individual face-to-face, in-depth interviews that focus on learning individual experiences and perspectives on phenomena such as suicide attempts and career retention. Qualitative phenomenological research techniques differ by using semistructured rather than structured interviews because structured interviews often produce quantitative data (DiCicco-Bloom et al., 2006).

Rabionet (2011) asserted that in order to collect the full meaning and experiences of an individual being studied using a qualitative research method, particularly semistructured interviewing, six conditions had to be met. The method requires (a) selecting the type of interview, (b) establishing ethical guidelines, (c) crafting the interview protocol, (d) conducting and recording the interview, (e) crafting the interview protocol, and (f) reporting the findings. These requirements are applicable in my phenomenological study to generate procedures explaining in-depth and the use of the USCG Suicide-Related Behavior Incident Report (SRBIR), Form CG 1734, Interview Protocol utilization to acquire data and information on the participants' experiences, perceptions, and perceived impact on their career retention following a suicide attempt. I address these issues in detail in Chapter 3.

Rezaie et al. (2014) used semistructured interviews during a qualitative study that explored motives for attempting suicide by self-immolation with 15 participants. The researchers taped and transcribed the interviews, and then performed a content analysis for the transcribed interviews. The content analysis provided the main categories and themes distinctive to the method. Rezaie et al. found that semistructured interviewing provided participants an opportunity to express the context of their suicide attempts

without the restriction or limitations caused by structured and closed questionnaires.

Strengths and Weaknesses Inherent in Interviewing

The strengths of the studies expand understanding of how structured interviews may be more beneficial if the goal was to achieve consistency among participants and to standardize the interview format. The weakness of the studies that used structured interviewing is that the interviewer may appear rigid and damage the effort to build rapport, which is essential when working with distinct groups and populations. The strengths of the studies demonstrated the collection of data from individuals using structured interview strategies in the form of individual face-to-face in-depth interviews assists with learning individual experiences and perspectives on phenomena such as suicide attempts and career retention. This study builds and utilizes multiple forms of data collection and differs from previous studies by using semistructured interviews and avoids the use of structured interviews to obtain data often used by themselves as techniques to get information from participants in quantitative research (DiCicco-Bloom et al., 2006).

Studies Supporting the Use of Suicide as a Key Theme

Drum et al. (2009) provided insight into the full spectrum of suicide thought, intent, and the implications for conceptualizing the problem for guiding multiple points along the continuum of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. In a case study conducted by Anestis et al. (2009) to understand suicidal behaviors among the military, Joiner's IPTSB was used to evaluate 12 participants who had not attempted suicide. The lack of a major

suicide attempt was cited as a limitation of the study, and researchers noted that future studies should include a sample of active duty military who attempted suicide (Anestis et al., 2009). Using existing data collected on suicide attempts in the USCG may provide the groundwork for future research. In several narrative studies conducted by Chung (2010), 31 participants were used to determine prevalent themes regarding their experiences preceding suicide attempts. There had been over 66 studies that identified the use of the IPTSB model supporting the use of suicide as a key theme in a review of 58 articles completed by Ma, Batterham, Calcar, and Han(2016) from 2005-2015.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Use of Suicide as a Key Theme

The strengths of the studies provided insight into the full spectrum of suicide thought, intent, and the implications for conceptualizing the problem of the impact of a suicide attempt on career retention. The weakness of the studies conducted by Drum et al. (2009), Chung (2010), and Kral et al. (2011) was that the researchers failed to use participants who served in the military or the USCG who had attempted suicide and the studies focused more on suicide completion. Although Anestis et al. (2009) used participants in the military, the study lacked military personnel who attempted suicide. This study builds on obtaining insight into the full spectrum of suicide thought and attempts utilizing Joiner's IPTSB. This study differs from the previous study by focusing on USCG members who attempted suicide while using Tintos (1975, 1993) IMR to support retention on how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members after a suicide attempt affects the members continued career retention.

Rationale for Studying Suicide Attempts and Career Retention

Suicide is a significant problem in society, and it is, even more, a concern in the military. Members of the armed forces provide a similar distribution of genders, age, and ethnicity as that of the civilian population but appear to be at higher risk for suicide with the current wars (McCarl, 2013). Additionally, it was the hope that this study would influence current knowledge of the effects of a suicide attempt on a person's ability to preserve their career and discourage another suicide attempt because of contributing factors such as unemployment, lack of clinical care, and social support (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). Suicide is among the Top 5 causes of death for adults in America and the 10th leading cause of death for all ages (CDC, 2015). Suicide is a serious concern nationally and globally and has become a significant social problem among many men, women, the elderly, and the young in society (Huisman et al., 2010).

Research conducted by Bergmans et al. (2009) and Ventrice et al. (2010) addressed the use of phenomenological inquiry and semistructured interviews as a strategy to answer the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty? Bergmans et al. and Ventrice et al. applied semistructured interviewing as a strategy to collect content. They used thematic narrative analysis and coding of a suicide attempt and its impact on returning to work. Bergmans et al. found that experiences and barriers associated with the return to employment following a suicide attempt had not been addressed in the literature. In 2008, Brenner (2008) provided information on the potential suicide risk factors that military personnel may experience while Drum et al. (2009) provided insight into the full

spectrum of suicide thought, intent, and the implications for conceptualizing the problem for guiding multiple points along the continuum of suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

In a quantitative study, Friedman (2014) found that 60% of members in the armed forces' suicide attempts traceable to prior attempts before service in the military. The studies of Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR supports how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members back into their units after a suicide attempt affects the members 'continued career retention and suggests that career retention links to the ability to assimilate back into the institution after an absence. Tinto's model was congruent with Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB to demonstrate how the unsuccessful integration of USCG men and women back into their units after a suicide attempt affects the members 'continued career success. The IMR had been used in studies on academic institutions but not in military research (Tinto, 1993). However, the IMR constructs may apply to military personnel institutional integration. Tinto also found this application was possible because the model builds on individuals' abilities to assimilate back into academic institutions after an absence, such as a suicide attempt and focus on social integration and membership in an institutional environment to avoiding attrition.

Bossarte et al. (2012) asserted that the relationships between military service and suicide attempts are not clear, and that research needs to focus on this phenomenon. Comparatively, there was limited knowledge of the characteristics and cause of suicide attempts among military service members. The prevalence of suicidal behaviors among veterans and the general population of the United States continues to demonstrate similarities while suicide attempts among members on active duty increase. In a DoD

Suicide Event Report, Program, Bush et al. (2013) found extensive information on suicide attempts by the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy personnel. The data compiled demographics, suicide event details, behavioral health treatment history, military history, and information about other potential risk factors to create a standardized suicide surveillance tool to assist suicide prevention in the U.S. military between 2008 and 2010.

What remains to be Studied of Suicide Attempt and Career Retention?

Additional studies are needed to explore how occupational stressors and other risk factors affect the marked increase in the incidence of suicide attempts among active-duty service members since 2005. LeardMann et al. (2013) suggested that the higher rate of suicide in the military might mainly be a product of increased occupational stress over the years of war. (LeardMann et al., 2013). Bergmans et al. (2009) found that experiences and barriers associated with the return to employment following a suicide attempt had not been addressed in the literature. The weakness of most studies conducted on military populations rests on suicide completions and post-suicide autopsy reports collected by the DoD. These records exclude information about the USCG as the USCG falls due to falling under the purview of Homeland Security. This study builds and utilizes the aforementioned studies as a basis for extending the knowledge obtained to focus on risk factors and the use of Tinto's model as congruent with Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB to demonstrate how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members back into their units after a suicide attempt affects the members career success and differs from the previous study by focusing on the impact of suicide attempts on career retention.

Career Retention

Selby et al. (2010) served as a framework for understanding the uses of how Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB relates to the study by demonstrating the application and use of the primary constructs of the theoretical model in a military setting. Conceptualization of the Selby et al. study refers to the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty? An answer may be, by signifying how themes and factors that participants may experience while continuing their career in the USCG after a suicide attempt affect the individual. Additionally, this research may provide information that can aid in the reintegration and retention of USCG members. The implication from Selby et al. is that the study may assist leadership with maintaining a mental and emotionally healthy workforce and add to the currently limited base of knowledge related to the impact of suicide attempts on the armed forces and society.

A quantitative study conducted by Mahon, Tobin, Cusack, Kelleher, and Malone (2014) examined occupation-specific risk factors for suicide among military personnel as a model for other professions at risk. A retrospective, case-control study using pair-matched military comparison subjects was conducted to determine occupation-specific risk factors for suicide, particularly suicide by firearm. Occupation influenced the suicide method, and access to an opportunity to use lethal means in the workplace emerged clearly. The findings in this dissertation study may be used as retention strategies and have applicability and transferability to this study and future studies on employees of similar professions as the USCG, for example, law enforcement in Texas and maritime

employees who have continued career retention after a suicide attempt (Mahon et al., 2014).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Studies

The strengths of the studies conducted by Selby et al. (2010) and Mahon et al. (2014) served as a framework for understanding the uses of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB primary constructs in a theoretical model for the military. The weakness of the studies conducted by Selby et al. and Mahon et al. was that the studies were quantitative and case studies that examined occupation-specific risk factors for suicide among individuals and focused on the use of firearms as a specific risk factor for suicide. This study builds and utilizes multiple risk factors and influences on the suicide method employed by the individual. This study differed from the previous studies by demonstrating applicability and transferability to employees of similar professions to the USCG, for example, law enforcement in Texas and maritime employees who have continued career retention after a suicide attempt (Mahon et al., 2014).

Integration and Retention

Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR supported retention and suggested how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members back into their units after an attempted suicide affected the members continued career retention by linking the ability to assimilate back into the institution after an absence to a focus on social integration and membership with community or society. Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB supports how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members back into their units after a suicide attempt affects their continued career success. IPTSB uses two overarching predictions linked to

painful, traumatic experiences pressures as the reason individuals may be able to integrate continuing careers after a suicide attempt through a review of several studies (Joiner, 2005; Newell et al., 2009). There was a need for studies that explored the life events and themes surrounding the issue of a suicide attempt rather than just quantitative data (Rajeev et al., 2011). Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide was widely applied in quantitative research and some qualitative studies on suicides' impact in institutional settings and society. Durkheim's theory was not used in this study because Tinto's IMR theory and Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB uses concepts derived from Durkheim's theory of suicide as a basis within institutional settings.

In an examination of 740 military records for demographic and psychosocial predictors of military retention following operational deployments, Vasterling et al. (2015) determined from in-person interviews and questionnaires several potential predictors of military retention. I concluded from the results of the study that service members early in their career might be especially prone to military attrition, needing important initiatives that target organizational cohesion and support, and that marital status influences military retention, reinforcing the needs of focusing on military families. The Vasterling et al. study found that multiple individuals and environmental factors determined occupational retention, including emotional support from peers, leaders, and socialization back into a unit after an extended absence. These important factors for assimilation of an individual and retention after psychosocial trauma were noted by Tinto (1975, 1993) IMR.

In the past two decades, some researchers had sought to determine how a suicide attempt impacts the integration and attrition of service members. Ireland et al. (2012) examined the incidence of mental health diagnoses during the initial service of U.S. active-duty military members. Ireland et al. identified associations with many factors, including the levels of attrition relationship with suicide attempts data, including medical encounters, deployment, attrition, and how suicide attempts affected retention levels of service members. Ireland et al. found that service members who had a mental health diagnosis had an increased risk of early attrition but discovered no significant link to a suicide attempt. The finding from the study provided data and information that synthesizes concepts of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB and Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR theories to answer the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty?

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Studies

The strengths of the studies conducted by Vasterling et al. (2015) and Ireland et al. (2012) determined that the use of in-person interviews could assist with gathering data. The researchers found that occupational retention was determined by multiple individual and environmental factors, which serve as important factors for the assimilation of a person into an institution and promoting retention after a traumatic experience. These findings reflect outcomes similarly noted by Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR. The weakness of the studies conducted by Vasterling et al. and Ireland et al. focused more on the impact of a mental diagnosis on attrition rather than the implications of a suicide attempt on individual career retention. This study differed from the previous

study by applying and synthesizing concepts of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB and Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR theories to answer the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty?

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, I discussed how the review of the literature identifies and establishes the relevance of the use of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB and Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR. Both theories served as a framework to answer the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty? In this chapter, I provided an overview of Tinto's IMR and Joiner's IPTSB theories that form the framework of this study. The IPTSB supported retention and how the unsuccessful integration of USCG members back into their units after a suicide attempt affects the members continued career success. The central focus of the study was to explore the phenomenon of suicide attempt effects on career retention. Participants' responses and analysis of the themes provide the basis of this qualitative phenomenological study. There was an important gap in the current psychology literature of qualitative and quantitative-based studies on the impact of suicide attempts on career retention (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Selby et al., 2010).

Currently, there is a lack of qualitative phenomenological research that addresses the impact of a suicide attempt on the career retention of USCG members present in the literature (Tester et al., 2004). The findings add to the body of knowledge of suicidology of the armed forces and determine the impact of a suicide attempt on career and retention. The findings of the study may be transferable to other members of the armed forces who

received treatment during October 2010-2012 and who were diagnosed fit for duty. Additionally, the finding of the study could be transferable to employees in similar professions as the USCG. For example, law enforcement in Texas and maritime employees who have continued career retention after a suicide attempt.

While previous quantitative and qualitative studies identified the potential risk factors that may lead an individual to attempt suicide, but there was limited research on the impact of a suicide attempt on an individual's career retention (Brenner, 2008; CDC, 2010). The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the lived experiences of a suicide attempt and to understand the impact the attempt had on the career retention of those who survive. During this study, the focus was on individuals who survived a suicide attempt and their lived experiences, perceptions, and the perceived impact on their career retention. The study was limited to persons who remain in services after their service obligation and who are stated to be mentally fit for duty.

Chapter 3 contains an introduction, explanation of the research design, and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, and participant selection logic. I discuss instrumentation, published data collection instruments, how I developed instruments and procedures for recruiting participants. I present details on data collection, the data analysis plans, and I discuss issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures. Chapter 3 ends with a summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the impact of a suicide attempt by a USCG service member on their career retention. In this study, I focused on individuals who survived a suicide attempt and their experiences, perceptions, and the perceived impact on their career retention. This study was limited to people who remained in service after their service obligation and who were stated to be mentally fit for duty. Chapter 3 contains an introduction and a discussion of the research design, rationale, and the role of the researcher, methodology, instrumentation, issues of trustworthiness, and a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

There was a lack of research on the topic of individuals who survived a suicide attempt and the individual's experiences, perceptions, and the perceived impact on their career retention. This lack of research made it necessary to add to the body of knowledge of the suicidology of the armed forces and determine the impact of a suicide attempt on career retention. The purpose of this research study was to address the following question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty? In this study, I focused on the impact of a suicide attempt on career retention. The central objective of the study was to explore particular themes of the suicide attempt's effect on career retention, and for this reason, I used the design of phenomenology. Career retention, in general, has been linked to the ability to assimilate back into the institution after an absence by focusing on social integration and

membership with community or society (Tinto, 1975, 1993). It was vital for me to understand and define the central concepts of the study to substantiate the use of a phenomenological approach. In this section of the chapter, I identify and explain the research tradition, the rationale for the use of phenomenological inquiry to address the research question, and why I did not choose a different form of qualitative inquiry.

Rationale for Using Phenomenological Approach in the Study

Participants were interviewed using semistructured questioning to obtain demographic information to be reorganized into a chronological framework, identifying key elements and epiphanies of the personal experiences that led to participants' suicide attempts (Polkinghorne, 2010). The study was an exploration of the participants' lived experiences as they navigate a military environment. I selected the phenomenological approach for several reasons. Primarily, the model provided an opportunity to focus on inductively analyzing the meaning of the lived experience of USCG members who attempted suicide and the impact of this event on their career retention (Polkinghorne, 2010). Secondly, the use of the phenomenological design brings meaning to the social phenomenon in the biographical accounts of the participants (Polkinghorne, 2010). The participants are the experts of experience, and as such, they provide data and information necessary for inductive analysis (Bruner, 1991). The findings of this research added to the knowledge regarding the impact of a suicide attempt on career retention. The findings included central concepts, themes, or phenomenon of the study were (a) that perceptions of burdening others and of social alienation combine to instill the wish for death and (b) that individuals would not act on the desire for death unless they have developed the

capability to do so (Joiner, 2005, 2009). The information gathered from the participants' lived experiences were transcribed. The transcribed statements provide an account of events, content, and themes that reveal patterns and answers to the phenomenon of a suicide attempt impact on career retention (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly 2000).

The phenomenological inquiry consists of data collection using open-ended questions, interviews, participant observations, and reflections (Bruner, 1986). A phenomenological approach lends itself to the analysis and understanding of themes, patterns, and codes that emerge from proposed research questions that help individuals make sense of their lived experiences that may seem chaotic (Bruner, 1986). Researchers use the qualitative research method when the researchers want to understand and create meaning out of life events and the human experience (Bruner, 1986). Biong and Ravndal (2007) asserted that phenomenological inquiry is especially useful when a disruption in the human experience occurs and, therefore, this method was appropriate to analyze the social phenomenon under study inductively.

My rationale for using the phenomenological tradition was that it was an effective design to address the research question. Qualitative phenomenological research provides a more integrative perspective and understanding of the individual's experience compared with other methods (Agee, 2009; Bruner, 1986; Hauser et al., 2006). The results of this study provide information that can assist with program assessment and dispelling attitudes and beliefs that may interfere with career retention and the

reintegration of USCG members into their units or gainful employment if discharged after a suicide attempt.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher during this phenomenological study was to interview, record, and transcribe the data collected for analysis. Central to this role was to approach each participant without bias and with an open mind to account for their lived experiences. Issues presented during this research include researcher biases and personal political background that can affect the recording and accounting of events experienced by the participants (Creswell, 2012). The belief that suicide research requires a significant investment of resources and time, using a multidisciplinary approach for large-scale evaluation, may not be viewed as a priority among other group and agency goals (De Leo, 2002). Lewis et al. (1997) asserted that targeting the general population instead of high-risk groups like those serving in the military may be used because using the general population might allow for a much larger number of individuals/institutions. Lewis et al. further asserted that this position might not be based on rigorous calculations. For example, social isolation and unemployment may be based on conditions frequently associated with a suicide attempt (Lewis et al., 1997).

