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

of

MICHAL BAK

BSc (University of Toronto, 2011)

“Social Information Processing Links to Cyber-Bullying in Adolescence: A Developmental Perspective”

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies

Tuesday, September 15, 2015
6:00pm
David Turpin Building
Room A144

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Joan Martin, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Kevin Runions, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

External Examiner:
Dr. Shelley Hymel, Department of Human Development, Learning, and Culture, University of British Columbia

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Colette Smart, Department of Psychology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The internet has become an important social context in adolescence, and communicating online with friends has become a natural part of everyday life. The present cross-sectional study examined the effects of social cues and popularity on developing adolescent social cognitions in online settings using a sample of 90, 11- to 14-year-old students from British Columbia, Canada. Participants completed self-report cyber-bullying, cyber-victimization, and cyber-aggression motivation measures. Hostile intent attributions were obtained using an instrument containing 8 hypothetical vignettes, where potentially harmful messages were sent to the protagonist, but the sender’s intentions were ambiguous. The results show an increasing cyber-bullying and cyber-victimization trend from early- to mid-adolescence. There was some evidence to suggest that individuals in mid-adolescence were more sensitive to online social cues and popularity. In line with the dual-process model, individuals in mid-adolescence were more likely to engage in cyber-aggressive behavior to obtain a material or social reward. Despite having a small sample size, this study provides a good foundation for further research examining developmental processes that underlie cyberbullying behavior.

Keywords: cyber-bullying, cyber-victimization, adolescence, social information processing, dual process model