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Abstract

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A pertinent question in contemporary Europe is whether the children of immigrants will reproduce the gender-complementary practices and ideals of the immigrant generation, which often include strong expectations that women should prioritise family obligations over the pursuit of paid work. This article analyses the cultural and moral understandings at stake in second-generation women's reflections on and practices of combining motherhood and paid work, and explores the space for negotiating such understandings in the family. The study is based on in-depth interviews with second-generation women of Pakistani descent in Norway, and interviews with some of their husbands. The findings show that the moral understandings and practices of the parent generation are not merely passed on to the second generation; rather they are challenged and reinterpreted in ways that support mothers' participation in paid work. The article argues that this change is facilitated by the cultural and institutional context that the Norwegian welfare state represents.

Introduction

The life trajectories of the children of immigrants are a major concern in Europe. In public discourse there is a particular worry that the second generation[i] will reproduce the gender arrangements and ideals of the immigrant generation where the expectation that women should prioritise family obligations over participation in paid work has been strong in certain groups. Still, there is little knowledge about processes of generational reproduction and change in immigrant families, and about second-generation women's conceptions and practices concerning motherhood and paid work.

Second-generation women's adaptations to work are often explained with reference to cultural conceptions of gender and family (see for instance Heath *et al.* 2008; Hermansen 2013). Such explanations risk portraying 'culture' as the primary determinant of action, something static that is simply passed on from the immigrant to the second generation (Brah 1996). The content of cultural conceptions and how they influence women's choices about work are seldom analysed in detail (Read 2004). Yet, if we do not understand the meaning people attach to their practices, the other dimensions of analysis are more likely to be rooted in unexamined assumptions about culture (Foner 1997: 972), as is the case in parts of the literature on the labour market attachment of the second generation.

The second generation in Europe has grown up in societies that represent different 'gender cultures' (Aboim 2010) and different institutional contexts for combining motherhood and work. Norway, together with the other Scandinavian countries, stands out with a strong gender equality ideology and family policies that support women's employment (cf. Aboim 2010; Ellingsæter 2009).

Thus, Norway is an interesting case for exploring how the practices and expectations of the immigrant family interact with the cultural and institutional context in second-generation women's work–family decisions.

This article looks at a group where the practices and ideals of the parent generation and wider society can be contrasting, namely, second-generation women of Pakistani background in Norway. The aim of the article is twofold. First, I analyse the cultural and moral understandings at stake in second-generation women's reflections on and practices of combining motherhood and paid work. Second, I explore the conditions for generational change by examining the space for negotiating such moral understandings in the family, paying particular attention to the negotiations between second-generation women and their mothers.

The second generation in education and work

The general trend in Europe is that the second generation has better educational and occupational achievements than the immigrant generation (eg Crul *et al.* 2012; Dale, Fieldhouse*, et al.* 2002; Heath *et al.* 2008; Hermansen 2013), and the same holds for the children of Pakistani immigrants in Norway. Immigrants from Pakistan to Norway generally have low levels of education, and the women have low employment rates, even when compared with other immigrant groups (Østby 2013). In contrast, the children of Pakistani immigrants enrol in higher education to a large degree, and the rate of participation in higher education for second-generation women in this group is slightly above the average for women in Norway (Dzamarija 2010). When it comes to employment, second-generation women of Pakistani descent have a substantially higher participation in the labour market than women who have migrated from Pakistan, but they have lower employment rates than majority women and other groups of second-generation women (Brekke and Rogstad 2011; Kavli and Nadim 2009). The difference in employment rates between second-generation and majority women persists also after they become mothers, but at more or less the same level (Brekke and Rogstad 2011). Similar patterns of generational change in second-generation women's education and employment are also found in studies of British-Pakistani women (eg Dale, Fieldhouse*, et al.* 2002; Dale, Shaheen*, et al.* 2002; Shah *et al.* 2010).

