

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., McCabe et al., 2003; Schell et al., 2018).
- 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 Leblanc, 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

- Are SM students more at risk of ever reporting cross-class co-occurring self-damaging behaviours in their first year of university than non-SM students?
- Do SM students report the same co-occurrences more often than non-SM students in their first year of study?
- 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; Nock, Holmberg, Photos, & Michel, 2007)

- Non-suicidal self-injury, suicidal ideation

Class 2: DE (EDDS; Stice, Telch, & Rizvi, 2000)

- Purging, fasting, binge eating

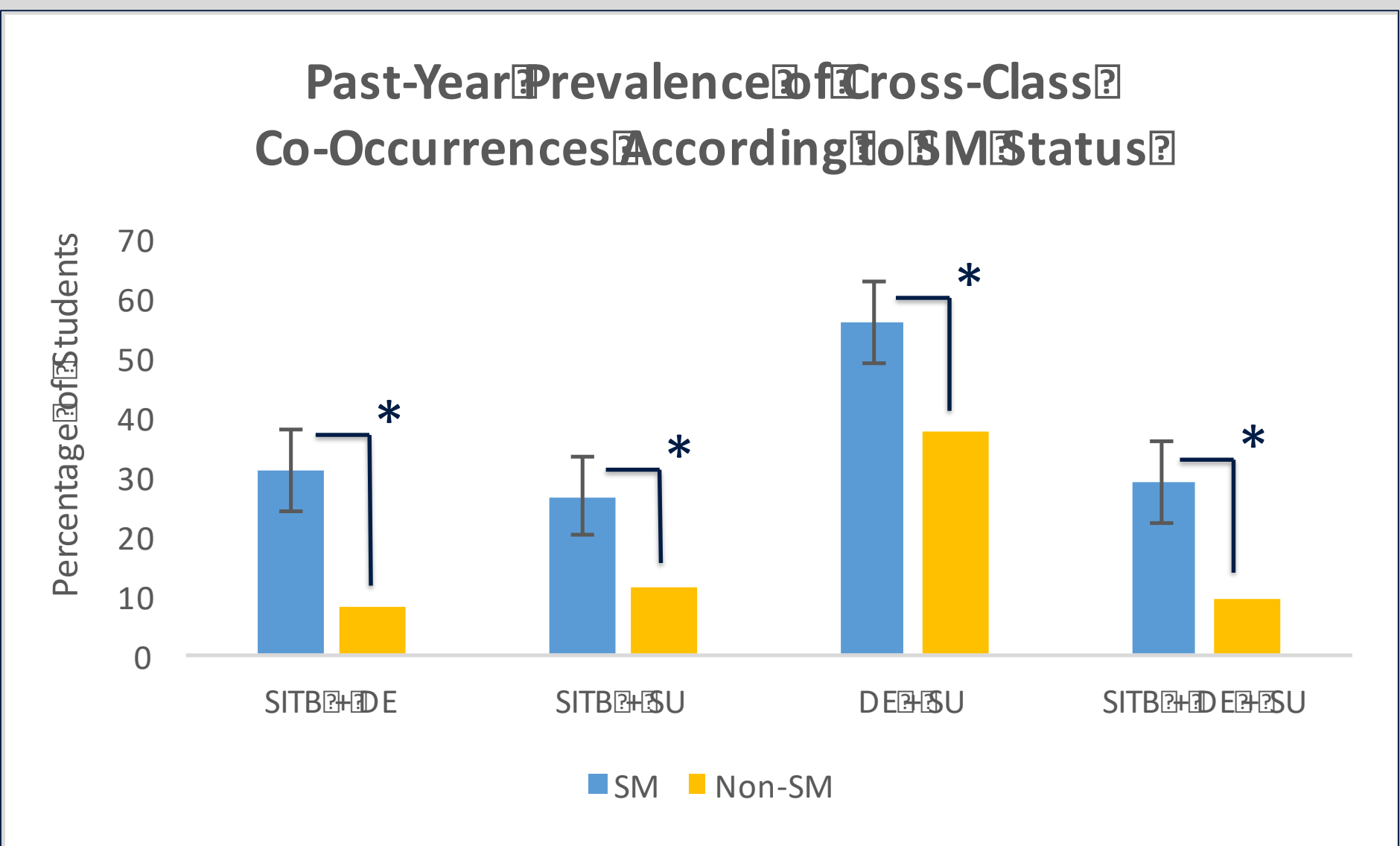
Class 3: SU (AUDIT; Saunders et al., 1993; DUDIT; Berman et al., 2003)

- Binge drinking, drug use (marijuana, illicit, prescription)

Analyses: SPSS 23

- Crosstabs and Chi-Square Tests of Independence
- Independent T-Tests
- Phi Coefficients

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 3

Degree of Association between Time Points for each Pattern of Co-Occurring Behaviours in SM and Non-SM Students in their First Year of University

