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# Parenting in the second generation. The changing family figurations of descendants of Pakistani, Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants in Norway

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**ABSTRACT**

This study explores how second-generation parents in Norway manoeuvre generational and institutional relationships and what consequences this may have for participation in ethnicity-based networks and majority society. The context is an advanced welfare state in which ideals of dual-earner, gender-equal and child-centred families are facilitated through provisions of care for the youngest children. We argue that second-generation families are moving towards a nuclear family model in which the dyadic bond between parents and children takes centre stage, strengthening dependency on institutions and networks in majority society and redefining dependencies on extended family and ethnicity-based networks. The transformed family and generational figuration become a means through which parents negotiate a position as established in Norwegian majority communities. The study contributes by highlighting parenting as a lens through which generational transformations and minority/majority relationships can be analytically bridged and by showing the relevance of Elias' figurational sociology for understanding social integration processes.

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## Introduction

An emerging European and American qualitative literature explores how adult children of immigrants approach parenting in contexts where they and their children are defined as ethnic or racialised minorities. This new interest in parenting represents a thematic extension of the existing research on second-generation families, which has so far focused on marriage patterns

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and changes and adaptions of gender roles in the Nordic context (Rytter 2013) and internationally (Foner and Dreby 2011). Our article expands this literature by examining parenting practices and generational relations among descendants of Pakistani, Indian and Sri Lankan immigrants. These parents are among the oldest in a relatively young second generation in Norway (Molstad and Steinkellner 2020), representing a new generation of parents.

"Second-generation immigrant" is a contested concept. However, we find the term fruitful when referring to a specific generational position between the immigrant grandparent generation and a new generation of children (for a similar discussion, see Aarset, Smette, and Rosten 2021; Gilliam 2022b), a position characterised by the duality of being both minority and citizen (Andersson 2010). As citizens educated and socialised in majority society's institutions, second-generation parents have been found to be confident when interacting with kindergartens and schools (Gilliam 2022b; 2023), yet they may overperform good parenting to manage the stigma attached to "the bad immigrant parent" (Handulle 2022). The second generation is particularly affected by what is referred to as the integration paradox – the finding that highly-educated immigrants report more experiences of discrimination than those with lower education (Midtbøen and Nadim 2022; Steinmann 2019). Concerns for children's belonging – their feeling of being at home and of being safe (Yuval-Davis 2006) is a central theme in the existing literature on the second generation. Studies of second-generation minority Norwegians show that non-recognised national identity is reported most often by well-established groups of Asian and African origins (Friberg 2021). A recurrent finding in the second-generation parenting literature is that transmission of knowledge about and skills in minority language and cultural traditions is conceived as protection in case of future discrimination and non-recognition as citizens (Juang et al. 2018; Karam 2020; Mukherjee 2021; Swartz, Hartmann, and Vue 2022). Studies place these parenting strategies within the broader conditions of late modernity, in which parents are charged with an extended responsibility to "parent well" to minimise future risk (Lareau 2003). Hence, the second-generation parents in the literature come across as typically middle-class in that they communicate a reflexive and cultivational approach to parenting (Gilliam 2022b; Karam 2021; Mukherjee and Barn 2021)

What needs to be added in the second-generation parenting literature is how these new approaches to parenting reshape generational relationships, that is, relationships between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, and between the first and second generation. Research on children of immigrants in Nordic countries indicates significant intergenerational changes taking place in gender relations and family formations in the second generation, involving renegotiations of relations, emotions, and obligations between family members (Aarset 2015; Rytter 2013) and a movement

towards more gender equal families (Kitterød and Nadim 2020). At the same time, cultural and social integration in the second generation may create tension and conflicts in family relationships (Kalmijn 2019).

As pointed out by Foner and Dreby (2011), studying intergenerational relations in immigrant families is critical for understanding both individual experiences and "the dynamics of immigrant incorporation" (560). Hence, this article aims to explore the interplay between parenting, intergenerational relations, and processes of social integration among second-generation parents in Norway. In debates on the consequences of immigration, the concept of integration is often, as pointed out by Rytter (2019), "unclear and fuzzy" (2019, 682). The integration discourse has also been criticised for reproducing and legitimising fundamental asymmetries between racialised minorities and majorities (Dahinden 2023; Gilliam 2023). Our use of the concept of "social integration" refers to the development of shifting bonds and interdependencies between individuals and groups, hence to how society is "connected" as a social system. This approach to social integration draws on Norbert Elias' concept of society as a figuration, defined as a structure of mutually oriented and dependent people (Elias 1978). Elias employed the concept of figuration both in analysing the relationships between generations, stressing intergenerational tensions and conflict as fundamental forces of social dynamics (Elias [1989] 2005), and in analysing the relational dynamics between "established" and "outsiders" in local communities (Elias and Scotson [1965] 1994).