The role of the family remains somewhat ambiguous in studies of the second generation. The Pakistani immigrant family is seen as a resource for second-generation women's educational achievements because they place great value on education and have explicit ambitions and expectations that the children work hard at school. Education is understood as a joint mobility project: It gives status to the whole family and the parents see education as a prerequisite for succeeding in their resident country (Crozier and Davies 2006; Leirvik 2012; Shah *et al.* 2010; Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera 2010).

However, the family is seen as less supportive of second-generation women's relation to the labour market. For instance, Pakistani immigrants in Norway report high levels of religiosity (Elgvin and Tronstad 2013), and in line with Muslim gender-complementary ideals they are found to express more negative attitudes towards mothers' participation in paid work than other immigrant groups and non-immigrants (Kavli and Nadim 2009). Dale, Shaheen, et al. (2002) argue that second-generation women's participation in education and work is only supported by the family as long it is not perceived as jeopardising the 'family honour', and the women often meet clear expectations to prioritise family over work. Thus, the family is generally understood as representing 'traditional'

gender norms that can act as a barrier to women's employment (Dale, Fieldhouse, *et al.* 2002; Dale, Shaheen, *et al.* 2002). Few studies explore how having children influences second-generation women's relation to paid work. Dale *et al.* (2006) suggest that childcare represents a significant barrier for second-generation women's attachment to work because the norm of maternal care for children is strong. However, much of the literature on women's employment in Pakistani immigrant communities comes from the British context, with its particular cultural and institutional environment for combining motherhood and paid work, and the reflections and practices of immigrant and second-generation families might play out differently in other contexts (cf. Aboim 2010; Pfau-Effinger 2012).

Cultural reproduction and change

Explanations related to cultural continuity have been central in studies of immigrant and second-generation women's attachment to work (Brah 1996). Without further examination, the difference in employment rates between second-generation and majority women is often attributed to 'traditional gender norms' or cultural understandings of gender and family (see for instance Heath *et al.* 2008; Hermansen 2013). Erel (2010: 645) argues that there is a tendency in migration studies to employ a 'rucksack approach' to culture, where migrants are seen as bringing with them a package of ethnically bounded cultural resources that are transmitted between generations. However, scholars have posed forceful critique against the inclination to portray cultural understandings in immigrant families as overly static, consistent, uniformly shared by all members of a group, and as determining for action (Alexander 2013; Brah 1996; Grillo 2003). Cultural conceptions and social practices that stem from the parent's pre-migration context can continue to have force for the second generation, but they do not continue unchanged. Following Lamont (1992: 135), I emphasise the possibility of individuals to actively choose among cultural resources when making sense of the world around them, while taking into account that individuals always exercise cultural creativity from a specific position that provides certain possibilities and constraints on their use of culture. Thus, cultural understandings are not merely reproduced between generations, instead they are reinterpreted and redefined in the everyday context of people's lives (eg Alexander 2013; Foner 1997).

The moral dimension of work and childcare

Wariness towards 'culturalist' explanations should not caution us from examining the role of cultural conceptions for women's participation in the labour market. Rather, I see the critique as a warning against superficial and unexamined accounts of culture. Also in the literature on majority women's relation to work there are studies that highlight the cultural basis of women's choices on work (eg Blair-Loy 2003; Duncan *et al.* 2003; Halrynjo and Lyng 2009; Pfau-Effinger 2012). There is a growing literature on the cultural and moral dimension of motherhood and family responsibilities and how these are experienced and negotiated in people's everyday lives (eg Blair-Loy 2003; Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan *et al.* 2003; Finch and Mason 1993; Halrynjo and Lyng 2009; Perrier 2013). Instead of presupposing an opposition between work and family, these perspectives ask *how* and *why* participation in the two domains can be experienced as conflicting.

