This article was downloaded by: [Statsbiblioteket Tidsskriftafdeling]

On: 17 March 2014, At: 11:02

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjms20>

Money or Education? Improvement Strategies Among Pakistani Families in Denmark

Mikkel Rytter ^a

^a Department of Anthropology, Archaeology and Linguistics , Aarhus University , Denmark

Published online: 06 Dec 2010.

To cite this article: Mikkel Rytter (2011) Money or Education? Improvement Strategies Among Pakistani Families in Denmark, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37:2, 197-215, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2011.521356](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2011.521356)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2011.521356>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Money or Education? Improvement Strategies Among Pakistani Families in Denmark

Mikkel Rytter

Tracing life stories and family histories back to rural Punjab, I explore the development and processes of upward social mobility of the Pakistani community in Denmark from the 1960s onwards. I suggest that social mobility among Pakistani immigrants and their descendants must be seen as the outcome of a village-like immigrant community's fierce competition for symbolic capital and recognition within the context of changing social and economic conditions in Denmark. While the Pakistani immigrants primarily found unskilled factory work during the 1960s and 1970s, the economic recession and restructuring of the Danish labour market during the late 1970s and 1980s pushed them into two different long-term strategies of money or education respectively. This created a split in the Pakistani community between educated and non-educated families and shaped the second generation's way of life in terms of, for example, marriage arrangements or notions of identity and belonging.

Keywords: Migration; Family; Social Mobility; Capital; Pakistanis; Denmark

It is well known that transnational migration is perceived as a way of improving living conditions and future possibilities for people all over the world, but it is also widely recognised that some livelihood strategies are regarded as more successful than others—as is the case for some Pakistanis who have been living in Denmark for four decades. However, as I argue in this article, notions of improvement are contested and may change over time.

Since 2001, I have been conducting fieldwork among Pakistani migrants in Denmark,¹ and have noticed that my interlocutors often make a sharp distinction between those families in which young people in the 'second generation' have

Mikkel Rytter is a Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Anthropology, Archaeology and Linguistics at Aarhus University, Denmark. Correspondence to: Dr M. Rytter, Section for Anthropology and Ethnography, Aarhus University, Moesgård Allé 20, 8270 Højbjerg, Denmark. E-mail: mikkel.rytter@hum.au.dk

pursued higher education and those where this has not been the case. Some of my interviewees gossip about the new elite of self-righteous doctors or arrogant engineers who think they are better than their neighbours, or they make jokes about having to drive a cab or open a corner shop (*kiosk*) in order to earn a living. The question of education is usually framed in terms of an evolutionary scheme in which education implies being progressive, Western or modern, thus leaving the rest of the community with the less-flattering connotations of being backward, traditional and shaped by the 'cultural' mentality that is supposedly dominant in the Punjabi villages from which these families originate. This kind of reasoning is not just based on internal Pakistani stereotypes or mutual prejudices. It also reflects an actual socio-economic division in the migrant community, initiated decades ago when Pakistani families had to decide between engaging in business ventures that would generate money quickly, and pursuing education that promised future gains in the long term.

Today a large number of second-generation Pakistanis do extremely well in the free Danish education system. The latest survey to give the national backgrounds of students dates back to 2002 and shows that, among young people aged 18–35 of Pakistani background, 30 per cent of the males and 36 per cent of the females have completed secondary education (*en gymnasial uddannelse*), whereas the figures for the descendants of immigrants in Denmark in general are 24 per cent for men and 31 per cent for women. In comparison, the average national figures for young Danes who complete secondary education are 25 per cent for men and 38 per cent for women (Hummelgaard *et al.* 2002).²

Over the years, researchers have tried to explain the educational achievements of the Pakistani community. According to Hjarnø (2000), the high level of achievement can be explained by the fact that Pakistanis were already investing in real estate in the 1970s and 1980s and were moving away from the badly maintained apartments of the inner city into the suburbs of Copenhagen. Here young people attended schools in 'white areas', mingled with pupils from middle-class families and were taught by teachers who had high expectations of their pupils, regardless of ethnic or linguistic background (Hjarnø 2000). Another explanation is suggested by Moldenhawer (2005), who emphasises that the education of second-generation Pakistanis has become a strategy of social mobility for the entire transnational family and who points to the importance of the transnational *biraderi* (classificatory kin group) in this context.

Even though these contrasting explanations point to important factors, neither of them seems satisfactory. Indeed, I suggest that the explanations offered by Hjarnø and Moldenhawer are merely the effects of a more fundamental social dynamic in the migrant community. Both local middle-class aspirations and the social mobility strategies of transnational family networks are the outcome of decades of fierce competition between migrant families, where the prize has been symbolic capital and an improved status in the local Pakistani community.

In this article I analyse how notions of improvement among Pakistani migrant families in Denmark have emerged and changed over time, and how the two long-term

overall strategies of money and education have been shaped by changes in the Danish welfare state. I use personal narratives to reconstruct the micro-history of the Pakistani community, with the acknowledgement that life stories not only represent attempts by individuals to give a credible account of their past, but also always reflect contemporary life, structural positions and opportunities, which will inevitably have important performative aspects (Peacock and Holland 1993). Furthermore, a focus on life stories and family histories tends to privilege the Pakistani migrant 'family' as a unit, and thereby neglect the many disagreements and conflicts found over the years within every family concerning various aspects of everyday life in Denmark.