Our empirical focus in this article is on how parents organise their lives with small children, negotiating relationships with the grandparent (first) generations and settling in majority-dominated local communities, and on the new family and generational figurations that emerge through these everyday practices. Our study contributes by highlighting parenting as a lens through which transformations in generational relationships and minority/majority relationships can be analytically bridged, and by showing the relevance of a figurational perspective for understanding integration processes.

## Second-generation family figurations in advanced welfare states

The context for our study is an advanced welfare state where "people are more involved with the state than in most other areas of the world" (Vike 2017, 43). Particularly significant is the increase in the availability of kindergartens for the youngest children, which has resulted in enrolment in public childcare for two-year-olds of 90 per cent (Ellingsæter, Kitterød, and Lyngstad 2017). Nordic welfare states are also characterised by a normative expectation that fathers are equally involved in developing the parent–child intimacy deemed critical in the resourcing of the child (Stefansen and

Aarseth 2011) and by a strong ideal of democratic parent–child relationships (Gullestad 1996). This combination of a high degree of institutionalised childhood and child-centred families means that becoming a parent in the Nordic context entails new and more encompassing interdependencies on the welfare state through its provisions for and demands placed on parents.

An important question is how this relationship between parents and children and between the family and welfare institutions are negotiated in second-generation families. Our case is families where parents are descendants of immigrants or refugees from Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka and can be defined as belonging to a broad middle-class category. In Norway, those of Pakistani family background constitute by far the largest group.[1] Although there are several differences between, but also within, the South Asian societies from which the first generation migrated, the historically dominant family form in the region involved ideals of arranged marriages and patrilocal extended households (Palriwala and Uberoi 2005), and strong gender and generational hierarchies (Therborn 2004). Therefore, while the second-generation parents in our study live through the same transformations as the population at large, their experience of and ways of navigating them will be shaped by their upbringing in a family and generational figuration that differed from the mainstream, as well as their position as minoritised citizens.

Drawing on Norbert Elias, we approach transformations of family organisation as shifts in the webs of interdependencies in which people are embedded. Elias' most well-known work is his theory of the civilisation process, built on a historical analysis of the consequences of increasingly integrated state formations for the changes in norms for "civilised" behaviour (Elias [1939] 1994). In a Nordic context, Gilliam and Gulløv (2017) have employed the civilising concept to analyse the new family-state figuration resulting from the institutionalisation of childhood. They argue that institutionalisation is a form of civilising process in that it requires detailed coordination of the behaviour of parents and children, increasing childhood institutions' power in relation to families.

Elias' theory of the civilising process is also the foundation for the essay "The Civilizing of parents" (1993), in which he analyses changes in the generational figuration – the relationship between parents and children. In this essay, Elias describes these changes as a historical process of gradual informalisation, "the loosening of barriers of respect in relations between parents and children" (207), which has led to a reduction of parental authority and a lessening of inequality in relations between parents and children. Elias connects these changes to a parallel change through which state institutions take over many of the family's former functions related to childcare and education, and the family's principal functions become affective and emotional (Elias 1998, 207).

Power relationships in figurations are also central in Elias' theorisation of relationships between established and outsiders. The original theory was

developed based on an ethnography of a British village working-class communities (Elias and Scotson [1965] 1994). Unequal power relations between the established and newly settled inhabitants developed as the norms and standards for good behaviour defined by the established made up the standard against which newcomers measure themselves. This inequality was reflected in the outsiders' self-understanding, more specifically in how their self-respect depended on the respect shown them by the established (Van Stolk and Wouters 1987, 479–481). With reference to this established-outsider dynamics, Hage (2006) defines an insider as someone "who 'belongs' and is mentally and bodily attuned to a specific socio-cultural space", while the outsider is "a specific mode of being an insider" – that is, they become outsiders (to the established) at the moment where they enter their space (Hage 2006, 343).

The second-generation parental position may be characterised by democratisation of parent–child relationships from one generation to the next. It is also characterised by being established in relation to the first generation and newly arrived immigrants but often regarded as outsiders by the majority when entering "their space". Analysing how mothers and fathers organise their everyday lives brings into view relationships between generations and between the second-generation family and the state. The research question we seek to answer in the following is how second-generation parents manoeuvre generational and institutional relationships and with what consequences for their participation in ethnicity-based networks and majority society.