Full disclosure of background data was essential to establish the context of the study with a detailed description of the environment while interviewing of participants (Shento, 2004). My biases and feelings that may have affected data interpretation also needed to be noted by keeping detailed transcripts of interviews and managing information using QSR NVivo, a data management tool. I used QSR NVivo to store and

compare results during the study. Two different methods of data collection were employed: the first method was to transcribe statements of participants obtained during interviews, and the second method was obtaining data from the SRBIR, Form CG 1734 for crosschecking with the participants during the interviews (Barbour, 2001). In the consent to participate form, I informed participants that there would be no compensation or incentives provided for their participation.

I conducted interviews in a neutral environment. Every effort was made to balance power differentials between the respondents and myself by informing the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. This action provided the respondents with autonomy while maintaining the option of the participants to withdraw from the study. Ultimately, I assured that no distress or harm would come to those who participated in this study by making structural interview allowances and providing respondents with the option of a telephonic interview if desired. I provided the respondents with the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interview and the opportunity to change and provide any clarification before finalizing the study results.

Methodology

A Note on Changes

I received conditional approval to conduct the study by Walden University IRB upon the approval of the research partner, the USCG Directive Department Support, to initiate the research with a partnership with the USCG director of health safety and work-life (CG-11) and the division chief of the Behavioral Health Services Division (CG-

1111). After several failed official attempts to partner with the USCG, I submitted a Request for Change in Procedures Form to Walden University IRB, which was granted (see Appendix I). There was a variation in the data collection plan that I presented in Chapter 3 involving the dissertation committee members and IRB approval. The data collection method changed from face-to-face interviews of active-duty USCG members that attempted suicide to the collection of data through Facebook from 12 USCG veterans who had been discharged from the USCG and attempted suicide.

Since I used the online survey method, the research design changed from phenomenology to qualitative descriptive, but the number of participants sought remained at 12. I created a survey to be distributed via Facebook to discharged USCG veterans who were not affiliated with the USCG. The change in participants removed the need to seek support from the USCG IRB and Directive Department Support to initiate the research and complete the study.

There was not a review of background information obtained from the SRBIR, Form CG-1734 supplied by the USCG on all participants due to not being able to obtain the form from the USCG. Instead, participants provided the information found in CG-1734 through Appendix F: Demographic Collection Tool, included in the Facebook survey tool. The survey tool consisted of four elements, (a) the Informed Consent Form, (b) the Suicide Attempt Impact on the USCG Career Retention, (c) Appendix B: Interview Protocol Suicide Attempt Impact on the USCG Career Retention, and (d) Appendix F: Demographic Collection Tool. The survey was administered at known USCG veteran online sites on Facebook in an environment typical of USCG veterans

who have access to the internet and feel safe to access the online survey (Groves et al., 2009). A link to the survey contained the Informed Consent, Demographic Information, and Narrative Questions from the proposal. The Walden IRB approved the link.

Facebook has been used to collect data during ethnographic research (Baker, 2013).

Participant Selection Logic

The participant pool consisted of USCG services members serving on active duty in the USCG from October 2010 to October 2012, who attempted suicide during this timeframe. From October 2010 to October 2012, 38 members attempted suicide in the USCG (USCG, 2013). Of these 38 possible respondents, 12 respondents would be interviewed in a private location selected by the participants within the state of Texas by myself. Bruner (1991) asserted that the qualitative forms of inquiry are more focused on the analysis and interpretations of what was it is like for an individual to experience a phenomenon. Englander (2012) asserted that phenomenological research was not interested in how many or how often participants had experienced a phenomenon but relied more on “representativeness of a group who can provide data on a specific experience” (Englander, 2012, p. 34). Polkinghorne (1995) found that a few individuals are needed to derive meaning from a phenomenology study to report a single person’s life story. Creswell (2011) and Englander (2016) supported the use of several individuals during a phenomenological study. Twelve participants were recruited to participate in the study. If more than 12 people volunteered to take part in the study, they would have been considered if it was determined necessary to achieve saturation. In other words, the use of more than 12 participants would have been needed if the information did not repeatedly

occur, and the responses to the research question provided no interpretive worth, or no new themes would have emerged from the respondents (Morse, 2000; USCG, 2012). Respondents would have needed to have attempted suicide from October 2010 to October 2012, had an SRBI Report, Form CG-1734, completed treatment, and returned to their unit after being diagnosed medically fit for duty.

Participants were selected through the USCG commandant. Formal coordination and request for participants would be submitted through the commandant of the USCG, as well as the Health Safety and Work-Life Program of those participants. A letter and research proposal would be provided to the USCG and participants to obtain access and cooperation with the sample population for recruitment. I initiated the request through USCG Health Safety and Work-Life, Norfolk, Virginia. All 38 possible participants received letters and information explaining the importance of the study, that the study was voluntary, how their anonymity would be maintained, and that signing an informed consent form would be required. The participants received an invitation to participate in the study from the researcher after selection. Participants would be informed that there would be no compensation or incentives provided for their participation in receipt of the consent to participate form. Participants received an informed consent form that provided information about confidentiality, informed the participant that strict maintenance of all records, including taped recordings of the interviews and interview transcripts, along with the signed consent forms would be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office for five years and destroyed on 11-01-2019 by incineration. Additionally, participants were informed that I was the only individual who would have access to this information.

Bowen (2008) and Crouch and McKenzie (2006) asserted that seeking participants through purposeful selection was appropriate to conduct a qualitative phenomenological study. Saturation was defined when the information repeatedly occurred and anticipated to the point that the collection of more data was no interpretive worth, or no new themes emerge from the participants (Morse, 2000). Saturation was not a concern during phenomenology research. The relationship between saturation and the sample size was that more data from a large sample size was not necessary because one occurrence of data or code was all that was needed (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, & Gillian 2003). Ritchie et al. (2003) found that frequencies of occurrences are rarely significant during qualitative research because the method was more concern with the meaning behind the phenomenon. Additionally, most qualitative research methods are extremely labor-intensive, and the analysis of large samples can be impractical and time-consuming (Ritchie et al., 2003).

Instrumentation

The SRBIR, Form CG-1734, was not administered to participants because I did not obtain permission from the USCG. For this study, data collection instruments and sources included the primary use of information obtained initially from the USCG SRBIR, Form CG-1734 Report Form CG-1734 (USCG, 2012) which has been utilized by the USCG on all USCG members who attempted suicide since the year 2010, upon intake and provision of medical treatment. The USCG SRBIR Form CG-1734 had not been used in any publications or studies to date except as a quantitative data collection form for statistical tracking and presenting on the number of suicide completions and attempts

internally to the USCG and Homeland Security (USCG, 2012). The Interview Protocol (Appendix B) had not been used in any past studies because I created it for this study. The basis for instrument development of the Interview Protocol (Appendix B) and questions came from Nademinet al. (2008) survey models used by the Air Force in an investigation of interpersonal-psychological variables in a controlled comparison study of suicide attempts and completions and is discussed in the Published Data Collection Instruments of this chapter. The development and use of an interview protocol are well documented in the literature for use during qualitative phenomenological studies (Englander, 2012).

Interview protocol during qualitative research can be used as a guide to collect data on the human experience and phenomenon of interest (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Polkinghorne, 1988). I developed an interview protocol that included the research question and 11 open-ended questions and prompts: how did your suicide attempt impact/effect your career retention (Appendix B). Semistructured questions were used to obtain demographic information to reorganize into a chronological framework identifying key elements and epiphanies of the personal experiences that led to participants' suicide attempts. The semistructured interview questions were associated with conformability and were used to gather data from the statements of participants by permitting the participants to provide their lived experience of the phenomenon without the intrusion of researcher biases (Moustakas 1994; Shento, 2004). The semistructured interview questions were used to obtain accounts of the lived

experiences from the respondents about their suicide attempt and its impact on their careers.

The purpose of the interview protocol corresponds with framing the study's main constructs to support information collected about the individual's experience using questions found to measure perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired capability (Gutierrez et al., 2013; Joiner et al., 2005, 2009; Nademin et al., 2008; Selby et al., 2010), for example, the open-ended interview question: how did your suicide attempt impact/affect your career retention? Semistructured interview questions gathered information and data on acquired capability; for example, the question, was there any training, injury, or pain that affected your decision to attempted suicide? Questions that collected information about the perception of career before the suicide attempt; for example, what do you remember about the episodes occurring in your life and career before your suicide attempt? Possible prompts: What do you feel led you to your suicide attempt? Semi-structured interview questions gathered the information on perceived burdensomeness; for example, how did you feel about your contribution and involvement in the USCG prior and after a suicide attempt. Possible prompts: what occurred to change your feelings? Questions provided information on the respondent's perception of their career after a suicide attempt; for example, can you describe your view of how your suicide attempt affects your present career goals and future? Questions about unit integration and thwarted belongingness included, can you tell me something about whom or what helped you maintain your career objectives and goals? Possible

prompts for the question were, how do you feel within your peer group? Can you tell me more about the relationship? (Appendix B).

Published Data Collection Instruments

During the study, the only published data collection instrument used to gather information from the participants would have been the SRBIR, Form CG-1734, which was employed by USCG medical personnel during the time of all intakes of USCG personnel who have attempted suicide (USCG, 2012). Content validity in qualitative research is defined as the extent the researcher can generalize from a particular collection of items to a broader domain of items (Brod et al., 2009). The SRBIR Form CG-1734 content was valid to the study because it provided information regarding prior diagnosis, medication history, and self-disclosed causes of a suicide attempt as disclosed by participants at the time of intake by USCG medical personnel. It is the preferred form for the USCG (Appendix, C). The SRBIR Form CG-1734 addressed and obtained cultural-specific information from USCG personnel who attempted suicide by collecting data regarding the ethnicity of the individual and issues unique to the military culture and orientation of the individual's position within the military (Dunivin, 1994).

The SRBIR Form CG-1734 (USCG, 2012) provided previously collected information regarding prior diagnosis, medication history, and self-disclosed causes of a suicide attempt as disclosed by participants at the time of intake by USCG medical personnel. Demographic information, which includes mean age, ethnicity, gender, diagnosis, if any, education level, military rank, and the number of suicides attempts can be determined before interviewing from the SRBIR, Form CG-1734. The SRBIR, Form

CG-1734, directly asks for information regarding the ethnicity of the individual who has attempted suicide and issues peculiar to the military culture and orientation of the individuals' position within the military. The form was reputable but has not been used in any research studies or literature to date and represents the best source of data and adheres to the Privacy Act Statement (Federal Regulation, 2003). USCG medical personnel complete the document within ten business days of being notified of suicide attempts of USCG active duty members, and the form is maintained and safeguarded by medical staff for future treatment planning and statistical data management for USCG reports. The form helped to provide additional data to assist in finding answers to the research question: How does a suicide attempt affects the career retention of both active duty and discharged USCG members who remain in service after the end of their service obligation and who are stated to be mentally fit for duty? The form provides documentation of known factors and causes of suicide attempts. For example, when filling out the form, USCG medical personnel ask the respondent about whether there was evidence of issues with the job, supervisor, work performance, relationships, or social situations that may have influenced the individual's behavior (Appendix C).

Researcher Developed Instruments

Content validity in qualitative research is defined as the extent the researcher can “generalize from a particular collection of items to a broader domain” of items (Brod et al., 2009, p. 1263). As mentioned previously, some interview questions used in a self-developed interview protocol instrument asked participants questions that collected information to validate the content of information. These questions emerged from

Joiner's (2005, 2009) main constructs of his IPTSB. The interview protocol included the research question What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty?

The interview protocol of 11 open-ended questions and prompts in a semistructured format. Questions were used to obtain demographic information that could be reorganized to identify key elements and epiphanies of the personal experiences that led to participants' suicide attempts (Appendix D). I developed an interview protocol as an instrument to elicit accounts of the participants' experiences and perceptions of their careers prior and after a suicide attempt and additional questions to prompt responses to how a suicide attempt affected the participants' career retention. Some interview questions (Appendix D) were developed to collect information from the respondents that would answer the research question using the contextual constructs/concepts of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB. Use of the theory assisted with framing the study's primary constructs to support information collected about the individual's experience using questions found to measure PB, TB, and AC (Gutierrez et al., 2013; Joiner et al., 2005, 2009; Nademin et al., 2008; Selby et al., 2010). Also, the interview questions were developed to collect descriptions of the lived experience of the participants' unit integration before and after a suicide attempt, which may have a significant impact on retention (Brenner et al., 2008; Tinto 1993).

The basis for instrument development of the Interview Protocol (Appendix B) and questions came from survey models used by the Air Force in similar studies of suicide attempts and completions (Nademin et al., 2008). Other researchers have developed their

surveys in line with Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB, such as Nademin et al.'s (2008) survey of Air Force personnel. Nademin et al. (2008) developed the IPS to assess three components of Joiner's theory using one administered instrument with Air Force personnel. The IPS demonstrated convergence validity and reliability with three scales: the ACSS, the INQ, and IPTS used by Joiner (2000, 2002, 2005) to assess the three constructs (PB, TB, and AC) of his theory in adults and college students (Van Orden et al., 2008). The IPS was derived from the SDIT developed by Nademin and a team of Air Force Suicide Prevention Program suicidologist professionals. The results of the study highly correlated with the three constructs (perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired capability) of Joiner's theory. The ACSS had excellent reliability to assess acquired capacity ($\alpha = .85$), the INQ internal consistency for the total scale was ($\alpha = .94$) for belongingness and burdensomeness. Correlation of the IPS and the INQ were high for burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness.

In a study of female veterans by Gutierrez et al., (2008) elements of Joiner's (2005) IPTS had been used to assess their experiences and their potential suicide risk using structured and open-ended interview questions during a qualitative study to gather information on Joiner's three constructs (Brenner et al., 2008; Gutierrez et al., 2013). The SRBIR, Form CG-1734, requests information regarding the ethnicity of the individual who has attempted suicide and issues unique to the military culture and orientation of the individuals' position within the military (Dunivin, 1994). The data collection strategy of using open-ended interview questions was appropriate for the population because a direct

question would fail to solicit statements from an individual who was prone to answer close-end questions that are direct and concise (Brenner et al., 2008).

Researchers address discrepant cases in a phenomenological study by carefully examining unusual or contradictory results for explanations. Negative discrepant data searches are conducted by searching for a contradictory variant or disconfirming data within the body of the statements and data collected from the interview protocol that provides an alternative perspective on an emerging category or pattern during coding and presented in the results (Robert et al., 2007).

Procedures for Recruitment Participation and Data Collection

Once a list of the 38 possible participants was collected, the participants would be sought by formal letter and phone contact to participate in the study. Twelve respondents would be selected through purposeful selection. The 12 respondents would be recruited after receiving a list of possible participants from the USCG, receiving permission to contact the participants, and gaining USCG IRB and Walden University IRB approval to contact participants. Respondents would be solicited by telephone contact and invited to participate in the study once confirming their willingness to participate in the study. The respondents would receive informed consent forms with the study's confidentiality information and procedures electronically and through the U.S. postal services. Follow-up with the participants would occur via telephone, e-mail, or U.S. mail in seven days. The participants would be reminded to return the consent forms to the postal service in the prepaid envelopes. Once the consent forms were received, interview appointments would be scheduled with the option of a face-to-face or telephone interview. For face-to-

face interviews, I would travel to a private location selected by the participants within cities in Texas. Individuals would be excluded from the study if they were not accessible geographically, failed to agree to the study, or could not be interviewed face-to-face or by telephone, or were not willing to be interviewed.

Missed interviews needed to be rescheduled within two weeks of the initially scheduled interview. Interviews would last for 45 minutes to 2 hours and would be audiotaped as a condition of participation in the study per the consent form. The interview protocol ensured data collection consistency. I would transcribe the audio recordings and e-mailed or used the U.S. Postal Service to mail transcriptions to participants for a 2-day review. Participants could make additional notes to their responses. The participants would be encouraged to send their responses via e-mail or mail within two days after receipt of the transcripts. A discussion of the participant-added notes would occur during the follow-up telephone interviews that would last approximately 45 minutes per participant. These steps ensure the accuracy and completeness of the statements and responses as perceived by the participants.

Prior to and after interviews, a review and collection of data from the SRBIR Form CG-1734(Appendix, C) would occur, for themes and information regarding prior diagnosis, medications history, and self-disclosed causes of a suicide attempt as disclosed by participants at the time of intake by USCG medical personnel with permission from the USCG IRB. Demographic information would be compiled using the form before interviews. The interview protocol would be utilized after greeting the participant, establishing rapport with the participants, explaining the purpose of the study before

interviewing, and the use of the audio taping equipment. The interview protocol would be used to collect data. After each interview, the audiotape would be turned off, and the participants would be provided information about the procedures for the e-mail transcript review and follow-up interviews. The study data collection was anticipated to last one month and would take into account additional time if one or both participants missed their interview appointment.

Data and information gathered from the participants' experiences would be collected and reorganized into a chronological framework identifying key elements and epiphanies of the personal experiences that led to their suicide attempts and its impact on their career retention. Text data from the participants' taped interview responses and audiotapes interviews would be analyzed based on Corbin and Strauss's (2008) approach to analyzing the data through open coding by examining, comparing, conceptualizing, categorizing participants' interviews to analyze data. All data collected from the participants' interviews and the SRBIR, Form CG-1734, would be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a computer program QSR NVivo (Ozkan, 2004). The program would be used to analyze the data for emerging and prevalent themes regarding participant experiences preceding their suicide attempts and the attempt's impact on their career retention. The program can develop a code inductively based on the outcome of the QSR NVivo analysis, which limits the participants' perspectives to their experience (Ozkan, 2004).

