

# Indirect Direct Self-Harm: Examining Functions of Self-Trigging with Nonsuicidal Self-Injury Content

Sierra Clair<sup>1</sup>, Salome Kang<sup>1</sup>, & Emma Edenbaum<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Laboratory for the Study and Prevention of Suicide-Related Conditions and Behaviors, Department of Psychology, Florida State University

## BACKGROUND

**Self-triggering (ST):**  
intentional exposure to reminders of a traumatic event that incites reexperiencing symptoms of **posttraumatic stress (PTS)**

**Nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI):**  
direct physical mutilation of body tissue performed without the intent to die and for purposes not socially sanctioned

### Past studies:

- Extensive research on functions of NSSI while ST research nascent stages
- ST has only been studied within post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Individuals who engage in NSSI have reported seeking graphic online depictions of NSSI that incite psychological distress and the urge to self-injure

### Current study aims:

- **Study 1:** Determine the extent to which ST occurs outside of PTS
- **Study 2:** Revise the existing Self-Trigging Questionnaire (STQ) to assess the function of ST when it is not linked traumatic event

## METHODS

### Study 1

**Participants** ( $N = 12$ ) will:

- be 18-24 years old ( $M = \#, SD = \#$ );
- $\#%$  female ( $n =$ );
- $\#%$  White ( $n =$ ); and
- **endorse co-occurring NSSI and ST engagement**

### Prospective Procedure:

- All participants will respond to series of self-report questionnaires followed by semi-structured interview
- Codebook will be created to identify themes of functions not currently represented in the STQ for PTS
- **STQ Reasons subscale** will be revised to include and address NSSI-specific functions (ST-NSSI) endorsed by participants

### Study 2

**Participants** ( $N = 300$ ) will:

- be 18-## years old ( $M = \#, SD = \#$ );
- $\#%$  (fe)male ( $n =$ );
- $\#%$  [race/ethnicity] ( $n =$ ); and
- **endorse co-occurring NSSI and ST engagement**

### Prospective Procedure:

- Administer questionnaire online to Reddit forums with NSSI content
- Conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using maximum likelihood estimation and oblimin rotation
- **Revise items of generalized STQ Reasons subscale as necessary**

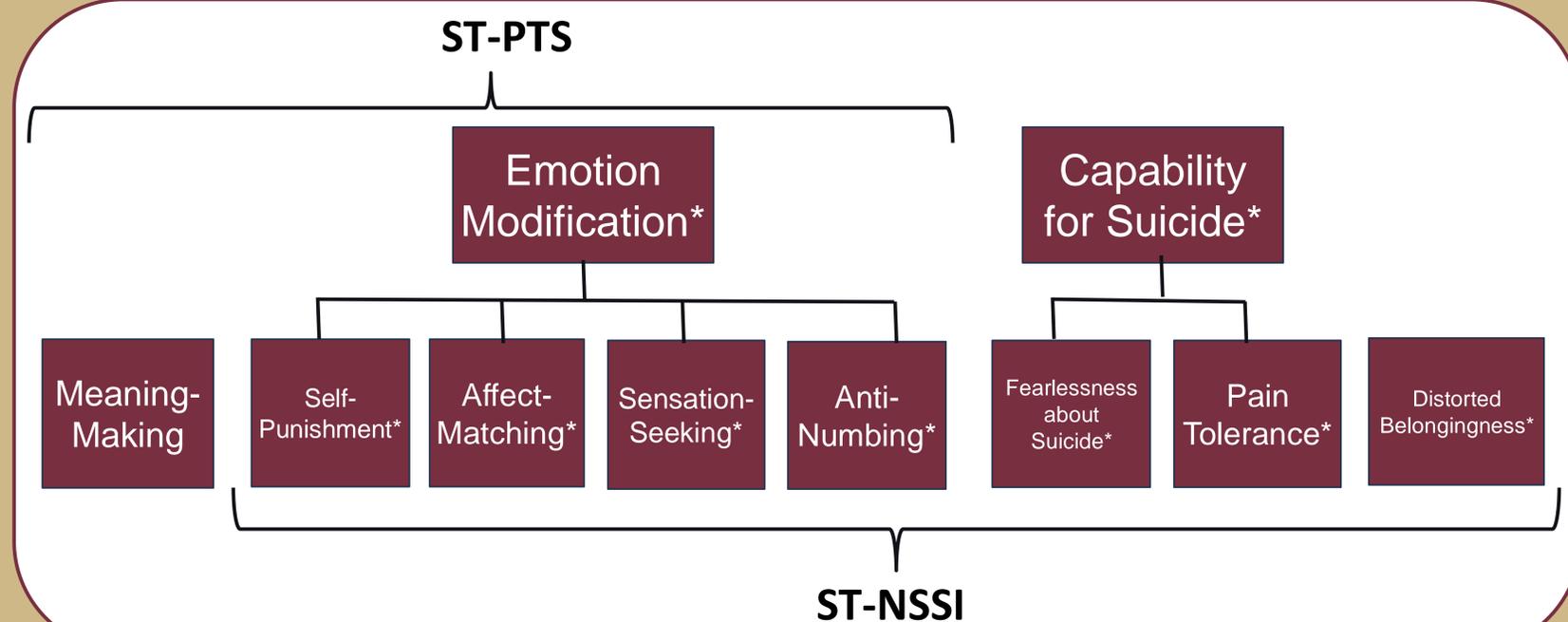
## PROSPECTIVE RESULTS

3-factor solution:

**(1) Emotion Modification; (2) Distorted Belongingness; and (3) Capability for Suicide**  
[Acceptable] fit, with NFI = [.#], RMSEA = .## (95% CI = [.#, .##])

## PROSPECTIVE RESULTS

*"[P]ictures trigger me a lot, so I want to self-injure again"*



*Note.* Functions of **self-triggering with post-traumatic stress content (ST-PTS)** found in Bellet et al.'s (2020) exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and McGhie et al.'s (2023) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). \*Functions of self-triggering with **nonsuicidal self-injury content (ST-NSSI)** are the predicted results of the EFA in Study 2.

## DISCUSSION

### ST found to be transdiagnostic:

- Individuals without lifetime PTS(D) engage in ST with NSSI content (ST-NSSI)
- NSSI-specific content rather than content tied to one specific traumatic event as seen with ST-PTS
- **Existence of ST-NSSI is evidence to support NSSI as a disorder**

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Clarify the role of ST-NSSI in the **Experiential Avoidance Model of NSSI**
- Distinguish between individuals who engage in co-occurring NSSI and ST with **content of a traumatic event** versus **content of direct self-injury**
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current interventions targeting NSSI for individuals engaging in ST-NSSI

For more information, please contact the principal investigator,  
Emma R. Edenbaum at  
[edenbaum@psy.fsu.edu](mailto:edenbaum@psy.fsu.edu)

## REFERENCES