## Materials, methods, and ethics

This article combines data from two separate studies of second-generation parents in Norway: Aarset's study of family life and belonging among highly educated descendants of immigrants from Pakistan and India, and Smette's study of descendants of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. The second generation of Pakistani and Indian backgrounds are mostly descendants of immigrants from the rural areas of Pakistani and Indian Punjab. The men came searching for work in Norway at point in time when the country was in demand for cheap labour in the unskilled labour market, particularly in the country's central areas, and were later joined by wives and sometimes children (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008). The second generation of Tamil background was initially descendants of Sri Lanka Tamil labour and educational migrants, and later (from early 80's) refugees fleeing the civil war between the Tamil minority and the Singhalese majority (Fuglerud 1999). As in the Pakistani and Indian migration, men, often young, arrived first, and women, sometimes children, came on family reunification.

Aarset's study was based on a 2-year ethnographic fieldwork (2010–2012) among 20 couples and families of Pakistani and Indian descent in the greater Oslo area. Half of the couples had Muslim Pakistani family backgrounds, and the other half had Sikh or Hindu Indian family backgrounds. The participants were recruited through personal networks and associations. The data were gathered through spending time with families in everyday domestic contexts and through in-depth interviews.

Smette's study of descendants of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees focused on generational relations and the transmission of Tamil language, religion, and culture in everyday life. Participants were recruited mainly through fieldwork at Tamil language schools in Oslo between 2020 and 2021 (extended due to the Covid-19-pandemic). Most families identified as non-practicing Hindu; a minority identified as Catholic. In addition to notes from fieldwork encounters, the second-generation material consisted of 18 interviews with second-generation individuals and couples and two focus groups with mothers, representing, in total, 22 families.

The ten-year gap between the first and the second studies enabled us to study families in the same life phase. A substantial part of Tamil immigration to Norway started approximately ten years after Pakistani and Indian immigration. However, significant contextual and historical differences shape this life phase for the parents in the two studies, relating, for instance, to developments in family policy and debates on immigration and religious and cultural diversity. There are also important differences in the public image of the minority groups represented in our material. Muslims, and thus Norwegian-Pakistanis, have come to represent the problematic "other". This contrasts with how people of Tamil or Indian origin, for the most part, Hindus and Sikhs, are often presented as "model minorities" (Kindt 2018). During the ten years between the two studies, the number of descendants of immigrants who have reached adulthood and occupied various positions in Norwegian society has increased – contributing to challenging and expanding previous understandings of Norwegianness and establishedness. At the same time, survey data on attitudes towards Muslims, in particular, suggest relatively high levels of hostility within the majority population (Hoffman and Moe 2017).

Both studies included what we, following Rytter (2013), refer to as "local couples", that is, couples where both spouses had grown up in Norway, as well "transnational couples" with one spouse born and/or raised in Norway and the other in Sri Lanka, Pakistan or India or as in a few cases in another European country. All had partners with the same ethnic and religious backgrounds, reflecting findings from Molstad and Steinkellner (2020) on marriage patterns among second-generation immigrants in Norway. In both studies, most had married at a relatively young age – early and mid-20s – when most still lived with their parents. They described a mixture of self-

initiated and arranged marriages among Pakistani and Indian participants and primarily self-initiated marriages among Tamil participants.

Aarset's study focused on couples with one or both spouses having higher education, and among the participants were doctors, dentists, IT consultants, teachers, journalists, and nurses. In the transnational couples, some migrant spouses were unskilled workers (two men) or did not have paid work (one woman). Smette's study did not have class-based recruitment. The couples were more varied, with interviewed parents having either higher education (engineers, doctors, lawyers) or being skilled workers (nursing assistants, technicians, transport workers). As in (the second author's) study some migrant spouses were unskilled workers (transport, retail). The research participants thus constitute a socioeconomically diverse group. However, based on a pragmatic approach to class (Stefansen and Farstad 2010), where class position or class aspiration is based on the level of education and work, they can be defined as middle or lower middle class.

Both studies were reported to the National Centre for Research Data. Interviews and data management were carried out following the guidelines for qualitative research set out by the Norwegian Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities. All the participants were given written information about the purpose of the study and informed that participation was voluntary, and that data would be treated confidentially. Both authors have majority Norwegian backgrounds, and a main ethical and methodological concern was related to the interviews and fieldworks as situations where the power relations between majority and minority were being played out. There is a risk that participants saw the research as an evaluation of them as good parents or gender-equal families. Therefore, they may have stressed their compliance with these ideals and under-communicated ways in which they did not. As such, the interviews were examples of an established/outsider dynamic, where the participants may have been concerned about gaining respect for their way of life from the researchers.