Recruitment efforts would continued throughout the study for participants, by telephonic contact and e-mail/mail requests from the list of possible participants obtained

from USCG of those who attempted suicide from October 2010 to October 2012 until twelve participants were recruited and as a contingency if any of the respondents dropped out of the study. All participants were provided contact information to USCG Support: a contract resource under the scope of the USCG Work-Life Program, Employee Assistance Program that provides comprehensive mental/emotional counseling for a variety of issues for members and affiliates of the organization (CG SUPRT, 2014). Participants would receive this information upon exit from the study, and a debriefing as well as to encourage them to utilize the services and resources through the USCG Work-Life Program. The services provided by USCG Work-Life are free. Services include comprehensive mental health counseling for members and their dependents.

Data Analysis Plan

Corbin and Strauss (2008) approach data analysis through open coding by examining, comparing, conceptualizing, categorizing participants' interviews to analyze data. I organized the participants' statements into an account for identifying plot structure elements of their personal experiences that led to their suicide attempts by manually coding the material using a five-step process. Step 1: Read all of the transcripts, making notes of first impressions, then rereading line by line before data coding. Step 2: Start coding or indexing by labeling words, phrases, sentences, or sections. Relevance was determined by the number of times a phrase appeared, or the interviewee explicitly stated an item or experience was important, or material appears applicable to theory or other concepts associated with the phenomenon of suicide or career retention. Brinkman and Kvale (2015) asserted that the researcher should remain close to the data or the responses

of the participants and remain unbiased and not hesitate to code plenty of phenomenon-oriented information. Step 3: Decide which codes are the most important and create categories by bringing several codes together; drop codes from Step 2; keep codes that may be substantial; group codes and create categories (themes). For example, participants may express reasons why they were encouraged to maintain their military service after receiving treatment and name a category of relevant persons such as unit members, a chaplain, their leadership, or another individual. The importance of this step was that data was conceptualized and categorized data (Bryman, 2015). Step 4: Label categories and decide which categories are the most relevant and interconnected to each other and the phenomenon. Step 4 was critical because the connections' descriptions and labeling of categories are the main results of the study. The study produced new knowledge about the lived experiences of the participants about the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants in the study. Step 5: Decide if there was a hierarchy of the categories and importance to be displayed in a table comparing results of the manual coding with the QRS NVivo program data analysis results.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using QRS NVivo (Stayt et al., 2015; Van Manen, 1997). Data analysis using QRS NVivo software included the following steps (NVivo, 2012). Step 1: Transcribe interviews verbatim, and the SRBI Report, Form CG-1734, data would be stored and organized using QRS NVivo by importing the data and explore the interviews. Step 2: Relevant phrases were identified and categorized into preliminary themes. Original transcripts were clustered and reordered by the software for code patterns of words, phrases, and sentences to derive

themes. In QRS NVivo, categories are placed in nodes, which are containers for coding themes in one place and looking at emerging patterns. Step 3: Participant quotations that exemplified themes relating to the phenomenon would be queried by running a text search and gathering loaded materials in one place. Step 4: The QRS NVivo program provided a visual display of the number of times relevant categories of themes emerged from participants' discussions. For example, for the theme, Reasons for leaving the USCG, the categories of lack of command support, fear, and being diagnosed fit for duty emerged. At this stage, QRS NVivo refers to this process as developing cases for storage. Step 5: The finding was recorded using the program's memo section. Step 6: Results from the manual coding and the QRS NVivo analysis were checked for similarities, and a summary of the results from both data analysis methods was written under the heading, Result, with a description of categories and connections in Chapter 4 of the study.

Participants were asked to validate themes to confirm the true accounts of the lived experience of the participants, and to keep a generalized and theoretical discussion of the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty? (Stayt et al., 2015). Results from the manual coding and the QRS NVivo results were checked for similarities, and a summary of the results from both data analysis methods would be written under the heading, Result, with a description of categories and connections in Chapter 4 of the study. Under the heading, Discussion, the interpretations, and discussion about the similarities of the results are written.

Triangulation appeared in two stages of the data gathering process. The interview protocol included the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty? The interview protocol of 11 open-ended questions and prompts were used to obtain demographic information that to combine with participants' statements and the SRBIR, Form CG-1734 to identify key elements and epiphanies of the personal experiences that led to participants' suicide attempts (Appendix, D).

Triangulation occurs by comparing the results from two or more different methods of data collection, and respondent validation, which means crosschecking interim findings with the participants would be utilized during this phenomenological study to support data interpretation (Barbour, 2001; Creswell, 2012) see Figure 1.

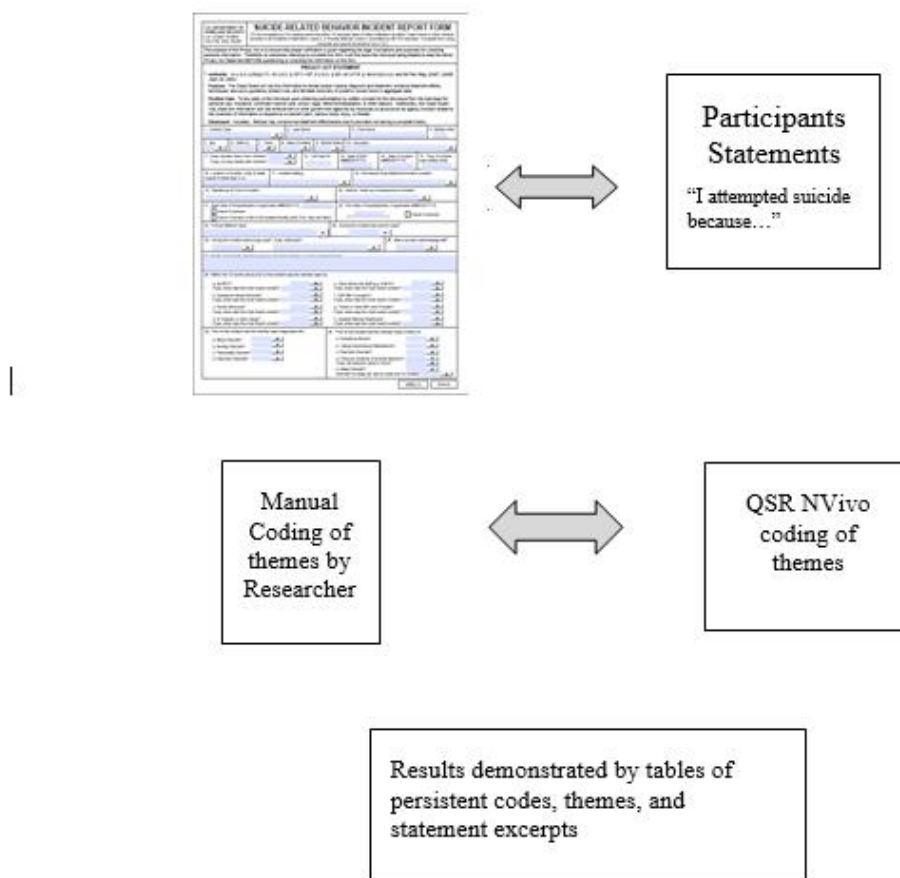


Figure 1. Comparison and contrast two data sources (Participants Statements and CG Form 1743). Themes were categorized in a table of findings of meeting the three constructs of Joiner's theory and themes that affect /effect career retention.

By comparing and contrasting the perspectives of the participants from the two data collection methods, the recognition of essential aspects and themes to be coded for the phenomenon of an attempted suicide impact on career retention as the experience appeared across sources would be achieved (Polkinghorne, 2005). Secondary analysis of the SRBI Report, Form CG-1734 supplied by the USCG to examine for themes, would be used. Data were gathered to determine possible persistent themes before interviewing

participants using the interview protocol for coding and data analysis. A secondary analysis was the reanalysis of either qualitative or quantitative data already collected in a previous study, by a different researcher wishing to address a new research question (Szabo & Strang, 1997).

The steps in secondary analysis are, to first, review the SRBIR; Form CG 1734 for themes consistent with Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB that measure perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired capability, as well as themes that impact career retention (Gutierrez et al., 2013; Joiner et al., 2005, 2009; Nademin et al., 2008; Selby et al., 2010). Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted that the researcher should return to the research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty? Returning to the research question: How does a suicide attempt affect the career retention of both active duty and discharged USCG members who remain in service after the end of their service obligation and who are stated to be mentally fit for duty?, assisted with the initial analysis of data, coding of information, and the statements' interpretive process. Questions developed for preliminary analysis and coding of transcripts and SRBIR Form CG-1734 assisted with this primary process (Appendix A). I would analyze the interview data for patterns and a connection with the three constructs, perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired capability of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB and themes that affect/impact career retention.

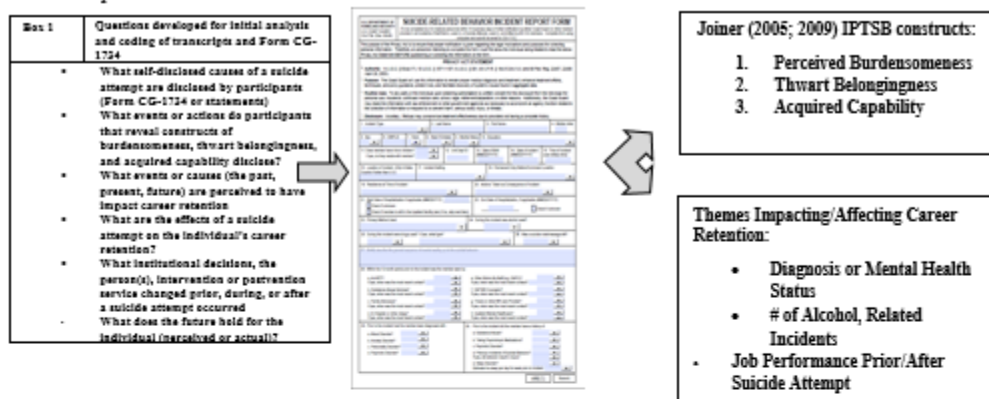
Secondly, statements obtained from the participants' interviews would be audio-taped and transcribed. To ensure that the findings were the result of the respondents'

experiences, the audio recordings of the interviews would be transcribed verbatim, examined for general clusters, and coded for schemes and families of tentative themes by the researcher through cutting and global sorting of the transcribed text. This procedure was based on Barkin et al. (1999). Lofland and Lofland (1984) used this method during their qualitative studies on youth violence and social settings. After multiple readings of the transcripts, the transcripts would be reviewed for major themes and any consistency with the main constructs of Joiner's IPTSB as well as themes that affect career retention (Gutierrez et al., 2013; Joiner et al., 2005, 2009; Nademin et al., 2008; Selby et al., 2010).

The study analysis would be strengthened by using a reliable and valid research protocol for phenomenological inquiry. The QSR NVivo computer software can assist with data management and representation of coded information by helping with the analysis of particular instances of software-generated themes combined with the manual techniques for coding used by the researcher to thoroughly cross-examine data (Welsh, 2002). QSR NVivo was used to analyze different data sources. In this study, QSR NVivo was used to store data and transcribed interviews in Microsoft Word document templates for analysis. QSR NVivo visual coding features would be used to analyze the SRBIR Form CG-1734 and organizes data into text for analysis and comparison for themes, as Ozkan (2004) did in a qualitative study of classroom data on constructive learning environment. QSR NVivo uses three methods of coding, open coding, axial, and selective coding for a phenomenological study. These codes connect concepts and themes by words, sentences, and text of a document to a node (category) for analysis, thereby determining the reliability and validity of the coding process (Gibbs, 2002; Gurdial

& Jones, 2007). Discrepant information and cases would be noted throughout the study and presented after the study to assist with future research. The mapping of the data analysis process was utilized and revised to assist with the conceptualization of the different levels of analysis and presentation of results (Figure 2).

- 1) The researcher reviewed twice the Suicide-Related Behavior Incident Report Form CG 1734 for themes consistent with constructs of Joiner (2005, 2009) IPTSB using questions developed for initial analysis and coding of transcripts and Form CG-1734.



Themes were categorized in a table of findings of meeting the three constructs of Joiner's theory and theme that affect /effect career retention

- 2)
- A. Interview participants using Interview Protocol (See Appendix B-sample Interview Protocol).
 - B. Record and Transcribe interviews verbatim.
 - C. Researcher examined for general clusters, coded for schemes and families of tentative themes through cutting and global sorting of the transcribed text of the participants' narratives (Barkin et al, 1999; Lofland & Lofland, 1984).
 - D. Organization of interpretive Codes demonstrated by Table 1.
- 3) QSR NVivo was used to analyze different data sources. QSR NVivo visual coding features were utilized by method of open coding, axial, and selective coding assisted with connecting concepts and themes by words, sentences, and text of a document to a node (category) for analysis determining reliability and validity of the coding process (Gibbs, 2002; Gurdial & Jones, 2007).

Compare and contrast two data sources (Participants Interviews and CG Form 1743)

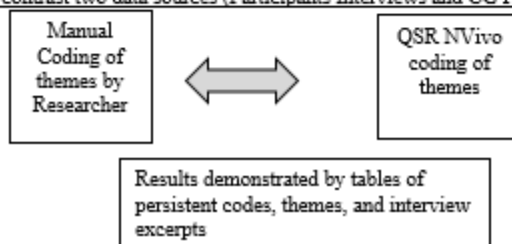


Figure 2. Data analysis mapping.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility refers to the objective and subjective believability of data and information from the source. In the case of a qualitative study, credibility was from the perspective of the participant in the research (Shento, 2004). Credibility during qualitative research was achieved by describing the phenomena of interest from the perspective of the participant and using the triangulation of different data collection methods. Credibility using the phenomena and triangulation of data includes using individual interviews to reveal clusters of schemas and tentative themes for sorting the transcribed text of the participants' interviews (Barkin et al., 1999; Krefting, 1991; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Shento, 2004).

The credibility of the study stems from the use of the program QSR NVivo and the two data collection instruments used to gather and analyze information obtained from the participants' viewpoints. The instruments' use strengthens the validity of the analysis, triangulation, and comparison of results. QSR NVivo was instrumental in organizing data from the two instruments, providing relative ease to searching for thematic relationships, and demonstrating how data was coded (Ozkan, 2004). Using different methods of data collection, meeting with respondents in the middle of analysis for crosschecking interim findings with the participants and software assistance can help establish a rigorous method of data analysis during a phenomenological study (Barbour, 2001), see Figure 3.

1. Respondents participated in one-on-one interviews for about one hour. Interviews will be audiotaped to enable the researcher to reproduce verbatim transcripts for interpretation.
2. Transcripts were sent to the participant by e-mail, to review and verify, to make alterations, or add to as the individual sees fit. The intent is to capture accurate events and thoughts describing the respondent experience of the impact of their suicide attempt on their career retention
3. The transcripts were returned to the researcher by e-mail, after which the researcher will contact the participant by telephone to discuss any changes and interim findings. This follow-up call should last about a half-hour.
4. At the end of the study, the researcher will send by US mail a summary of the findings of this research study for finalization.

Figure3. Procedures for crosschecking interim findings.

My review of the SRBIR, Form CG-1734 before the development and use of the interview protocol assists with more precise and accurate focus on the constructs of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB and perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired capability effects on career retention perceived by the participant's accounts. Polkinghorne (2005) asserted that data gathering during qualitative research was to provide a core description of the investigated experience or phenomenon by using excerpts from the data that illustrate findings. In this study, the SRBIR, Form CG-1734, and interviews of the participants' ideas and thoughts are transformed into written text express the impact of their suicide attempt on their career retention to enrich our understanding in the field of psychology of the textual evidence the data presents.

External validity in qualitative research was defined by the degree the results of the study can be applied to other persons, places, cases, and times beyond the present study, while transferability was the application of the findings of the study to other or similar settings (Yilmaz, 2013). External validity was supported by the transferability of

the finding from one study and its application to similar situations (Shento, 2004).

Findings of the study results would be transferable to other members of the armed forces as well as the sample of the study that (a) received treatment during October 2010-2012 and were diagnosed fit for duty and (b) employees of similar professions as the USCG for example, law enforcement in Texas and maritime employees who have continued career retention after a suicide attempt.

Dependability was defined by the process of selecting and applying the research strategy can be established by reporting the process and operational details of gathering data used to conduct the research (Holm et al., 2014). Dependability was the same methods and techniques to collect data during the study from participants would yield the same or similar results if repeated by another researcher (Shento, 2004). A detail verification process of triangulation and respondent validation was conducted using overlapping methods of individual interviewing, review of written transcripts by the researcher and participants, as well as documenting research design and implementation of methods in sections of the research report.

Triangulation was the use of multiple methods or data sources to develop a complete understanding of how suicide attempts impact USCG members in this study (Stukowski, 2014). Triangulation was used by a comparison of results from two or more different methods of data collection, and respondent validation, which means crosschecking interim findings with the participants would be used during a phenomenological study to support data interpretation (Barbour, 2001; Creswell, 2012), see Figure 4.

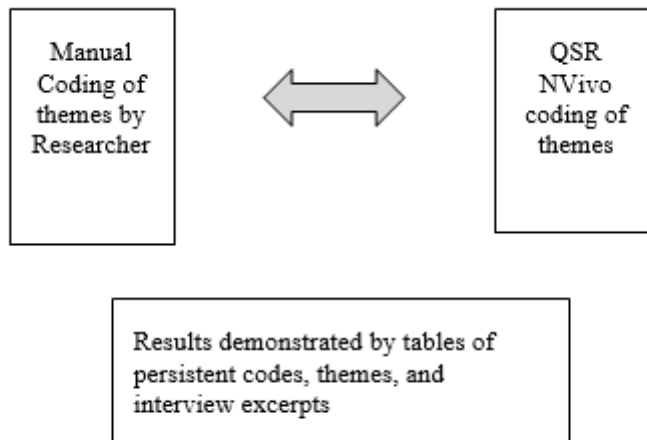


Figure 4. Compare and contrast two data sources (Participants Interviews, Statements, and CG Form 1743).

