

# Transnational practices and local lives. Quran courses via Skype in Norwegian- Pakistani families.

With the emergence of an adult generation of descendants of migrants who are entering the labour market, marrying, and having children, questions of transnationalism are made current in new ways. This article engages in the discussion of transnationalism and ‘the second generation’ by taking the everyday life of families as a starting point for discussing the role and meaning of what can be defined as transnational practices. The practice in question is the use of online Quran courses among families of Pakistani background in Norway. Employing Levitt and Glick Schiller’s distinction between ways of being and ways of belonging in transnational social fields, this article discusses how to understand this practice and its transnational dimensions.

**Keywords:** transnationalism; second generation; Pakistanis; Norway; religion; Skype

## **Introduction**

Questions of transnationalism are made current in new ways with the emergence of an adult generation of descendants, the so-called ‘second generation’<sup>i</sup>, who are entering the labour market, marrying, and having children. For many members of this generation, the transfer and exchange of practices, values, money, and people across nation states have been part of everyday life. At the same time, this generation grows up, establishes their lives as adults, and invests in a future for themselves and their children in the country their parents migrated to.

They face the same challenges as those faced by most families; balancing family and work, taking their children to school and soccer practice, and simply managing an everyday family life.

Based on fieldwork among descendants of Pakistani immigrants in Norway, this article engages in the discussion of transnationalism and the 'second generation'. The practice in question here is the increasing use of Quran courses via Skype among families of Pakistani descent in Norway. There is an extensive and emerging literature on the impact that communication technology has on migration and transnational connections (cf. Vertovec 2004). In this article, however, I do not want to discuss the technology itself, but rather how the use of the Skype courses can be analysed in the context of the everyday lives of the families using it. Inspired by Olwig's appeal for transnational research to move beyond a focus on ethnic organisations and diasporic cultural expression by investigating 'the practice of home, a household or domestic unit', (Olwig 2002, 216), I take the everyday lives of families as a starting point for discussing the role and meaning of what can be defined as transnational practices.<sup>ii</sup>

The Skype courses transcend national borders: The teacher is situated in Pakistan and the child and their parents in Norway. With the use of Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004) distinction between 'ways of being' and 'ways of belonging' in transnational social fields - between engaging in social relations that cross borders and expressing and highlighting a transnational belonging - the article discusses how to understand this practice and its transnational dimension. Moreover, it explores the relation between national and transnational belonging. Does the use of Pakistani-based online courses reflect a (re)orientation towards the place of origin? Or is it rather an investment in everyday life in Norway? Or perhaps both at the same time?

## **Transnationalism and descendants**

The ‘transnational turn’ in migration research during the 1990s and onwards directed attention towards the ways many migrants maintain enduring ties to their countries of origin while continuing to become incorporated into the country to which they have migrated (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Vertovec 2009).

Definitions of transnationalism vary in their inclusiveness (cf. Vertovec 2009) from those who argue that transnationalism should be limited to border crossing activities in which migrants engage with persistency over time (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999), such as visits and sending of remittances, to those who take a broader view and include individuals who do not move themselves but maintain social relations across borders (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) and to more comprehensive notions of ‘transnational social imaginaries’, ‘transnational identifications’, and ‘transnational consciousness’(Andersson 2010; Vertovec 2009).

Parts of the transnational literature have been criticized for taking for granted that the country of origin is a dominating factor in the life projects of migrants and their children, and for masking solidarities or identifications other than those based on ethnicity and country of origin (cf. Andersson 2010; Anthias 1998; Brubaker 2004), thus having ‘a strong emphasis on continuity’ (Amit 2012, 501). A related critique concerns a tendency to ‘see transnationalism everywhere’. White argues that by focusing on transnationalism, researchers may be in danger of ‘overstating the degree to which migrants are consciously and deliberately engaged in transnational practices of various kinds, as if almost everything migrants do is by definition, “transnational”’ (White 2011, 8; see also Amit 2012).

Whereas the early transnational literature focused primarily on the first generation (cf. Andersson 2010), in recent years more attention has been paid to descendants of immigrants. Some researchers point to a low level of transnational activity among second generation immigrants (Alba and Nee 2003; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut and Portes 2001), while

other studies show examples of adult children of migrants creating new transnational practices (Bolognani 2007, 2013; Charsley 2003, 2005; Reynolds and Zontini, 2006; Zontini, 2007).