Notions of Improvement

In ongoing public discussions concerning immigrants and refugees in Denmark, the ultimate improvement that both categories are expected to subject themselves to is integration. It is nevertheless 'exceptionally unclear' (Ejrnæs 2002: 7) what is actually meant by 'integration'. It may refer to anything from *social integration* in certain neighbourhoods or educational institutions, to *economic integration*, understood as participation in the labour market, *political integration*—seen as participation in national elections and local associations—and *cultural integration*, measured by the extent to which immigrants and refugees have maintained traditions, identity or notions of belonging connected with their first homeland. Despite the unclear definition, 'integration' has become a common political ambition and desirable imagined horizon.

The social diagnosis of whether or when integration has been reached or not is always set 'from above' (Mahler 1998) by politicians, the media, scientists, etc.—ultimately, that is, by people in power. In this respect, the concept of integration is part of the vocabulary of the nation-state (Sayad 2004). But, even though immigrants and refugees often make headlines in the media or are the objects of political discussions, legal interventions and academic research, they continue to live their ordinary lives in spite of all the fuss (Pedersen and Rytter 2006: 10).

In their everyday lives, i.e. 'from below', migrants themselves constantly formulate and reformulate notions of improvement that are often very different from the national ambition of 'integration'. During fieldwork among Pakistanis in Denmark, I often heard people refer to 'families who have done well' ('*familier der har klaret sig godt*'). However, the standards whereby 'families who have done well' are distinguished from those who have not are never fixed, but are the result of an ongoing evaluation between 'examiner' and 'examined', me and you, our family and their family. In this process, there are always (real or imagined) audiences monitoring the family's deeds, and notions of improvement are always situated within socio-political contexts that set up specific criteria for evaluation.

According to Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001: 85), the social cosmos of modern societies is constituted by a number of relatively autonomous social fields, each with their own logic and demands, which are not necessarily comparable to rules

governing other fields. A field can be compared to a game (2001: 84): by participating in a specific social game, you confirm that you recognise it as important. This mutual recognition is the basis of struggles and conflicts in any field. Furthermore, every field is characterised by a distribution of power (capital), which gives access to the values at stake in the game. Bourdieu distinguishes between several different types of capital, but in this article I only discuss the economic capital of money, the cultural capital of education and the symbolic capital of prestige, status and honour. Whereas the first two forms of capital are measurable – for example, the size of a fortune or the level of education reflected in a diploma – symbolic capital distinguishes itself by being primarily cognitive and based on recognition by significant others in the field (Bourdieu 1997a: 163). Symbolic capital is that particular capital that ‘rescues agents from insignificance, the absence of importance and meaning’ (Bourdieu 2000: 242).

For Bourdieu, notions of improvement are always situated in an exclusive social field governed by its own rules, morals and aesthetics, which comprise a unique capital economy. In order to grasp how notions of improvement are redefined over time, I outline the micro-history of Pakistani families in Denmark. The aim is to explore how and why these two long-term strategies, focused on money and education respectively, have become means of improvement within the migrant community, and how they relate to the overall national project of integration.

Immigration and Settlement Processes

Pakistanis in Denmark constitute an interconnected network or a little village in which the histories and trajectories of families criss-cross. The story of one family is part of the collective history of what it means to be ‘Pakistani in Denmark’. In order to understand current community dynamics and changing notions of improvement, it is necessary to trace family stories back in time and space. As Figure 1 shows, the migrant men arrive in the 1960s and 1970s and are soon followed by women and children. In the 1980s, the community becomes split between the two long-term strategies of money and education. Since the 1990s, there has been an ongoing conversion of acquired capital, and new transnational strategies have started to take shape.

Rural Punjab in the 1960s

Pakistani men started migrating to Denmark as ‘guestworkers’ in the late 1960s. In 1973 the Danish government banned further labour-related immigration, but Pakistanis kept arriving through family reunification and later through the high rate of endogamous transnational marriages in the second generation (Schmidt and Jakobsen 2004). Today approximately 25,000 people in Denmark have a family history related to Pakistan. Due to a pattern of chain migration, most Pakistani immigrants originate from villages in the Gujrat district of rural Punjab and, as this is also the case for most Pakistanis in Norway (Østberg 2003), this area is often referred

Figure 1. The micro-history of Pakistani families in Denmark

to as 'Little Scandinavia'. When Denmark entered the European Community in 1973, a group of Pakistanis also came from Great Britain and later from Uganda and Kenya (Bajaj and Laursen 1988: 128).

Those who came directly from Pakistan left a developing country in a difficult period of transition following the end of the colonial era and the violent partition from India in 1947. Rural Punjab was a society consisting of villages highly divided due to the *zaat* system, a Muslim caste-like hierarchy that developed out of the historical co-existence of Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism in the region (Dumont 1980). Each village had a rigid division between the *zamindar* who owned the land and the *kammi* who worked for them. These overall categories, based on descent and occupation, created a significant cleavage in the villages between the privileged and the unprivileged. As emigration was costly, the migrants who came to Denmark were primarily from landowning families belonging to *zaat*—such as Gujar, Jat, Raja and Malik—and different types of Kashmiri background (Quraishy 1999: 91). The privileged social position of the migrants and their families is reflected in the fact that most of the migrant men had between eight and 12 years of schooling before they came to Denmark (Østergaard 2007: 353). But, even though most of the migrants came from well-off families who ranked relatively high in the social stratification of the Muslim caste-like system, they were, from a Pakistani perspective, families with very different norms and values.