Comparing and contrasting the perspectives of the participants from the two data collection methods would assist with the recognition of essential aspects and themes to be coded of the phenomenon of an attempt suicide impact on career retention as it appeared across sources (Polkinghorne, 2005). Twelve participants were recruited through purposeful sampling to achieve variability (Bowen, 2008; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). The number of respondents selected for the study would allow for a deeper understanding of the individual experience by multiple participants and determine the transferability of core meanings in other populations (Creswell, 2011; Polkinghorne, 2005). Yilmaz (2013) asserted researchers achieve transferability when similar methods and findings apply to other similar settings adding to dependability, which can be clearly explained by using an audit trail. An audit trail provided detailed documentation of procedures and mapping of methods used during this study to collect data and information by the researcher (Yilmaz 2013). Transferability was achieved by providing an audit trail of “thick description” of

how I used methods and procedures for data collection, recording; transcribing procedures and account of the research experience to evaluate and draw conclusion as to how the research becomes transferable to settings and people whom suicide attempt may impact/affect their careers retention (Geertz, 1973; Ryle, 1949).

Authenticity was my quest to ensure the credibility of data and information gathered from the perspective of respondents. In the context of qualitative research, authenticity contributes to the trustworthiness of the study through the documentation of participants' lived experiences (Holloway & Freshwater, 2009). Conformability was the degree that data, information, or finding can be confirmed or corroborated through objectivity (Shento, 2004). Conformability was associated with objectivity using semistructured interviewing to gather data without the intrusion of researcher biases (Shento, 2004). The use of an audit trail and full descriptions of the researcher's methods enhances the authenticity and conformability of the research (Polit & Beck, 2008). Findings of the study results was transferable to other members of the armed forces as well as the sample of the study that (a) received treatment during October 2010-October 2012 and were diagnosed fit for duty after a suicide attempt and (b) employees of similar professions as the USCG (example, law enforcement in Texas and maritime employees who have continued career retention after a suicide attempt). Individuals who received treatment during October 2010-October 2012, after a suicide attempt and who were diagnosed fit for duty, would be included in the study. Also, those who are geographically accessible to the researcher would be incorporated. Individuals who were discharged from service after treatment and were deemed not medically fit for duty as

well as who was not accessible geographically to the researcher would be excluded from the study

Creswell (2012) asserted that structured analytical approaches are the least used methods during phenomenological research out of other qualitative data analysis methods, but that transcription, coding, and interpretations are essential to drawing meaning to the experiences of individuals. As mentioned, all the methods above would be used as well as intra- and intercoder reliability by using two different coding procedures. The first procedure was conducting the initial analysis and coding of the SRBIR, Form CG-1734, and the statements of the participants. The second was to use QSR NVivo to analyze the different data sources for comparison for similar or different themes for coding and analysis (Gibbs, 2002; Gurdial & Jones, 2007; Whiffin et al., 2014).

Inter- and intracoder reliability refer to two processes related to the analysis of written materials, which may involve two researchers coding for themes independently (Van den Hoonaard, 2008). There was only one researcher coding manually. Once I completed the manual coding, the data was coded using QRS NVivo as a second source for coding for themes independently, utilizing both the data protocol from QRS NVivo and manual coding added to inter- and intracoder reliability through the use of two processes. Kaiser, Ruong, and Salander Renberg (2013) found that QSR NVivo software programs were used to code statements for main themes as a secondary source. The software's ability to create codes for categorizing the meaning of themes added a rigorous process of inter- and intracoder reliability analysis. Since I was the only researcher doing the coding, the researcher would use the software as a subsequent

coding process to add to rigor during the analysis of the text. Both the data collection and analysis followed descriptive phenomenological methods to achieve rigor (Englander, 2012). The comparison of results was used to strengthen the validity of the analysis, triangulation, the comparison of results from more than two dissimilar methods of data collection, and respondent validation crosschecking interim findings with the participants would be used during this phenomenological study (Barbour, 2001).

Ethical Procedures

Initially, any request to conduct a study and seek participants was coordinated after approval from the Institutional Review Board number 10-13-17-0115753 (IRB) at Walden University. In general, the IRB application process addressed the ethical issues of informed consent, confidentiality, the physical, mental, or emotional avoidance of harm to participants; and deception in addition to legal and ethical issues regarding vulnerable populations, for example, the elderly, children, and the disabled during research (American Psychological Association, 2002).

There was no assurance that the USCG would approve the study or assist with securing respondents until requests were made according to the USCG COMDTINST Manual M6500.1. Human Research Protection Program Research Proposal Forms and requirements are processed through the USCG (Appendix E). I made formal coordination and request for participants by written submitted through the commandant of the USCG, as well as the Health Safety and Work-Life Program of those participants who are currently serving and had been discharged from service from October 2010 to October 2012 who attempted suicide.

A request was submitted to the commandant (CG-11), USCG, 2100 2ND ST Southwest STOP 7902, Washington DC 20593-7902, through Dr. Carlos Comperatore, Human Research Protection Program, for permission to conduct a study, as well as an application to the USCG IRB to request its approval of the study protocol. The chief of the USCG IRB needed to provide approval and then determine if any changes to the process described in the proposal would need to be made to satisfy the USCG IRB regulations. This process was outlined in the USCG IRB regulations through the chief of the USCG IRB to gain approval.

The IRB addressed the use of informed consent forms, which are one of the most necessary forms from the perspective of the researcher and the participant. The forms outlined the participants' rights, responsibilities; ensure that there was an understanding between the researcher and the participant in regard to the release of information, how records and documentation would be used during the study (Barnett, 2007). Within this transaction, three main points must be addressed for the consent to be considered legal (Barnet, 2007). First, the participant had to provide consent, the second was that the participant fully understands what they are consenting to, and finally, the consent was be given voluntarily (Barnet, 2007). According to the APA (2002), merely presenting the information to a person in terms they can understand does not meet these requirements. The APA 2002 defined detailed procedures for studies and research to prevent harm and other possible infringements that can lead to ethical and legal issues during the research (45 CFR 46.101; Strand, 2009). Ethical issues considered during the proposed research were (a) informed consent: do participants have full knowledge of what was involved?,

(b) harm and risk: can the study hurt participants?, (c) honesty and trust: was the researcher being truthful in presenting data?, (d) privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity: would the study intrude too much into the participants' behaviors?, and (e) intervention. The study was conducted in an environment of employment; therefore, there would be no conflict of interest. Every effort was made to balance power differentials between the respondents and researcher by informing participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. This action provided the respondents with autonomy while maintaining the desires of the participants.

The issues related to the protection of human subjects during phenomenological research on suicide attempts impact on career retention of USCG members was harm and risk; legal and ethical issues regarding safeguarding records, documentation, and audiotapes; privacy and confidentiality issues; and would the research intrude too much on the participants? The completion of the Informed Consent forms was needed to ensure the protection of participants, which includes the data use agreement with participants, and the USCG, as well as other community service providers if used during the study. Additionally, the confidential agreement would need to be completed. Participants received a copy of their signed informed consent. The informed consent described how the strict maintenance of all records would be secure. The taped recordings of the interviews and transcripts, along with signed consent forms, would be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office for five years and destroyed on 11-01-2019 by incineration. There was no compensation included in this study. I informed the

participants that their participation was strictly voluntary in the Informed Consent Form. The only individual who had access to this information would be the researcher.

Participants who had refused to participate or withdrew from the study would be provided the same safeguards for the information and protection as the participants as well as receive notification of community resources as the participants that continued to the end of the study. Participants would receive a form notifying them about community resources, as well as USCG contract therapists through the employee assistance program (EAP). The USCG, who would need to address possible mental/emotional issues because of interviews and recollection of stressful events, can utilize these resources. The protection of the respondents from reexposure to the stressors and trauma of accounts of events that may have to lead up to their suicide attempt would be mitigated by referring participants to contract therapists through the EAP known as USCG Support (CG SUPRT). CG SUPRT provides mental/emotional counseling due to a variety of issues for members in the USCG. All respondents who participated in the study would be referred to the community and national resource for Veteran Services through the Veteran Administration (VA) Veterans Crisis Line, which connects veterans with qualified, confidential responders who are experiencing mental or emotional crises and can direct to a local provider. (Appendix G)

Summary

In Chapter 3, I described the rationale for the selection of the qualitative phenomenological research approach as a method to explore how a suicide attempt affected both active duty and discharged USCG members' career retention. Procedures

were explained in-depth and the use of the USCG SRBIR Form CG 1734, Interview Protocol utilization to acquire data, and information on participants' experiences, perceptions, and perceived impact on their career retention following a suicide attempt. Additionally, I discussed the role of the researcher, methodology, data collection, and verification strategies. Issues of trustworthiness were addressed to establish validity and dependability by use of the verification processes of triangulation and respondent validation and summary.

Post-IRB Approval Data Collection Changes

The researcher sought out support through the USCG Work-Life Department for sponsorship of the study through the USCG, to receive endorsement for submission of the study through the USCG IRB for final approval. The response could not be obtained from the USCG IRB for support or approval. Changes to data collection are noted in Chapter 4 of the final dissertation by addressing (a) present any variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3 and (b) present any unusual circumstances encountered in data collection. Change to data collection included utilizing an online survey method instead of a face-to-face interview method (Ferrucci & Tandoc, 2015). I created a survey to be distributed via Facebook to discharged Coast Guard veterans who are not affiliated with the Coast Guard to obtain my participants. I changed participants from USCG active duty members to USCG veterans who have been discharged from the USCG and had no service obligation, thus excluding the need to seek support or IRB approval from the USCG to complete the study. Chapter 4 contains an introduction, demographic details, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and a summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the goal of this study was to investigate USCG veterans' perceptions of the impact of their suicide attempts on their careers at USCG. More specifically, I used semistructured interviews in this study to collect data from 12 USCG veterans to address the following primary research question:

What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty that are currently veterans?

Participants' lived experiences and persistent themes may be used to inform targeted support practices and programs that aim to improve career retention after a suicide attempt. This chapter contains several sections: a short introduction followed by the sample description, the research methodology, the presentation of the data, and results in the form of emerged themes and a summary.

Note on Changes

Conditional approval was provided by Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) upon the approval of the research partner United State Coast Guard Directive Department Support to initiate the research with a partnership with the USCG Director of Health Safety, and Work-Life (CG-11) and Division Chief of Behavioral Health Services Division (CG-1111). After several failed official attempts by the researcher to partner with the United States Coast Guard, a Request for Change in Procedures Form was submitted to Walden University IRB and granted (Appendix I). There was a variation in the participants and the data collection plan presented in

Chapters 1-3, with the Dissertation Committee Members and IRB approval. Data collection was changed from face-to-face interviews of active-duty members of the USCG that attempted suicide to the collection of data through Facebook from 12 USCG veterans who were discharged from the USCG and had attempted suicide.

The methodology used during the study changed from phenomenology to qualitative descriptive using a survey method approach. The number of participants sought remained at 12 participants. Data collection included utilizing an online survey method instead of a face-to-face interview method. I created a survey for distribution via Facebook to discharged Coast Guard veterans who were not affiliated with the Coast Guard. The change of participants excluded the need to seek support from USCG IRB and USCG Directive Department Support to initiate the research and complete the study.

There was not a review of background information obtained from the Suicide-Related Behavior Incident Reports, Form CG-1734 supplied by the USCG on all participants due to not being able to obtain the form from the USCG. I obtained the information found on this form through Appendix H: Demographic Collection Tool included in the Facebook survey tool. The survey tool contained three appendices, (a) Appendix A: Informed Consent Form Suicide Attempt Impact on the United States Coast Guard Career Retention, (b) Appendix D: Interview Protocol Suicide Attempt Impact on the United States Coast Guard Career Retention, and (c) Appendix H: Demographic Collection Tool. The survey was administered through Facebook at known USCG veteran online sites in an environment typical of USCG veterans who have access to the internet and felt safe to access the online survey (Groves et al., 2009). A link to the

survey, contained the Informed Consent, Demographic Information, and Narrative Questions from the proposal. The Walden IRB approved the link. Facebook has been used to collect data during ethnographic research (Baker, 2013).

Survey Method Approach

Survey research can capture measurements of opinions, perceptions, preferences, and interest for synthesis from data collected rigorously and systematically through a sampling of the population and entities targeted to construct descriptors and qualitative descriptions to understand what was measured (Smith,2009; Umbach,2005). Surveys are measuring instruments utilized to gather information about the constructs that interest a researcher. Umbach (2005) asserted that the basics of survey research consisted of the target population, sampling frame, sample, respondent, and adjustments to produce the survey statistics without errors due to the mode of data collection. I conducted data collection uniformly with defined objectives and purposeful question wording to avoid measurement errors and to be able to make inferences about the broader population from a smaller population.

Surveys are designed to standardize, oriented to specific timeframes to prevent the manipulation of variables, and suited for some descriptive quantitative studies (Umbach (2005). Surveys can also provide data for the analysis of hypotheses. Surveys vary in form and can be used to collect demographic, socio-economic information, characteristics, and behaviors, and attitudes about events from the respondents' experiences and knowledge (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Researchers use survey methods during descriptive and evaluation research as well as analytical studies.

For example, in a quantitative study, Sandler (2000) developed a survey questionnaire and used institutional records. Cabrera et al. (1993) later used this approach to enhance Tinto's (1993) IMR. Inherently, survey research has many strengths and weaknesses in its methodological application, and survey tools are no better than their design and the design's ability to accomplish the goals of the researcher to provide sound analysis that is reliable and valid to the nature of a study (Groves et al., 2009).

I changed the design of this study from a phenomenological study to a qualitative descriptive study, which allowed me to remain close to the data and describe the participants' lived experiences of the impact of an attempted suicide on veterans discharged from the USCG. The change to the study occurred after receiving Walden IRB approval due to being unable to partner with the USCG. Using a qualitative descriptive design allowed participants to describe the impact of their attempted suicide (Bohan & Doyle, 2008).

Setting

Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR suggested that career retention linked to the ability to assimilate back into the institution after an absence by focusing on social integration and membership with the community or society. The IMR implies that a match was imperative between the institutional environment and the person (Tinto 1975, 1993). Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB was used to support how the unsuccessful integration of USCG men and women back into their units after a suicide attempt affected their continued career success. With these theoretical considerations in mind, I examined semistructured interview responses provided through a Facebook survey from 12 USCG

veterans that attempted suicide while on active duty. During the study, there were no conditions that influenced participants or their experience at the time of study that may have influenced the interpretation of the study results (e.g., changes in personnel, budget cuts, and other trauma).

Demographics

Characteristics of the Study Participants

Eleven USCG veterans completed the structural interview component, and one participant (an African-American, married male over 40 years old with a master's degree) only completed the demographic component of the study. Of the remaining 11 participants, four were females, and seven were males; two were African American, one was Hispanic, and eight were White. Three participants were between the ages of 17 and 24 years old; five were between 30 and 39 years old, and three were older than 40 years old. Three participants were single; five were married; one was separated, and two were divorced. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Participant	Gender	Race	Age range	Marital Status	Education	Completed the study
JG	Male	African	40+ 17-	Married	Master's Degree or Greater	No
SG	Male	Caucasian	24	Divorced	Bachelor's degree	Yes
DP	Male	Caucasian	40+ 17-	Married	High School Graduate	Yes
RH	Male	Caucasian	24 30-	Single	High School Graduate Degree/Technical	Yes
PG	Male	Caucasian	39	Single	School/Certificate-4hrs Some college/Technical	Yes
KM	Male	Caucasian	40+ 30-	Married	School/Certificate	Yes
ES	Male	Caucasian	39	Married	High School Graduate	Yes
SC	Female	Hispanic /Latino	30- 39	Married	School/Certificate-4hrs Degree/Technical	Yes
KW	Female	Caucasian	39 30-	Married	School/Certificate-4hrs Degree/Technical	Yes
DS	Male	Caucasian	39	Separated	School/Certificate-4hrs	Yes
TW	Female	African American	40+ 17-	Divorced	Master's Degree or Greater Some college/Technical	Yes
JA	Female	American	24	Single	School/Certificate	Yes

All participants but one had prior mental, emotional, or another health diagnosis, and four participants had a prior history of self-injury. Suicide attempt methods ranged from drug overdose to a “suicide by cop” (i.e., a suicide method in which a suicidal individual deliberately behaves threateningly with intent to provoke a lethal response from public safety or law enforcement officer(s)). Most participants attempted to commit suicide at either their own home or at the home of a family member or a friend. Table 2 summarizes information related to a suicide setting.

Table 2

Information Related to a Suicide Setting

Participant	Suicide event setting	Suicide attempt method	Prior history of self-injury	Prior to mental/emotional or health diagnosis
SG	Residence (own) or barracks	Drugs	Yes	Yes
DP	Automobile (away from the residence)	Crashing motor vehicle	No	Yes
RH	Residence (own) or barracks	Drugs	No	Yes
PG	Hotel	Hanging	Yes	Yes
KM	Residence of friend or family	Firearm, other than military	No	Yes
ES	Residence (own) or barracks	Sharp or blunt object	No	No
SC	Residence of friend or family	Drugs	Yes	Yes
KW	Residence of friend or family	Alcohol	Yes	Yes
DS	Residence (own) or barracks	By cop ^a	No	Yes
TW	Residence of friend or family	Drugs	No	Yes
JA	Residence (own) or barracks	Drugs	No	Yes

^aA suicide “by cop” is a suicide method in which a suicidal individual deliberately behaves threateningly, with intent to provoke a lethal response from a public safety or law enforcement officer.

Most study participants referred to more than one factor that may have triggered their decision to attempt suicide. The two most common factors were personal relationships and legal or administrative issues. Participants also listed several issues related to their military services, such as military legal or administrative issues, the

Uniform Code of Military Justice proceedings or actions, loss of rank/rating, separation from services, and other employment factors. Table 3 provides information on the issues in the participants' opinions that may have contributed to their suicide attempts. Table 4 provides more detailed information about specific circumstances that led to a suicide attempt from each of the study participants.