The question of how to balance work and parenthood is bound up in people's identities as moral beings and their understandings of 'the proper thing to do' in given circumstances. It invokes notions of what a good mother is, what is best for children, and what makes a meaningful life. Janet Finch (1989) argues that such understandings of 'the proper thing to do' do not follow from abstract 'moral rules'. While these understandings are culturally shaped and shared, they are also *socially negotiated* and developed and used within specific family, neighbourhood, and institutional contexts (see also Duncan 2011; Duncan *et al.* 2003; Finch and Mason 1993). The implication is that we need to empirically examine what people consider as 'the proper thing to do' under given circumstances and what space there is to negotiate such understandings in specific contexts. By analysing the moral conceptions of women's employment and motherhood that people use in making sense and explaining their practices, I wish to concretely explore the cultural aspect of second-generation women's adaptations between work and care.

When I denote understandings of work and childcare as 'moral'[ii] I mean that they are culturally shaped understandings that refer to the 'right' or 'proper' thing to do. The focus on the moral dimension of women's adaptation to work does not mean that I see women's work behaviour as an expression of individual preferences and choices (cf. the common critique of Hakim 1991, 2002). I argue that not only practices but also moral understandings are shaped by structural constraints and opportunities (cf. Lamont 1992), and the moral perspective highlights how individual work–family preferences are both socially and culturally shaped, reproduced, and constrained.

The Norwegian context

The labour migration from Pakistan to Norway in the late 1960s and early 1970s represented the first substantial migration to Norway from outside the Nordic countries, and consisted mostly of unskilled migrants (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008). Immigration policies soon became restrictive, and today migration from Pakistan to Norway is essentially limited to family migration. Immigrants from Pakistan are still one of the largest immigrant groups in Norway, and their children constitute the largest single group in the second generation. Although the children of the immigrants from Pakistan are amongst the oldest in the second generation, 60 per cent of them are still under 18 years old (Dzamarija 2010). Thus, the second generation in Norway is still young, and it is only recently that they have reached an age where it is relevant to ask how they will balance parenthood and work.

Second-generation women in Norway become mothers in a context that provides both cultural and institutional support for women's employment, and where norms of gender equality dominate. Norway has high employment rates for women, including mothers of small children. More than 80 per cent of women with children under the age of three are employed, and the employment rate increases to almost 90 per cent for mothers of children between three and six years (Kitterød and Rønsen 2012: 163). The availability of part-time work, particularly in the large public sector, offers women who wish to prioritise children and family an opportunity to participate in paid work. Moreover, Norway's overall unemployment rates are very low in a European context, and thus, employment is an available option for most women.

The high labour market participation rates for women in Norway are often attributed to generous family policies. Women who are employed prior to giving birth have the right to paid parental leave, with one portion of the leave (12 weeks in 2012) reserved for the father. Combined,

the parents have the right to about a year of paid parental leave with generous income compensation (see Ellingsæter 2009 for details).

Over the past decade the Norwegian welfare state has invested heavily in childcare services. Children are guaranteed access to childcare from the age of one within a set maximum fee limit. Thus, families in Norway have access to affordable and (relatively) good quality childcare from early on. Following the expansion of supply of childcare services, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of kindergartens in Norway, especially for the youngest children (one- and two-year-olds). In 2010, 78 per cent of all one- and two-year-olds attended kindergarten, while the share was 96 per cent among children between three and five years. The majority of immigrant parents also have their children in kindergarten, but the rates are lower than in the rest of the population (Kitterød *et al.* 2012).[iii]

The dominant cultural understanding of the 'ideal' family form in Norway can be characterised as the 'dual-breadwinner/state-carer model' (cf. Pfau-Effinger 1999: 63). Both men and women are expected to work, and caring for children is to a considerable extent seen as the responsibility of the welfare state, as reflected in the state's extensive provision of childcare services (Leira 2002). While the literature on class and childcare commonly finds that working-class families are more sceptical of formal childcare than middle-class families (eg Duncan 2005), also working-class families in Norway largely seem to conceptualise kindergartens as good for children, although there are still classed differences in childcare ideals (Stefansen and Skogen 2010).

All in all, second-generation women in Norway make their work–family decisions in a context that offers better opportunities for balancing work and family when compared to many other national contexts, and where there are explicit expectations that women also work after becoming mothers.

