

# TRANSNATIONAL MARRIAGES AND SECOND-GENERATION WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

## Abstract

This article studies transnational marriages among the second generation and analyses the processes through which transnational marriages shape second-generation women's attachment to work. Based on in-depth interviews with second-generation women of Pakistani descent in Norway, along with some of their husbands, the article identifies three processes through which transnational marriages can shape women's attachment to work: 1) conflicting expectations concerning childcare and women's employment; 2) unsettled gendered power relations; and 3) economic instability. Contrary to the public concern that transnational marriages will impede second-generation women's employment, this study suggests that marrying transnationally can create incentives for second-generation women's paid work.

## Keywords

Second generation • transnational marriage • work-care practices • Pakistani • Norway

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## 1 Introduction

Across Europe, a substantial share of the children of immigrants turn to their parents' country of origin to find a spouse (Beck-Gernsheim 2007). In public discourse, there are recurrent concerns that such transnational marriages will reinforce ties to the "sending country" and thus pose a threat to the cultural and socio-economic integration of the second generation (cf. Andreassen 2013). This concern speaks to a larger theoretical debate about the interaction between transnational ties and practices, on the one hand, and processes of integration, on the other (e.g. Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004; Vertovec 2009). This article aims to answer the call by Erdal & Oeppen (2013: 878) for analyses that move beyond simply illustrating that processes of transnationalism and integration can co-exist. It does so by analysing the interaction between a specific transnational practice – transnational marriage – and a specific dimension of integration – participation in the labour market – for second-generation women of Pakistani descent in Norway. Participation in the labour market is used as a key indicator of integration, and a pertinent question as the second generation comes of age is whether the low rates of female employment that have characterised many immigrant groups will be reproduced in the second generation (e.g. Cheung 2014; Dale *et al.* 2002). When second-generation women marry men from their parents' country of origin, there seems to be a fear in public and political discourse that the migrant husbands will impede processes of integration because they can bring with them patriarchal understandings of gender and uphold the so-called traditional family practices that will keep their wives out of the labour market.

However, there is less information about what actually happens within transnational marriages (Liversage 2012). The process of migration and the dynamics of transnationalism can clearly shape the marital relationships and the organisation of family life (Charsley & Shaw 2006: 332). The question is, *how?* In this article, I examine transnational marriages between Norwegian-born women of Pakistani descent and men from Pakistan, and ask how the migration inherent in transnational marriages can shape the gendered division of labour between the spouses. A particular interest here is how the second-generation women balance motherhood and paid work.

This empirical case is interesting for several reasons. To begin with, Pakistani immigrant women have low employment rates, both in Norway and other European countries, and this has been understood as (at least partly) reflecting cultural values and traditions (Cheung 2014; Farris & de Jong 2013; Heath & Martin 2013). At the same time, the children of Pakistani immigrants predominantly marry transnationally (Charsley & Shaw 2006; Daugstad 2008), thus making the question of how transnational marriages will impact women's participation in paid work highly relevant. Still, the second generation in Norway have been raised in a society that, together with the other Scandinavian countries, stands out as having a strong gender equality ideology and high rates of female employment, even amongst mothers of young children (Ellingsæter 2009). Thus, Norway represents a context where the spouses in transnational marriages might experience a heightened tension between divergent ideals and expectations concerning women's adaptations to paid work and childcare.

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## 2 Transnational Marriages and Family Practices

Studies of transnational marriages among the second generation have mainly focused on the motivations and processes behind the decision to find a spouse in the parents' country of origin. Transnational marriages among Europe's second generation are especially common among children of labour migrants from South Asia, Turkey and Morocco (Beck-Gernsheim 2007; Charsley & Shaw 2006; Daugstad 2008; Schmidt 2011), and these communities also often practice arranged marriages. Consequently, migration scholars tend to see the marriage process as a family project, and often concentrate on the parents' motivations for transnational marriages (Beck-Gernsheim 2007; Shaw 2001).