'The Golden Age' of the Late 1960s and Early 1970s

Regardless of social status and economic background, the Pakistanis arrived in Denmark by the same route, travelling overland by bus via Afghanistan, Iran and

Iraq, and entering Europe through Turkey. Many ended up in Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s, where they worked on construction sites in Munich in preparation for the 1972 Olympic Games. In Germany at that time many rumours were circulating about Denmark, a little country to the north where it was possible to get legal work permits and where there were plenty of jobs for immigrants. The pattern of chain migration therefore continued, as immigrants who were already established in Denmark started helping friends stranded in Germany to obtain the job offers that would give them permission to enter the country.

Arriving in Denmark, many Pakistanis found themselves cramped together in small and often badly maintained apartments in the centre of Copenhagen or in the suburbs. Others rented single rooms from Danish landlords. There was work available at factories needing migrant workers to do the '3-D-Jobs' of dirty, demanding and dangerous manual labour (Østergaard 2007: 351). The new lifestyle and position as immigrants made the male Pakistani migrants structurally equal. They lived, ate and slept together in small apartments and worked side by side in the factories.³ In Denmark the many hierarchies and mechanisms of social stratification from rural Punjab disappeared for a while, as everyone was 'just' an immigrant and shared the experience of living in a strange country a long way from their loved ones back home. In the gendered masculine migration narratives, the period of the early 1970s figures as 'a golden age' when everyone was young and strong and had every opportunity in life (see Gardner 2002).

According to Pakistani life stories, Danes had a radically different approach to immigrants during the 1960s and early 1970s than they have had more recently. Immigrants were in most instances recognised as co-workers by their Danish colleagues, who invited them to their homes, helped them read letters from the authorities and taught them the Danish language. This was also a time when male migrants were introduced to alcohol and dancing, and many became involved in romantic relationships with Danish women. On the one hand, 'the golden age' is looked back upon today with nostalgia but, on the other, it was also a time when the Pakistani men, who today present themselves as respectable elders, had a more explorative approach to life in the West and transgressed several of the rules and moral boundaries they today encourage their grown children—and maybe even grandchildren—to respect and live by. It is therefore a period in the history of Pakistani migration that is today covered in silence, due to the many skeletons hidden in the closet.

The Settlement Process of the 1970s

The most important source of continued Pakistani immigration to Denmark in the early 1970s was family reunification. In order to qualify, a male 'guestworker' needed to have his own accommodation. Thus, as wives and children arrived from Pakistan, the newly re-established families moved into their own apartments. In the same period, however, many workers began to lose their jobs. After the energy crisis in

1973–74, Denmark faced a period of economic recession, followed by declining opportunities in the labour market. It became a period of high unemployment, during which much of Danish industry and the labour market in general were restructured (Hjarnø 2000: 101). Many factories that had benefitted from the manpower of the guestworkers were shut down, outsourced their activities or went through processes of rationalisation. As a result, many of the manual jobs needing low-skilled workers disappeared, and a large number of immigrants lost their jobs and livelihoods in the process.

Generally speaking, the men lost their jobs just as the women and children started arriving, and what used to be a fraternity of migrant men became a community of migrant families. This transition marked the end of 'the golden age'. Now the logic of social stratification that predominated in Pakistan was re-established and framed inter-family relations.

Asif, an elderly man, related that, in the early years before his wife arrived, he had worked at a factory making paint and lived in a small apartment with a handful of his fellow countrymen. On my next visit I had a longer conversation with Asif's son, who explained that, when his father meets some of his former co-workers today, they do not even greet each other. The example illustrates the shift from a fraternity of equal men to a community of differentiated families. In order not to be confronted with compromising stories from the past, people are highly selective about who they want to socialise and remain friends with (Bajaj and Laursen 1988: 140–1). This process of re-differentiation had an important impact on relations between families in the community.

A Community of Competition

As Pakistani wives joined the men in Denmark, new families and households were established, and began re-creating some of the cultural and religious institutions from their country of origin. The migrant families shared life-cycle transitions, as many started having children and faced similar challenges in raising their offspring in a new social environment that in many respects was (and still is) more liberal than that of Pakistan. But, even though the families helped each other with different aspects of everyday life, relations between them became more and more competitive, as distinctions of status and hierarchy were asserted and re-negotiated on the basis of their economic, educational or social merits.

There are numerous arenas in which families strive to accumulate the symbolic capital of status and recognition in the Pakistani community. In these social games, participants are often divided into groups of different age and gender. Men compete at carving out careers or prosperous businesses, holding prestigious positions in the numerous Pakistani cultural, political and religious associations, or acquiring a reputation by doing volunteer work for the community or generously donating money to various causes. Women may compete at having the most beautiful dresses, the largest and most well-furnished homes, the most expensive jewellery, the most

polite daughters-in-law, the most extensive knowledge of Islam, and the best cooking (Bajaj and Laursen 1988: 130). Families in general will gain in reputation by erecting three- or four-storey houses on the family's land in Pakistan (Ballard 2003: 45) or by providing 'their' village with remittances. Finally, holidays in exotic tourist destinations have also been mentioned as a way to make claims for recognition as 'a family that has done well' (Bajaj and Laursen 1988: 133). In the second generation, the arenas for competition and mutual evaluation may be educational performance, demonstrations of love and respect for one's parents, knowledge of Islam, influential positions in youth organisations, volunteer work etc.⁴

This list is in no way complete, but it does illustrate the many different contexts in which families evaluate and are evaluated. Ideally each member, regardless of age or gender, contributes to the collective *izzet* (honour) and symbolic capital of the household and family. This public display of success and ongoing evaluation of 'our family' in relation to 'other families' is the cause of happiness and pride, but also of suspicion, envy and long-lasting enmity. The competitive environment where almost anything can (and will) be measured as economic, cultural or symbolic capital was not created overnight, but is the result of changes that took place in the Pakistani community during the 1970s and 1980s.