About the study

This analysis is based on a small-scale qualitative study of how second-generation families in Norway organise and reflect on work and childcare. The study includes 19 in-depth interviews in the greater Oslo area, 14 with Norwegian-born women whose parents emigrated from Pakistan, in addition to separate interviews with five of their husbands. The participants were recruited by deploying various strategies, including contact with schools and voluntary organisations, and snowball sampling through networks from previous research projects.

Nine of the second-generation women in the study are married to men who came to Norway as marriage migrants from Pakistan, while the rest are married to a second-generation man of Pakistani descent. Of the five husbands I have interviewed, two are marriage migrants and three have grown up in Norway. With the exception of two childless women, the participants have between one and three children, where at least one child is of pre-school age. All the women work, but they are located in different parts of the labour market. Their strength of attachment to the labour market varies from working a couple of hours a week from home to work that exceeds regular working hours (see Table 1 for a description of the participants).

The study includes participants both with and without higher education. The participants' educational levels range from lower secondary school to master's level. Eight of the interviewed women, and all the men, have a higher education. Three of the women do not have education beyond the upper secondary level. Three are currently studying at a university level, but two of these

enrolled in higher education in their late twenties, after becoming parents. Their experiences with work and care are to a considerable extent coloured by the fact that they were not qualified for skilled work at the time they had children. The women's areas of educational focus vary and include economy, IT, biology, hairdressing, law, social sciences, and teaching.

	No. of children	Level of education	Work
Women			
Amina	2	Higher education	Full-time
Bushra	3	Higher education	Short part-time
Fathia	2	Higher education	Long part-time
Jamila	1	Higher education	Full-time
Muna	1	Higher education	Full-time
Nadia	2	Higher education	Full-time
Sara	2	Higher education	Full-time
Iram	2	Upper secondary level	Short part-time
Rima	1	Upper secondary level	Full-time
Dara	4	Lower secondary level	Long part-time
Hana	1	Student	Long part-time
Yasmin	3	Student	Short part-time
Parvin	-	Higher education	Full-time
Uzma	-	Student	Long part-time
Men*			
Adil	2	Higher education	Full-time
Bashir	3	Higher education	Full-time
Farid	2	Higher education	Full-time
Jafar	1	Higher education	Full-time
Malik	1	Higher education	Full-time

*The spouses in the sample share the first letter in their pseudonyms.

Table 1. Overview of research participants.

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between one and two hours. The aim of the interviews was to capture the participants' education, work, and childcare choices, in addition to how they justify and explain these choices. The interviews were open to pursue the participants' stories, and the order of topics and the relative time given to each were determined by the dynamics of the conversation.

In the analysis I explore the meanings that second-generation women attach to motherhood and paid work in their daily lives, and how these are negotiated in the family. Thus, the article is based on the second-generation women's perspective. The sample is strategic in that the second-generation women have an attachment to the labour market. In this sense the women's practices are characterised by a break with the family practices of the parental generation. At the same time the sample includes women with a variety of work–family adaptations who are – according to their educational backgrounds – differently situated in relation to the Norwegian labour market. The

contributions from this study come from the variation and richness of the cases, and studying the moral understandings of mother's employment amongst second-generation women in the 'women-friendly' Norwegian welfare state (Hernes 1987) allows us to trace some potential conditions for generational change.

Anything but a housewife

The second-generation women in this study grew up in families with a clear gendered organisation of family life, and where their mothers, with a few exceptions, were full-time homemakers while their fathers were breadwinners. However, the second-generation women have organised their family lives differently. They combine motherhood with work outside the home – in one way or another. Although few attended kindergarten as children, all of the women have used childcare services for their children. Thus, in many respects their family practices are characterised by generational change. But are the changing practices reflected in the way second-generation women conceptualise paid work, motherhood, and childcare?

Work as a source of self-fulfilment

The second-generation women in this study articulate a clear orientation towards work and most speak of work in a taken-for-granted manner. For instance, the women describe their educational choices as closely related to future employment prospects (cf. Shah *et al.* 2010). The women use the defined period of paid maternity leave as an explicit frame of reference for when it is suitable to start working, and few had planned to stay at home beyond the paid maternity leave, though the actual stay-at-home time did vary.