Three main clusters of motivations emerge from the research literature (cf. Beck-Gernsheim 2007). First, some studies emphasise the role of kinship obligations, the emotional ties of kinship and transnational marriages as a way of managing risk (Charsley 2007; Gardner 2006; Shaw 2006; Shaw & Charsley 2006). Second, transnational marriages have been understood as a result of adaptations to different "marriage markets". Immigrant families might perceive a greater availability of suitable candidates in the family's country of origin. Moreover, the status as a migrant can represent an advantage in the marriage market "back home", giving immigrants and their children the upper hand in marriage negotiations (cf. Beck-Gernsheim 2007; Straßburger 2004; Van Kerckem *et al.* 2013). Third, scholars argue that transnational marriages can be motivated by a desire to establish certain gender relations. Transnational marriages involve gendered and geographical imaginings of potential partners (Constable 2005), for instance, when men in Europe seek wives from South Asia with the expectation that they will bring with them "traditional" views on family life. Some studies suggest that women also may favour a spouse from their parents' home country because of a desire to reinvigorate "traditional family culture and religion" (Shaw 2006: 217; see also Schmidt 2011). However, in his influential study of transnational marriages, Lievens (1999) argues that women might marry partners from their parents' country of origin in order to secure more independence after marriage, because transnational marriage frees them from the traditionally powerful and direct influence of their in-laws and enhances their position within the new household.

Although there is a growing body of research about the motivations for transnational marriages among the second generation, little is known about what actually happens *within* these marriages (Beck-Gernsheim 2007; Liversage 2012). The research literature that more generally studies how gender relations are affected by migration yields mixed evidence; the gains for men and women may be uneven and contradictory, and patriarchal structures can be challenged or reinforced by migration, depending on what aspects of gender relations are studied (e.g. Mahler & Pessar 2006; Parrado & Flippen 2005). Thus, any examination of how migration influences gender relations must be concrete in terms of what aspect of gender relations is analysed.

This article examines how the migration inherent in transnational marriages can shape second-generation women's attachment to work, as women's employment is a key factor in defining gender relations (cf. Parrado & Flippen 2005). In Norway, the reported employment rate for second-generation women of Pakistani descent is just below 60 per cent (Østby 2013)<sup>1</sup>. This is lower than the female average in Norway, which is above 80 per cent, but substantially higher than the employment rate for Pakistani immigrant women, which is below 35 per cent (Østby 2013; see also Dale *et al.* 2002). In transnational marriages among the second generation, the spouses may have

been raised in societies with contrasting gender norms and practices concerning women's employment. Husbands migrating from Pakistan come from a gender context characterised by a male breadwinner model, patriarchal gender relations and a clear gendered division of labour in the family. Thus, one can expect that marrying a man from Pakistan has a negative effect on the employment prospects of the second-generation wife. Yet, large-scale quantitative studies in Britain and Norway find that the husband's background – whether an immigrant or born in Britain/Norway – does not affect the second-generation wife's attachment to paid work (Brekke & Rogstad 2011; Dale & Ahmed 2011).

I aim to go behind these aggregated patterns and tap into the processes through which the practice of transnational marriages can influence second-generation women's attachment to work. The analysis is not concerned with the influence of the dynamics of transnationalism as such, but rather examines how the husband's migrant background can contribute to shaping the conditions within which the families establish their work and childcare practices in the context of their everyday family life in Norway.

## 3 Methods and Data

This article is based on a qualitative study of how second-generation<sup>2</sup> women in Norway balance motherhood and paid work. The study includes 19 in-depth interviews in total, 14 with Norwegian-born women whose parents emigrated from Pakistan, in addition to separate interviews with five of their husbands. The interviews with the second-generation women form the main empirical base in the study, and consequently the analysis is predominantly based on the women's perspective, while the interviews with the husbands are used to elaborate the argument.

Nine of the women in the study have married transnationally, i.e. married a man from Pakistan who subsequently came to Norway through family immigration. Their migrant husbands have been in Norway between four and twelve years, and two of the interviewed husbands are marriage migrants. With the exception of two childless and unmarried women, all the participants have pre-school-aged children, and the rest of the women are married to men with the same background as themselves, i.e. Norwegian-born of Pakistani descent. The study includes women both with and without a higher education, but the participants have higher levels of education than the average in this group of the second generation.