Table 3

Perceived Issues That Contributed to a Decision to Attempt Suicide

Participant	Personal Relationship	Legal/ Administrative	Loss of rank/ rating	Separation from services	Military Legal/ Administrative	Sexual/ Harassment Assault	UCMJ proceedings/ actions	Employment Factors
SG	√	√			√	√		
DP		√			√		√	
RH		√	√	√	√		√	
PG	√	√			√		√	
KM	√	√		√				√
ES	√	√						
SC	√							
KW	√	√	√					
DS		√	√					
TW	√	√						
JA	√							

Table 4

Perceived Specific Circumstances That Lead to a Suicide Attempt.

Participant	Contributing circumstances
SG	Had CPS and Family Advocacy Case. Children were sexually abused by their stepfather.
DP	CGIS was investigating me for missing supplies in excess of 10, 000.00 dollars, that I did not steal.
RH	I went out with friends and met some new people on the town, that I believe drugged me. I almost died was hospitalized, treated and the command processed me out of the Coast Guard because I tested positive and opt not to got to inpatient treatment.
PG	I was in New Orleans with my girlfriend, we had a fight, she hit me, scratched and I tried to hang myself. She called the police and I was incarcerated for assault.
KM	Wife was going to leave me and take our kids.
ES	I was going through a divorce after being accused of Domestic Violence against my wife who was depressed at the time and lied about me hitting her.
SC	I was diagnosed with depression and attempted to take all my Prozac and Xanax.
KW	My performance dropped, and I was not recommended for advancement when I transferred from Washington State. I was angry and cursed at my Chief and was subjected to a disciplinary actions ^b .
DS	I was drinking alcohol and my wife was physical towards me and threaten to leave with my child to return to Peru.
TW	My CO was difficult, and I didn't know how to separate myself from the abuse that I felt I was enduring.
JA	Bad break up - first person I loved.

Note. “Disciplinary Action” administrative and disciplinary actions including, but are not limited to: (1) Court-martial; (2) Nonjudicial punishment; (3) Letter of reprimand; (4) Military Protective Order; (5) Administrative discharge; (6) Administrative Remarks, Form CG-3307; (7) Denial of reenlistment, including bars to reenlistment; (8) Termination of government family housing; (9) Advance return of family members to the United States from an overseas command; (10) Curtailment of the member’s military tour

of duty overseas (COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1752.1),b Child Protective Services (CPS), Coast Guard Investigation Service (CGIS), Commanding Officer (CO)

Approximately half of the participants (6) had continued service in USCG after their suicide attempt, 4 of the participants left, and one participant stayed initially but left in a year. Table 5 provides information about participants' service at USCG, such as their ranks while they were on active duty and whether they stayed at the USCG after their suicide attempt. During qualitative data analysis, I contrasted the responses of participants that stayed on active duty to responses of those who did not.

Table 5

Information About Participants' Service at USCG

Participant	Military rank at time of service	Continued service after a suicide attempt
SG	BM1 (Enlisted)	First stayed and then left
DP	AMT2 (Enlisted)	No
RH	SN/E3 (Enlisted)	No
PG	SN (Enlisted)	Yes
KM	MST2 (Enlisted)	Yes
ES	FS3/E-4 (Enlisted)	No
SC	BM (Enlisted)	No
KW	YN3/E-4 (Enlisted)	Yes
DS	SK3 (Enlisted)	Yes
TW	O1-03 (Officer) ^c	Yes
JA	E1-E4 (Junior Enlisted)	Yes

^c - The percentage of officers among the participants was significantly lower. Given the fact that enlisted personnel constitute a higher percentage of the USCG, the vast majority of participants were enlisted (Stander et al. 2004).

Data Collection

From October 2010 to October 2017, more than 38 USCG members attempted suicide (USCG, 2013). Of these 38 possible respondents, 12 respondents were given access to the survey via Facebook in a private location selected by the participants. Thus, data collection was conducted using an online survey instead of a more common face-to-face interview method. Access was given only to Coast Guard veterans no longer affiliated with the Coast Guard. All participants had been discharged from the USCG and had no service obligation, excluding the need to seek support or IRB approval from the USCG to complete the study

Data Analysis

The study analysis utilized a reliable and valid research protocol for a phenomenological inquiry by employing a QSR NVivo 12 computer software. NVivo software was a useful tool for data management and representation of coded information, which allows for the use of manual techniques for coding by the researcher during thorough cross-examination of data in the search for emerging themes (Beck et al., 1994; Welsh, 2002). Following these guidelines for this study, I used a generic exploratory qualitative approach to conduct the inductive thematic analysis and interpretative analysis to examine the data. The generic qualitative research approach ensures that the research design was linked with the “epistemological stance, discipline, and particular research questions” (Leta-Leroux, 2018, p. 111). The interpretative analysis paradigm allows

researchers to obtain individual experiences, which was significant for conducting and interpreting from gathering data (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). When researchers use the interpretive methodology, it was more subjective than objective (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Thus, I paid particular attention to bracketing my knowledge of the phenomenon to avoid biases and prejudices that could influence the selection of codes and themes.

To analyze the data, I employed a thematic analysis to identify ideas and patterns that emerged from the data (Costa, Breda, Pinho, Bakas, & Durao, 2016). To that end, I applied several steps, including becoming familiar with the data, coding the data, searching for common themes and subthemes, reviewing the themes and subthemes in the context of the research questions of interest, and producing the report. The use of semistructured interviews helped to organize data around a theoretical framework developed by Tinto (1975, 1993) and Joiner (2005, 2009) and the central research question of the study. Figure 5 depicts the general structure of the participants' responses.

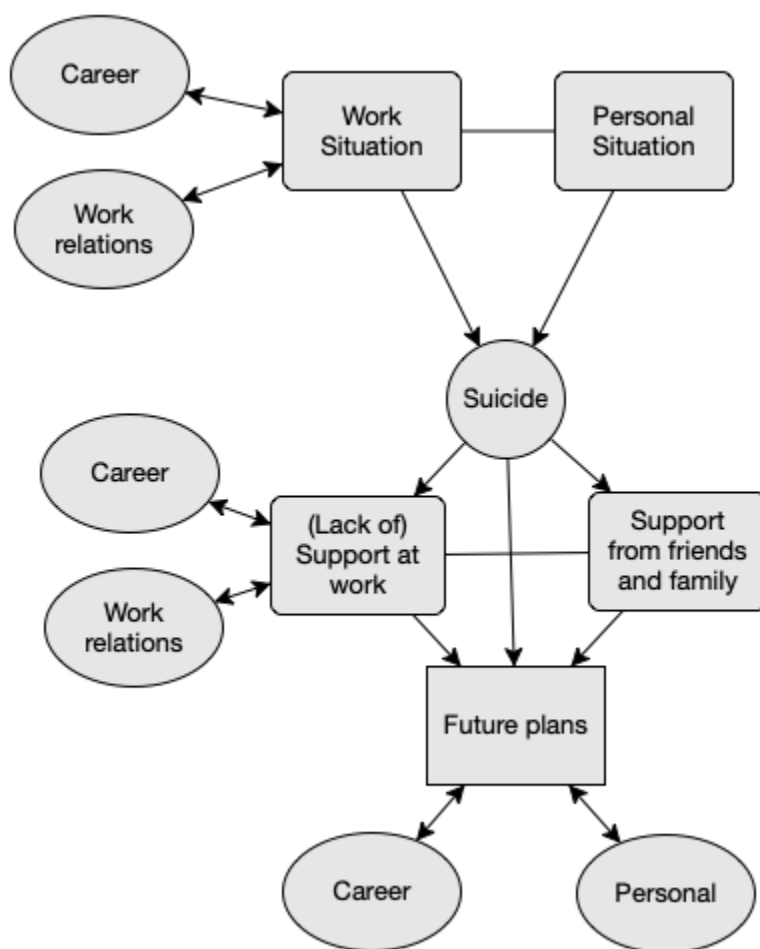


Figure 5. The general structure of the responses to the semistructured interviews.

Therefore, I paid close attention to the difference in themes that emerged from responses of participants who left USCG after their suicide attempt and themes that emerged from responses of participants who continued their active duty at USCG. The open coding process was achieved by carefully reading transcripts and segmenting the data phrases used by the participant into meaningful expressions and describing those expressions in a single word or short sequence of words (i.e., the code). The coding was accomplished while keeping an open mind but also considering the research questions of this study. I read the interview transcriptions to pull out and separate the emerging

themes identified as codes. An example of a theme that appeared in many interviews was that participants experienced significantly stressful events in their personal life. Therefore, the expression “relationship stresses” became a themed code. Subsequent interviews were read with consideration for the existing codes while looking for additional ones that may develop, always keeping in mind the research questions. Finally, theoretical relationships emerged from both within and across the themed codes. Mind-mapping software was used to aid in this analysis. Every time a vignette was linked to code, I would review that vignette for relationships with other codes until I established all of the relationships among themed codes. The results section presents the results of these analyses in detail. The respondent quotations and description of the discrepant case, when they occurred, are noted and are also provided in the results section to illustrate the findings.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Data were collected using a Facebook survey. Thus, each participant entered his or her responses. Their responses ensured that the participant’s point of view was accurately portrayed.

Transferability

In the background section, I described in detail the research context and the assumptions central to the research project. The focus of the study was on perceptions of the USCG veterans of the impact of their suicide attempts on their careers at USCG. The results of the qualitative research can be applied to individuals on active duty in other

agencies such as the military and police. However, the sample size of this study may affect transferability to a broader population outside of members of the armed forces.

Dependability

It was critical to account for the ever-changing context within which the research occurred. The setting remained constant. The experiences of each participant varied but did not affect the way the researcher approached the study. The process of selecting and applying the research strategy remained consistent, and there were no changes to the process and operational details of gathering data used to conduct the research (Holm et al., 2014). The same methods and techniques to collect data during the study from participants remained the same (Shento, 2004). I verified the data through the process of triangulation, and respondent validation was conducted using overlapping methods of individual Facebook survey responses and a review of written transcripts in the sections of the research results (tables, narrative excerpts of the respondents, and figures).

Confirmability

I documented the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. The comparison of results was used to strengthen the validity of the analysis, triangulation, the comparison of results from more than two dissimilar methods of data collection, and respondent validation crosschecking interim findings with the participants would have been used prior to the change of the study from a phenomenological study to a qualitative descriptive study (Barbour, 2001).

Results

The results section reports the general themes that emerged from the thematic analysis. Discrepant cases were noted and discussed within general patterns. The goal of this study was to investigate perceptions of the USCG veterans of the impact of their suicide attempts on their careers at USCG. More specifically, this study used semistructured interviews to collect data from 11 USCG veterans to address the primary research question: What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty that are currently veterans? The results of data analyses indicated that participants experienced difficulties with their career and the other themes that emerged from analysis parallel to the research question. The results also indicated that all participants needed to receive support from people in their life after the attempts. All participants were able to find such support from people outside of work, but not all participants received such support from their coworkers. Data analyses revealed that those participants who were supported by their peers and commanding officers chose to stay. The results suggest that peer support was among the critical USCG retention factors.

Three groups of codes emerged from this analysis in parallel to the main research questions of the study: Group 1, Situation Prior to a Suicide Attempt; Group 2, Response to a Suicide Attempt; Group 3, Situation Post Suicide Attempt. Codes from Group A refer to how participants perceived the circumstances that lead them to a suicide attempt, both at work and in their personal lives. Three themes emerged within Group A: A1, (Difficulties in) Career path; A2, (Distant) Relationships at Work; and A3, Relationships Stresses. Codes from Group B refer to how participants perceived reactions from their

coworkers and friends and family members to the event of attempted suicide. Three themes emerged within Group B: B1, (Lack of) Support from coworkers; B2, Family Support; and B3, Professional Support. Finally, codes from Group C refer to how participants perceived their life circumstances after the suicide attempt. Three themes emerged within Group C: C1, Continuing Career in USCG; C2, Getting More Education; and C3, New Career Path. Figure 6 depicts the themes that emerged from the thematic analysis. Table 6 presents the number of references for each of the themes.

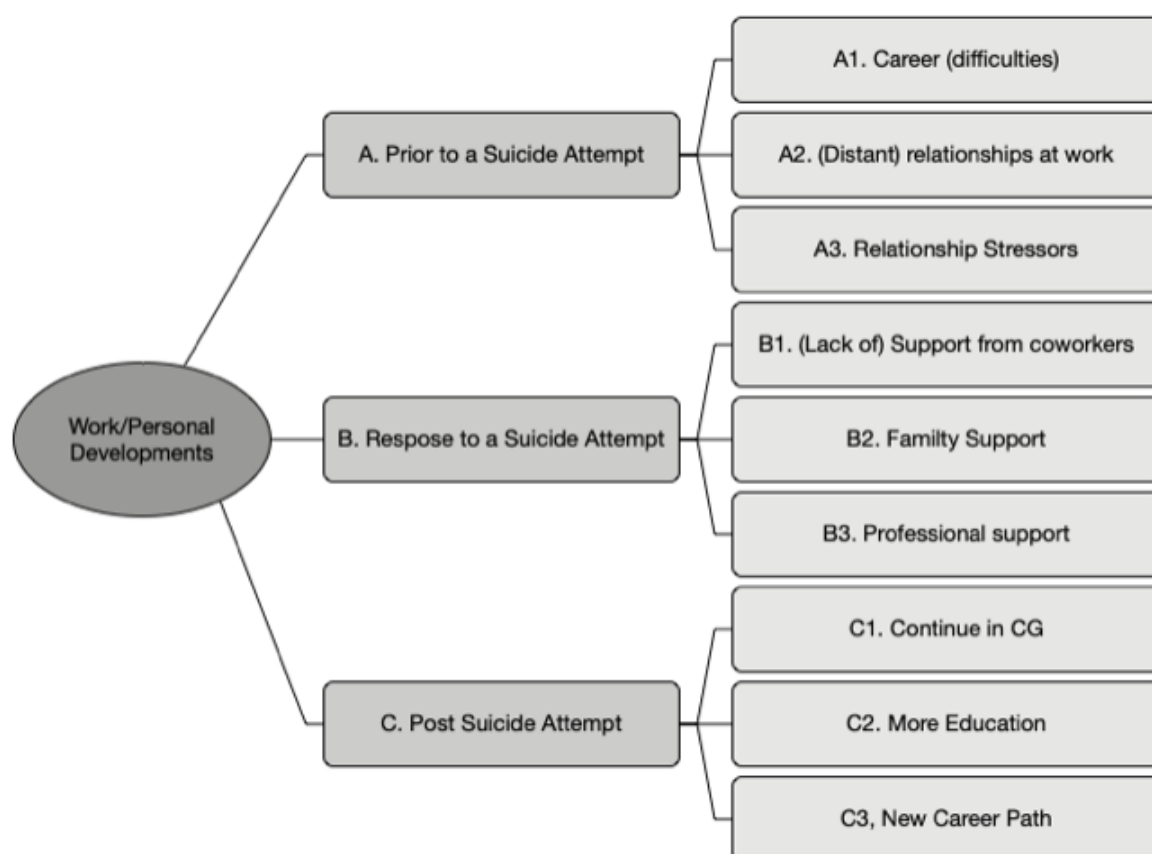


Figure 6. Major themes.

Table 6

Number of references for each of the major themes

Major theme	Number of references
A. Prior to a suicide attempt	
A1. Career (difficulties)	27
A2. (Distant) relationships	17
A3. Relationships stressors	19
B. Response to a suicide attempt	
B1. (Lack of) support from coworkers	9
B2. Family support	20
B3. Professional support	2
C. Post suicide attempt	
C1. Continue in CG	7
C2. More education	8
C3. New career path	9

Themes for Group A: Situation Prior to a Suicide Attempt

Theme A1: (Difficulties in) career path. Theme A1, (Difficulties in) Career path, reflects the participants' perception about the state of their career before a suicide attempt. Data reflected that some participants felt good about their career prior to a suicide attempt, and some participants thought that their career was not going well. Feeling good about their career before suicide did not differ between participants who continued on active duty and those who left after the attempt. The comments ranged from very general, such as "My career was going great" or "My job was fine," and "I was feeling low and not engaged in my career," to much more detailed descriptions of their work experience.

For instance, DS recalled: “I was passed over for the rank of SK3. It was the first time in my six years that I was passed over and did not advance.” TW remembered: “there was an extreme amount of finger-pointing and mandatory training that I was singled out to attend.” KW shared: “My performance dropped, and I was not recommended for advancement when I transferred from [the state of] Washington. I was angry and cursed at my chief and received a 4910.”

Similarly, ES recalled:

Once the command forced me to attend training and counseling, it put my career on hold. I was supposed to test and get boarded for the next rank. It was delayed a whole year, and I needed the money because my bitch wife was trying to fuck me with the divorce and child support.

In contrast, SG shared:

My career was going well. I was a Boatswains mate, and my career was cruising. I was doing well and making rank easy until I started drinking alcohol more often. Then the CPS case happened in Pepperill, MA to my girls and all went to hell.

Thus, the data suggested that many, even though not all, individuals who attempted suicide had experienced difficulties in their career. However, some of them remained on active duty after the attempt, while others left.

Theme A2: (Distant) relationships at work. Theme A2, (Distant) relationships at work, reflects the participants’ perception of their relationship with coworkers before a suicide attempt.

Almost all participants reported difficult or distant relationships with their co-workers prior to a suicide attempt. KM said that “no one knew I was going to kill myself.” SC recalled, “I felt like I was worthless and not heard by my chief and others.” This theme emerged from the comments of the majority of participants. Often, they felt too distracted to care about their work at all. They recalled feeling isolated, misunderstood, and angry. For instance, JA explained that he “did not think about [his] career. [He] thought no one cared.” DP shared that he “was not trusted by others and did not feel [he] was a part of the Coast Guard.” He also recalled that he “wanted help and felt no one was helping,” and that “the Coast Guard and command did not support or wanted” him.

KW described it in more detail:

Before the suicide attempt, I felt ashamed and angry at everyone because my husband at the time was in the Coast Guard with me, but he was seen better than me, and I felt that the command and everyone was against me.