## Analytical approach

The material is diverse and comprises different migration histories in the first generation, different religious and class backgrounds, and a ten-year gap between the first and the second study. The first analysis step was carried out separately for the two studies. (The second author's) material had been analysed for earlier publications. It was re-analysed with a specific focus on the parents' discussing priorities and organisation of their everyday lives and concerns for the future. (The first author's) material was first analysed for broad overarching themes related to everyday life, family structure, parental biographies (including relocations, education, and marriage), family

network (local and transnational families, neighbourhoods), and childrearing priorities and concerns.

The second step in the analysis was conducted jointly and guided by the principles of abductive analysis – in which theoretical concepts are acknowledged as informing the analysis (Tavory and Timmermans 2014). Elias' concepts of figurations, interdependencies and established-outsider relationships have guided our analysis.

Rather than comparing the three groups (Tamil, Pakistani and Indian), we applied the metaphor of "juxtapositioning" (Boddy et al. 2020) by which we strived for "a more nuanced and contextually situated analysis entailing recognition of […] commonalities and differences" (p. 18). At the time of the research, most of the couples in both studies were in their thirties, and most had been married for several years, had children in kindergarten or primary school, and were approximately in the same life phase. This juxtapositioning enables us to draw attention to how the second-generation position shapes parents' ways of manoeuvring and negotiating generational and institutional relationships.

## Dual-earner family figurations. Institutionalised weeks and weekend togetherness

Existing studies of everyday life in families with small children in Norway highlight their dependence on public institutions for childcare and on involved fathers to manage everyday life as a dual-earner family model (Ellingsæter, Kitterød, and Lyngstad 2017; Farstad and Stefansen 2015). Studies also show that first-generation immigrants and descendants of immigrants, support and take the dual-earner/dual-carer family model for granted (Kitterød and Nadim 2020). Parents in our studies described ways of organising their daily lives that resonate with these findings.

In Norway, kindergarten and after-school programmes are typically open between 7.30 am and 5 pm. Hence parents usually shared the morning and afternoon logistics between them to have an entire workday of eight hours. An example of this organisation was described by a mother of Tamil family background with two children in their first years of elementary school. The mother was a higher civil servant, and her husband, also raised in Norway, was an engineer in a private company. In this family, the father would get up before the rest of the family and go by car to his workplace on the other side of town. The mother would prepare the children for school and then leave for work. In the early afternoon, the husband returned to be at home when the youngest returned from his after-school programme. He would also prepare dinner, and when the mother returned, they would eat and, depending on the weekday, accompany the children to their respective organised activities. After homework and bedtime, both parents would usually sit at the computer for a few hours to make up for too short workdays.

This example illustrates how the dual-earner family model depends not only on childcare institutions but on fathers taking part in childcare for the youngest children. Both mothers and fathers presented their system for sharing responsibility for the children as necessary and as something they wanted very much. Parents in families who did not have flexible hours or worked shifts described how they coordinated their work schedules to take turns in the morning and afternoon with the children. In some families, one of the parents had a work rotation that made it challenging to participate in the morning and afternoon shifts with the children. In these cases, parents stressed that they were looking for a different job that would enable more family time. One mother raised in Norway with parents who had immigrated from Sri Lanka described how she and her husband had recently moved from another European country, where they had first settled because her husband had migrated there from Sri Lanka as an adult. With the husband working evenings and weekends while she stayed home with the children – something she described as the expectation from the system – they both found it hard to have a good family life. Her family in Norway recommended them move back, because they could have a much better life as a family there.

Overall, parents in our studies expressed strong identification with the institutionalised forms of childcare provided by the welfare state. Like other studies of second-generation working mothers in Norway (Nadim 2014), most mothers and fathers in our material discussed kindergarten as an essential arena for child development, which children enjoyed very much. Hence, when a local couple of Tamil family background talked about the abrupt termination of their children's enrolment in a public kindergarten due to the family's change of residence, they stressed the negative consequences for the children, who lost their friends and the adults they were close to, rather than emphasising the inconvenience it meant for them as working parents.

For families with school-aged children, weekdays were also structured according to organised activities, most frequently sports in local sports clubs. One father of three (Pakistani family background, local marriage) described the family's weekday routines as "school, work, dinner, homework", adding that "and then there is something extra every day" before describing the kids' weekly swimming lessons and Quran lessons. He ended the description by pointing out that "and then there is always a birthday they are invited to—or a parent-teacher meeting or a parent council".

