Are Co-Occurring Self-Damaging Behaviours More Stable in Sexual Minority First-Year University Students?
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Introduction

• Sexual minority (SM) undergraduates experience higher rates of self-damaging behaviours, i.e., self-injurious thoughts and behaviours (SITB), disordered eating (DE), and substance use (SU) than non-SM students (e.g., McBride et al., 2002; Scheff et al., 2016).
• These three classes of self-damaging behaviours carry a high potential for physical harm and frequently co-occur, often resulting in complex clinical management, worse prognosis, and heightened health care costs (see LaFrance, 2014; see Turner et al., 2013).
• Yet, no studies have looked at (a) whether SM youth are more vulnerable to multiple self-damaging behaviours than heterosexual youth, and (b) how the co-occurrence of these behaviours varies over time in SM youth.

Research Questions

1) Are SM students reporting cross-class co-occurring self-damaging behaviours in their first year of university than non-SM students?
2) Do SM students report the same co-occurrences more often than non-SM students in their first year of study?
3) How stable are cross-class co-occurrences in SM students compared to non-SM students?

Methods

Sample: 307 non-SM and 49 SM first-year undergraduates at UVic

Measures: Self-reports, 7 time points (October – April 2018)
Class 1: SITB (SITBI, Rock, Mandelberg, Pisani, & McManus, 2007)
• Non-suicidal self-injury, suicidal ideation
Class 2: DE (2003, Stone, Sip, & Barlow, 2009)
- Purging, fasting, binge eating
Class 3: SU (AUDIT Saunders et al., 1993; DUDIT; Berman et al., 2003)
- Binge drinking, drug use (marijuana, illicit, prescription)
Analyses: SPSS 23
1) Crosstabs and Chi-Square Tests of Independence
2) Independent T-Tests
3) Phi Coefficients

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Results 1

SM undergraduates were significantly more likely to ever report co-occurring:
• SITB and DE ($\chi^2 = 21.52, p < .001$)
• SITB and SU ($\chi^2 = 7.82, p = .009$)
• DE and SU ($\chi^2 = 5.22, p = .032$)
• All 3 classes ($\chi^2 = 14.29, p = .001$)

Results 2

SM undergraduates reported the same co-occurring patterns more often than their non-SM counterparts in their first year of university ($t = -2.79$ to $-2.24, p < .05$).

Conclusions

• In their first year of university, SM undergraduates have a much higher risk than their non-SM counterparts of ever engaging in co-occurring behaviours that cross over general classes of self-damaging behaviours.
• In comparison to their non-SM counterparts, SM first-year students are also more likely to report the same cross-class co-occurrences more than once.
• Finally, cross-class co-occurrences appear to be more stable in SM students over their first year of study than in non-SM students, suggesting that self-damaging behaviours are more chronic concerns for SM students than they are for non-SM students.

References