A common theme across the interviews is that the women are concerned with distancing themselves from the role of full-time homemaker that their own mothers filled. Jamila went back to her job as a teacher when her son was 10 months old and explains that it was not an option for her to stop working when she became a mother: 'I couldn't imagine myself as a stay-at-home mom; that was very unnatural for me.' Jamila implies that it is 'natural' for her to be a working mother.

Even Bushra, who spent the past seven years at home after having three children successively, is reluctant to describe herself as a 'housewife'. Bushra has higher education and works a couple of hours a week from home as a freelancer, but she says that she will start working outside the home as soon as her youngest son gets a place in a kindergarten. She explains:

> It's not healthy to be this much at home. Those housewives, I don't understand how you can be that your whole life. It would drive me crazy. That wouldn't work.

The explicit distancing from the category of 'housewife' might reflect the low status of the housewife role in Norway, where being a full-time housewife has rapidly gone from being the most accepted role for married women to being seen as very problematic (Knudsen and Wærness 2009).

The rejection of being a full-time homemaker is accompanied by an insistence on the value of working. For instance, Hana explains:

I really admire and look up to those who are at home with kids and all that. But for my own sake I don't think I would've been a satisfied person by staying at home. I think I would've become depressed. I have to feel I can be of use.

For Hana it is work outside the home that can offer the affirmation that she is 'of use'. Although house work is important, it is not a source of personal satisfaction. In a similar manner Sara implies that staying at home is not satisfying: 'You rust very quickly when you're only at home'. At the same time she finds work important because it 'keeps my mind fresh and clear'.

The women desire interesting work and the opportunity 'to develop', and they describe numerous strategic steps they have taken to get where they want in the labour market. In contrast to the domestic arena, the women portray work as an arena for development and stimulation. Working is seen as 'the proper thing to do', even for mothers, particularly if they have invested in an education. This understanding of work can be considered 'moral' because it prescribes what is meaningful and worthwhile, and it builds on the notion that we have a duty to fulfil ourselves and our potential (cf. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 22). Thus, work for these second-generation women is about more than earning an income; it is a central ingredient for a worthy and meaningful life.

Seeing work as a source of meaning is not delimited to the women with higher education. Also the women who see their opportunities in the labour market as unattractive still desire access to interesting work, and several of the women explain that they were inspired to enrol in higher education after realising the limited options they had due to their lack of qualifications. Thus, the women share an idea that work *can* and *should* be a source of meaning.

'The family comes first'

Although the women are oriented towards work, Amina's stance illustrates the general sentiment among the women: 'The family comes first. I'm not interested in having a real career so that my children hardly see me'. The women hold that family and children are their top priorities, but 'putting the family first' does not necessarily involve retracting from the labour market. The question for these women is not primarily whether they should work or stay at home, but how they should combine motherhood with paid work.

Several of the women see part-time work as an ideal solution, an option that is available and widely used by women in the Norwegian labour market. While some of the women already work part time, others wish to reduce their working hours. However, the attractiveness of part-time work depends on the kind of work the women have. The women with flexible yet demanding work, like Sara, explain that '[w]hat happens is just that you get less paid, but you have to work just as much'.

Although the women wish to protect their family from the demands of their work, they still have ambitions to develop their careers. Amina, for instance, feels it is about time to 'move on' career-wise, but she is wary of following the standard career track because it would entail great responsibility and long working hours. Instead she insists that moving sideways in the job hierarchy can also be defined as career development:

It's development for me even so. I'm not interested in taking a step back; I'm not. I'm just developing in a slightly different direction; that's fine.

Although Amina wishes to prioritise her family over her career, she does not let go of her ambition to 'move on' and 'develop'. Rather she redefines the meaning of development in her sector to also include moving into jobs that are not overly demanding. Thus, the women try in different ways to protect themselves from the demands of the labour market in order to prioritise their families without retracting from work or lowering their ambitions too much.