The participants were recruited from a variety of sources – such as schools, ethnic organisations, personal networks and snowball sampling – in order to obtain variation in family situations. The interviews were semi-structured, and the aim was to capture processes related to the interviewees' education and work choices, the organisation of work and childcare within the family, and ideals concerning the gender division of paid work and childcare. The interviews lasted 1–2 hours and were fully transcribed. Ethical considerations have been important throughout the research process, particularly regarding issues such as informed consent, securing confidentiality, and respecting individual's privacy and close relationships.

Although the analysis does not have a direct comparative design, where transnational marriages are compared with same-background marriages, the specificities of transnational marriages were identified through a careful analysis of the entire data material. I applied a two-step approach to the analysis: first analysing each case by identifying the micro-processes that shape the women's attachment to work and, second, comparing these micro-processes

across cases in an attempt to explore “what differences make a difference”. The interviews illustrate how the husband’s migration can shape the micro-context within which couples in transnational marriages organise their family life. Therefore, the study contributes to constructing empirically grounded understandings of the dynamics in transnational marriages in a specific context.

The women in the study, regardless of their educational background, have some sort of attachment to the labour market. Thus, they offer an interesting entry point for studying the potential negotiation of women’s employment in transnational marriages. In the following analysis, I will elaborate on some of the empirical cases that are particularly illustrative of how the migration inherent in transnational marriages can shape the way second-generation women balance motherhood and paid work. The results reveal that transnational marriages can have very different consequences for second-generation women.

## 4 The Norwegian Context

The present study is set in Norway, a country with a relatively short history of migration. The first substantial migration from outside the Nordic countries came in the late 1960s, consisting mainly of unskilled labour migrants from rural Pakistan, predominantly from the Punjab region. After a period with a liberal immigration regime, from the 1950s to the “immigration stop” which was introduced in 1975, immigration policies have become increasingly restrictive (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2008). Today, marriage migration is practically the only route for migration from Pakistan to Norway.<sup>3</sup> In fact, marriage has become the most common source of migration to Norway from countries outside the European Economic Area (Henriksen 2010), although greater restrictions have been placed on access to marriage migration (Eggebo 2010).

The children of the 1960s and 1970s labour migrants from Pakistan are beginning to reach adulthood, but over 70 per cent are still under 25 years old (Olsen 2013). Of the marriages that the children of Pakistani immigrants in Norway have entered, 70 per cent have been with a spouse from Pakistan (Daugstad 2008). However, the tendency to marry transnationally seems to be declining (Sandnes 2013; see also Van Kerckem *et al.* 2013). Despite coming from families with low education levels, the children of Pakistani immigrants, especially the girls, have an “education drive” (Østby & Henriksen 2013: 5). In the age group of 19–24 years, they participate in higher education to an even greater extent than the Norwegian population in general (Østby & Henriksen 2013). The large proportion of second-generation women in higher education points to upward social mobility and a radical change in biography compared with their mothers, who were often homemakers with little education. Because the second generation is still young, not much is known about whether and how the women will use their education in the labour market once they have children.

The implications that transnational marriages have for women’s labour market participation are particularly interesting to study in a Norwegian context, where the dual-income family is the norm both in politics and in practice. Norway has high labour market participation rates among women, even for mothers of pre-school-aged children (Ellingsæter 2009). The employment rate for married or co-habiting women with children under three years is above 80 per cent, while it increases to almost 90 per cent for mothers of children between three and six years (Kitterød & Rønsen 2012: 163).<sup>4</sup> The labour market is characterised by low unemployment rates and a large public sector

that employs the majority of working women. The large proportion of working mothers is often attributed to active family policies featuring two central components: generous parental leave arrangements and extensive publicly sponsored provisions of childcare services from the time the child is one year old (Ellingsæter 2009; Leira 2002). Women’s participation in the labour market is also fronted as a key objective in Norwegian integration policies (Ministry of Children, Equality, and Social Inclusion 2012). Thus, the couples in this study establish work–care practices in a context where there are strong expectations that women – including mothers of small children, regardless of ethnic background – should participate in the labour market.