Despite admitting that the rhythm of the work week was hectic, prioritising most of their non-working hours on the children and their activities were presented as a self-evident choice. The taken-for-grantedness of this way of organising everyday life was, as pointed out by Gilliam (2022b), the result of the parents' institutional socialisation in Norway. This became evident

when a father of Tamil family background described how his wife, who had grown up in Sri Lanka and India, was distraught by the hectic everyday life they had when she first came to Norway, referring to it as a "machine life", with time for nothing other than work and transporting children to and from childcare institutions and school.

The parents considered children's participation in sports and other enrichment activities important arenas for development and sociability and an arena for parent child-bonding (Stefansen, Smette, and Strandbu 2018). Some parents also mentioned that they wanted their children to have a different experience than they had had in their childhood when their parents were unable to prioritise leisure activities for their children.

With the limited time left for relaxation and being together during the week, several parents discussed the weekend as a cherished time for focusing on family. For many families, Fridays were reserved for the nuclear family and for snuggling up on the sofa with something good to eat, watching TV, relaxing, and just having "a cosy" time together. Saturdays and Sundays were often spent mainly with the nuclear family, though several parents referred to negotiations over how much weekend time to allocate to grandparents and extended network socialisation. The dual-earner family figurations can therefore be characterised by an alternation between openness towards and dependency on the outside world during the week, and a concern to cultivate the nuclear family relationships, during the weekend. In a comparative study of families in Los Angeles and Rome, Kremer-Sadlik, Fatigante, and Fasulo (2008) and colleagues argue that separate family time and togetherness become "symbolic locus where family members connect and experience each other as a relational unit, and a moral expression of being a family" (2008, 286). The extent to which parents try to isolate and shelter the nuclear family from others may be seen to reflect how families are understood, and more specifically, whether the outside world is seen as threatening "to draw family members away from each other" (Kremer-Sadlik, Fatigante, and Fasulo 2008, 298). These tensions in what constituted family were evident also in the negotiation of generational relationships.

## Redefining generational relations. Grandparents in child-centred families

Migration represented a rupture to patrilocal extended household formations many in the first generation had grown up with. As their children were to establish new families, questions about what kind of household to establish were raised anew, as children will often have different ideas of "what it means to be and to family" than the parents (Rytter 2013, 2), emphasising notions of romantic love and more individualised life projects. Statistics show that nuclear households are the second generation's most common form of

household, even if the share of families living in extended households is higher than in the majority population (Søholt and Astrup 2009). This tendency was reflected in our material, where, of the total of 42 families, eight couples (four of Tamil, two of Indian and two of Pakistani family backgrounds) shared residence with parents/in-laws at the time of the studies; the rest lived in nuclear family households.

In the life phase in which they currently found themselves – with primarily small children and with parents who were retired or approaching retirement – the generations mainly did not rely on each other's assistance to make everyday life work. However, there were several ways in which grandparents – if living in Norway and within a reasonable distance – functioned as a reserve or an additional resource for families with small children. This tendency resonates with findings from general population studies in Norway (Herlofson and Hagestad 2012). Typical examples of how grandparents could help were picking up a child from kindergarten in case a parent was delayed or taking care of a sick child so that the parent did not have to stay home from work. Some had more regular arrangements, such as an older child going to the grandparents' every day after school and a grandmother coming over once a week to babysit so the couple could do sports or watch a movie together. Parents living in some form of extended households described more extensive forms of assistance. One mother of three (Tamil family background, local marriage) explained that the maternal grandparents, with whom she and her husband shared a three-storey house, had food ready for the children when they came home from school so that they could eat before their afternoon activities. They also contributed with transport to some of the weekly activities, particularly valuable for this family as the father often worked evening shifts.

Divorced/single parents described help from cohabiting grandparents as crucial for working full-time and following up with the children in the way they wanted. Most parents stressed, however, that they were careful not to build their family logistics around the parents' assistance and that it was important that they took responsibility for the most everyday tasks related to the child, to be able to monitor the child and know how they were doing and if there was follow-up needed. Delivering and picking up children from kindergarten is commonly regarded as an important moment for exchanging information about the child. Taking part in this, is a central aspect of being a good parent (Handulle and Vassenden 2021). Hence, most parents did not seem to consider leaving the task of taking children to and from kindergarten and school to the grandparents.

Other parents were reluctant to involve the grandparents too much in the daily routines because the interdependence would make it difficult to maintain clear boundaries between the nuclear family and the grandparents. One couple of Pakistani family background (the husband was raised in Norway

and the wife in Pakistan) described how they had ended up moving out of the residence they shared with the husbands' parents a couple of years after their first child was born because his mother kept interfering in their daily life. In another family of Indian family background, the father explained that it had taken some negotiation to make living together in a three-generation household work for everyone. He (born and raised in Norway), his wife (raised in India), their two kids and his mom (a widow) lived in the same house but in semi-separate apartments. They often shared dinner meals with the grandmother, and she took care of the kids if the parents came home late from work, but otherwise, they tried to have different daily rhythms and carve out some private space for the nuclear family, he said.

