The Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
Department of Psychology

Alanna Hager
2009 University of Victoria MSc
2006 McGill University BA (Honours)

“Growing Pains: Exploring the Concurrent and Prospective Effects of Peer victimization on Physical Health Across Adolescence and Young Adulthood”

Tuesday, July 15, 2014
1:00 PM
Cornett Building, Room A228

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Bonnie Leadbeater, Department of Psychology, UVic (Supervisor)
Dr. Marsha Runtz, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)
Dr. Stuart MacDonald, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)
Dr. Elizabeth Bannister, School of Nursing, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Amirali Baniasadi, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Victoria
Abstract

Extensive research documents the deleterious effects of being victimized by peers on adolescents’ mental health. In contrast, the impact of peer victimization on physical health remains largely unexplored. Studies suggest that peer victimization is a salient interpersonal stressor for adolescents that interferes with discrete aspects of physical health. However, past studies typically collapse the various forms of victimization together (i.e., physical, relational); examine single health indicators; and fail to test the effects of victimization prospectively. A limited understanding of the nature and course of physical health across adolescence and young adulthood also hinders the existent research. The present study tests the structure, stability, and patterns of change in a multidimensional model of physical health among a large, representative sample of young people across a six-year period and four waves of data. It then examines the concurrent and prospective associations between physical and relational victimization and physical health outcomes (physical symptoms, subjective well-being, health-risk behaviours, and health-promoting behaviours) across adolescence and young adulthood. Data from the Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) were collected four times between 2003 and 2009. Participants were 662 young people (aged 12 to 18 years at Time [T] 1; 342 girls). By T4, participants were 18 to 25 (n = 459). Age at T1 and SES were covariates, and models compared effects for males and females. Latent growth curve modeling was performed. Confirmatory Factor Analysis supported the structure of five distinct health outcomes that were invariant over time and by sex. Univariate latent growth curve modeling established linear patterns of change in each health outcome across time. Peer victimization was examined as a time-varying covariate of health, whereby the repeated victimization measures predicted concurrent and longitudinal health outcomes over and above the average growth trajectory of that outcome. Each time-varying covariate model fit the data well. As expected, physical and relational victimization were associated with poorer physical health both within and across time; however, effects varied by victimization type, by sex, and by health outcome. Relational and physical victimization were associated with more concurrent physical symptoms, but only relational victimization predicted more symptoms at subsequent time points. Relational and physical victimization predicted poorer subjective health and fitness within and across time. Physical victimization was associated with poorer nutrition for the whole sample. Findings suggest that peer victimization puts adolescents at risk of several immediate and long-term physical health difficulties. This study highlights the unique effects of physical and relational victimization and that males and females respond differently to victimization experiences.
Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships

2013  Sarah Spencer Foundation Research Fellowship
2012  CIHR Health Professional Student Research Award
2010  Certificate of Academic Excellence for a Master’s Thesis, Canadian Psychological Association
2007/09 Fellowship, University of Victoria, Victoria

Presentations


Publications