## 5 The Micro-context for Work–care Practices in Transnational Marriages

In the analysis, I identify three processes through which transnational marriages among the second generation can shape the second-generation women’s attachment to paid work. First, the spouses in marriages across cultural contexts can have conflicting expectations regarding women’s adaptations between motherhood and paid work. Second, the different migrations statuses of the spouses can unsettle “traditional” gendered power relations within the couple. Third, transnational marriages involve migration for one of the spouses, something that can entail economic instability even long after migration. In the following, I will explore these characteristics of transnational marriages in turn and show how they can shape the couples’ work–care practices.

### 5.1 Conflicting Expectations concerning Childcare and Women’s Employment

Transnational marriages can be motivated by a desire for a spouse who shares specific gender and family ideals (Constable 2005). The second-generation women in this study generally perceive men from Pakistan as more “traditional” than men in Norway, but the fact that they have married transnationally does not seem to reflect a desire for a gender-complementary division of paid work and care. Rather, some of the women were very anxious about the implications of marrying transnationally. For instance, Hana<sup>5</sup> explains that she was worried that she would be married to a “conservative” man, and describes gender equality as a central concern for her and others among the second generation:

The second generation now is very concerned with things being equally divided and all that. One is conscious of it because many immigrants have been described as, “No, it’s the man who decides everything here”.

Generally, the women in this study distance themselves from the strict gender division of labour that they grew up with, and instead expect and hope for a more equal division of work with their husbands. The women want to be good mothers who provide their children with high-quality childcare. At the same time, and regardless of their educational background, they aspire to pursue projects outside the realm of the family, like education and paid work (see Nadim 2012).

Although the female participants generally depict their husbands as more “liberal” than they initially feared, several transnational couples in the study have different ideals and expectations concerning family life. For example, Jamila and her husband, Jafar, who migrated

to Norway seven years ago, explain that how to organise their family life in Norway is a topic of discussion. They have one child, and both spouses are highly educated and work full time. According to Jafar, differing expectations of family life are a source of “conflicts and a bit of trouble”. Jamila thematises their disagreements in terms of cultural differences:

I can't get him [Jafar] to contribute much, even if I try. Because he comes from another culture [where] there are other ways of raising children, there are other... He is used to completely other conditions at home than Norwegian families are used to.

Jamila suggests that while her husband comes from a Pakistani culture, her expectations are more in line with what she conceives of as the typical Norwegian family. Jafar articulates a similar understanding of cultural differences in the marriage. He suggests that Jamila has “Norwegian” expectations of how they should organise their family life, expecting him to “help out 50 per cent at home”, something he finds very difficult since, as he explains, he is not used to men being expected to contribute at home.

Jamila went back to work part time when their son was one year old, while her mother cared for the child. When their son turned two, he started kindergarten and Jamila began working full time. However, Jafar did not agree that Jamila should prioritise work over being at home with their child:

No, we did not agree about sending him to kindergarten that early. I wanted her to stay at home with him at least one more year because he was too little. I feel the child has to be with his mother until he's... at least two, three years.

Although Jafar thinks Jamila should have waited longer to return to work, he generally supports her work aspirations.

In a similar manner, Muna and Malik disagreed about how Muna should balance work and family when they had their first child. Malik has been in Norway seven years, and both he and Muna are highly educated. Muna has a demanding job and describes herself as career oriented and ambitious. She went back to full-time work after a year of paid parental leave. She is pregnant with their second child at the time of the interview and plans to go back to work again after the paid parental leave. Her husband, Malik, on the other hand, explicitly wants Muna to stay home more with their son and now with their second child.

As these examples illustrate, it is often questions related to how the women balance childcare responsibilities with their aspirations to work that come to highlight the spouses' divergent expectations about their joint family life. Both Jamila and Muna describe their husbands as mostly supportive of their ambitions to work, and the women's relation to work only becomes an issue once they have children. The question is not *whether* the women should work outside the family, but *how* motherhood and paid work should be combined in practice.