A few parents also talked about disagreements regarding childrearing, such as one mother of two (Indian family background, local marriage) who had not wanted to share residence with her parents-in-law because they had ideas of childrearing different from her own, relating to equal treatment of boys and girls. That this question could be a source of tension was evident in how parents who lived in extended households sometimes highlighted that they were the ones to make decisions relating to the child and that the grandparents were expected to respect these decisions in order not to make the child confused regarding "who were the parents" as one father put it.

While parents did not want grandparents to interfere with their upbringing, they strongly encouraged the grandparents to form strong bonds with the grandchildren. Thus, in extended households, children could be encouraged to move freely between the private living spaces even if the parents wanted respect for their privacy. In many families, grandparents were also given special responsibilities and roles that complemented the parents, frequently related to language transmission. Many parents described how they were unsuccessful at making the children respond to any other language than Norwegian, but the grandparents were better positioned. The parents in some families of Tamil family background allocated the responsibility of assisting children with homework from Tamil school to grandparents. In families with Pakistani and Indian family backgrounds, grandparents often played a crucial role in teaching the children about Islam/Hinduism/Sikhism and religious rituals. However, the parents and grandparents did not always agree on all aspects of religion regarding gendered norms and values. What grandparents, in some cases, saw as religion, the parents referred to as "old" cultural traditions they wanted to rid themselves of.

As touched upon above, the value of spending time together as a family and with the children was also an important reason why several parents expressed reluctance to be too involved in the often extensive, ethnicity-based networks that they were indirectly part of through the grandparents (Fuglerud and Engebrigtsen 2006). One father of two (Tamil background, local marriage) described how he risked being invited to a wedding or

another large event simply by bumping into someone in his parents' extensive network. For him, the covid-19 pandemic had been a relief because it had eliminated such invitations for a period. Another father of two (Indian background, local marriage) linked his frustration over such events to the loss of family weekends and to being with people he had no personal interest in: "And then you lose all your weekends and all the days you could relax as well, by being over-social with people you otherwise would not hang around with".

Prioritising children's activities and agendas seemed to be a legitimate reason for avoiding or changing social obligations. An example was a father of Indian family background who explained that until recently, there had been birthday celebrations and anniversaries within their network of other families with Indian backgrounds every weekend. Now he and his wife had weekends filled up with the children's activities instead and could legitimately decline invitations. Others explained how they, and other parents in their generation, had been able to bring about changes in the way that weekend visiting took place and that they were no more adapted to children's eating and sleeping routines than in the grandparents' generation.

This redirection of time and network priorities implied a flipping of a generational figuration, where formerly, it was the oldest generation that defined the terms of interaction. With the second generation as parents, the children and their needs now set the terms for socialising. Elias (1998) describes this as a change of power relations, in which the child gains power – implied in the notion of child-centeredness. This flipping of the generational figuration also implied an informalisation of relationships between older and younger, thus fewer demands for the display of respect. While parents often commented that they cherished as valuable of Tamil/Indian/Pakistani culture the respect traditionally paid to elders, they also commented how the grandparents had changed very much in their way of interacting with children, being much more open and lenient with the grandchildren than they had been with them.

## Doing establishedness in neighbourhoods, schools, and ethnicity-based associations

Most families in both studies currently lived in neighbourhoods they described as dominated by majority Norwegians. Several had moved to such places from other, more ethnically diverse neighbourhoods. Those who could afford it often moved to areas that could be defined as middle-class within or on the outskirts of the capital Oslo's urban centre. Others had moved to semi-rural areas on the city's outskirts, where housing was cheaper than in the urban middle-class areas. In both cases, it had been important for the parents to move away from neighbourhoods where, in their view, parents did not follow up their children properly, and where

there was a risk that peers would negatively influence the children. Though a few of the families had chosen to settle or continue to live in ethnically diverse central areas, we focus in the following on families who had moved to communities dominated by majority ethnic Norwegians because their situation permits us to analyse second-generation families' relationship with majority society as a particular example of an established-outsider figuration (Elias and Scotson [1965] 1994).