While many participants shared these feelings, some recalled a more positive experience. For instance, ES recalled that his “shipmates were good to [him] and supportive.” Some expected the “people would understand [their] pain. “These data suggest that feelings of isolation and the lack of support from their coworkers were shared by the majority of participants, regardless of whether or not they stayed on active duty after a suicide attempt.

Theme A3: Relationship stressors. Theme A3, Relationship stressors, reflects the participants’ perception of their relationship before a suicide attempt. Most

participants lived through significant stresses in their personal lives. These stresses included abusive relationships with their significant others, difficult endings of romantic relationships or divorce, witnessing sexual abuse of their children, and continuing difficulties in romantic relationships. For instance, JA shared that her “boyfriend and [she] had been fighting for about six months.” KW recalled that her “ex-husband was attempting to make [her] crazy and saying that [her] mother left me when [she] was 7-years old. [Her] mother did not leave [her], she died.” PG agreed that his “suicide attempt was because of relationship issues.

SG described his difficult personal experience:

My daughter was [sexually abused] by her stepfather, I wanted to kill him, but knew I would not see my other children again, I felt alone and thought taking the drugs would make everything go away. I felt [lost] and alone.

KW reported that her husband got her drunk and raped her. This theme emerged from responses of participants who stayed on active duty after a suicide attempt and from responses of participants who left USCG. Overall, the three themes that emerged from Group A illustrate that life circumstances that may have led to suicide attempts appear to be similar for all participants, including those who left USCG and those who stayed on active duty. Thus, it was unlikely that perceived difficulties that led to a suicide attempt impacted or affected USCG career retention.

Themes for Group 2: Response to a Suicide Attempt

B1: (Lack of) support from coworkers. Theme B1, (Lack of) support from coworkers, reflects the participants’ perception of how their coworkers reacted to the

news of their suicide attempt. Data analysis revealed that participants, who stayed in the USCG, generally felt that their peers responded to this event with support. The feeling was even though generally, they felt that they had complicated relationships with peers prior to the attempt. DS thought that his “counselor, and chief, the command and Work-Life” provided needed support during the most challenging times after the attempt.

Similarly, TW recalled:

There was a huge circle of help afterward. My original signs of suicidal behaviors were overlooked, or maybe the staff was overworked. After the event, every one showed that they cared about my well-being and my continued healing. The support came was HUGE for me. I felt alone, and I needed that occasional ‘how are you,’ and reminder to look towards the positive.

JA admitted that he “starting to feel secure around [his] peers.” Some of them directly connected, receiving this support to their decision to continue to serve. For instance, PG stated: “My command provided support [...], I continued to serve and did okay after a year after the attempt.”

In contrast, participants who left USCG reported that they did not receive the support they needed from their peers. ES recalled that “After I was sent to counseling and anger management, I felt marked and that the command and my chief were not going to let me make rank and left the Coast Guard somewhat bitter.”

The responses of SG particularly illustrated the connection between peer support and a decision to stay in service. SG initially stayed in service, but ultimately decided to leave. He explained in detail how his work relationships shaped his decisions:

The chief was hard but fair, I felt obligated to remain my second term in the Coast Guard but went to get my older daughter brought her to my unit, and she started acting out in high school, and I thought it was best to get out of the Coast Guard before I was brought on charges. My peers gave me a hard time because they had to pick up the slack, and I could not go on missions because of my suicide attempt and the CPS case against the stepfather. [...] I left the Coast Guard.

Therefore, the results of data analysis revealed that the level of peer support and support from commanding officers are among critical retention factors for service at USCG.

B2: Family support. Theme B2, Family support, reflects the participants ‘perception of the level of support they were able to receive from their family members, friends, and other significant personal relationships. All participants spoke about the support they were able to find outside work. The support received did not differ between those who left service and those who stayed in the USCG. Many participants referred to their children as a significant motivation to stay “alive.” KM said that her “children kept me alive. [She] wanted to be in their lives and wanted to live. [She] had to work to keep them safe.”

Similarly, KW said that she “focus more on [her] family and being with them and find joy in being a mother.” DP shared that his “wife was supportive and believed [in him].” SG relied on a “closer relationship with [his] daughter. DS “met a girl that encouraged [him] to stop drinking.”

TW felt that she had to learn to select the right people for a personal relationship: “less interaction with those that are toxic and unhealthy.” SC also shared that she “met a

guy who became her boyfriend.” JA felt that it was important to change self and actively look for people who can be supportive: “I am very involved in my church and will continue to worship my god.” DP also relied on church and worked on developing a sense of self: “I go to church, I don’t drink, and I am an honest man.” Overall, the data suggested that even though receiving support from significant personal relationships was important for those who recover from a suicide attempt, it was not a significant factor for USCG retention.

B3: Professional support. Theme B3, Professional support, reflects the participants’ perception of the support they received from mental health professionals. Only a very few participants commented on the effect of help from mental health professionals. JA, who stayed in service, shared that he was “still in treatment.” ES, who left USCG, shared that he “was sent to counseling and anger management.” Therefore, available data did not allow me to make conclusions on the effect of professional counseling.

Overall, data analysis revealed that receiving support from people in their life after a suicide attempt was crucial for study participants. However, only the level of support from their coworkers appeared to affect their decision to stay USCG.

Themes for Group 3: Situation post suicide attempt

C1: Continuing career in USCG. Theme C1, Continuing career in USCG, refers to participants’ perception of the possibility to continue to be on active duty at USCG. As stated earlier, six study participants remained in service after the suicide attempt. KM “stayed in the CG and gained rank.” PG also continued to serve. KW and her husband

“continued [their] Coast Guard careers until [she] decided to get out to raise [her] daughter. JA shared that he “loved the Coast Guard, and all it had to offer.” DS “got help and earned [...] SK3 and transferred after [his] wife went to Peru. [He] was more focused on [his] career and made additional rank.” These responses indicated that despite the suicide attempt, participants were able to continue service in the USCG. The responses also indicate that they found this service fulfilling. The desire to continue their careers after a suicide attempt suggested that USCG retention after a suicide attempt was a feasible and achievable goal.

C2: Getting more education. Theme C2, Getting more education, refers to participants’ decisions to get more education. Eight of 11 participants chose to receive or plan to receive additional education at some point after their suicide attempt. Plans to receive additional education was valid for all participants who left the USCG, and for some of those who stayed. For instance, DP plans “to go to college and major in economics in the future.” RH was “working waiting tables and finishing college.” ES “went to college and finished a [...] degree in engineering and plan to go to graduate school.” SG “went to college and finished BA in Social Science.” These responses illustrated that, after a suicide attempt, participants were able to find the motivation to improve their professional skills even if they are not related to their career in the USCG. This observation reinforces the importance of retaining USCG members in service because it illustrates the motivation and skills that are required to pursue higher education.

C3: New career path. Theme C3, New career path, refers to participants 'plans and decisions to follow new career plans. Recall that all participants enrolled in the study had already left the USCG. Therefore, all of them were pursuing new careers at the time of the data collection. However, the reasons for ending the service at the USCG significantly affected their attitudes toward the USCG and their career plans. Participants who could not stay after their suicide attempt felt resentful and discouraged. DP shared: "Trying to kill my self was dumb, I was kicked out of the Coast Guard and started working at Home Depot and Avis." RH recalled that he was "discharged due to misconduct and [did] not use any Coast Guard to get a job." ES also spoke about a challenging experience of leaving the USCG: "After I was sent to counseling and anger management, I felt marked and that the command and my chief were not going to let me make rank and left the Coast Guard somewhat bitter."

Participants that stayed at the USCG made a more natural transition from the USCG service to new careers. KM "retired from the CG and worked for [himself] and [...] make a good living taking a photo for a living at a wedding and other events." DS also "focused on [his] career goals, and [felt] good about becoming a manager." Participant JA hoped "that [his] career will be very fulfilling."

Overall, these responses may suggest that those who ended up leaving the USCG after a suicide attempt felt resentful and were not inclined to use their service experience in their new professional lives. In contrast, participants who stayed in service after the suicide attempt spoke about their new career in more optimistic tones. This observation needs further exploration but may potentially suggest that not being able to stay in the

USCG after the suicide attempt had long-lasting negative implications for their future professional lives.

Summary

The changes that occurred to the study were explained at the beginning of Chapter 4 under the heading “Note of Changes.” The goal of this study was to investigate perceptions of the USCG veterans of the impact of their suicide attempts on their careers at USCG. More specifically, this study used semistructured interviews to collect data from 12 USCG veterans to address the primary research question:

RQ. What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty that are currently veterans?

The results of data analyses indicated that study participants experienced difficulties with career, work, and personal relationships prior to their suicide attempts. These circumstances were similar for participants that stayed in service after the attempt and those who left. The results also indicated that all participants needed to receive support from people in their life after the attempts. All participants were able to find such support from people outside of work, but not all participants received such support from their coworkers. Data analyses revealed that those participants who were supported by their peers and commanding officers chose to stay. The results may potentially suggest that peer support was among critical USCG retention factors.

Finally, data analyses indicated that leaving USCG after the suicide attempt may have long-lasting negative implications for participants' work experiences. All participants appeared to have the capacity and motivation to pursue their professional

goals, which was illustrated by their decision to get additional education. However, those participants who left felt resentful and unwilling to utilize their USCG experience in their future career fully. The results reinforce the importance of developing successful USCG retention programs.

In Chapter 5, I provide a report of these themes, conclusions, as well as the implications of this study for methodology, theory, and practice. In the chapter, I examine the experiential impact of suicide on career retention. The results of data analyses indicated that study participants experienced difficulties with career and other factors before their suicide attempts. The results suggested that peer support was among critical USCG retention factors.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the USCG veterans of the impact of their suicide attempts had on their careers at USCG. More specifically, I used semistructured interviews to collect data from 12 USCG veterans to address the primary research question of, What is the lived experience of USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty that are currently veterans? The respondents provided a narrative about their active duty lived experiences. In this qualitative descriptive study, I examined the experiential impact of suicide on the career retention of both active duty and discharged USCG members who remained in service after the end of their service obligation and who were stated to be mentally fit for duty (Bohan & Doyle, 2008).

The results of data analyses indicated that study participants experienced difficulties with career, work, and personal relationships before their suicide attempts. Therefore, the themes of the study pertained to the impact of relationships on the decisions of the USCG members to attempt to commit suicide. These circumstances were similar for participants that stayed in service after the attempt and those who left. The results also indicated that all participants needed to receive support from people in their life after the attempts. All participants were able to find such support from people outside of work, but not all participants received such support from their coworkers. The presence of support from different support groups played an essential role in the USCG veterans moving forward with their lives and preventing further thoughts of committing

suicide. Data analyses also revealed that participants who were supported by their peers and commanding officers chose to stay in the USCG. The data may potentially suggest that peer support was among the critical USCG retention factors. The presence of peers and commanding officers who showed genuine support for the members also helped in building policies that helped the veterans cope with their personal lives.

Interpretation of the Findings

Three groups of codes emerged from the data analysis: Group 1: Situation prior to a suicide attempt, Group 2: Response to a suicide attempt, and Group 3: Situation post suicidal attempt. Codes from Group A referred to how participants perceived the circumstances that led them to a suicide attempt, both at work and in their personal lives. Three themes emerged within Group A, A1: (Difficulties in) career path, A2: (Distant) relationships at work, and A3: Relationship stresses. Codes from Group B referred to how participants perceived reactions from their coworkers, friends, and family members in the event of attempted suicide. Three themes emerged within Group B, B1: (Lack of) support from coworkers, B2: Family support, and B3: Professional support. Finally, codes from Group C referred to how participants perceived their life circumstances after the suicide attempt. Three themes emerged within Group C, C1: Continuing career in USCG, C2: Getting more education, and C3: New career path. The percentage of officers among the participants was significantly lower. Enlisted personnel constitute a higher percentage of the USCG; therefore, the majority of participants were enlisted members (Stander et al., 2004).

The results supported Durkheim's (1951) theory mainly on the assertion that an individual may attempt suicide due to insufficient integration into society, while Tinto (1975, 1993) expanded the model to apply to different aspects of institutional life and social settings. Codes from Group A address institutional life in the USCG and the social settings that led participants to a suicide attempt, both at work and in their personal lives. Tinto acknowledged that both the IMR and Durkheim's model failed to take into account an individual's psychological characteristics that may predispose some individuals to suicide (McCubbin, 2003). Joiner's (2005) model addressed the impact of interpersonal and psychological characteristics that affect an individual capacity to attempt suicide. Codes from Group B referred to how participants perceived reactions from their coworkers, friends, and family members in the event of attempted suicide. In some survey responses, participants noted institutional actions of encouraging psychological treatment and help-seeking. Codes from Group C referred to how participants perceived their life circumstances after the suicide attempt. Overall, life circumstances that may have led to suicide attempts appear to be similar for all participants, including those who left USCG and those who stayed on active duty, making it unlikely that the perceived difficulties that led to a suicide attempt impacted or affected USCG career retention. The findings from mixed-method studies by DiRamio et al. (2008) and Livingston et al. (2011) exploring the transitional experiences of veterans supported the results of this study.

First Theme (Difficulties in) Career Path: IMR and IPTSB Constructs

Impact on Career. The first theme revealed the difficulties in the career path of the

participants. Before the suicide attempt, the participants generally felt good about their career, but they thought that their career was not doing well, which made them consider attempting to commit suicide. The findings of the study revealed that the thoughts about the success or failure of a career path played an essential role in the decisions of the USCG members on whether to commit suicide. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that personal experiences grow out of other experiences to bring forth limitations and practical aspects of the analysis. The results of the study confirmed the importance of personal experiences in each decision made by the USCG veterans. Available literature has emphasized that their experiences primarily influence the way USCG veterans react (DiRamio et al., 2008; Livingston et al., 2011). These personal experiences can also be influenced by the people around them and the general structure in the military field. Based on the experience of the participants, a sudden change of the career path towards the negative side made them decide to attempt to commit suicide as the only way out. This result supports Bergmans et al.'s (2009) assertion that barriers exist with the return to the employment of individuals who attempt suicide. There was evidence of the effects of a suicide attempt on the careers of those who may have wanted to continue to but had to address domestic violence, alcohol treatment, or psychological issues that delayed temporary advancement in their careers.

Second Theme: (Distant) Relationships at Work and the Impact of the IPTSB

Construct of Thwarted Belongingness

The second theme regarding relationships at work pertained to the influence of the participants' relationships at work. All the participants reported difficult or distant

relationships with their coworkers before the suicide attempt. According to Joiner's IPTSB, the suicide attempt was motivated by PB (i.e., an individual's perception of themselves as a liability to others and hopelessness about their status in an institution of a group (Joiner et al., 2009). Joiner (2009) asserted that the presence of either of the two overarching propositions, which includes TB, converges to predict suicide risk. TB was believed to be one of the proximal causes of the suicide attempt, which can affect an individual's career retention. The participants' responses revealed that a sense of detachment from others might directly affect the degree to which individuals experience TB. The results can mean that the relationships that the members create with their peers can have an impact on what they do. Brenner (2008) provided information on the potential suicide risk factors that military personnel may experience, while Drum et al. (2009) provided insight into the full spectrum of suicide thought, intent, and the implications for conceptualizing the problem for guiding multiple points along the continuum of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. The findings of this study confirmed that the intent and actions of the USCG veterans are affected by several factors, including the challenging duties associated with being a member of the armed forces. The results of this study revealed that participant relationships with coworkers created an impact in how they dealt with their professional duties.

The results supported Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR, which suggested that career retention links to the ability to assimilate back into the institution after an absence by focusing on social integration and membership with community or society. All the participants reported difficult or distant relationships with their coworkers before suicide,

which may have increased or decreased after the participant's suicide attempt, contingent on their reception back into their commands and peer support. According to Joiner's IPTSB, the suicide attempt was motivated by PB.

Third Theme: Relationships Stressors and the Impact of the IPTSB Construct of Perceived Burdensomeness

The third theme, which pertained to the stressors in a relationship, revealed the relationship stresses that caused the participants to decide that committing suicide was a fact to consider. The stresses in relationships included relationships outside work, such as difficulties with ending a romantic relationship with their lover. In a case study conducted by Anestis et al. (2009), Joiner's (2005) IPTSB constructs of PB, TB, and acquired capability indicated that it was the interaction of these factors that determine an individual's risk of a suicide attempt. The results of the present study confirmed that the presence of the feeling of being a burden to others could increase suicidal tendencies. Based on the responses from the participants, I concluded that the personal burden that the USCG veterans experienced from personal relationships influenced how they perceived their own lives and in wanting or not wanting to continue with their personal and professional lives. Based on these results, I theorize that PB is directly affected by an individual's belief and perception that they caused problems for others and failed at contributing to the world. Exposure to painful trauma or provocative events influences the degree to which people exhibit an acquired capability for suicide attempts (Van Orden et al., 2008).

Impact of the IPTSB Construct of Belongingness

The lack of support from coworkers was also one of the reasons why the participants attempted to commit suicide. The connection between peer support and a decision to stay in service emerged in most responses of the participants. Gutierrez et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study among female veterans from recent conflicts to explore the women's experiences and potential suicide risk factors using the concepts of Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB, including burdensomeness, failed belongingness, using a qualitative descriptive study design with hermeneutic hues. Based on the results of this current study, analyses revealed that the sense of belongingness with the coworkers or the lack of it might have caused the decision of some USCG veterans to attempt to commit suicide. The results of the study confirmed the importance of belonging to a community to feel worthy.

The support derived by the participants from their family and friends outside work also helped the participants to be able to cope with the challenges of work. Drum et al. (2009) provides insight into the full spectrum of suicide thought, intent, and the implications for conceptualizing the problem for guiding multiple points along the continuum of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Based on the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants, I found that the presence of support from the participants played an essential role in the performance and positivity among the veterans. The results of the study confirmed that being able to develop positivity plays a vital role for USCG veterans.