In addition, research on minority youth, building on theories of hybridization, 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1996) and 'diasporic space' (Gilroy 1993) demonstrates how young people of migrant background often identify with (imagined) communities based on other aspects than family, ethnicity and country of origin, such as religion, music, various forms of youth culture and the experiences of common ground with second generation youths in other countries (Andersson 2010; Jacobsen 2011; Levitt 2007). Research on the second generation has however to large degree focused on the group in terms of being children in migrant and transnational families or as adolescents and young adults without families of their own. Few studies have followed them into adulthood and parenthood. However research by Zontini (2007) on Italian young adults with children is one such exception to this rule.

In this article I emphasize how *doing family life* - the organisation and understanding of family, is an important part of this generation's way of placing themselves in local, national, and transnational social fields. Furthermore, I approach the issue of transnationalism both in terms of practices and as identity, imaginaries and belongings and I investigate the relations between these two levels. Here I rely on Levitt and Glick Schiller's distinctions between the existence of transnational social networks and the consciousness of being embedded in them, between 'ways of being' and 'ways of belonging' in transnational social fields (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Their view opens up for the possibility of being embedded within transnational social fields on different levels. 'Ways of being' are defined as actual social relations and practices in which individuals engage, and 'ways of belonging' are practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group (ibid., 1010). Levitt and Glick Schiller also emphasise the notion of *simultaneity*: the possibility of 'living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and

institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally' (2004, 1003). The notion of simultaneity can also be seen as a move away from understanding the relation between transnationalism and integration as a zero-sum game, to one of co-existence. However, as Erdal and Oeppen (2013) argue, we need to not only describe the co-existence, but also attempt to identify the nature of that co-existence or simultaneity. We need to explore what the relation between transnationalism and integration means in relation to specific practices and identifications and among descendants of immigrants in specific life situations.

### **Setting the study**

The first Pakistani labour migrants came to Norway in the late 1960s and early 1970s and were part of the first substantial immigration to Norway from outside of the Nordic countries (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008). Although Norway enforced an immigration halt in 1975, immigration from Pakistan kept on first through family *reunification* and then through family *formation* migration, as young people of Pakistani descent frequently marry spouses from Pakistan. Today Pakistani immigrants and their descendants constitute the third largest immigrant group (33 634) in Norway<sup>iii</sup>, and the largest group of descendants (15 194) (January 2013, Statistics Norway). Descendants of Pakistani immigrants constitute about one third of the whole second generation in Norway and they are also older than most other groups of the second generation (Midtbøen 2013). The dominant story of the Norwegian-Pakistani population is that of intergenerational changes and social mobility. The second generation attends higher education to a much higher degree than the parental generation, and also to a larger degree than the majority population (Dzamarija 2010). Persons of Pakistani background occupy a wide range of positions in Norwegian society, including high status occupations like doctors, lawyers, and politicians. Furthermore, researchers have documented a shifting

orientation from Pakistan to Norway illustrated by a recent significant decrease in transnational marriages (Sandnes 2013)<sup>iv</sup> and by the fact that the majority of Norwegian-Pakistanis now bury their dead in Norway (Døving 2005).

However, researchers point to a tendency for a polarisation among descendants of immigrants; at the same time as more enrol in higher education, there are also those do not complete upper secondary (Støren 2010). Furthermore, several studies document experiences of racism and discrimination among ethnic minorities (Andersson 2010; Midtbøen 2013). Immigrants and their children are to a large degree defined by culture and religion, and being Muslim *and* Norwegian is commonly represented as a contradiction (Jacobsen 2011). Immigrants' and their children's statuses as fully-fledged members of Norwegian society remain debated and precarious.