To describe the historical emergence of this competitive community, I outline the two long-term strategies of money and education to which families resorted when the Danish labour market was restructured during the late 1970s and the 1980s. These should be understood as Weberian ideal-types not necessarily found empirically in a pure form. Nevertheless they are constantly used by Pakistanis to distinguish between families and as marks of navigation within the terrain of the community.

The Value of Money

Hjarnø (2000: 102), after 30 years' research among Pakistanis, Turks and Yugoslavs, wrote that, at the beginning of the 1980s, his conversations with Pakistanis became more and more focused on how to start as self-employed and which families had already done so. These discussions reflected the emergence of a new long-term livelihood strategy in Denmark after the unskilled factory jobs had disappeared. Many Pakistanis became self-employed in the late 1970s and 1980s, operating businesses such as small grocery stores or corner shops, taxis or travel agencies (2000: 104). The economic capital to start these businesses came from savings and loans from banks or from extended networks of family and fellow villagers, the *biraderi* that offered practical help and economic support.

In 1977 the rules concerning licences for haulage-contracting and taxi-driving were liberalised, making it easier for Pakistanis to start their own businesses. Those who acquired licences hired fellow countrymen to keep the taxi on the street round the clock and also brought them into the business. In this way, driving a taxi became one of the largest ethnic businesses among Pakistanis in the Copenhagen area. Small shops—e.g. corner shops (*kiosks*)—offered another opportunity for self-employment.

Pakistani entrepreneurs were willing to take the economic risk of operating a small-scale grocery store with declining trade and had networks of family and fellow villagers who already had experience of running a corner shop; they soon became the immigrant group to operate the greatest number of corner shops and small grocery stores (Rezaei 2002: 4)—between 600 and 800 in Copenhagen and Odense (Quraishy 1999: 95).

To succeed with a corner shop or a taxicab it is not important to have many years of education, but it is necessary to economise with money and income (Hjarnø 2000: 101). Pakistanis were already doing this in order to support both the household in Denmark and members of the transnational family in Pakistan, putting savings aside to visit the 'homeland' once in a while. However, perhaps the most important factor ensuring success as a self-employed person was the willingness to work long hours. Corner shops and taxi firms became family enterprises, pursuing a certain 'way of life', in which the husband, the wife and the grown-up children all contributed to running the business (Smith 1996).

The outcome of a successful business was 'fast money'—and more of it than people ever imagined. Compared to their former levels of income, many Pakistani families became '*nouveaux riches*'. Some of the profits were invested in Denmark, and some sent to Pakistan to support family members there in starting up businesses or building new houses in the migrant's village of origin. Conspicuous consumption of expensive clothes, cars and jewellery proved to the Danish migrant community and relatives back in Pakistan that here was truly 'a family that had done well'.

However, as times changed, so did the opportunity to earn fast money. Interviewees explained that it has become much more difficult to earn fast and big money by driving a taxi. Similarly, since the mid-1990s, the corner-shop business has come under pressure from chains of all-night shops like '7-eleven' (Quraishy 1999: 95) and the long opening hours of supermarkets, which did not exist 20 years ago. Today running a corner shop is looked down upon in the community, as it has become the business for those who cannot do anything else, especially in circles of educated families. In the corner-shop business, they say, it is necessary to work long hours, just sitting in the back and waiting for customers to come. Furthermore, in order to keep these businesses alive, alcohol and possibly pornographic publications are often sold, and rumours of illegal activity—selling beverages or cigarettes without paying taxes—abound.

In sum, the accumulation of money and wealth is no longer sufficient for a Pakistani family to maintain a prominent position in the changeable hierarchies of 'families that have done well'. Today the cultural capital of education is also needed.

The Value of Education

Despite growing rates of unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s, some Pakistanis kept working as wage-earners in various factories, in some cases because they did not have the skills, economic resources or luck to become self-employed. Others were

successful as interpreters or teachers of Urdu in the expanding 'integration industry' (Preis 1998: 11), where the main task was to help less-fortunate immigrants manage in Danish society. Many Pakistani women also worked as cleaners in public buildings and institutions. This meant that a large group of Pakistanis performed low-skilled manual labour or worked as public servants in state institutions at different levels. They soon understood the importance of education if their children were to gain access to the well-paid prestigious jobs and positions in Danish society that they could not obtain for themselves. In these families, it was possible for the children to invest time and effort in their education because they did not have to take turns behind the counter in the corner shops and were not seduced by the fast money to be made driving a cab. The tradition of living at home made it possible for unmarried young men and women to concentrate on their studies, rather than spend time earning money to pay for food and rent. Furthermore, they received a monthly stipend from the State Educational Fund [*Statens Uddannelsesstøtte*] to cover personal expenses.

