Comparing the Desirable Consequences of Nonsuicidal Self-Injury, Disordered Eating, and Binge Drinking: Support for a Transdiagnostic Functional Model of Self-Damaging Behaviors?

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Self-Damaging Behaviors

- **Self-damaging behaviors (SDBs)** are behaviors that result in immediate or cumulative bodily harm:
  - Nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI)
  - Disordered eating (DE; binge eating, purging, restricting)
  - Binge drinking (BD; having five or more alcoholic drinks)

- SDBs often co-occur, suggesting similar processes may underlie these behaviors.
SDBs are enacted because they lead to short-term desirable consequences that are reinforcing.

**Emotional Consequences**
- Relieving negative emotions
- Feeling in control
- Feeling independent

**Social Consequences**
- Meeting new people
- Fitting in
- Demonstrating strength or toughness
- Seeking support
- Reducing demands
- Creating interpersonal distance
Limitation of Previous Research

• No research has *directly* compared the salience of these consequences across different SDBs.

• Identifying points of similarity and divergence in consequences can:
  • Inform transdiagnostic functional models
  • Inform behaviorally-based interventions
## Methods

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Participants</strong></th>
<th>704 college freshmen (73% female, Mean age = 18).</th>
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<td><strong>Procedures</strong></td>
<td>Participants were sent links to complete monthly online surveys from October to April of their first year at university.</td>
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<td><strong>Measures</strong></td>
<td>Past-month SDBs were measured using items developed for this study; desirable consequences were measured using items adapted from the SASII (Linehan et al., 2006).</td>
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<td><strong>Data Analytic Strategy</strong></td>
<td>Paired sample t-tests compared the levels of endorsement of desirable consequences across SDBs.</td>
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Reduced Negative Emotions

“Helped me manage intense emotions” and “Helped me de-stress”

Reducing negative emotions was more strongly endorsed for BD than DE, $t(241) = 7.07, p < .001$
Control

“Made me feel in control”

Control was more strongly endorsed for DE than BD, t(241) = 2.00, p = .047

Control was more strongly endorsed for NSSI than BD, t(43) = 3.50, p = .001
Independence

“Made me feel independent”

Independence was more salient for BD than DE, $t(241) = 6.99$, $p < .001$

Independence was more salient for BD than NSSI, $t(43) = 2.72$, $p = .009$
"Met new people" was more salient for BD than DE, $t(239) = 23.31$, $p < .001$

"Met new people" was salient for BD than NSSI, $t(43) = 11.26$, $p < .001$
Feeling Closer to Others

“Felt closer to friends or romantic partner(s)” and “Felt closer to family”

Bonding was more strongly endorsed for BD than DE,  \( t(241) = 16.59, p < .001 \)

Bonding was more strongly endorsed for BD than NSSI,  \( t(44) = 5.24, p < .001 \)
Fitting in
“Helped me fit in”

Fitting in was more strongly endorsed for BD than DE, \( t(241) = 13.68, \ p < .001 \)

Fitting in was more strongly endorsed for BD than NSSI, \( t(43) = 6.68, \ p < .001 \)
Demonstrating Strength

“Showed other people I was strong, tough, or could handle it”

Strength was more strongly endorsed for BD than DE, $t(239) = 4.95$, $p < .001$

Strength was more strongly endorsed for BD than NSSI, $t(43) = 3.08$, $p = .004$
Interpersonal Distance

“Got distance or space from people I didn’t want to deal with”

Distance was more strongly endorsed for BD than DE, $t(241) = 6.90$, $p < .001$

Distance was more strongly endorsed for BD than NSSI, $t(43) = 2.30$, $p = .027$
Reduced Demands

“Got me out of work I didn’t want to do”

Reduced demands was more strongly endorsed for BD than DE, $t(241) = 6.90, p < .001$

Reduced demands was more strongly endorsed for BD than NSSI, $t(43) = 2.30, p = .027$
Communicating a need for social support was more strongly endorsed for NSSI than DE, *t*(50) = 2.67, *p* = .010.

Communicating a need for social support was more strongly endorsed for NSSI than BD, *t*(44) = 2.78, *p* = .008.

"Showed people I needed support"
Discussion

• There were differences and similarities in the desirable consequences of SDBs.

• The greatest differences were found for BD, such that BD generally elicited more desirable social consequences than DE and NSSI.

• An exception was that seeking support was more salient for NSSI than BD and DE.

• Few differences emerged between the consequences of DE and NSSI, lending credence to a common functional framework.
Clinical Implications

• Transdiagnostic interventions may intervene on the function to concurrently reduce NSSI and DE.

• This could lead to more efficient and cost effective behaviorally-based interventions.
Thank you!

Please reach out to christinarobillard@uvic.ca if you have any questions.