Notice of the Final Oral Examination for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of

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MSc (University of Victoria, 2015)
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“Discrimination, Identity, and Psychological Distress: An Investigation of Adult Immigrants’ Social Identity Management in Identity Threatening Contexts”

Department of Psychology

Monday, July 27, 2020
10:00 A.M.
Conducted Remotely

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Catherine Costigan, Department of Psychology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Christopher Lalonde, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)
Dr. Karen Kobayashi, Department of Sociology, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Benjamin Giguère, Department of Psychology, University of Guelph

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Adel Guitouni, Peter B. Gustavson School of Business, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Rooted in adult identity development and social identity theories, this dissertation investigated the experiences of discrimination, ethnic and national identity, and psychological distress amongst immigrant adults (ages 40-64) in Canada. A mixed methodological approach was used to quantitatively investigate the links among discrimination, ethnic identity, and psychological distress as well as the links between social identity and identity management strategies. Open-ended questions and thematic analysis were used to identify the ways in which discrimination affects participants’ sense of belonging and connection to their ethnic group and Canadian society. The findings of this dissertation highlight the major protective function of (ethnic and national) identity affirmation, both in buffering discrimination-related stress and guiding the selection of adaptive identity management strategies. Equally, the qualitative work provides insight into the myriad of ways that individuals protect their sense of self when faced with discrimination. A major contribution of this work is an evaluation of the applicability of existing identity theories to adults in midlife and the integration of a number of disparate areas of identity theory. Clinical and policy implications as well as future directions for research are discussed.