

Female students with disrupted social networks more likely to binge

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News Writer

According to a study published in the October 2007 issue of the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, first-year female students living away from home are at a greater risk of demonstrating symptoms of binge eating.

Dr Erin Barker, professor of psychology at Beloit College in Wisconsin, completed the study while earning her PhD at the University of Alberta. Barker found that first-year students that demonstrated an inability to adjust to their new social environment were more susceptible to consuming unusually large amounts of food to, the point that they would feel the need to hide such eating habits from others.

"Students who weren't making new connections for themselves in university were at a greater risk of developing the binge eating disorder," she said. "If you are moving away from home and are having trouble fitting into your new social world, all these stresses could combine and contribute to these behaviours."

The study was a subsection of a larger, ongoing study examining whether or not the transition to university affected health behaviours. At the U of A, 101 female participants in their first year of postsecondary education completed an online checklist daily for 14 days to determine whether or not they demonstrated symptoms of binge eating. From there, the researchers examined the variables related to the symptoms associated with the disorder.

"What we found was that the academic variables weren't related to binge eating symptoms. In the study, we included three academic variables: GPA for that semester, the participant's subjective perception of their adjustment academically, and number of class hours. None of those variables were associated with binge eating symptoms," Barker explained.

Instead, she said the disruption of social networks and an inability to form new connections were the leading factors linked to binge eating. Such occurrences were compounded by a move away from parents' homes, as



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: SARAH YOUNUS

COMFORTING CALORIES Female students run a higher risk of overeating.

well as body dissatisfaction.

Dr Agatha Beschell, a registered psychologist at the University Health Centre Student Counselling Services, explained that binge eating tends to occur in such cases to alleviate stress associated with such a transition—usually after a period of food deprivation.

"It's a coping mechanism to deal with emotions; if someone is going through a stressful time or experiencing difficult emotions, they may demonstrate 'emotional eating' in this context. I think we can say that we've all done it. But when it becomes a pattern and gets out of control, then it is identified as binge eating," Beschell said.

Barker added that emotional disorders such as depression are also associated with frequent binge eating, as individuals begin to associate negative feelings with such behaviour.

However, Beschell stressed that the purpose of the study wasn't to diagnose eating disorders, but to

identify students with symptoms of binge eating. In most cases, displaying these symptoms isn't an indication that an individual will continue to exhibit the behaviour long-term, or that these symptoms will develop into a more serious eating disorder; instead, symptoms usually fade as the individual becomes more adjusted to their social environment.

Beschell added that binge eating may appear to be harmless on the surface, but there are a few consequences associated with the disorder: it's one of the main criteria of *bulimia nervosa*, a serious eating disorder.

"Even without going to the extreme, binge eating alone can cause a lot of distress. It can make a person feel quite guilty and feel even worse about their body image because it can lead to weight gain. In this case, it can actually become a vicious cycle where it may lead to more dieting and consequently more binge eating," Beschell said.

“I would encourage Councillors to not touch other Councillors' microphones.”

COUNCIL FORUM

by Jon Mastel

Students' Council meets every second Tuesday in the Council Chambers in University Hall at 6pm. Council meetings are open to all students. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 30 October, where free food will be provided for all attendees.

QUESTION PERIOD

Vice-President (Operations and Finance) Eamonn Gamble was questioned on the use of the handicap doors in SUB with the winter approaching. It was suggested that signs be posted requesting students not use them unless they need them. Gamble stated that he hadn't given it much thought until that time, and that he would look into it.

VP (External) Steve Dollansky responded to a question regarding how the SU was going to lobby the federal government in regard to the recent Throne Speech. Since the speech hadn't even ended by the time the Council meeting started, Dollansky stated that he would have to first read the speech and await the responses from the opposition parties before determining lobby strategies. He also added that the current government might fall in the next few weeks if the Speech isn't passed in the House.

SU President Michael Janz was asked about the status regarding the appointment of speakers for the Revolutionary Speakers Series. Janz replied that a long list of speakers had been compiled and passed off to the SU staff to review costs and availability.

Gamble responded to a question regarding the financial status of Dewey's by explaining that the last month had a loss of \$1100-1200, but that it took a

few weeks to get in the swing of things, and that Dewey's had been closed for a few days to train the new staff. He continued to say that the upcoming projections should meet and maybe surpass budgetary goals.

Gamble was also questioned regarding Safewalk. Normally, Safewalk volunteers work in teams of one girl and one guy; recently, however, all-male teams have been noticed patrolling campus. The question was whether Safewalk was still able to provide the service required of them. Gamble responded by stating that Safewalk was a valuable service, but the usage had dramatically increased since last year. He continued by saying that Safewalk is looking for volunteers, and if students like the service, hopefully they will volunteer.

ATTENDANCE

The following councillors were absent during the 2 October meeting: Chiswell (BoG Rep), Farhat (Science).

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THURSDAY FROM 2 PM TO CLOSE
\$3.00 Sleeman Maclays bottles
\$3.75 Sleeman Pints

open monday-friday from 8am until 8pm

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7TH FLOOR SUB

RATT AND MOLSON WILL BE GIVING AWAY A PAIR OF TICKETS TO EVERY OILERS HOME GAME!
tickets are given away at the beginning of the 3rd period for the next game. Must be present to win

» TUESDAY, OCT. 23TH @ 7:30PM
oilers vs. the colorado avalanches!

» WIN TICKETS FOR THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25TH, OILERS VS. MINNESOTA

Molson pints on for \$3.75, Molson bottles on for \$3.25 and pitchers for \$10.25 1 hour before and during the game.

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Every Monday Night starting at 9 p.m.
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TUESDAYS - DUB THAT DITTY
Molson Canadian Rocks on Special Starts at 9 p.m.

WEDNESDAYS - KARAOKE!
Kokanee on Special! Starts at 9 p.m.

FRIDAYS - DJ!

HOURS
monday-friday | saturday
11AM-2AM | 3PM-2AM