For this segment of the Pakistani community, the educational performance of the second generation became an important new arena for competition. Through education, the second generation acquired the cultural capital that, in the long run, improved the symbolic capital of the entire family, and educational performance became a significant long-term strategy for social mobility. However, following the logic of competition, education was never just 'an education'. The first hurdle was to get youngsters through secondary school, but higher education soon also became necessary in order to be a successful family. There is a joke among second-generation Pakistanis that parents want their children to become 'doctor, engineer and lawyer' in succession. Even though this is a joke, it also has its real aspects. Studying medicine is often regarded as the highest, most prestigious education.⁵ It is a profession that both first-generation migrants and transnational families recognise as valuable and important. A doctor is, among many other things, a universal figure everyone can relate to—which might not be the case for a designer, a hairdresser or a social anthropologist (Dahl and Jakobsen 2005: 30).

Very often education becomes a family project. Parents of the first generation explain that they have worked all their lives in order to provide the best opportunities for their children to concentrate on their studies. In return the children are expected to study hard and perform well. In this intergenerational contract, the younger generation are obliged to fulfil not only their own ambitions, but also their parents', and this pressure can be very difficult to handle when the young have other plans for their future or even lack the intellectual ability to pursue higher education. But when a daughter or a son actually does manage to become an engineer, a dentist or a doctor, it fulfils all the hopes and ambitions that drove the parents to migrate to Denmark. The long absence from family members and homeland, and the many years of hard work, suddenly make sense if the parents' generation can convince real and imagined audiences that they left Pakistan years ago in order for their offspring to obtain higher education.

Conversion of Capital

Today the elevated position of the families who successfully exploited the strategy of money in the 1980s and 1990s has in several respects been taken over by the families who employed the long-term strategy of education. As the educated second generation entered the labour market in high-profile positions and well-paid jobs, the hierarchies of the previous decades have been turned upside down. This has happened through processes of capital conversion. According to Bourdieu, capital can and will be converted from one field to another. The rate of exchange between the different kinds of valid capital is the result of an ongoing symbolic struggle between more- or less-powerful actors in the social field (Bourdieu 1997a: 55–6; 1997b: 57–8). The most obvious conversion of capital in the Pakistani case occurs when the highly educated second generation begin to work and earn more money than their parents ever did. They use their cultural capital of higher education to improve the prestige, or symbolic capital, of the entire family. On the other hand, the owners of successful self-employed businesses have always converted their economic capital into signs of wealth and status through consumption.

An important arena for capital conversion is marriage, the preference for Pakistanis in Denmark being until recently an endogamous, transnational arranged marriage (Charsley and Shaw 2006; cf. Shaw 2001). More than 80 per cent of second-generation marriages used to be arranged with spouses recruited from the *biraderi* of family, kin and fellow villagers in Pakistan (Schmidt and Jakobsen 2000: 144), but a 2004 study shows that more than 40 per cent of young Danish-Pakistanis aged 17–27 are now engaged to, or have married, a partner found in Denmark, most often from other Pakistani families (Schmidt and Jakobsen 2004: 111). Today the total number of marriages within Denmark is probably even higher, because the Liberal–Conservative government introduced new legislation in 2002 that makes it extremely difficult for Danish-Pakistanis to obtain family reunification with spouses from Pakistan.⁶

According to the tradition of arranged marriages, couples should be matched so that they come from families that are alike (Rytter 2003; 2006a). This quest for equality and similarity is meant to give newly-weds and their families the best odds for building a future life together. In their search for a proper *rishta* (marriage match), the parents of a well-educated son or daughter will usually look for potential spouses in families of similar status and educational level. Today families therefore often go beyond (i.e. neglect) the *biraderi* in Pakistan and look for other, more suitable, options. The cultural capital of educational performance has become an entry into new marriage-scapes (Constable 2004: 4) offering numerous new possibilities for matchmaking. It has become legitimate for families to recruit spouses for children in educated and influential families in the Pakistani community in Denmark from major Pakistani cities such as Lahore, Karachi or Islamabad or from other migrant families living in Europe or North America—a means of consolidating social mobility and aspiring to new positions.

The discussion thus far may give the overall impression that those families who turned, years ago, to the strategy of education, today live an unproblematic life. This is not always the case. Families face huge problems due to the fact that the generation gap widens when the second generation obtains higher education and comes to embody the ideals and life-styles of upward social mobility. Mr Iqbal, a father of four, has learned this from bitter experience. Both his sons became doctors. Today he lives with his younger son in a detached house south of Copenhagen. The elder son has moved to Sweden, where he works in a hospital, taking advantage of the high salary and favourable tax benefits that Danish doctors benefit from in working in other Nordic countries. Mr Iqbal describes this son as a 'workaholic' and a big spender who has lost all interest in his parents and family. He explains that he has tried several times to talk reason to his son, but that he will not listen. The son's main priority is his career and the fashionable life-style that follows from it. Mr Iqbal just has to accept that they no longer share the same ideas of what is important in life.

Sisyphus and the Moving Horizon

So far the micro-historical perspective has uncovered changing notions of improvement within the Pakistani community, together with revised Danish perceptions of the ways in which immigrants ought to improve their way of life in order to become part of Danish society. These perceptions correspond to three different periods.

