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

of

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MA (University of Victoria, 2012)
BA (University of Victoria, 2014)

“Of Duty, Deen (faith), Diaspora, and Dilemma: Narratives of Care and Intergenerational Support Exchanges in Aging South Asian Muslim Families”

Department of Sociology

Monday, December 7, 2020
9:00 A.M.
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Karen Kobayashi, Department of Sociology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Andre Smith, Department of Sociology, UVic (Member)
Dr. Denise Cloutier, Department of Geography, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Fernando De Maio, Department of Sociology, De Paul University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Eva Kwoll, Department of Geography, UVic

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

International migration flows have increased at a rapid pace over the past decade and are often accompanied by emergent and evolving global realities, fluid and permeable borders, (re)negotiation of identities and familial bonds, anticipated challenges, as well as unforeseen exigencies. Concomitantly, advances in public health and chronic disease management have resulted in longer lives with an increasing proportion of the global population now 65 years and older. While these demographic shifts have received considerable research attention over the past few decades, little attention has been paid to aging Muslim families and the ways in which they adjust and adapt to shifting global realities and social circumstances. Of the roughly 3.45 million Muslims in the US, nearly six-in-ten US Muslim adults are first-generation Americans. And among US Muslim adults who were born abroad, more immigrate from South Asia (35%) than any other region. This demographic trend, along with the aging of the US population, implies that South Asian Muslims will comprise a large segment of the US population aged 65 years and older in the coming years and greater attention needs to be paid to the lived experiences of mid- to late-life South Asian Muslim families in the US in order to better support their health and social care needs. This qualitative study addresses these issues, specifically focusing on the intersections of faith, culture, gender, age, and immigrant status, as well as intergenerational care and support exchanges within the family, and the ways in which everyday lived experiences and seminal life course events shape processes of meaning-making and sense of self in immigrant South Asian Muslim families. Building on findings from 30 in-depth narrative interviews with three generations of South Asian Muslim women living in the US, and using an intersectional lifecourse perspective, I explore the re-negotiation of familial bonds and the enactment of religious beliefs and practices such as those around filial expectations in a transnational Islamic context. In so doing, I highlight how, for the women in my study, their Islamic faith was a part of both the public sphere and a collective ideology as well as a deeply personal and intimate attachment that provided structure and continuity in their everyday lives. I suggest how attitudes, behaviors, and meaning-making processes related to kin-work and exchanges of support between generations may be shaped by categories of gender, age, time of and since immigration, and degree of religiosity. Finally, I situate these attitudes and behaviors within the broader framework of Islamophobia and salient structural barriers to accessing available health and social support services for immigrant South Asian Muslim women and their families.