

## **ABSTRACT**

**THESIS:** Emotional Working Memory and Internalizing-Related Distress: Differentiating Between Verbal and Visuospatial Processing with Event-Related Potential

**STUDENT:** Joshua Grzywana

**DEGREES:** Master of Arts and Master of Science

**COLLEGES:** Sciences and Humanities and Teachers College

**DATE:** July 2020

**PAGES:** 94

High rates of comorbidity among distress disorders suggests that a bottom-up approach based on common symptoms observed across dimensions is a viable alternative for classification. However, modern dimensional systems have not addressed shared working memory deficits within distress liability, particularly regarding biases towards negatively valenced content in working memory. Research has also not addressed the neurophysiological correlates of negativity biases. The current study found preliminary evidence of a pre-conscious emotional bias in distress psychopathology, suggesting that this failure to inhibit pre-conscious processing of emotional content within working memory leads to a diminished capacity to process emotionality during later stages of conscious awareness. Exhibiting this pattern in both verbal and visuospatial working memory also provides preliminary evidence of a dominant dysfunction of executive functioning. If replicated significantly with a larger sample, this would offer a unique perspective into an interplay between cognitive and emotional mechanisms which influences experiences of distress psychopathology.