In some cases, however, the conflicting expectations concern more fundamental issues related to different understandings of gendered life projects. A recurrent question for Yasmin and her husband has been whether or not she should pursue a higher education. Yasmin had just completed upper secondary school, several years delayed, when her husband came to Norway six years ago and disrupted her plans to study further. She explains that at one point her ambition to study began to feel more pressing, but her husband was against her educational plans, and she spent several years persuading him:

I think he needed those five, six years to realise and understand how the system works here and how it is here. How a woman *must* be able to have an education. And that they approve or in a way value it. Gradually, he's understood that it's very difficult to get a job and get ends to meet at all.

As Yasmin describes, it took time for her husband to accept that women have the right to an education. Although she also emphasises the economic advantages of pursuing a higher education, throughout the interview she primarily highlights non-instrumental justifications for her ambitions to study and argues that an education is important for her sense of worth and achievement. In this case, the couple appear to have started out with conflicting understandings and ideals concerning women's life projects.

None of the same-background couples in the study describe such explicitly conflicting expectations of how the woman should balance family and work. Of course, spouses within the same cultural context can also enter the marriage with different desires and experiences of family life, and not all transnational couples experience disagreements. However, marriages between Norwegian-born women and men from Pakistan bring together spouses from different cultural and gendered contexts, making the spouses particularly likely to have distinct experiences, expectations and desires for a joint family life (cf. Charsley 2005; Liversage 2012). Furthermore, in transnational marriages, disagreements might more readily be attributed to cultural differences and thus become especially salient. Next, I will examine how such conflicting expectations are settled.

## 5.2 Unsettled Power Relations and the Settlement of Disagreements

If transnational marriages can be predisposed to conflicting expectations and understandings of family life, a pertinent question concerns how the couples settle their differences. Power relations in Pakistani families are often characterised as patriarchal, where men (fathers and husbands) are decision makers and have authority over women (e.g. Prieur 2002). However, power is not static; it is variable, contextual and relational, and gendered power relations can be restructured in the migration process (cf. Charsley 2005; Liversage 2012; Mahler & Pessar 2006). This study does not analyse power relations in the marital relationship as such, but is concerned with how disagreements over work–care practices are settled.

The conflicting expectations the couples experience are handled in various ways. Jamila and Jafar do not agree on how she should balance motherhood and work, and Jafar expresses a sense of being left out of the decision to send their son to kindergarten:

Interviewer: If you wanted him not to start kindergarten, how did you make... Was it something you discussed or how did you make that decision?

Jafar: No, we didn't discuss it. We didn't agree. And she had to... she said she had to prioritise her job. And she did.

Muna and Malik also describe a situation where Muna went back to work without involving Malik in explicit discussions. Malik explains that he wanted Muna to prioritise motherhood over her career, at least for a while:

Career is very important, I understand that. But if she didn't have that good education and she didn't have career goals and [if

she had] a completely normal job, factory worker or something, I would have, we would perhaps consider that she doesn't go to work. And that after... after three, four years when she is done with children and everything, then she goes back to work. But I understand that... I have career plans, so I respect it, that she goes back to work and all that.

Although Malik did not initially agree with the organisation of childcare and work, he says he accepts that Muna wants to use her education and pursue a career. Both Jafar and Malik appear somewhat resigned to how their wives balance motherhood and paid work. Previously taken-for-granted family ideals and childcare practices are challenged by their wives and sometimes by their in-laws, who can support the women's ambitions to work.

Yasmin's husband, on the other hand, appears more involved and active in negotiations over how they organise their family life. Yasmin had to *persuade* her husband over the course of several years before he accepted that she should apply for a higher education. While Jamila and Muna went ahead with their plans without deeply involving their husbands, Yasmin's husband appears to assert more decision-making power. A central difference between the cases is that while Jamila and Muna received at least some support from their parents, Yasmin's mother instead backed her husband. The family of the settled spouse can play an important role in disempowering (or empowering) the migrant spouse because the newly arrived immigrant often lacks other social networks in his or her new home country (Charsley 2005).