The available mother reinterpreted

The women in this study wish to participate in the labour market *and* be good mothers. Sara explains how these parallel desires can be difficult to combine:

> I wish it was like with my mom. […] Mom was a housewife and was there when we came [home]. But I'd really like to work and be present also. It doesn't add up. […] So it's like a constant puzzle or like a challenge – psychologically. Are you a good enough mother or not?

Sara, like most of the other second-generation women, grew up with stay-at-home mother who she describes as available and always present, and she wishes to be the same for her own children. When the women reflect on what it means to be a 'good mother', the constant frame of reference is the family practices and ideals they themselves grew up with. The women highlight being *available* for one's children as central to being a good mother. What it means to be available and how available you have to be to be a good mother are at the centre of debate when the women discuss childcare arrangements and children's needs with their mothers.

Moral understandings of childcare: Stimulate or shelter?
The parents and husbands generally seem to support the women's aspirations to work, although a few of the women have had conflicts with their families over the issue. When it comes to questions of childcare and mothering, however, the parents in particular, along with some of the husbands, express disapproval in the women's choices to prioritise work at the expense of staying home with their children. As is the general trend in Norway, all the women in the study have used state-sponsored childcare services for their children, but it varies at what age the children started and how many hours they spend there. The topic of childcare arrangements is a source of heated discussion and disagreement in the women's families and social networks. For instance, Iram describes repeatedly discussing the issue of kindergartens with her mother:

> She [her mother] was just: 'Oh my god, she's [Iram's daughter] so little and you want her in kindergarten! Why did you do that?' And I think: 'It's needed'. […] Before I used to try to explain, but every time I get the same complaint. So now I'm like… she sits and complains and I'm just: 'Yeah, yeah, mom, she's doing fine. She's fine'.

Iram explains that her mother is concerned that she is not giving her children enough time since they both went to kindergarten:

> I never managed to explain to her that I give them a lot of time. And that's what she's afraid of: 'Do you give them enough time? Is it enough, do they get enough of you?' […] But then I explain to her in the right way that their homework gets done, they get food, I'm with them, I

play with them, I take them out. I'm actually much more with them than many other parents who are at home 100 per cent of the time.

When Iram insists that she is 'more with' her children than stay-at-home mothers, she implies that good childcare is not merely about the amount of time mothers are available, but also how that time is spent, thus challenging the grounds of her mother's concern. Iram's conception of parenting is in line with a wider trend where parents are expected to be *actively* involved in their children's lives and engage in 'intensive parenting' (Hays 1996; Lareau 2003).

Jamila also has disagreements with her husband and parents about the use of childcare services. Since she works as a teacher she has longer periods of time off work:

> But my parents still [say]: 'If you have time off, let him [her son] be at home too, let him too stay at home'. They still have that mind-set. But I don't. I see that it's better for him to be in kindergarten than with me. […] a very long period for him [at home] can be very boring. He's very active. I see that he needs to be with other children, not just adults. He really needs it. Because then he's calmer and does things and… A lot of things he finds interesting. At home it's only TV-watching; he'll watch TV for hours if he gets the chance.

At the core of the disagreements that Jamila describes is different understandings of children's needs. The same disagreement is described by the other women as well. Generally the women's parents maintain that it is best for children to be at home with their mother. They articulate an understanding that mothers should always 'be there' for their children (cf. Becher 2008), and that children first and foremost need the safety and care offered at home. The idea that children need a sheltered environment is also described in studies of childrearing in the majority population and is primarily associated with working-class families (Duncan 2005; Lareau 2003; Stefansen and Skogen 2010).

In contrast to their parents, the second-generation women see kindergarten as good for children's development because it offers a pedagogical environment where the children are stimulated and where they can socialise with other children. Some of the women also emphasise that kindergartens are particularly important for the language development of their children since they are bilingual. The women endorse the use of kindergartens, but only at the *right time* and to the *right extent.* They draw on an understanding that parents should facilitate children's learning and development, and that children need more stimuli and challenges than they can get at home. This focus on children's development to a large part echoes the descriptions of the parenting ideals of middle-class families (Lareau 2003; Stefansen and Farstad 2008; Stefansen and Skogen 2010).