In the first period of the 1960s and 1970s, relatively little public and political attention was paid to the everyday lives of immigrants: the newcomers were expected to stay and work for a couple of years and then return home. This was also the plan most Pakistanis originally had themselves. During the 1970s and the 1980s, however, when Pakistani immigrants sent for their wives and children, their plans for the future changed. According to Schwartz, the decision to stay in Denmark was largely perceived by the wider population as a violation of the contract between the labour migrants and the Danish state (1990: 46). As the Pakistanis established their own families in Denmark, they also began to frequent welfare institutions such as day-care centres, public schools, the health system or social services. This new group of clients confronted the welfare state system with a range of unforeseen 'cultural' problems, which intensified as Denmark also accepted large groups of refugees from areas of conflict in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Bosnia and Somalia.

In the second period of the late 1980s and 1990s, Pakistani families, along with other immigrant and refugee families, were subjected to increasing demands that they integrate themselves by adapting their way of life to Danish norms. The notion of 'integration' became omnipresent in public and political discourse as both the means and the end of migrant improvement (Olwig and Paerregaard 2007: 17–20).

In recent years, the perception of immigrant improvement seems to have changed once again. Currently immigrants are mainly referred to in public and political discourses as 'Muslims'—a religious category implying a radical difference from Danish values and identity. Islam and Muslims are constructed as the opposite of

'Danishness' (Hervik 2004; Jensen 2007, 2008; Schmidt, this issue.) and seen as a threat to the values of democracy, human rights, gender equality or freedom of speech that form an important basis of Danish society and the welfare state. In this third historical period, previous challenges of integration seem to merge with urgent questions related to national and international security. The situation has been described as 'the security/integration response' of the nation-state in relation to the immigrant population (Bleich 2009).

This shift has been stimulated by international and national 'critical events' (Das 1995), among which are the terrorist attacks in New York, London and Madrid, the bombing of the Danish embassy in Islamabad in 2008, and the US-led 'war on terror' in Iraq and Afghanistan, to which Denmark sent troops. National events include several planned terrorist attacks by Danish Muslims—foiled by the Secret Service—and the 'Cartoon Crisis' which, in 2005–06, placed Denmark at the centre of international attention. These critical events substantiate the impression that Denmark is under attack from Islamic fundamentalists, and maybe even from Islam itself.

These events have also created a 'cultural anxiety' (Grillo 2003) that national sovereignty and identity are under threat of extinction, prompting an ongoing reinvention of traditions that are considered typically Danish. The Liberal–Conservative government elected in November 2001 has launched a campaign—a so-called '*kulturkamp*' or cultural struggle—which has resulted, for example, in new curricula and national canons. The process of reinvention leaves no (or very little) room for Muslim immigrants in national history, tradition or imaginary.

The rearmament of national identity politics has altered the criteria of immigrant improvement. Many migrant families have learned the hard way that, despite social mobility and their own middle-class aspirations, they face an incessant demand to comply with unclear and changing criteria of what it means to be Danish. One randomly chosen example was when, in 2007, several newspaper articles drew attention to the increasing number of immigrants in higher education. Instead of interpreting the pattern in terms of the achievements of young immigrants in the Danish education system or even at national integration, their educational achievements were seen as a social problem. Thus, Jacob Lange, head of student counselling (*studiechef*) at the University of Copenhagen, saw a problem in some overly ambitious immigrant parents pushing youngsters into prestigious academic education, even when the latter did not have the intellectual capacity to complete such an education.⁷ The apparent success story was turned around and became yet another example of the supposedly problematic Muslim family structure that does not respect the freedom of choice of the young generation.

A couple of days after the Lange article appeared, I discussed it with Zubair, a highly educated young man of Pakistani parentage. To him the twist in the story was an example of the kind of 'no-win' situation that immigrants are confronted with in Danish public and political discourses. It confirmed his experience that, no matter

how much immigrants try to comply with the rules and norms of Danish society, they are never recognised by the wider public for these efforts.

In the analytical vocabulary of Bourdieu, 'There is no worse dispossession, no worse privation, perhaps, than that of the losers in the symbolic struggle for recognition, for access to a socially recognized social being, in a word, to humanity' (2000: 241). My disillusioned friend Zubair and other Muslim immigrants in Denmark share the fate of the Greek mythological figure Sisyphus:⁸ no matter how hard they try, they will never satisfy the vague and changing criteria of integration defined by the majority, nor gain recognition as the equals of native Danes. Immigrants are locked into a structural position in which their full acceptance as fellow citizens remains a horizon: they can just make out the contours of recognition, but it will never come within reach, as the horizon moves further away whenever they attempt to approach it.

The New Klondike

Pakistanis have reacted to these social changes and the lack of social recognition in different ways. Some families consider whether they should stay in Denmark or move to some other country—such as Great Britain, Canada or Sweden—or back to Pakistan. This new aspiration is partly due to a growing feeling of insecurity among immigrants concerning their legal status and the future prospects for themselves and especially their children in Denmark. A recent study shows that 46 per cent of young immigrants between 15 and 29 years of age are considering leaving Denmark and starting a new life in another country (Shakoor and Riis 2007: 116).

The idea of returning to Pakistan has always been salient in the first generation as a 'myth of return' (Anwar 1979). Attempts to return form a part of many family histories but, faced with Pakistani bureaucracy and widespread corruption, the fear of being the victims of crime, the hot climate and tropical diseases, the process of reintegration in a demanding kin network or the disturbing experience of being a foreigner in what you consider your homeland, has made most returnees realise that the Pakistan they once knew no longer exists. Reaching this painful conclusion, most families have moved back to Denmark again (Rytter 2006b). But, whereas the first generation was caught up in the myth of return, the second generation increasingly sees return as a way to escape the Islamophobia and racism they are confronted with in their migrant destinations (Bolognani 2007; Rytter 2010a: 612–4).