IMR and Institutional Support

Bossarte et al. (2012) asserted that the relationships between military service and suicide attempts are not clear and called for research that focuses on this phenomenon. Comparatively, there was limited knowledge in the field of literature on the characteristics and cause of suicide attempts among military service members. The results of this current study supported the expectancy theory that the relationships enjoyed and established by the USCG veterans were essential for them, and the lack or absence of these relationships was a determining factor in their final decision to attempt to commit suicide finally. Tinto (1987) asserted that a match between the individual and the institution was paramount for social integration and congruence of the individual in the institution. Tinto's approach proposed that (a) individuals fail to separate from a previous socializing agent, (b) fail to negotiate a transitional period, and (c) fail to incorporate new values into their lived experiences at the institution. Tinto's integration model influences retention programming focused on institutional practices that lead to increased integration, social integration, and programs that may increase social integration and reduced attrition or suicide attempts as the professional support received by some of the respondents in the study (Bean & Eaton, 2002). Components of Tinto's (1993, 1975) IMR purport positive engagement and integration influenced retention, a participant's sense of belongingness, and a strong correlation between the retention and perceived social integration.

The professional support that the USCG veterans received also played a significant role in their ability to perform their work. The results of the study revealed

that the presence of mental health professionals provided the participants with enough support to be able to deal with anger management and other issues. Suicide is of great concern nationally and globally and has become a significant social problem among many men, women, the elderly, and the young in society (Huisman et al., 2010). One of the growing concerns is those who serve in the armed forces die from suicide, the second most common cause of death (Selby et al., 2011; U.S. DoD, 2007). Based on the findings in this study, I conclude that the professional and institutional support that the USCG veterans received, created a considerable impact on their ability to adequately perform their tasks.

IMR Career Retention, Integration and Preparedness

Based on the responses of the participants, their continuing career in the USCG also created an impact on their perceptions of their work in the USCG. Joiner's (2005, 2009) IPTSB supports how the unsuccessful integration of USCG men and women back into their units after a suicide attempt affects the members' continued career success. Tinto's (1993, 1975) IMR contends that positive engagement and integration influenced retention linking correlation to the importance of participant's sense of belongingness and retention, focusing on the importance of social integration. In several mixed method studies conducted by DiRamio et al. (2008), Tinto's model was used to study experiences of 25 combat veterans who transitioned to college as full-time students. The responses of the participants in my study noted that they were concerned about their continuing career with the USCG. The results could have been influenced by the fact that the participants

preferred to continue their careers with the USCG because of fear of failing to integrate back into society.

The data analyses and findings indicated that leaving the USCG after the suicide attempt may have long-lasting negative implications for participants' work experiences. The findings may mean that the USCG veterans' suicide attempts have been influenced by the participants' lack of direction if they leave the USCG. All participants appeared to have the capacity and motivation to pursue their professional goals, a position illustrated by their decision to get additional education—having additional education after their USCG service was also perceived to be a tool increase access to possible sources of livelihood after their USCG service. However, some participants who left felt resentful and unwilling to utilize their USCG experience in their future careers. These results reinforce the importance of developing successful USCG retention programs.

Getting an education was also an essential factor for the participants. Therefore, being able to receive additional education also created an impact on the participants' decision to attempt suicide. LeardMann et al. (2013) suggested that the higher rate of suicide in the military may mostly be a product of increased occupational stress over the years of war. LeardMann et al. (2013) and Bergmans et al. (2009) found that experiences and barriers associated with the return to employment following a suicide attempt had not been addressed in the literature. Based on the responses from the participants, it can be inferred that it was vital for the USCG veterans to have access to educational support for them to know how to deal with the emotional turmoil that was associated with their jobs. The results of the study confirmed literature that the ability of the military field to

provide educational support makes the soldiers aware of their situation (Luby, C. D. 2012).

Tucker (1999) asserted that a comparison of themes of institutional integration and social integration, as postulated by the Tinto model, was more suited to developing programs that assisted retention. Tucker argued an individual's sense of community might be more useful as a theoretical consideration for developing retention programs more so, than Tinto who asserted that retention programs alone are limited in their impact (Tinto, 1996). This study's results supported the focus on programs that target organizational cohesion and support; that marital status influences military retention, reinforcing the needs of focusing on military families and the individual's sense of community. The current study confirmed the literature that the relationship of the veterans to their families influence the overall disposition of the USCG veterans.

Suicide Attempt Impact on Career Retention

The thoughts of new career plans also influenced how the participants thought of addressing their issues. Several quantitative studies conducted by Newell et al. (2009), RAND Corporation (2011), and Olsen et al. (2014) describe specific aspects of the problem of a suicide attempt's effect on career retention in the armed forces and the belief among members that a suicide attempt has a significant negative impact on the member's career retention. Based on the findings of the study and available literature of several mixed-method studies conducted DiRamio et al. (2008) and Livingston et al. (2011) exploring the transitional experiences of veterans; I conclude that the desire of the USCG veterans to retain their jobs, attend vocational training, or attend college can

primarily influence their decision not to continue to attempt suicide. To give an example, the different transitional experiences of the veterans can relate to their future prospective lives outside their military services. Having vocational training can give the USCG veterans enough hope so that they can be convinced that there was still a bright future ahead of them.

In contrast, participants who stayed in service after the suicide attempt spoke about their new career in more optimistic tones. This observation needs further exploration but may potentially suggest that not being able to stay in the USCG after the suicide attempt had long-lasting negative implications for their future professional lives. The results of the study confirmed literature that there was a long-lasting negative impact on the professional lives of military soldiers who tried to commit suicide (Lazar, S. G. (2014).

The Hope of a Career as a Deterrent of Suicide Attempt

The future career of USCG veterans played an essential role in the participants' decision to attempt to commit suicide. Vasterling et al. (2015) found that multiple individuals and environmental factors determined occupational retention, including emotional support from peers, leaders, socialization back into a unit after an extended absence. These essential factors support the assimilation of an individual and retention after psychosocial trauma, similarly noted by Tinto IMR (1975, 1993). The results of the study confirmed the theory that having peers outside of work would lower the veterans' suicidal attempts. Based on the responses from the participants, the assurance of a career or livelihood after working in the USCG represents an essential factor for the veterans to

decide not to attempt suicide. The findings of this study confirmed the importance of having activated various factors in their lives, in addition to their military skills (Vasterling et al., 2015). The findings of this study confirmed that having livelihood after the military service was a positive influence on the decisions of the participants. The results of the study support the assertion of Cabrera et al. (1993) that the impact of career decision making self-efficacy, perceived stressors, financial difficulties, and perception of one's future, attitudes, behavior, and career development in an institution affect retention.

Limitations of the Study

One of the study's limitations includes the small sample size used during the qualitative descriptive inquiry, which affects the identification of individuals who experience the same phenomenon and shared emerging relationships between factors and themes in the data that exist. A significant limitation was the change from face-to-face interviewing to the use of a Facebook survey. Descriptive and evaluation research, as well as analytical studies, use survey methods. For example, in a quantitative study conducted by Sandler (2000), a survey questionnaire and institutional records were developed and later used by Cabrera et al. (1993) to enhance Tinto's (1993) IMR. Online survey measurement tools vary but are enhanced when researchers conduct a detailed assessment of their research goals and timeline before choosing a method of deploying a survey. This position is demonstrated by the use of survey tools such as Survey Monkey, Facebook Survey Tools, and other low-cost survey programs, including Qualtrics. The researcher can reach large communities and individuals using online survey tools, which would be challenging to access using more conventional means; for example, it would be

difficult to find respondents through face-to-face surveys on issues of cyber-bullying and to determine the pros and if online dating for the millennial generation. Researchers in the healthcare field have been able to gain data through online survey methods from HIV infected individuals more readily overcoming the obstacle of the public stigma that can act as a barrier to gaining access face-to-face (Wright, 2005).

The data may have lacked details or depth on the impact of attempted suicide on career retention (Kelley et al., 2003). The limitation of the study about the experience of the participants was necessary because the study's inquiry rested on the lived experiences of the participants. Using quantitative correlation may describe relationships between the individual's suicide attempt and career retention on a larger population of participants responding to the interview questions than just 12. More participants would present more diverse experiences. The sample size of this study also affected transferability to a broader population who are not members of the armed forces.

The transferability was strengthened because the results of the study revealed the general emotional support provided to individuals in different fields. It bears noting that the transferability of the method and the results of the study can be dependent on the ability of future research to also collect the same data based on the experience of the participants. In this study, an interview protocol was part of the Facebook survey tool. The Facebook survey tool was used to determine possible persistent themes without follow-up questioning of participants. The nature of the qualitative descriptive study method explores the lived experience of the event by the interviewed individual. The lived experience of the participants became a critical source of the data for this study.

Researcher bias could not influence the ability to remain objective in response to the participants' experiences and beliefs concerning suicide because the participants generated and documented their responses. Despite the limitations, a reliable and valid research protocol for qualitative descriptive inquiry strengthened the study. All individuals experienced the phenomenon in question (suicide attempt), and I used the computer program, QSR NVivo to assist with bracketing my personal experiences and to manage the data (Beck et al., 1994; Cypress, 2017; Morse et al., 2002; Welsh, 2002).

Increasing reliability and validity can be achieved through the use of a mixed method among active-duty members (Gibbs, 2002; Gurdial & Jones, 2007). For example, a quantitative study would be more beneficial to a precise method of data collection. QSR NVivo uses three methods of coding, open coding, axial, and selective coding which is used in qualitative descriptive studies to connect concepts and themes, words, sentences, and text of a document to a node (category) for analysis determining reliability and validity of the coding process (Gibbs, 2002; Gurdial & Jones, 2007). Using a qualitative descriptive design allowed participants to provide descriptions and impact of their attempted suicide experiences (Bohan & Doyle, 2008). Face-to-face interviewing would have provided a more in-depth collection of the data needed for this study; a qualitative study was appropriate because the lived experiences of the participants were the focus. Completing a mixed method study would be more difficult because of the privacy of the data and information about those who are still active in military duty. Using existing data collected on suicide attempts in the USCG may provide the groundwork for future

research that contributes to promoting a confident, healthy workforce and an individual's career retention after a suicide attempt.

Recommendations

The qualitative descriptive research tradition was most appropriate for answering the research questions of this study because this strategy focuses on the lived experience of individuals. The data collection design changed from a face-to-face interview method to an online survey method (Ferrucci & Tandoc, 2015). Using a qualitative descriptive design allowed participants to provide descriptions about the impact of their attempted suicide experience on their career retention (Bohan & Doyle, 2008). It must be noted that the experiences of individuals are the chief criteria determined by the research question. The literature search revealed that few researchers had conducted qualitative descriptive research on members of the armed forces to explore their experiences, perceptions, and perceived impact on their career retention following a suicide attempt. Researchers generally explored the experiences of nursing and medical care professionals and focused on case study research methods.

Future studies can explore this topic using a mixed qualitative and quantitative method. Using mixed methods would allow the accuracy of a quantitative method and at the same time, keep the in-depth analysis that was possible in a qualitative study. Several mixed method studies conducted by DiRamio et al. (2008) and Livingston et al. (2011) focused on Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR to explore the transitional experiences of military service members feelings of ambivalence towards suicide attempts and a sense of PB to others while dealing with social integration stressors that may lead to a suicide attempt.

Future research should include a more in-depth approach to the emotions and feelings of the veterans, as these two factors may significantly affect the decisions chosen by the USCG veterans. Researchers preferring a more precise and exact data set may use a quantitative method. Quantitative studies offer larger data sets. The change in the methodology may also lead to new information that cannot arise from the use of a qualitative or qualitative descriptive study.

Another recommendation for future studies is to focus on the specific themes and topics that would be the only topic for future studies. For example, one study can focus solely on the effects of relationships with the decision of the USCG veterans to commit suicide. In this manner, the focus would be more in-depth, and the effects of different forms of relationships would be better analyzed. Further, the more in-depth analysis of the factors can also better guide the policymakers to make sure that their policies cater to the needs of the USCG veterans and those who are still active in military service.

The findings of this study enable work-life professionals and the USCG leadership to provide a positive social change in the lives of the service members by identifying factors for mitigation and negative themes that may prevent the service member from accessing post-care and focus the members towards maintaining their career status after a suicide attempt. Therefore, it is a recommended practice for the professionals occupying the leadership positions in USCG to prioritize the welfare of the USCG members, including the veterans who may have deeper issues that may cause the veterans to attempt to commit suicide.

Implications

Positive Social Change

The information and knowledge attained from the interviews of USCG veterans who attempted suicide during their career and the impact of the knowledge on career retention inform practitioners and policymakers on individuals' perspectives and lived experiences during their services of this country. Vasterling, J. J., Proctor, S. P., Aslan, M., Ko, J., Jakupcak, M., Harte, C. B., & Concato, J. (2015) determined several potential predictors of military retention derived from in-person interviews and questionnaires. In this study, the use of in-person interviews allowed me to create a more personal approach with the participants. This method could have affected the decision of the participants to share more of their lived experiences with me.

I concluded from the results of the study that service members early in their career might be especially prone to military attrition, needing important initiatives that target organizational cohesion and support, and that marital status influences military retention, reinforcing the needs of focusing on military families. The current study confirmed the literature that the relationship of the veterans to their families influences the overall disposition of the USCG veterans. Vasterling et al. (2015) found that multiple individuals and environmental factors determined occupational retention, including emotional support from peers, leaders, socialization back into a unit after an extended absence. These essential factors for assimilation of an individual and retention after psychosocial trauma were similarly noted by Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR. The findings of the current study confirmed that the presence of psychosocial trauma would have effects on the way

the veterans make their decisions. The identification the different factors that lead members of the armed forces to attempt suicide by this study can guide practitioners and the policymakers to create policies that prevent the USCG veterans from committing suicide by creating more effective and strategic interventions. Strategic interventions can focus on the set of expectations to ensure that the members of the armed forces know the challenges of the profession and the importance of peer, family, and professional support to mitigate factors that contribute suicide attempts and career attrition. The results of the study create progress for positive social change that is consistent with the qualitative descriptive research method of this study. The results of the study also provide a voice for the individual who experiences career personal conflict and loss of confidence in their work abilities, conditions that can lead to a suicide attempt when they realized that their current abilities might not be sufficient.

The study provided future data, and the findings of the current study may support the use and application of concepts of Tinto's (1975, 1993) IMR in conjunction with Joiner's (2009) IPTSB. The results of this study can be used to assist with current institutional programs and policies that focus on the exploration of precipitating themes that prevent career retention. Tinto (1993) and Joiner both asserted that individuals might possess a series of characteristics—for example, demographics and social support networks—that influence institution retention, which was supported by this study's themes.

The profession of an individual influenced the decision of the military veterans to attempt suicide because of the specific stressors encountered. Further, access to an

opportunity to use lethal means in the workplace may also influence distinct methods. The findings in this study may be used as reduction strategies and have applicability and transferability to this study and future studies on employees of similar professions as the USCG for example, law enforcement in Texas and maritime employees who have continued career retention after a suicide attempt (Mahon et al., 2014). The results would apply to other jurisdictions, as well. The veterans who come from other jurisdictions may experience similar lived experiences as the participants in this study. Therefore, the findings of Mahon et al. (2014) applied to the current findings, as well as to the future experiences of other USCG veterans. The findings of the study would be able to help ensure that the consequences of depression are mitigated, and the individual issues of military members are addressed more comprehensively. The current findings would add to the literature by contributing additional knowledge to the discipline of psychology that can answer the research question of whether there was a relationship between acquired capability, thwarted belongingness, and perceived burdensomeness to USCG members and their ability to retain their careers.

The professional support that the USCG veterans received also played a significant role in their ability to perform their work. Based on the findings of the current study regarding the importance of social support, the study conducted by Mahon et al. (2014) was confirmed. The analyses determined that the presence of mental health professionals provided participants with enough support to be able to deal with anger management and other issues. Based on the findings in this study, it can be concluded that psychologists should explore the risk and protective factors, individual and family

history, alcohol involvement, environmental stressors, and interpersonal factors during suicide assessment (Mahon et al., 2014).

A psychologist can encourage positive forms of therapies that instill a sense of belongingness and the importance of social integration that involves stakeholders of the individual's community. The results of the current study have revealed that the military veterans valued the sense of belongingness to their social community. The study supported the need for psychologists to understand TB: one unmet need to belong due to barriers that lead to alimention and lack of being an integral part of a social support network (example, family, and membership within a group or community (Joiner et al., 2009; Selby et al., 2010)). The findings of the current study revealed that when the veterans felt like they had support from their social networks, they can decide properly and feel worthy of their achievements.

All participants spoke about the support they were able to find outside work from family members. Tinto's model focused on the importance of race, ethnicity, family background, and social and academic history but failed to acknowledge past prevalence of mental illness, family history, finances, and other constructs of social and institution integration that may impact attrition and retention of an individual who attempted suicide (McCubbin, 2003). The findings of this research study support the need for psychologists and mental health clinicians to assess the prevalence of mental illness and family history. The support derived by the participants from their family and friends outside work also helped the participants to be able to cope with the challenges of work.

The findings of the study can be applied to individuals on active duty in other agencies such as the military and police. However, the sample size of this study may affect transferability to a broader population outside of members of the armed forces. Because the results are transferrable, the next generation of USCG personnel and veterans would be able to benefit from the findings of this current study. Additionally, the finding of the study can be transferable to employees of similar professions to the USCG, for example, the Navy. If the employees in similar professions are educated on the risks, challenges, and how to address the possible emotional turmoil associated with their jobs, they would be more equipped on how to deal with their battles. For example, law enforcement in Texas and maritime employees who have continued career retention after a suicide attempt narrate certain specific impacts of their previous experience. The findings would add to the discipline of suicidology of the armed forces and determine the impact of a suicide attempt on career and retention (Laird, 2011). Therefore, it is vital for those working in the military field to know the impact of their decisions. The body of knowledge in the suicidology of the armed forces can help the policymakers to create more policies and educational awareness that support the welfare of the members of the armed forces.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of USCG veterans about the impact of their suicide attempt on their career in the USCG; specifically, the study aimed to understand the lived experience of the USCG members who have attempted suicide while on active duty, but who are currently discharged. The results of the study

revealed that several factors influenced their decisions. One important note, due to the influences that affect the decisions of the individuals, these decisions may be mitigated if institutions address these influences early and that these issues lie within the scope of career retention. The track of the career path of the veterans influenced their decisions. Further, the relationships that the participants had at work also influenced their decision to attempt suicide. The results of the study also showed that the career path or future career opportunities after USCG service also impacted the participants' decision to commit suicide. The lived experiences and perceptions of the participants revealed that the support from the institutions would have positively influenced the way the participants perceived things when they were still in service (Bohan et al., 2008).