The research on transnational marriages has demonstrated that the migrant spouse, regardless of gender, is often in a weak position in the marital relationship (e.g. Charsley 2005; Liversage 2012). The migrant spouses will often lack language skills (especially when migrating to a non-English speaking country), have limited personal networks, and lack institutional and social knowledge about the society they have migrated to. Furthermore, marriage migrants can be in a vulnerable legal position because in many European countries their residence permit is conditional on the continuation of their marriage for a specific period of time (see Liversage 2013). The difference in position between a second-generation woman and a newly arrived male immigrant can thus restructure gendered power relations, disempowering the migrant husband and empowering the settled wife (see also Beck-Gernsheim 2007; Charsley 2005; Liversage 2012).

Although the extent to which the marriage-migrant husbands are involved in defining the family's work-care practices varies, most of the women describe that their husbands (at least reluctantly) accept that they pursue work and education to a greater extent than their husbands would have initially liked. Their situation as fairly recent immigrants can result in limited resources and support in decision-making processes in the family. In addition, the husbands seem to adjust their expectations for family life and views of what is reasonably proper and possible in the encounter with a different cultural and structural context for "doing family". When the husbands, like Jafar and Malik, appear somewhat resigned, it can reflect an awareness that they lack arguments that are considered legitimate in the social and cultural context they now find themselves in (cf. Prieur 2002: 57).

Importantly, the same-background couples in this study are not characterised by conspicuous patriarchal relations. The Norwegian-born husbands support their wives' aspirations to work, and the same-background couples portray their work-care practices as a result of *joint* decisions. In contrast, the transnational couples more often

describe following *her* preferences for work-care practices at the expense of his. Regardless of their husband's migration status, most women in this study have strong ties to the Norwegian educational system and labour market, which means that education and work are available options for them. The overall impression is that the second-generation women in this study are active and involved in deciding how they should balance childcare obligations and paid work.

How power relations are played out in transnational marriages of course depends on the couple's micro-context (cf. Liversage 2012). However, the husband's situation as an immigrant can create specific types of inequalities in the marital relation that potentially shapes the decision-making processes in the family. In addition, as I will elaborate in the next section, the second-generation women might be supported in their work aspirations because their husbands (and family) recognise that the women's income represents a welcomed contribution to the household economy.

### 5.3 Economic Instability

While all but one of the women's migrant husbands have ended up with work that more or less matches their qualifications, the women describe that most of the men had trouble finding employment when they first arrived and have gone through a (shorter or longer) period of unstable, badly paid, low-skilled work. Even when the migrant husbands gain access to relevant parts of the labour market, their work history often continues to be characterised by instability. Thus, their experiences illustrate the tendency that newly arrived immigrants face challenges in accessing the labour market, especially in a country like Norway, where there is relatively little demand for unskilled work and where the risk of hiring is considered high because of strong worker rights.

For some second-generation women in the study, the family's economic situation lays the basis for their work-care practices. Nadia explains that her husband's difficulties finding stable and decently paid work after he came to Norway have impelled her to take a larger responsibility for the family's economy than she ideally wanted. Nadia has higher education and works full time in the public sector. With both children, she went back to work after the one-year period of paid maternity leave, while the children entered kindergarten. However, she explains that her husband's difficulties in the labour market have influenced her working choices:

That he should get a good job was everything for me. Because everything was based on that. If his economic situation was good, I could perhaps reduce my working hours and be a bit more at home. [...] If I had the possibility, I would do it. Working 80 or 50 per cent would have been ideal.

Although Nadia enjoys her job and finds it meaningful, she describes feeling pressured to work more than she wanted because of the family's challenging economic situation.

Even after securing employment, immigrants can experience economic insecurity and obligations that make economic considerations particularly pertinent. For instance, both Sara and her husband have stable and well-paid jobs. Still, she explains that her husband is extremely concerned with their household economy, and that he urged her to return to work after the paid maternity leave, although she felt they could afford her staying at home longer. Sara attributes her husband's (excessive) preoccupation with their financial situation to his previous experiences of poverty. Transnational

marriages between Pakistan and Norway entail migration between countries with very different economic situations and standards of living, and as Sara's story illustrates, experiences of economic hardship before migration can instil a sense of economic vulnerability even after migration.