This article draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2010 and 2012 among twelve families and couples of Pakistani descent, as part of a larger project on family life among young adults of immigrant descent in Norway (Aarset forthcoming). The data was gathered through spending time with families in everyday domestic contexts and through in-depth interviews. The study includes couples and families where both spouses have grown up in Norway, and transnational couples where one was born and/or raised in Norway and the other in Pakistan. Furthermore, to capture the generational changes described above I have focused on couples where at least one spouse has higher education. Following a pragmatic approach to class where class position or aspiration is based on the level of education and work the participants may, albeit to a varying degree, be seen as part of a new emerging Norwegian middle class. Most of the informants are in their thirties and have children. The research was conducted in the greater Oslo area, where the majority of the Pakistani population in Norway resides. Oslo is a clearly classed and ethnically divided city (Andersen 2014). Most immigrants and their children live in the eastern and largely working class parts

of the city. There is a tendency however for immigrants and descendants of immigrants to move out of the inner and eastern parts of the city when they can afford a larger apartment or house.

Religious education of children was not initially an explicit research question, but emerged as a central theme through the fieldwork process. The discussion is primarily based on observations of the courses and on conversations with the parents about *their* experiences of the courses and *their* reasons for choosing them. Although I have met and talked with several of the children I have not had separate interviews with them.

### **Quran education in mosques and online**

Among Pakistani migrants and their children in Norway, Quran schools constitute an important arena for transmitting religious traditions, such as reading and reciting the Quran in Arabic (Jacobsen 2011). A research report from 2007 shows that 36 per cent of children of Pakistani descent living in Oslo between the age of six and nine attended Quran schools on a daily basis, and almost as many attended on a weekly basis (Kavli 2007). During my fieldwork I noticed that several of the research participants and their acquaintances chose to use Internet-based companies instead of the mosques in the religious education of their children. On the Internet one can now find numerous web pages offering online Quran courses via Skype. Many of the companies offering such courses are based in Pakistan. The target group seems to be Muslim families living in non-Muslim countries with everyday lives that do not easily include going to Quran school at the local mosque, either because there are no nearby mosques or because of the families' busy schedules.

The online Quran courses providers promote themselves as being effective, of high quality, easy to use, and flexible (you can schedule classes at a time that suits you). Over the last couple of years choosing online Quran courses for children seem to have become

increasingly popular among descendants of Pakistani immigrants in Norway. Children log on to their computer three to six times a week to read the Quran with a teacher situated in Pakistan. The types of courses offered to children and the prices of these courses<sup>v</sup> seem to be more or less the same between the different companies. The children attend what the parents referred to as ‘basic courses’ where they learn the Arabic alphabet and to read the Quran in Arabic. The Skype courses are one-on-one sessions: one student and one teacher at a time. In what can be described as a typical lesson the child sits in front of a computer screen in her/his home, and it is often set in the afternoon in between homework, TV watching, soccer practice, playing with siblings, etc. The teacher, on the other hand, is in his home or office in Pakistan. The child and the teacher hear each other’s voices, but do not have face-to-face contact. The screen shows the parts of the Quran they are reading. The communication between the child and the teacher is in Urdu, except for the actual reading of the Quran in Arabic. In addition to reading the Quran the teacher usually educates the child in praying. The whole lesson takes approximately 30 minutes. The children who participated in the courses in the families followed were between the ages of six and fourteen. Boys and girls seemed to participate equally.

In Norwegian integration discourse, as elsewhere in Europe, ethnic minority families, religious traditions, and transnational practices in general, and Quran schools in particular, are often presented as factors that restrict the self-development and cultural integration of immigrant youth and descendants of migrants. It is argued that Quran schools may hinder integration (Wikan 1995) by weakening children’s competence in Norwegian and by stealing time from other activities (Kavli 2007). The methods are often being described as ‘old fashioned’, and there have also been reports in the media of use of physical punishment (Leirvik 2009).

Moreover, in the aftermath of critical events such as the September 11 attack in USA (2001) and the tube bombing in London (2005), Quran schools have increasingly become associated with religious radicalisation. Seen in this context, using Pakistani-based teachers in the religious education of children of Pakistani descent in Norway can be seen as suspicious and as a sign of withdrawal from the Norwegian community. However, my interviews with Norwegian-Pakistani families challenge such assumptions and show how the use of Skype courses should be understood as ways of being and belonging in connection to the local context of everyday life in Norway just as much as a (re)connection to Pakistan.