In the research literature, moving from one neighbourhood to another is discussed as an aspect of social mobility and integration processes (Tran 2020). Parents, however, may, as suggested by Danielsen (2010) experience it as choosing a childhood for their children which in turn will influence what kinds of adults they will become, and as such, it can be linked to the extended sense of responsibility characterising particularly middle-class parenting in late modernity (Lareau 2011). Several parents explained their decision to move to a majority-dominated neighbourhood by a wish that their children could "be part of Norwegian society" now and in the future. However, in these new communities, where they had no former network and stood out as one of few non-white families, the parents were nevertheless outsiders who relied on the established for recognition as families that behaved in compliance with majority norms.

Across the studies, parents described how they endeavoured to build relationships with other parents around children by establishing various forms of reciprocity around children and children's activities. The organisation of children's sports in Norway has been analysed as a reciprocal relationship between families, civil society, and the state, in which parents offer a gift to the local community by acting as coaches and organisers, and the local community reciprocates the gift to the parent in the form of an opportunity for the child to participate and become integrated into society (Archetti 2003). This analysis can also be extended to relationships between parents sharing neighbourhoods and schools. Hence, efforts to organise birthday parties, take turns accompanying children to activities and school, as well as engagements as coaches in children's sports, were exchanged for opportunities for children to experience activities and relationships in their communities. The child-centred nuclear family described above was a premise for engaging in this form of reciprocity, as it required allocating most of the adults' free time to the children.

Most recounted positive experiences with engaging in such reciprocity, though many were in an early phase and expressed hopefulness rather than certainty regarding their new connections. Some parents with Pakistani family backgrounds said that they felt obliged to be active in the neighbourhoods and the children's after-school activities to not be seen as "typical immigrant" parents who did not care. Taking up formal roles in the community could also be a way of working with the environment to prevent their children

experienced harassment as non-white. One father (Tamil background, local marriage) described how this role as a coach on his son's soccer team allowed other children to become familiar with him – "a big, dark man" as he expressed it – referring to the way he stood out as one of the few parents with dark skin in the neighbourhood. These findings resonate with Gilliam's (2022b) study, where second-generation minority Danish parents strived to present themselves as different from the public image of "the problematic immigrant parent". When fathers in interviews described themselves as taking an equal and active part in childcare and household chores, it can be read as reflecting an extra layer of self-consciousness regarding stereotypical views on immigrant fathers. This self-presentation may also have been directed at other parents from the same background, to whom they explicitly stated they wanted to act as a role model. Parents in transnational couples described how participation in different forms of socialisation was often complicated for partners who spoke little Norwegian and often had inconvenient work hours. In these couples, the more established parent tended to take the main responsibility for building relationships in these families.

While parents could be explicit about wanting to be like the other parents in their local engagements, there were several examples of parents who did not hesitate to confront other parents of schools if their children encountered harassment related to skin colour. This reflects how second-generation parents, as citizens, feel entitled to do so and are confident in what channels to use to handle such situations. One example of such confrontation was described by a mother (Tamil background, transnational marriage) whose eldest attended an elementary school in a predominantly white middle-class area. When she learnt that other children had addressed him with racial slurs, she contacted the teacher. The teacher suggested that she post a message in the parental Facebook group to inform them of what had happened and encourage the other parents to discuss this with their children. She described having been hesitant, as she did not know the other parents very well at that point, but that she was overwhelmed by the other parents' response and described the incident as a turning point in her relations with them. Several interpretations are possible, and we should not underestimate the importance of middle-class parents' shame when confronted with the possibility that their children have exposed others to racism. However, following Elias (1998, 208), we can also regard this exchange as one in which the mother was seen as complying with norms for good parenting (standing up for her child) and self-control (confronting the other parents in a rational manner that allowed the other parents to demonstrate their *civilness*) in their interactions with her. The mother experienced this exchange as being respected and included by the other, established, parents.

The risk that the children could be confronted with racism and discrimination, also as adults, was something most parents counted on but handled

in different ways. Some parents took a pragmatic approach, stressing that the children just had to learn to live with it and think about it as reflecting other people's bad upbringing. Other parents, mostly highly educated, seemed more concerned that such experiences would affect their children negatively and acted accordingly. An example was a mother of Indian family background who had recently moved from a multi-ethnic to a predominantly white, middle-class area. When her kindergarten-aged daughter cried because she wanted to "be white like the other children", the mother tried to compensate for the lack of a multi-ethnic environment by providing the daughter and her kindergarten with children's books about experiences of race and racism.

