



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Science

of

**NICOLE LEGG**

BSc Hons. (University of British Columbia – Okanagan, 2016)

**“A longitudinal investigation of depression, anxiety, and stress as moderators of the coupled relationship between negative urgency and disordered eating frequency in first-year undergraduates”**

Department of Psychology

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

2:00 P.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B021

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Brianna Turner, Department of Psychology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Bonnie Leadbeater, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Shannon Zaitsoff, Department of Psychology, Simon Fraser University

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Warwick Dobson, Department of Theatre, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## Abstract

Evidence suggests that the transition to postsecondary may be an important period of risk for engagement in disordered eating (DE). DE has been demonstrated to fluctuate and change course over time, however, very little research has examined factors that underlie these changes in DE. Higher negative urgency has been associated with elevated DE frequency, and preliminary evidence suggests that negative urgency may change concurrently with DE symptoms. Moreover, depression, anxiety, and stress (DAS), are all associated with DE engagement, implicating an important role for negative affect in DE engagement. Despite this evidence, there is a paucity of literature examining the association between negative urgency and DE frequency over time, and how acute negative emotional states may moderate this relationship. The current study aimed to address this research gap by integrating diathesis-stress and emotion regulation theoretical models of DE and examining the relationship between negative urgency and DE frequency over time, and if DAS moderate this relationship. It was hypothesized that DE frequency and negative urgency would share a significantly coupled relationship, and that DAS would significantly moderate this relationship. More specifically, negative urgency would be more strongly coupled with DE frequency when DAS was high, as compared to when DAS was low. Two cohorts of first year undergraduate students ( $N = 645$ ) completed monthly self-reports of negative urgency, DAS, and DE frequency over their first two semesters of post-secondary study (7 months total). Multilevel Models revealed that indeed negative urgency and DE frequency share a statistically significant coupled relationship over time ( $p < .001$ ), and that depression moderates this relationship ( $p < .001$ ) such that the coupled association between negative urgency and DE frequency was strengthened by depression. The current study is the first to examine how negative urgency and DE frequency co-vary over time and how negative affect moderates this association. The results illuminate the importance of considering interactions between established risk factors and negative emotional states in the engagement and frequency of DE behaviours, and offers preliminary insight into correlates of change in DE frequency over time.