The Norwegian family policy model – with its emphasis on combining motherhood and paid work and childcare services from the age of one – is built around the 'children need stimuli'-understanding of childcare (Stefansen and Farstad 2008). There has been much debate and policy work on kindergartens over the last decade, and kindergartens are increasingly being portrayed as pedagogical institutions that are included in the overall educational trajectory (cf. NOU 2011; Stefansen and Skogen 2010). Thus, the second-generation women draw on an understanding of childcare that is predominant in the Norwegian welfare state and middle class. The women challenge their parents' understandings of what it means to be a good mother, particularly their parents' assumption that children should stay at home. Like their parents, the second-generation women emphasise being available for their children, but the meaning of *being available* is reinterpreted. The women emphasise the *quality* as much as the *quantity* of time they have with their children. Being

available does not entail complete availability in terms of staying at home full time, but it is rather seen as compatible with using childcare services and being in employment.

Accommodating grandmothers

The women's mothers in many cases continue to be available for their daughters and offer extensive practical help for the dual-career family. Muna's family is a good example of how a mother's practical support can ease her daughter's participation in paid work. Muna is career oriented and works in a demanding sector. She did not consider staying at home beyond the year of paid parental leave. After she went back to work, her mother cared for her son for a year, and he started kindergarten at the age of two. Muna's mother still contributes with substantial practical help. For instance, she picks up Muna's son at kindergarten before Muna and her husband are finished at work, and she cooks him dinner almost daily. The practical support from her mother means that Muna could return to work without her son having to start kindergarten 'too early', and because his grandmother picks him up early, his days are not 'too long' – in Muna's opinion, but particularly in the opinion of her husband and parents. Using the mothers for daily childcare appears to be a salient alternative for the second-generation women in the study (cf. Afshar 1989; Dale, Fieldhouse, *et al.* 2002). It represents a compromise that allows the women to participate in paid work, while their children are still cared for in a familiar and sheltered environment.

The mothers' practical support for their daughters' work aspirations can be interpreted as a contribution to a joint mobility project. The migrant family is often portrayed as supportive of women's participation in education (eg Shah *et al.* 2010; Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera 2010), but when it comes to participation in work, the family is rather seen as an obstacle that communicates and sometimes enforces expectations that women should prioritise family obligations over career aspirations (Dale, Fieldhouse, *et al.* 2002; Dale, Shaheen, *et al.* 2002). However, when the parents witness their daughters' opportunities in the labour market it can be that the ambitions for social mobility are extended from the women's educational achievements to include their achievements at work. It is in the labour market where education is converted to economic capital, and it is not only educational achievements that can give status to the family. Although the mothers of the women in this study express disapproval of their daughter's prioritisation of work and use of kindergarten, in practice they often represent an invaluable resource for the second-generation women's participation in work. This ambivalence concerning their daughters' employment can be understood in light of the family's mobility project, and might reflect parent's recognition of their daughters' opportunities in the labour market.

Discussion and conclusions

This article has shown traces of generational challenge and reinterpretation in second-generation women's moral understandings of a mother's relation to paid work. The parents are very present in the women's accounts: first, because the parent's practices and understandings act as constant references in the women's reasoning, and second, because their mothers in particular engage in explicit negotiations over the meaning attached to the women's family practices. However, the

parental generation's ideals and practices are not merely passed on; they are reinterpreted and re-created in the process and are thus open for negotiation.

The second-generation women distance themselves from the domestic roles their mothers filled. And their stated desire to prioritise family does not entail retracting from work or giving up ambitions of having interesting work. The women wish to be available for their children, but the meaning of 'availability' is reinterpreted so that it does not refer to the *total* availability their own mothers represented. Furthermore, the women reject the understanding that it is best for children to be at home, and rather insist on the importance of kindergarten as a source of stimulation and development. Of course, the women's reflections are more nuanced than what this brief summary conveys, and they express doubts and ambivalence about what is the right thing to do. Still, it is clear that these women conceptualise work, motherhood, and childcare in a way that supports mothers' participation in paid work.

