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

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“Cultural Adaptation in International Students: Proposing the Goal-Opportunity Model of Acculturation (GOMA), and Developing and Exploring the Cultural Fit Questionnaire (CFQ)”

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies

Thursday, April 1, 2021
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Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Todd Milford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Joan Martin, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
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Prof. Maneesha Deckha, Faculty of Law, UVic

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

A goal-opportunity model of acculturation, according to which sojourner’s goals align with the opportunities of the host culture, can evaluate adaptation to a new sociocultural environment as functional, predictable, and meaningful. Although the model builds on the previous construct of cultural fit (Ward & Chang, 1997), it also aims to redefine the construct. Determining the right components of the cultural fit dimension as the core of adaptation is nonetheless challenging, as there are different constructs that can be considered. Previous adaptation models have promoted the person-culture alignment (e.g., cultural fit) either as the mitigation of the sociocultural gap between the native and host cultures (Church, 1982), or as the match between specific personality traits (e.g., openness, extroversion) and the values of the host culture (Ward & Chang, 1997). However, those models disregard valuable cognitive factors, such as autonomy, problem-solving ability, decision-making skills, achievement need, goal setting, motivation, participation, and effort. This thesis introduces goal-opportunity cultural fit as a contextual measurement of cultural adaptation in international students, as a group of sojourners with high achievement needs. Using exploratory factor analysis to refine a new measurement instrument—the Cultural Fit Questionnaire—the current study attempts to show that the person-culture alignment can be measured, predicted, and interpreted. It is expected that this new model of acculturation based on evaluating cultural fit as a goal-opportunity alignment will offer a better understanding of cultural adaptation in goal-driven sojourners with a need for achievement and autonomy, such as it is the case with international students.

Keywords: goal-opportunity model of acculturation, goal-opportunity alignment, goal-opportunity cultural fit, cultural fit, person-culture fit, cultural fit questionnaire