The findings of the study results may be transferable to individuals on active duty in other agencies such as the armed forces and police. The findings of the study revealed that the lived experiences of the participants had a commonality, and therefore, the results were also expected to apply to the experiences of other USCG veterans. However, the sample size of this study may affect transferability to a broader population outside of members of the armed forces. The finding may be transferable to employees of similar professions as the USCG (for example, law enforcement in Texas and maritime employees who have continued career retention after a suicide attempt). The potential audiences for this study are the unit commanders and leaders within the Coast Guard, peers and Work-Life Program practitioners, and the approximately 42,000 USCG members serving on active duty and reserve duty. Additional potential audiences are medical and community resources providers, family members, and friends.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that information gathered from participants' acts as a collaborative of data and information that reveals factors and patterns that answer perplexing questions that can assist with the planning of prevention and intervention services. The findings of the current study confirmed that there are certain factors and patterns in the experiences of the participants that made them decide whether an attempt to commit suicide was worth it. The information garnered from this study answered how social support, clinical intervention by a psychologist, and encouraging veterans to continue career goals could mitigate factors that lead to a suicide attempt. The findings of the current study proved that the presence of support from loved ones could significantly create better decisions on the part of the participants. The DoD, Homeland Security, and the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs have made the problem of suicide among its members and veterans the focus in establishing community and mental health resources to design prevention and intervention programs developed to assist with career retention after a suicide attempt. Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (1999) asserted that data helps interventionists analyze programs that are relevant to the stakeholders and the target population of this study.

Writing findings in a general format in a language that can be understood by different audiences will increase the types of audiences the results reach. The format may have to be adjusted and written for academic, political, and other stakeholders (Creswell, 2007). Writing of findings to appeal to different audiences (political, family, academic audiences) includes providing alternative procedures to disseminate findings through journals, public services announcements, and commercial mediums to include the internet

(Creswell, 2007; Frisby, 2006; National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, 1999). A plan for dissemination of findings, including journal publications, book publications, professional conference presentations, and local/work-related presentations that include submission requirements and planned submission dates could promote findings of this study to promote social change.

The results of the study contribute to positive social change because the policymakers will be better guided on how to create and foster a culture of collaboration that supports the USCG member when they still serve the institutions or reintegrate into this nation's communities. Veterans contribute significantly to business, community, and educational institutions through their unique mix of work ethic, leadership, and resilience. Society gains by playing a role in facilitating their contributions by improving their transition after a suicide attempt because "sometimes even to live is an act of courage" (Harris, 2014, p.742).

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Appendix A: Sample Suicide-Related Behavior Incident Report, Form CG-1734,

COMDTINST 1734.1A (USCG, 2012)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY U.S. COAST GUARD CG-1734 (Rev. 06-09)		SUICIDE-RELATED BEHAVIOR INCIDENT REPORT FORM <small>[To be completed by CG medical personnel within 10 business days of initial notification by either Coast Guard or other medical provider in all incidents of Self-Harm, Level 2, or Suicide Attempt, Level 2, committed by AD CG members. Complete form using computer and submit via email to CG-1112.]</small>			
The purpose of the Privacy Act is to ensure that proper notification is given regarding the legal implications and purposes for collecting personal information. Therefore, all personnel intending to complete this form must first allow the individual being treated to read the below Privacy Act Statement BEFORE questioning or collecting the information on the form.					
PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT					
* Authority: 14 U.S.C. § 93(a)(17); 10 U.S.C. § 1071-1107; 5 U.S.C. § 301; 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(k)(1)(i); and 68 Fed. Reg. 22407, 22408 (April 28, 2003).					
* Purpose: The Coast Guard will use this information to render proper medical diagnosis and treatment, enhance treatment efforts, techniques, and policy guidance, protect lives, and facilitate discovery of systemic issues found in aggregate data.					
* Routine Uses: To any party or the individual upon obtaining authorization by written consent for the disclosure from the individual for: personal use; insurance; continued medical care; school; legal; retirement/separation; or other reasons. Additionally, the Coast Guard may share the information with law enforcement or other government agencies as necessary to accomplish an agency function related to the collection of information or respond to or prevent harm, serious bodily injury, or threats.					
* Disclosure: Voluntary. Refusal may compromise treatment effectiveness due to providers not having a complete history.					
1. Incident Type	2. Last Name	3. First Name	4. Middle Initial		
5. Sex	6. EMPLID	7. Rank	8. Rate if Enlisted	9. Marital Status	10. Education
11. Does member have minor children? If yes, do they reside with member?	12. Unit Dept ID	13. Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY)	14. Date of Incident (MM/DD/YYYY)	15. Time of Incident (use military time)	
16. Location of Incident (City & State, Country if other than U.S.)	17. Incident Setting	18. Permanent Duty Station/Command Location			
19. Residence at Time of Incident	20. Actions Taken as Consequence of Incident				
21. Start Date of Hospitalization if applicable (MM/DD/YYYY) <input type="checkbox"/> Check if unknown <input type="checkbox"/> Check if member is still in the inpatient facility (and, if so, skip next item)	22. End Date of Hospitalization, if applicable (MM/DD/YYYY) <input type="checkbox"/> Check if unknown				
23. Primary Method Used	24. During this incident was alcohol used?				
25. During this incident were drugs used? If yes, what type?	26. Was a suicide note/message left?				
27. Briefly describe the general sequence of events leading up to the suicidal behavior					
28. Within the 12 month period prior to the incident was the member seen by:					
a. An MTP? If yes, when was the most recent contact?		e. Other Work-Life Staff (e.g. EAPC)? If yes, when was the most recent contact?			
b. Substance Abuse Services? If yes, when was the most recent contact?		f. EAP MH Counselor? If yes, when was the most recent contact?			
c. Family Advocacy? If yes, when was the most recent contact?		g. Tricare or other MH care Provider? If yes, when was the most recent contact?			
d. A Chaplain or other clergy? If yes, when was the most recent contact?		h. Inpatient Mental Healthcare? If yes, when was the most recent contact?			
29. Prior to the incident had the member been diagnosed with:			30. Prior to the incident did the member have a history of:		
a. Mood Disorder?			a. Substance Abuse?		
b. Anxiety Disorder?			b. Taking Psychotropic Medications?		
c. Personality Disorder?			c. Psychotic Disorder?		
d. Psychotic Disorder?			d. Previous Incidents of Suicidal Behavior? If yes, did behavior result in injury?		
			e. Sleep Disorder? Estimate hrs sleep per day for week prior to incident.		
<input type="button" value="eMAIL"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/>					

31. Prior to the incident did the member receive the required Suicide Prevention Mandated Training within the past 12 months? <input type="text"/>				
32. Please elaborate on any other relevant details related to the member's mental health treatment history:				
33. Prior to the incident was the member the subject involved in or the subject of				
a. Article 15 proceeding?	<input type="text"/>	e. Med Evaluation Board?	<input type="text"/>	
b. Civilian criminal charge?	<input type="text"/>	f. Civil legal problems, e.g., child custody?	<input type="text"/>	
c. Admin Separation proceedings?	<input type="text"/>	g. Non-selection, e.g., rank, rate, command, school?	<input type="text"/>	
d. AWOL or Desertion proceedings?	<input type="text"/>	h. Failure to meet Weight Standard?	<input type="text"/>	
34. Please describe or elaborate on life stressors or other circumstances impacting the patient prior to the incident.				
35. Within the past 12 month period prior to the incident was the member an alleged or confirmed VICTIM of:		36. Prior to the incident was the member accused or convicted of:		
a. Physical abuse or assault?	<input type="text"/>	a. Physical abuse or assault?	<input type="text"/>	
If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	
b. Sexual Abuse or Assault?	<input type="text"/>	b. Sexual Abuse or Assault?	<input type="text"/>	
If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	
c. Emotional Abuse?	<input type="text"/>	c. Emotional Abuse?	<input type="text"/>	
If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	
d. Sexual Harassment?	<input type="text"/>	d. Sexual Harassment?	<input type="text"/>	
If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	
37. Describe any known childhood or developmental history that may have contributed to the incident				
38. Did member have orders to deploy? <input type="text"/>	39. Was the incident related to a deployment? <input type="text"/>	40. How many deployments for total military career? <input type="text"/>	41. Has member experienced combat? <input type="text"/>	
42. Please describe any additional relevant military history including additional relevant deployment history				
43. Prior to the incident was there evidence of:				
a. A failed/failing intimate relationship?	<input type="text"/>	i. Job problems, e.g., stress, not making quals, etc? <input type="text"/>		
If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	j. Supervisor/coworker issues/problems? <input type="text"/>		
b. A failed/failing other relationship?	<input type="text"/>	k. A poor work performance review or evaluation?		
If yes, when was the most recent incident?	<input type="text"/>	If yes, when was the most recent incident? <input type="text"/>		
c. A completed spousal suicide?	<input type="text"/>	l. Unit or workplace hazing? <input type="text"/>		
d. A completed family suicide?	<input type="text"/>	m. Family history or mental illness? <input type="text"/>		
e. A death of a friend?	<input type="text"/>	n. A gun in the member's house? <input type="text"/>		
f. A serious physical health problem?	<input type="text"/>	o. History of Substance or Alcohol Abuse? <input type="text"/>		
g. A chronic/severe spousal or family health problem?	<input type="text"/>			
h. Excessive debt or bankruptcy?	<input type="text"/>			
44. Provide a brief "bio-psycho-social" formulation as to WHY this member engaged in suicidal behavior? That is, briefly describe any medical or emotional health issues, and other information about the patient's current relationships and social situation that may have influenced his/her behavior.				
45. Today's Date (MM/DD/YYYY)		46. Location where this report was completed (Clinic or Unit Name)		
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		
47. Person completing report:				
a. Rank	b. First Name	c. MI	d. Last Name	e. Job Title
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Appendix B: Interview Protocol Suicide Attempt Impact on the United States Coast

Guard Career Retention

Open-Ended Interview Question: how did your suicide attempt impact/effect your career retention?

Semistructured Interview Questions:

Acquired capability

1. Was there any training, injury, or pain that affected your decision to attempted suicide?
2. How had your occupation affected your decision?
3. When you made that decision to attempt suicide, what did you think would happen to your career? Possible prompts: what did you think people would understand? Possible general prompts: Can you tell me more about that? How did you feel?
4. Can you recall a particular example of what made it possible for you to attempt suicide?
5. Was the suicide attempt documented on your Form CG 1750, the first within a twelve-month period, from October 2010 to October 2017? Possible prompt: was there a suicide attempt before October 2010? What about after October 2012?

Perception of Career before Suicide Attempt

Interview Protocol

Suicide Attempt Impact on United States Coast Guard Career Retention

What do you remember about the episodes occurring in your life and career before your suicide attempt? Possible prompts: What do you feel led you to your suicide attempt?

Semistructured Interview Questions:

6. Before a suicide attempt, how was your career going? Possible prompt: what incidents do you feel had an impact on your career after a suicide attempt?

Perceived Burdensomeness

7. How did you feel about your contribution and involvement in the USCG prior and after a suicide attempt? Possible prompts: what occurred to change your feelings?

Perception of Career after Suicide Attempt

8. Can you describe your view of how your suicide attempt affects your immediate career goals and future?

Unit Integration and Thwart belongingness

9. Can you tell me something about whom or what helped you maintain your career objectives and goals? Possible prompts: how do you feel within your peer group? Can you tell me more about the relationship?

Interview Protocol

Suicide Attempt Impact on United States Coast Guard Career Retention

10. What kind of changes are in your life? Possible prompts: in regards to your current relationships, social situation, and career status. How do you react to these changes?
11. What has changed for you since the suicide attempt and your career goals?

Appendix C: Questions for Initial Analysis and Coding of Transcripts

Box 1	Questions developed for initial analysis and coding of the survey transcripts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What self-disclosed causes of a suicide attempt do participants disclose?▪ What events or actions do participants that reveal constructs of burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired capability disclose?▪ What events or causes (the past, present, future) are perceived to have impact career retention?▪ What are the effects of a suicide attempt on the individual's career retention?▪ What institutional decisions, the person(s), intervention, or postvention service changed prior, during, or after a suicide attempt occurred?▪ What does the future hold for the individual (perceived or actual)?

Appendix D: Letter to the United States Coast Guard Form Manager for Permission to
Use CG Form 1734

United States Coast Guard Forms Manager,

I am searching for a Phenomenological Study Demographic form or tool to collect general information on my target population, United States Coast Guard (USCG) member who attempted suicide. The primary purpose of my phenomenological research study is to address the following question: How does a suicide attempt affects the career retention of both active duty and discharged USCG members who remain in service after the end of their service obligation and who are stated to be mentally fit for duty? Please let me know if you need additional information. I have attached a form the USCG uses to collect data on suicide attempts and need the authorization to use the form for my study. It appears that the attached form can be utilized. Based on the information at the United States Coast Guard's website, the forms are for use "Coast Guard-wide, including DoD, SF, and DHS, available for reference, viewing, and use by the general public." To be safe, I would like to gain permission to use the form by the USCG Forms Manager and be granted approval to use the form for my dissertation.

Please feel free to contact the undersigned if you need additional information or have questions. Thank you in advance for your response and cooperation.

James W. Bailey, LMSW
Ph.D., Candidate, Clinical Psychology
Walden University
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Response Received on January 8, 2015, from
XXXXXXXXXX<XXXXXXXXXX>XXXXXXXXXX
EAP Manager

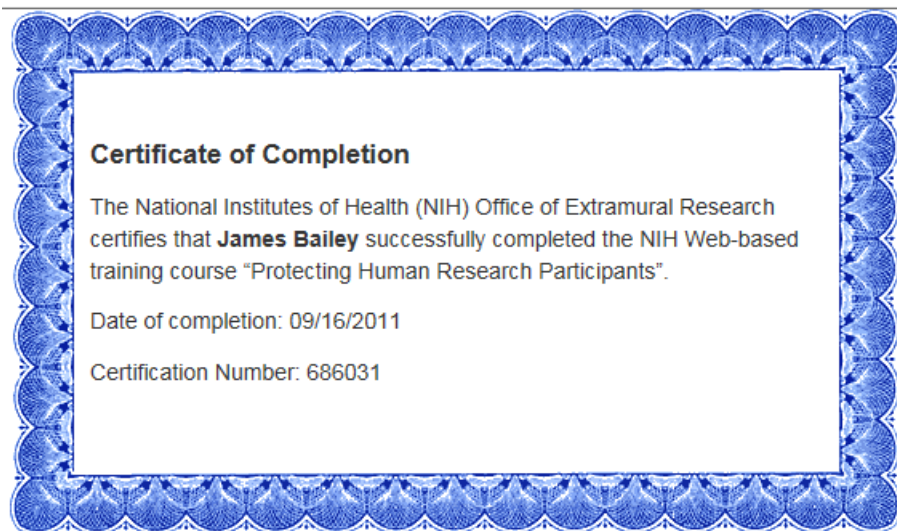
Office of Work-Life (CG-1111)
XXXXXXXX

Hi, James. Feel free to use the blank form as an example of data collection tools. As far as looking at actual records, that is a bit more complex. It would help me to know what kind of information you are looking for. Maybe your prospectus would help. When you discuss volunteer participant's PII, what volunteers are you speaking of? Whom are you studying? If you are interested in looking at PII in the CG and interviewing people, then there is a process that anyone would have to go through to get it approved. It is a typical process for any research involving people. I can figure out who that is if I have more information from you.

I hope this makes sense!

Appendix E: National Institutes of Health (NIH) Protecting Human Research Participants

Certificate of Completion



Appendix F: United States Coast Guard Suicide Attempt-October 2010-2012:

Demographic Collection Tool

Instructions: Please place a \checkmark in the indicating your demographic information.

Gender Male Female LGBT

Race American Indian or Alaskan Native Asian or Pacific Islander
African American Caucasian Hispanic/Latino
Other

Age Range 17-24 25-29 30-39 40+

Rank *Enlisted*
E1-E4 (Junior Enlisted) E5-E9 (Senior Enlisted)
Rate if Enlisted _____

Warrant Officer
W1-W3 W4-W5

Officer
01-03 04-06

Marital Status
Married Separated Divorced Widowed Data Not available

Education
Some high school did not graduate GED High School Graduate
Some college/Technical School/Certificate Data note available
Degree/technical school/ certificate <4hrs. Master's degree or greater

Geographical Location of suicide attempt

City & State, Country if other than United States indicate here:

Event Setting

- Residence (own) or barracks Residence of a friend or family
 Work/job site Automobile (away from the residence)
 Inpatient medical facility Other

Suicide Attempt Method Used

- Drugs Firearm, military issues or duty weapon
 Alcohol Firearm, other than military Gas, vehicle exhaust
 Hanging Gas, utility (or other) Drowning
 Crashing Motor Vehicle Fire, steam, etc.
 Sharp or blunt object, cutting Jumping from a high place
 Lying in front of moving object Other

Prior History of Self-Injury **Prior mental/emotional or health diagnosis**

Any of the following:

- Personal Relationship Issues Civil or Criminal Legal/administrative issues
 Loss of Rank/Rating Separation from service issues
 Military Legal/Administrative Issues Sexual/Harassment Assault issues
 UCMJ proceedings/actions Employment Factors

List other circumstance or relevant information or history that may have led to a suicide attempt as described by the participant:

Demographic Tool adapted from "Bush, N. E., Reger, M. A., Luxton, D. D., Skopp, N. A., Kinn, J., Smolenski, D., & Gahm, G. A. (2013) Suicides and Suicide Attempts in the U.S. Military, 2008- 2010. *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior*, 43(3), 264.

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