**Background**

**Help-negation** is the processes of withdrawal that occurs for many individuals as suicidal ideation becomes more intense [1].

Perception of social support and distorted affect regulation are associated with the development of suicidal ideation, and implicated in the development of help-negation [2].

As suicidal individuals have interpersonal needs rejected, they may cease to seek or accept help [3].

The Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (IPTS) [4,5] proposes that suicidal ideation is, in part, caused by **Thwarted Belongingness (TB)**, a construct which is theorised to reflects both:

- Self-report perceptions of not belonging, and
- Reductions in objective social variables such as social networks size and frequency of social interaction.

Reduced social network size and frequency of social interaction has been found to differentiate suicidal individuals from controls [6,7].

Biased information processing facilitated by suicide schemas [8] and an inability to assign accurate value to the social environment [9] may influence whether self-report TB corresponds with reductions in objective social variables.

**Research Questions**

1. Has previous research implicated TB in help-negation following suicidal ideation?
2. Has previous research investigated the relationship between self-report TB and objective social variables such as reduced social networks size and frequency of social interaction?
3. Is this relationship affected by changes in the severity of suicidal ideation?

**Method**

Guided by the PRISMA statement [10], a systematic review of 4 electronic databases was conducted from January to February 2013. Data bases were: Cochrane Library, MEDLINE with FullText, PsycINFO and PubMed Central.

Search terms used in the review were:

- "interpersonal theory of suicide”, “perceived AND belongingness”, and “belongingness AND suicide”.

Records were excluded during screening if they did not discuss the IPTS or TB.

Articles were included in the review if they assessed the relationship between TB, suicidal ideation or behaviour, and help-seeking or objective social variables.

- Investigate psycho-social factors that may be directly implicated in the help-negation processes associated with suicidal ideation.

This will substantiate the IPTS, as well as determine whether resources aim to promote help and support seeking for suicidal thoughts, should be focused on changing subjective feelings of belonging or on mending and building actual interpersonal relationships.

**Results**

Most studies find a significant association between self-report TB and suicidality. Six studies examined the relationship between self-report TB and objective social variables.

Lower TB has been associated with more hours spent volunteering [11] and club participation [12]. One study found TB to correlate moderately with indicators of social network size and social interaction. However, limitations of this study included small sample size (n=69), using a single score to represent both size and interaction, and restricting nomination of network members to those living within 1 hours travel [13].

Proxy measures of belongingness have been associated with parental displacement [14] and extracurricular activities [15].

The review found no evidence that previous research has assessed whether:

- TB is implicated in help-seeking for suicidal ideation OR
- Objective social variables are related to self-report TB, as the severity of suicidal ideation changes.

The results suggest that objective characteristics of peoples’ social networks have received relatively little attention in suicide research.

**Implications and future directions**

- Assess the relationship between self-report TB and objective social network characteristics among suicidal individuals compared to non-suicidal individuals.

References

6. Alexander Svenson. BPsych (Honors)