ABSTRACT

THESIS: Understanding Compulsivity: Exploring & Defining a Construct

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Compulsivity is a construct which reflects individuals feeling compelled to repeatedly perform some act and is used to describe compulsions in a range of psychological disorders. The construct of compulsivity is also important to understanding non-clinical experiences such as personality. However, there is currently no commonly used definition of compulsivity that adequately captures disorder specific and dimensional trait manifestations in a transdiagnostic manner. It has been proposed that a definition of compulsivity meeting these criteria could reflect elements of 1) an internal experience of feeling as if you must perform the act, 2) the act is incongruent with one's goals, and 3) the act is performed repetitively (Luigjes et al., 2019). However, this framework for defining compulsivity has not been empirically investigated. The current study used exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to investigate the empirical support for this definition of compulsivity in a community sample. Results broadly supported the emergence of these three factors in addition to a fourth, worry factor ($\lambda = .41$ and $.89$ for 138 of the 181 items included for analysis). Contrasts of the model from EFA and a bifactor model in a separate subsample indicated the best fitting model was a bi-factor model defined by a general compulsivity factor in addition to the four factors that emerged in the EFA (CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .07; RMSEA = .01). Items tended to load meaningfully and significantly onto Anankastia,

Compulsions, and Disability bifactors (λ = .40 - .74) while the Worry bifactor was subsumed by the general compulsivity factor (λ = 0.44 – .73). This factor structure lends support for a model of compulsivity in which worry related mechanisms function as a general factor while the elements described by Luigjes and colleagues characterize bifactors.