Cross-Class Co-Occurrence	Phi Coefficients ^a	
	SM Students	Non-SM Students
A. SITB + DE		
A1. October → November	.47**	-.02
A2. November → December	.27	.13
A3. December → January	.23	.17**
A4. January → February	1.00***	.51***
A5. February → March	.70***	-.01
A6. March → April	1.00***	.50***
B. SITB + SU		
B1. October → November	.49**	.26***
B2. November → December	.37*	.10
B3. December → January	.30	.17*
B4. January → February	.80***	.28***
B5. February → March	.56**	-.01
B6. March → April	1.00***	.08
C. DE + SU		
C1. October → November	.67***	.41***
C2. November → December	.64***	.41***
C3. December → January	.46**	.40***
C4. January → February	.48**	.23**
C5. February → March	.22	.19**
C6. March → April	.37*	.34***
D. SITB + DE + SU		
D1. October → November	.56***	-.02
D2. November → December	.44*	-.01
D3. December → January	.30	-.01
D4. January → February	1.00***	.57***
D5. February → March	.79***	-.01
D6. March → April	1.00***	-.01

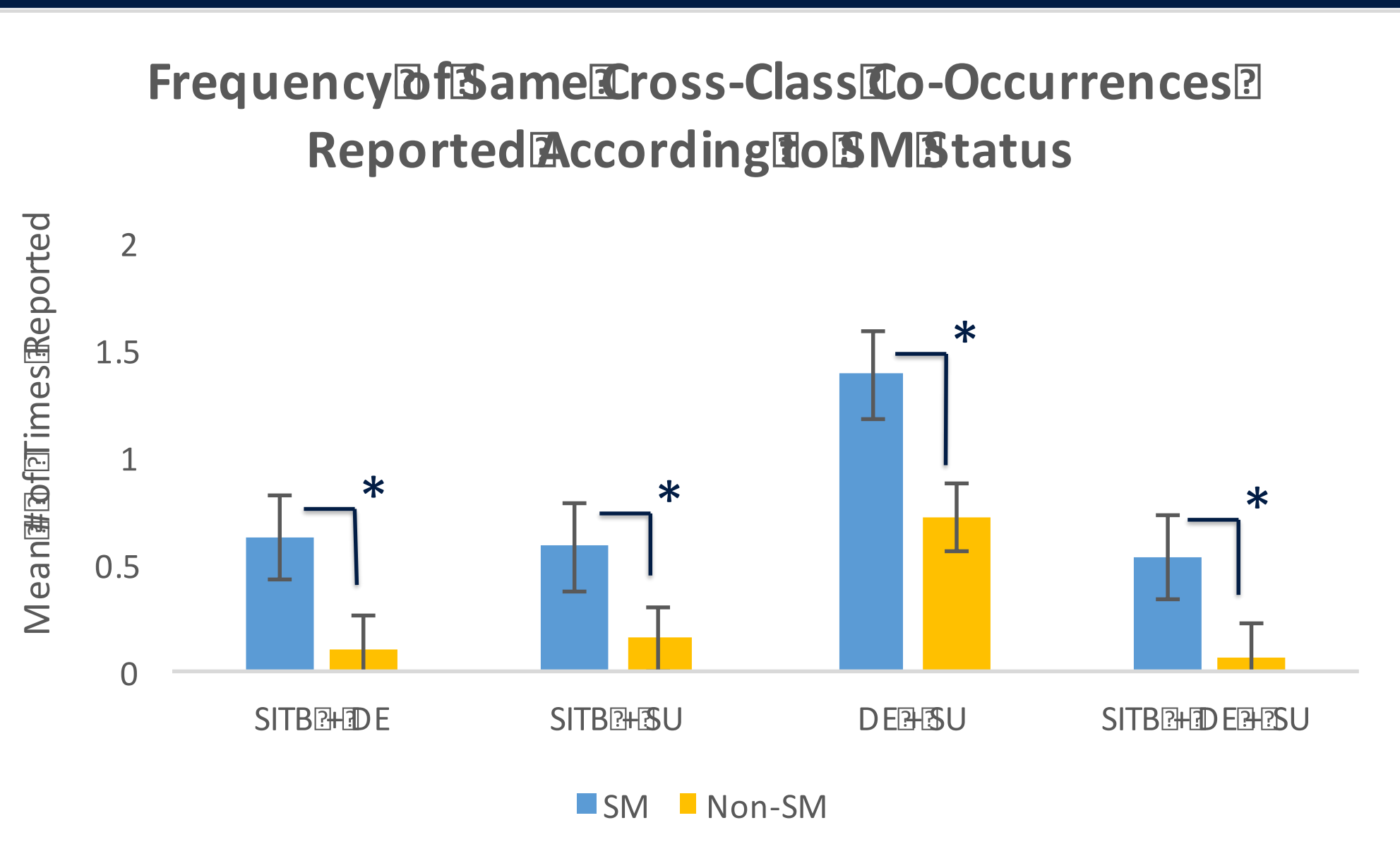
Note. N(Oct) = 299. N(Nov) = 294. N(Dec) = 250. N(Jan) = 269. N(Feb) = 249. N(Mar) = 254. N(Apr) = 222. SM = Sexual Minority. SITB = Self-Injurious Thoughts and Behaviours. DE = Disordered Eating. SU = Substance Use.

^a Perfect agreement values may reflect small cell sizes at certain time points.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

While there is some variability, the overall trend of larger Phi Coefficients for SM students indicates that the associations between time points tend to be much stronger in SM students than in non-SM students.

Results 2



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

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 much 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

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