Furthermore, because of financial obligations to family and others in the migrant spouse's country of origin, economic considerations can become particularly salient in transnational marriages. In Pakistani families, the obligation to send remittances traditionally falls on men (Shaw 2001); thus, financial obligations to the family are a particularly relevant issue in transnational marriages with a *male* migrant spouse. Most families in the present study send or have sent money to the husband's family in Pakistan. However, there are great variations in both the economic need of the family in Pakistan and the degree to which the couples prioritise remittances over financial needs in Norway. Some couples explicitly mention that they send remittances only after covering their own financial needs, while others describe making large economic sacrifices to support the husband's family in Pakistan.

Yasmin depicts their economic situation as very difficult, as her husband has not been able to find work in Norway. She was not qualified for skilled work when she married, and has provided for her family through odd jobs, cleaning and delivering the newspaper. The couple and their children live with Yasmin's mother and receive economic support from her, but they are not always able to make ends meet and have at times relied on social security benefits. In addition, Yasmin's husband's family in Pakistan depends on their economic support. As Yasmin explains, economic concerns are central to the family:

That thing about work and economy has been very important. Because we *have to*... we *have to* support down there and we *have to* make ends meet here.

Furthermore, the family's economic situation and their obligations to support her husband's family in Pakistan have for a long time posed a constraint to Yasmin's educational and work aspirations:

Yasmin: I've just gotten pregnant and been a cleaning lady. And then it was maternity leave and then another maternity leave and a sister-in-law getting married and a brother-in-law getting married. And we have to contribute and we have to help with that.

Interviewer: So, it's been important to work to...

Yasmin: To help them, yes. And then my studies haven't been very important, neither for myself nor for my husband nor for my mom.

Thus, in Yasmin's case, economic considerations appear to dominate over other considerations in determining her work and educational choices.

Nevertheless, economic concerns are not always primary in determining the second-generation women's participation in paid work and education. For Yasmin, the disagreements about her educational plans revolve around the question of women's needs and rights to individual projects outside the family. In some families, women's responsibilities for childcare and the home are considered more important than the economic contributions of women's investment in work and education. For instance, Dara explains that she was taken out of school after lower secondary school to marry a man from Pakistan. Once married, she was expected to provide full-time care

for the family and the home. Although Dara and her husband have struggled economically, it was never considered an option that Dara should start working while they still had pre-school-aged children.

Economic concerns can also be important motivating factors for women's employment for the same-background couples. However, the husbands' migration can make the transnational couples more prone to economic instability, even long after migration, making economic concerns particularly pertinent in the transnational couples' work-care decisions. Although the Norwegian welfare state provides an economic safety net that is generous by international comparison, the economic instability that often follows from migration can provide an extra incentive for the second-generation women to seek employment. For a shorter or longer period of time, second-generation women in transnational marriages may become an important, and sometimes the primary, economic provider for the family.

## 6 Concluding Discussion

The question of how to negotiate and balance motherhood and paid work is central for most families with small children, regardless of their ethnic and cultural background. The solutions families find vary, both in general and in transnational marriages. This article has analysed how the migration inherent in marriages where second-generation women marry men from their parent's country of origin can add to other influences on how families organise work and childcare. The aim has been to explore what characterises the micro-context for transnational couples' work-care decisions, and the article identifies three characteristics of transnational marriages that can shape the women's attachment to work: First, transnational marriages between Norwegian-born women and Pakistani men bring together spouses from divergent cultural contexts who might enter the marriage with distinct experiences and conflicting expectations and desires concerning childcare and women's employment. Second, the different migration status of each spouse can potentially empower the second-generation women over their migrant husbands in decision-making processes concerning the family's work-care practices. Third, the migration in transnational marriages can entail economic instability and economic obligations to the migrant spouse's family, making economic considerations particularly pressing in work-care decisions.

The article contributes to the empirical knowledge about what happens *within* transnational marriages in the second generation, and how the asymmetrical migration statuses can shape gender relations and work-care practices. The second-generation women in this study are oriented towards education and work. Most challenge their husbands' expectations of a more gender-complementary family organisation, and combine motherhood with paid work. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that second-generation women's employment is not merely a question of gender and family norms; economic considerations are also important in structuring how the women balance childcare and paid work. We can expect that the "push" towards employment in transnational marriages has grown stronger since the participants in this study got married, as Norway has posed increasingly strict subsistence requirements for marriage migration (cf. Eggebø 2010). The income requirement means that a specific income level must be documented if one wants to sponsor a spouse for immigration. This study suggests that rather than posing obstacles to women's employment, marrying a migrant husband can in fact create incentives for second-generation women's work.