This generational change in moral conceptions of work and childcare must be understood in light of the women's context of opportunity. For instance, the availability of childcare can be a key factor in enabling women's participation in paid work. We have seen how the women's mothers offer substantial practical help with childcare. In addition, the women in this study make sense of and establish their work and childcare practices in an institutional context that provides families with access to good quality and affordable childcare, something all women in this study have utilized, even those who are predominantly homemakers. In contrast, studies from a British context, where access to childcare is much more limited, find that British–Pakistani families make little use of childcare services, and childcare responsibilities are described as the main barrier for second-generation women's employment (Dale *et al.* 2006; Dale, Shaheen*, et al.* 2002).

Parrado and Flippen (2005) argue that changing gender relations among immigrants must be understood in light of their new structural opportunities, and not as a result of exposure to a different gender culture. Zontini (2007) makes a similar argument regarding changing practices of motherhood between immigrant and second-generation women, emphasising the role of structural opportunities and personal experiences above the influence of the receiving society's values. Although the institutional context and the opportunities and constraints it represents are important for understanding the adaptations of the second generation (cf. Crul *et al.* 2012), I wish to additionally highlight the importance of the *cultural* context. The moral conceptions the participants in this study use in making sense of work and childcare are shaped by the cultural resources that are available to them, not only in their families and the Pakistani immigrant community, but also in the Norwegian society.

The participants make sense of women's employment and childcare in a context where kindergartens are depicted as a pedagogical environment that is important for children's development, in particular for the language development of children of immigrant background (eg NOU 2011). The families' endorsement of kindergartens should be understood not only in light of their ready access to childcare services, but also their access to cultural understandings of kindergartens as good for children. Furthermore, when the women downplay their homemaking roles and distance themselves from the category 'housewife', even if they only have a minimal attachment to the labour market, it might reflect that the conception of paid work as a central ingredient in a meaningful and fulfilled life and the emphasis on gender equality are salient parts of the cultural repertoire they encounter in Norwegian society. In this cultural context, it might be difficult to uphold a perception of living a meaningful and worthy life without participating outside the realm of the family, especially for women with a higher education.

In making sense of work and care, the second-generation women in this study are also defining who they are in relation to others, as women, as mothers, and as caregivers. Drawing moral distinctions is central in people's efforts to define themselves and others (Lamont 1992), and several studies have demonstrated how moral conceptions of motherhood and childrearing can be important markers of class belongingness (eg Ball *et al.* 2004; Lareau 2003; Stefansen and Skogen 2010). When the women in some ways distance themselves from their parents' practices and ideals concerning motherhood and childcare, it might reflect an approximation to the 'Norwegian mainstream', and a desire to distance themselves from (the image of) 'Pakistani' families. However, it might perhaps more accurately be interpreted as an approximation to 'middle-class' practices and ideals, where the endorsement of women's employment and use of childcare services can be seen as a continuation of their parents' mobility project. This article shows that in a context that, both institutionally and culturally, strongly supports the combination of motherhood and paid work, there is a potential for substantial generational change in the second generation's work-family practices.

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[i] 'Second generation' in this article refers to the children of immigrants who were either born in the country of residence or immigrated before school-age. Thus, 'generation' refers to 'generation-since-migration' (cf. Paerregaard 2013). In addition, the second-generation participants in this study are concentrated in age and can be seen to belong to a common generation in terms of belonging to the same historical cohort.

[ii] 'Moral understandings' can be problematic as an analytical concept because it has certain connotations about the strength and density of meaning and emotion. Such characteristics should not be assumed, but rather explored empirically in a given context. I still use the term 'moral' rather than the less charged term 'normative' because it reflects the common usage in family sociology (Duncan and Edwards 1999; Duncan *et al.* 2003; Finch and Mason 1993; Perrier 2013).

[iii] It is not possible to identify second-generation mothers in these statistics.