The two overall family strategies of the 1980s and 1990s create different opportunities for the second generation to return. Non-educated migrants have a hard time returning because, even though they may have plenty of money, they do not necessarily have the skills to start from scratch in Pakistan. It is not possible to maintain a standard of living acceptable to a migrant family that has been living in Denmark for decades by running a little shop or driving a cab in Pakistan. The prospects are much more favourable for the well-educated segment of the second generation, as the cultural capital of academic training is an embodied resource they

can take with them wherever they decide to settle down. A dentist, doctor or engineer, for example, can earn a living in one of Pakistan's major cities. Those who use this opening may take their parents with them and fulfil their long-term aspirations of return. In this way, long-term family strategies continue to have an impact on the way places and spaces in Pakistan are conceptualised by the second generation, further widening the cleavage between educated and non-educated families.

Pakistan gains new meaning as the second generation utilises its high levels of education, language proficiency and transnational connections to set up businesses in Pakistan that benefit from using highly educated local employees who work for much lower salaries than a professional in a similar position in Denmark would demand. These enterprises are often managed from offices in Denmark and engage in import/export, the outsourcing of manual factory work, entrepreneurship or working with computer technology or telecommunication systems. As a result of these entrepreneurial activities, Pakistan is being reconfigured as 'a new Klondike' to the second generation and becoming a country of economic opportunities and business adventures. Just as their parents went to Denmark to improve their livelihoods, so the second generation are returning to Pakistan and setting up transnational businesses. Along with increased financial investment, risk-taking and stories of success, these transnational enterprises have become yet another site for competition between migrant families. In this respect, history is repeating itself.

Conclusion: Prospects for the Future

In this article, I have shown how family strategies of improvement are shaped by historical circumstances. Any account that starts out in rural Pakistan and covers the nearly 50 years from the 1960s to 2008 will inevitably neglect nuances from everyday life and numerous idiosyncratic experiences both within and between migrant families. Thus patterns of employment and educational achievements in most families are more complex than the neat picture I have given of two family strategies. Despite these reservations, it is quite informative, once in a while, to take a step back and look at the broader picture of community dynamics in order to enrich our understanding of urgent questions—i.e. the upward social mobility of Pakistanis in Denmark.

When discussing the long-term strategies of money or education, I use the 'family' as the basic unit of analysis, regardless of the many discrepancies and conflicts there are in any family. Taking 'the family' as my context I have argued that the social mobility of Pakistanis should neither be explained primarily as the result of economic opportunities in the Danish welfare state nor as an orientation towards the transnational extended family. These two explanations are merely effects of a more fundamental dynamic within the Pakistani community, where families for years have competed for high-ranking positions in the changeable hierarchies that are seen as important within the migrant community. The suggested micro-historical perspective on long-term family strategies contributes to contemporary migration

research by insisting on the importance of combining the specific migration history, individual life trajectories and family cycles as they unfold under specific circumstances in particular nation-states.

I have also suggested that notions of improvement are the outcome of ongoing negotiations in different contexts that are characterised by asymmetrical relations of power. The historical perspective illustrates how these dynamics work at different levels of society and change over time. Not only have the criteria for earning a reputation as 'a family that has done well' changed within the Pakistani community, but socio-economic and political processes have also redefined the structural relationship between minorities and majorities in Denmark. In recent decades, it has become more and more difficult for Muslim immigrants to meet the standards of improvement set 'from above' and be fully recognised as Danish citizens. The Pakistani case presented in this article illustrates that, even when migrants successfully engage in 'social games' that are widely recognised as important by the Danish population and nation-state—such as 'education'—they cannot succeed. Regardless of their efforts and actual achievements, they are seldom seen or recognised in public and political discourses—often interpreted as an act of discrimination or racism by Pakistanis themselves—a demeaning and painful experience that, in the years to come, risks further widening the gap between immigrant minorities and the native-born Danish majority.

Acknowledgements

A first draft of this paper was presented at the 14th Nordic Migration Conference, Bergen, 2007, in the workshop 'Migrating for "improvement": Migrants and Refugees between Transnational Family Networks and the Receiving Society'. I would like to thank all the participants and especially Birgitte Romme Larsen, Karen Fog Olwig and the anonymous *JEMS* reviewer for many constructive suggestions and comments. I also thank Anders Rytter (www.johnnybazooka.dk) for designing the illustration and Robert Parkin for correcting my written English.

Notes

- [1] In this article, the category 'Pakistani' refers both to first-generation, Pakistan-born and -raised migrants, and to their children—often born and raised in Denmark. It is not a straightforward matter to group everyone into a national category of 'Pakistani' because the group consists of Pakistani, British and Danish citizens. My reason for doing so here is that most of my interlocutors call themselves Pakistanis, regardless of their citizenship.
- [2] Recent statistics from the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs show that, in 2008, 60 per cent of the descendents of immigrants and refugees aged 16–24 had entered or finished secondary education. The percentage of Danish young people finishing secondary education was only 59 per cent (*Morgenavisen Jyllandsposten*, 19 January 2008). There is no reason to believe that Pakistanis have a less-favourable position in the statistics of national immigrant groups today than they did in 2002.
- [3] For similar observations in the UK, see Shaw (2000: 37) or Werbner (1990: 84).