### **The families**

In the following I will present three families who use Skype Quran courses. The families represent different family constellations that provide distinct contexts for transnational connections and orientations. Two of the families were formed by transnational marriages. In one of them *he* is the marriage migrant and in the other *she* is. In the third family, both partners had grown up in Norway. In the latter type of families both spouses are likely to have immediate family in Norway. In transnational couples, on the other hand, at least one in the couple will have close family members living in Pakistan, possibly providing a stronger orientation to and connection with Pakistan. However, a male marriage migrant will traditionally have greater economic and social obligations towards family members remaining in Pakistan than a female marriage migrant (Shaw 2001), a factor which may influence the form and content of the contact with family and relatives in Pakistan.

### **Family I: Rubina and Rashid**

The first family consists of Rubina (wife), Rashid (husband), and their two children (a boy aged six and a girl aged eight). Rubina was born in Norway to parents who migrated from Pakistan in the early 70s. Rashid is from Pakistan and came to Norway through marriage to

Rubina. Rubina has a bachelor's degree and sporadically takes temporary part-time positions. Rashid is an industrial worker and the main breadwinner in the family. The family lives close to Rubina's parents, in a neighbourhood that is home to several other families of migrant background, in addition to majority Norwegians. The children speak mostly Norwegian at home, while Rubina and Rashid speak a mix of Norwegian, Punjabi, and Urdu to each other.

Rubina has a large extended family and many relatives in Norway and the family participates in various religious and social feasts and gatherings with other Pakistanis in Norway. Rashid does not have any relatives in Norway, but keeps in close contact with his parents and siblings in Pakistan. He sends them money and travels to Pakistan several times a year to take care of his aging parents. How and where to invest emotional, social, and economic energies are areas of dispute in this family: Rubina wants to prioritise their house, their everyday life, and their future in Norway, whereas Rashid emphasises the connection to Pakistan and wants to invest in building a house there.

Rubina and Rashid's children, together with several other children, used to read the Quran at a neighbour's home, but they had to look for another alternative when the neighbour moved. Rubina announced that sending the children to a Quran school in a mosque was out of the question because of the time it took and the quality of the education. 'In the mosque there are 50 kids cramped in a room. And the lesson lasts for two hours', she said. Like several of the other families in this study the family received frequent phone calls from Pakistani-based companies offering online Quran courses.<sup>vi</sup> They decided to try out one of companies that a friend recommended. A couple of months after the children had started their online course, the Quran teacher left the company he worked for to start up his own online business. Rubina and Rashid's daughter continued on as his student. In this process the family discovered that the teacher actually lived near Rashid's brother in Pakistan. This meant that they could pay the teacher in cash through Rashid's brother, instead of wiring the money through the banking

system, making it cheaper and easier. During a trip to Pakistan Rubina and the children also met the teacher in person.

### **Family II: Faiza and Farooq**

Farooq (husband), Faiza (wife), and their two children (a girl aged eight and a boy aged ten) make up the second family. Farooq has grown up in Norway, whereas Faiza grew up in Pakistan and came to Norway after marrying Farooq. Farooq is an engineer. Faiza has a bachelor's degree from Pakistan, and has taken several language and job-training courses in Norway, but did not have paid work at the time of fieldwork. The family lives in a municipality next to Oslo, close to where Farooq grew up and to where his parents still live.

Farooq and Faiza participate actively in an international mosque in Oslo, and Farooq in particular seems more oriented to a Norwegian and global Muslim community than to Pakistan or some sort of Pakistani community in Norway. The family have only been to Pakistan three times in the last ten years. Farooq has a pragmatic view on the family's relation to Pakistan:

We have relatives in many places. Maintaining all those relationships and managing our everyday lives... That's just... When the grandparents die, the connection [to Pakistan] fades.

Faiza, on the other hand, wanted to visit her family in Pakistan more often but due to a combination of reasons (not earning her own money and bad health) she found it difficult to make frequent trips.

Farooq described growing up with a Muslim and Pakistani background in Norway as challenging. Wanting to make life easier and safer for his children, he was very conscious about engaging in the children's everyday lives by keeping in close contact with the school and participating in the children's after-school activities. He emphasised the importance of belonging to and being settled in the local community and in the Norwegian society at large.