For some highly educated parents, instruction in the language spoken by their grandparents was also a strategy to cultivate resilience in children. One example was a couple interviewed together. The mother explained that their recent decision to send their two young children to Tamil language school emerged from wishing her children would regularly experience being in a place where other children looked like them. This was particularly important for her since they lived in a neighbourhood with mostly white, majority Norwegians, and her children had started reflecting on their different skin colour. These meanings of language instruction differ from the meanings they had for the first generation when the continuity of the Tamil nation was a prime concern (Bruland 2012), and resonates with findings from a study of second-generation middle-class British Indian parents engaging in language and cultural instruction as a form of concerted cultivation (Mukherjee and Barn 2021).

The parents of Pakistani – and Muslim – family backgrounds described more experience with prejudice based on religion than those of Tamil and Indian family backgrounds. These parents also expressed fear that their children would meet anti-Muslim sentiments in the future. Giving their children instruction in Islam was one way of making them confident in their identities and more robust when encountering racial or religious prejudice. Hence, some parents, such as the father above who confronted his children's school, tried to carve out a space for being simultaneously a visible, practising Muslim and a Norwegian for their children. Others chose to downplay their "Muslimness" and/or display themselves as "relaxed Muslims" (Gilliam 2022a) when meeting non-Muslims.

## Concluding discussion

In this article, we have examined how second-generation parents manoeuvre generational and institutional relationships and what consequences this may have for their participation in ethnicity-based networks and majority society. The context for this study is an advanced welfare state in which ideals of dual-earner/dual-carer, gender-equal and child-centred families are facilitated through welfare state provisions of care for the youngest children. Our

analysis shows that in this historical and cultural context, second-generation families are moving towards a nuclear family model in which the dyadic bond between parents and children takes centre stage, strengthening the family's dependency on institutions and networks in majority society. The redefinition of dependencies on extended family and ethnicity-based networks implicates the untying of individuals – men and women – from the generational dependencies and power dynamics of the patriarchal family figuration (Therborn 2004). The emotional importance of the child and of family togetherness also reflects the historical process through which the child-centred family emerges (Elias 1998). Hence, our study contributes by showing the relevance of figurational sociology for understanding social integration processes as an interplay between changes in relationships between generations and changes in minority-majority relationships.

Second-generation families' interdependence on welfare state institutions resonates with the transformation of the generational figuration in Europe described by Elias (1998), argued to be particularly accentuated in a Nordic welfare state context (Gilliam and Gulløv 2017). Our analysis shows that in this figuration, everyday life in second-generation families is adjusted to fit the rhythm of the institutions on which the families depend during weekdays but often centre around nuclear family togetherness during weekends. A nuclear-family model also defines the premises for the grandparents' role – including for those living in extended households. In this family model, grandparents are defined as an additional resource for the parents in their endeavours to juggle the children's often tight afternoon schedules but are expected to conform to the parents' childrearing practices. However, the grandparents' knowledge and emotional ties to the family narrative are highlighted as critical to initiating the children's connection with countries of origin and religious and cultural traditions – now and in the future.

Second-generation parents are incorporated into the figuration of interdependent actors and institutions linked to children and upbringing by taking roles as involved parents in local communities. For some, investments in such activities enable a reduction in engagement with extended family and ethnicity-based networks. Being an involved and active parent in networks around children also enable the parents to present themselves as "established" (Elias and Scotson [1965] 1994). Nevertheless, parents recognise that their children will not necessarily be defined as fully acknowledged as Norwegian now or in the future, underlining their position as both established and outsiders. Some recounted their children's experiences of racial slurs or religious prejudice, whereas others expressed concerns that this could happen. We observed a tendency that the most highly educated parents expressed most explicit concern for racialisation. The way different parents cope with racialisation and discrimination is an important topic for further research. Our analysis suggests that the established groups, and highly educated parents in

particular, may feel that their children are entitled belonging through their parents' compliance with central notions of Norwegianness, which can make instances of non-recognition more painful (Aarset 2018). There are connections here with the class-mobility literature in the vulnerability experienced when people change their social positions (Gubrium 2014). This vulnerability is linked to building a new network from scratch and to one's self-respect being dependent on respect and recognition from the established (Van Stolk and Wouters 1987). At the same time, in these new networks and connections, there is potential for change in who will be defined as established and outsiders. Future research should therefore also address the extent to which the bonds of interdependencies established around being a parent of young children are extended beyond the inevitable temporariness of this situation and in families of different class backgrounds. Research is also needed to investigate how ongoing outsider-established dynamics challenge and shape understandings of who counts as insiders and part of the majority.

## Note

1. By January 2022, Norwegian-born to Pakistani parents counted 18,116, compared to respectively 6,710 and 4,912 Norwegian-born to parents from Sri Lanka and India (Statistics Norway, *Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents*. https://www.ssb.no/en/innvbef).

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## Ethics statement

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