However, the empirical cases described show how transnational marriages can have highly divergent consequences for women's

employment prospects, depending on their educational attainment. On the one hand, we have seen how Muna and Jamila want to prioritise their careers and do so, contrary to their husbands' preferences. Nadia is also concerned with her career development, but for her the economic necessity of working largely overshadows other motivations to work. Although these women differ on how they wish to balance motherhood and paid work, the interviewees with higher education all wish to use their education in the labour market and, through their educational qualifications, have access to work they find meaningful. Thus, in these cases, the women's attachment to the labour market is reinforced by the combined economic insecurity following migration, the second-generation women's strong orientation towards work and their advantageous position in negotiating work–care practices.

On the other hand, we have seen how Yasmin set aside her educational plans in order to provide for her family, only to experience difficulties in finding work. Economic considerations, combined with little support for her educational aspirations, for a long time locked her in a “dead-end” segment of the labour market. Several of the other women also found that the economic pressures after marrying transnationally *postponed* their education for several years, although their educational plans were not dismissed completely. Hence, in some cases, the economic insecurity following the husband's migration means that the second-generation women cannot afford to invest in education at the expense of paid work. Furthermore, cultural understandings of gender and motherhood may mean that women are not expected to or supported in make achievements in education or the labour market.

When researching how transnational marriages affect employment among British–Pakistani women, Dale & Ahmed (2011) emphasise the importance of qualifications. Their quantitative study demonstrates that qualifications are more important in explaining the UK-raised women's attachment to paid work than whether or not they have married transnationally. However, the authors argue that transnational marriages can have a “concealed” effect on second-generation women's employment, because marriage can curtail women's education and consequently impede their attachment to paid work (Dale & Ahmed 2011: 920). The empirical material in this study does not allow for a full comparison between transnational marriages involving second-generation women with and without a higher education. Nevertheless, the variation in the empirical material suggests that the second-generation women's qualifications at the time of marriage mark a distinction with the potential to shape the way transnational marriages impact women's attachment to the labour market.

This article analyses the micro-processes that can mediate the interaction between a specific transnational practice –transnational marriage – and a specific dimension of integration – participation in the labour market – for second-generation women of Pakistani descent in Norway. The study adds qualitative understandings to the quantitative findings that transnational marriages do not seem to hinder second-generation women's employment (Brekke & Rogstad 2011; Dale & Ahmed 2011) and shows that the interaction between transnational marriages and women's employment is mediated by the

women's ambitions and access to employment, structures of social support that affect the spouses' decision-making power, and the family's economic situation. The migration inherent in transnational marriages among the second generation can shape the conditions for the families' work decisions in ways that rather than counteracting the “integration” of second-generation women can strengthen their participation in the labour market.

The analysis I have done is gendered in that it only concerns marriages in the second generation where the *husband* is the migrant spouse. Indeed, one can expect to find other processes and outcomes when the migrant spouse is a woman, where gendered relations of power might be reinforced rather than challenged (cf. Liversage 2012). However, the features of transnational marriages discussed here can serve as fruitful analytical dimensions also for studies of marriages with a migrant wife. Future research on transnational marriages and the second generation should further explore how transnational marriages can have varying consequences for different groups of second-generation men and women; in particular, there is a need to consider the role of class and gender. So far, there have been few efforts to analyse “what differences make a difference” within the second-generation category.

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## Notes

- 1 However, this figure is from 2008, and there is reason to believe that the employment rate has increased since then (Østby 2013).
- 2 All women in this study were born in Norway to immigrant parents from Pakistan. The article refers to the women as “second generation” and “Norwegian born” interchangeably.
- 3 There is still a possibility for limited labour migration for highly skilled immigrants in specific sectors of the labour market, e.g. the oil industry.
- 4 These employment rates refer to women who have had *some* attachment to work; thus, they include part-time work.
- 5 All the names of the participants are pseudonyms.

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