This everyday focus also manifested itself in how Farooq viewed the children's relations to their Pakistani background. The family spoke mostly Norwegian at home, for instance. Emphasising that the children were not just Norwegians but *Norwegian Muslims* was important to Farooq:

I focus on them as Norwegian Muslims. They have Pakistani roots and they are Norwegian Muslims. I try to teach them that distinction.

Making the children feel confident about their identity as a Norwegian Muslim was fundamental to Farooq. In that regard it was important to give them religious knowledge. Previously both children went to Quran school at a mosque, but the time it took to attend classes (Farooq had to drive them to and from the mosque, and it lasted from half past three to half past five in the afternoon, five days a week) and the mixed results they got from it prompted Farooq to switch to online education. Now they had Quran education via Skype half an hour, four times a week. The Quran lessons were fitted in between school and the children's soccer practice.

Now they get an effective half hour. It is part of a new trend: making the everyday life easier by buying services. The kids are at home and use the facilities they have and get what they need,

Farooq said, again highlighting the importance of everyday life.

### **Family III: Shafaq and Saim**

Shafaq (wife), Saim (husband), and their four children (aged three, five, seven, and nine) constitute the third family. Both Shafaq and Saim have lived in Norway all their lives, and most of their family and close relatives live in Norway. Saim is a dentist. Shafaq has a bachelor's degree, but has been a stay-at-home mom since they had their first child.

Saim and Shafaq had moved out of the area where they both grew up, to a neighbourhood, on the western side of Oslo, where they were the only family of minority background. One of the reasons for this, they said, was that they wanted their children to become fully integrated into Norwegian society. Like Farooq, Saim also describes a normal weekday as packed with activities, and Quran education is mentioned in-between other everyday tasks:

There is something extra everyday: Once a week they take swimming lessons. And the oldest one takes Quran lessons. He reads the Quran in Arabic. But that's something he does at home – online. In addition there is always a birthday they're invited to – or a parent-teacher meeting or a parent council.

Shafaq and Saim both frequently spend time with parents and siblings in Norway, but compared to Rubina and Rashid, they seem to have a weaker connection to a close-knit community of Pakistanis in Norway. Moreover, unlike Faiza and Farooq, Shafaq and Saim do not belong to a particular mosque or Muslim community. Their everyday lives centre around the nuclear family: the children's activities, kindergarten, school, after-school activities, and work. They explain that by not having close relatives there today, paired with the country's unstable political situation, they are deterred from going to Pakistan, and seldom travel there. They emphasise, however, that they are very fond of Pakistan and they both remember with great affection their childhood visits to relatives in Pakistan (on childhood visits in the country of origin see Bolognani 2013, King, 2011, Zeitlyn 2012). At the same time, Shafaq and Saim contrasted themselves to their parents' generation:

They're still Pakistanis, and we're almost Norwegian really. We're Norwegian-Pakistanis, but we're more a part of the Norwegian society than our parents. We speak Norwegian at home, for instance, even though we know Urdu. And we almost never eat Pakistani food, except for when we're visiting our parents.

While Shafaq and Saim describe themselves as ‘almost Norwegian’ and ‘Norwegian-Pakistanis’, they define their children as ‘Norwegians with Pakistani background’.

Like Farooq, Shafaq and Saim prioritise the Norwegian language, and the family speaks only Norwegian at home. They still want their children to be able to speak and understand (some) Urdu, but have never really made great efforts in that direction. They like the fact that their son learns some Urdu during the Quran lessons. The Skype course seems to provide a possibility for giving him some language training that otherwise might have been lost in the busyness of everyday life.

Living in an area where they are the only Muslim and only non-white family, and having less contact with Pakistani or Muslim communities than the other two families I have presented, this family, when compared to the other two, seems to be carrying the responsibility of maintaining and shaping their religious and cultural identity more on their own.

### **A transnational practice in everyday life**

The phenomenon of Quran lessons being conducted via Skype represents an intertwining of distance and proximity. It involves communication and transfer of knowledge over great physical distances, and at the same time, it takes place in the ‘safety of the home’ (as one of the online companies puts it). Though the teacher is situated in another country, since the lesson is a one-on-one session, the families describe an experience where the teacher is more ‘present’ than an imam in a mosque with 20 children to teach. More still, the Skype lessons allow for a level of parental presence that could not be matched by mosque. Shafaq and Rubina underlined that the Skype solution allows them as parents to have more control over ‘what went on’, and they pointed out that they always stay nearby during the Quran lesson. The parents were less concerned about the children receiving the wrong religious influence in

the mosques than about the lack of pedagogical skills. Some of the parents had received physical punishment from their Quran teacher when they were young feared the same could happen to their children. Moreover, they pointed out that by staying nearby they are also able to refresh their knowledge and learn new things as well. In some ways, then, the Skype lessons can set the stage for a situation where religion and religious learning become more of a family practice. This poses interesting questions, though outside the scope of this article, about the role of religion in a minority context and in modern, complex societies, and about broader discussions on privatisation and or individualisation of religion (see, e.g. Jacobsen, 2011; Roy, 2004 and Taylor, 2007).

Importantly, the families gave similar reasons for having chosen online companies instead of the local mosque. Their explanations are to a large degree based on the context of their everyday lives and are framed within what can be described as a typical, modern, middle class family lifestyle, where efficiency and quality in a hectic family life are central priorities. At the time of my fieldwork the use of Skype courses seemed primarily to be a (aspiring) middle class phenomenon. There was however some indications pointing towards that the use of Skype courses were increasingly adopted by working class families as well.

Choosing Skype courses over mosque courses was not necessarily done (just) out of a desire for building stronger connections to Pakistan or a (re)orientation to Pakistan, but to fill a need for an efficient education of good quality. Quran education at the mosque was considered too time consuming, and the Skype teachers in Pakistan were perceived to be more modern and up to date in their pedagogical methods than some of the teachers in the mosques in Norway. Rather than representing a segregation or withdrawal from Norwegian society the use of Skype courses, instead of the local mosque, provided the families with the time and space for participation in Norwegian society. The use of Skype courses can be understood as part of what Levitt and Glick Schiller define as 'a way of being' in transnational social fields.

However, for some, like Saim, Shafaq, and Farooq, it is perhaps more accurately understood as a reflection of their daily lives in Norway and an expression of belonging to the local Norwegian context than a transnational ‘way of belonging’.

Still, by bringing children into contact with a teacher in Pakistan several times a week and through the inclusion of Urdu as part of the education, the Skype courses contribute to reinforcing pre-existing connections to Pakistan and/or forging new ones, for both the parents and the children. For some, like Rubina and Rashid, the Skype lessons create a personal connection to the teacher in Pakistan, while building on already existing tie to persons in Pakistan (e.g. Rashid’s brother). For the other families the connections made are less personal and tangible; it is first and foremost the children’s knowledge of Urdu that is strengthened. It remains to be seen whether or not this will result in the children having an increased feeling of belonging to Pakistan. It is possible that the Skype courses and the language skills create a type of *latent transnationalism* (Charsley 2012, 18) which can be transformed to an active transnationalism later in life.

Furthermore, the ‘second-generation experience’ is not homogeneous. Instead it is fractured by social differences (Anthias 2012), like gender and family constellations. The three cases presented here illustrate how the individual compositions and situations of families are relevant for how transnational orientations and connections are played out – thus underlining the importance of studying transnational practices in the context of everyday family life.

Olwig (2007) discusses how both family and place are cultural phenomena that become defined and attain meaning as individuals’ lives take social form and place within specific networks of social relations. She points out that the place of origin may shift from being an important site of personal belonging to a ‘more abstract place of identification if the centre of migrants’ social relations, and sociability, shifts to the migration destination (Olwig

2007, 12). The orientation to the parents' country of origin is related to family connections, memories, and experiences, and is partly something one may choose to invest in. At the same time, as Olwig (ibid.) also emphasises, immigrants and their descendants are often categorised matter-of-factly in terms of ethnic group designations based on their own or their parents' place of origin. The 'homeland identity' is also an ascribed identity, something that 'sticks' to you, and not just a matter of choice. This stickiness is illustrated by a situation of which the local school, according to Farooq, continues to define his children as Pakistanis, even though they are born in Norway. By emphasizing that his children are *Norwegian Muslims* Farooq tries to disentangle 'the homeland identity' from their religious identity (cf. Jacobsen 2006, 2011). The choice of online religious education must be understood both in relation to the families' Norwegianness and their Pakistani backgrounds, and in relation to an orientation towards a global (imagined) Muslim community (cf. Jacobsen 2011; Werbner 2002).

Andersson's (2010) notions of 'transnational social imaginaries' related to the experiences of otherness and common ground with second generation youths in other European countries gives resonance to how the individuals in my study talk about growing up as a religious and ethnic minority in Norway, but also to how they reflect around the lives of their children. Giving their children religious education and emphasizing, as Farooq explicitly does, their religious identity can be understood as an expression of a transnational way of belonging embedded in an global or European Muslim (imagined) community (cf. Jacobsen 2011; Werbner 2002). This suggests a complex relationship between transnational, religious, and national belonging. This also poses interesting questions to the complex and interwoven relationship between ways of being and ways of belonging; between practices and identifications. When and how does participation in particular practices lead to feelings of belonging and identification, and, the other way around, when and how do feelings of belonging lead to the participation in specific practices? Here we have a transnational practice

(Skype course) that gives room for local practices (soccer training etc.) and thus also local ways of belonging. The practices are however chosen because the families are already embedded in both transnational and national social fields.

The use of online Quran courses thus reveals several ways of belonging and ways of being that can have shifting emphasis, importance, meaning, and implications. In addition, persons may be embedded in several overlapping and contesting transnational fields at the same time. The empirical example in this article highlights a point also made by Levitt and Glick Schiller that the distinction between 'ways of being' and 'ways of belonging' is elucidating as an analytical distinction, but that in practice it can be difficult to make a clear distinction.

### **Concluding discussion**

In her article 'What's wrong with migration scholarship? A critique and a way forward', Levitt (2012) emphasises that a transnational perspective should not be understood as a shorthand for how people continue to participate in the economics or politics of their homelands, but it is rather a perspective that tries to capture how they *simultaneously* become part of the places where they settle and stay connected to a range of other places at the same time. Levitt points out that using a transnational optic may or may not reveal transnational engagement. Here I will add that revealing a social relation or practice that crosses borders, does not automatically imply that it is the *transnational* dimension(s) of that practice or relation that is the most significant for the ones that engage in it. Through grounded, ethnographic studies of the everyday family lives in of an emergent generation of descendants, raised in the country their parents migrated to, we can gain insights into complex experiences and trajectories that involve changes in meanings, shapes, and consequences of transnational practices. Ignoring the context of these practices, we may fail to capture the

seeming paradox that engagement in a transnational practice may in fact represent a strategy to invest more (time) in the country of residence. The discussion of the Skype courses demonstrates, on the one hand, that the multiple sites and layers of social fields where migrants and their descendants are embedded reveal ‘how something that is seemingly local is intimately connected to other places and levels of social experiences’ (Levitt 2012, 496). Just as much, or perhaps more so, however, this article demonstrates the reverse: how practices connected to other places, may be intimately tied to the local context of everyday life.

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<sup>i</sup> I define the second generation as children of immigrants, either born in their parent’s destination country or arrived before adolescence (cf. Portes and Rumbaut 2005)

<sup>ii</sup> The growing literature on the transnational dimension of religion and religious communities will not be explicitly addressed (see, e.g. Jacobsen [2011], Levitt [2004, 2008] on this issue).

<sup>iii</sup> Poles (82 601) and Swedes (37 467) are the two largest groups.

<sup>iv</sup> In the period between 2002-2007 71 per cent Norwegian born to Pakistani parents who had married had married transnationally, to 50 per cent in the period between 2008-2012 (Sandnes, 2013).

<sup>v</sup> 300 NOK (approximately 36, 5 Euro) a month per child for 30 minutes five days a week.

<sup>vi</sup> According to the participants in the study, lists of persons with Pakistani background in Norway have been circulating for years among Pakistani companies.

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