- [4] In a study of transnational humanitarian activism among second-generation Pakistanis in Denmark, Holm and Fabricius (2008) show how the mobilisation of different aid initiatives following the earthquake that hit the Kashmir region in 2005 soon became a matter of competition for recognition within the migrant community.
- [5] It is not only among Pakistanis that the position of doctor is considered prestigious. In a 2006 survey, 2,155 Danes were asked to rank 99 different occupations. 'Ordinary doctor' came in third on the list, while 'Hospital doctor' was fourth. First and second places were pilot and lawyer respectively (*Ugebrevet A4*, 23/2006:12).
- [6] Since 2002 it has become virtually impossible for second-generation Pakistanis (despite their citizenship) to obtain family reunification with spouses from Pakistan. For a discussion of how this new immigration regime is affecting Pakistani families and marriage patterns, see Rytter (2007a, 2007b, 2010b, 2012); Schmidt (this issue).
- [7] See 'Indvandrere har æren med på skolebænken', *Morgenavisen Jyllandsposten*, 25 February 2007.
- [8] Sisyphus was the King of Corinth who was punished in Hades by repeatedly having to roll a huge stone up a hill over and over again.

References

- Anwar, M. (1979) *The Myth of Return*. London: Heinemann.
- Bajaj, K. and Laursen, H.S. (1988) *Pakistanske Kvinder i Danmark: deres baggrund og tilpasning til det danske samfund*. Esbjerg: Sydjysk Universitetsforlag.
- Ballard, R. (2003) 'A case of capital-rich underdevelopment: the paradoxical consequences of successful transnational entrepreneurship from Mirpur', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 37(1–2): 49–81.
- Bleich, E. (2009) 'Muslims and the state in the post-9/11 West: introduction', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(3): 353–60.
- Bolognani, M. (2007) 'The myth of return: dismissal, survival or revival? A Bradford example of transnationalism as a political instrument', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33(1): 59–76.
- Bourdieu, P. (1997a) *Af Praktiske Grunde. Omkring teorien om menneskelig handlen*. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Bourdieu, P. (1997b) *Hvem Skabte Skaberne? Interviews og forelæsninger*. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000) *Pascalian Meditations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. (2001) *Refleksiv Sociologi: mål og midler*. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Charsley, K. and Shaw, A. (2006) 'South Asian transnational marriages in comparative perspective', *Global Networks*, 6(4): 331–44.
- Constable, N. (2004) *Cross-Border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Dahl, K.M. and Jakobsen, V. (2005) *Køn, Etnicitet og Barrierer for Integration. Fokus på uddannelse, arbejde og foreningsliv*. Copenhagen: Socialforskningsinstituttet.
- Das, V. (1995) *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Dumont, L. (1980) *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Ejrnæs, M. (2002) *Etniske Minoriteters Tilpasning til Livet i Danmark: forholdet mellem majoritetssamfundet og etniske minoriteter*. Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, AMID Working Paper 18/2002.

- Gardner, K. (2002) *Age, Narrative and Migration. The Life Course and Life Histories of Bengali Elders in London*. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Grillo, R.D. (2003) 'Cultural essentialism and cultural anxiety', *Anthropological Theory*, 3(2): 157–73.
- Hervik, P. (2004) 'The Danish cultural world of unbridgeable differences', *Ethnos*, 69(2): 247–67.
- Hjarnø, J. (2000) 'Indvandrere som selverhvervende: en sammenlignende analyse af udbredelsen af selverhverv hos danske pakistanere, tyrkere og eksjugoslavere', *Dansk Sociologi*, 11(3): 95–112.
- Holm, A. and Fabricius, A.S. (2008) Transnationalisme på Sigt: en undersøgelse af transnational aktivitet blandt efterkommere af pakistanske indvandrere i Danmark. Roskilde: Roskilde Universitetscenter, unpublished MA dissertation.
- Hummelgaard, H., Husted, L., Nielsen, H.S., Rosholm, M. and Smith, N. (2002) *Uddannelse og Arbejde for Andengenerationsindvandrere*. Copenhagen: AKF forlaget.
- Jensen, T. (2007) 'Hvor går man hen, når man "går ud"? Forestillede og praktiserede fællesskaber blandt omvendte danske muslimer', in Olwig, K.F. and Pærregaard, K. (eds) *Integration: antropologiske perspektiver*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 173–90.
- Jensen, T. (2008) 'To be "Danish", becoming "Muslim": contestations of national identity?', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34(3): 389–409.
- Mahler, S. (1998) 'Theoretical and empirical contributions: towards a research agenda for transnationalism', in Smith, M.P. and Guarnizo, L. (eds) *Transnationalism from Below*. New Brunswick: Transaction, 64–100.
- Moldenhawer, B. (2005) 'Transnational migrant communities and education strategies among Pakistani youngsters in Denmark', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(1): 51–78.
- Olwig, K.F. and Pærregaard, K. (2007) 'Integration. Antropologiske perspektiver', in Olwig, K.F. and Pærregaard, K. (eds) *Integration: Antropologiske Perspektiver*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 9–36.
- Østberg, S. (2003) *Muslim i Norge: Religion og hverdagsliv blant unge norsk-pakistanere*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Østergaard, B. (2007) *Indvandrerne i Danmarks Historie. Kultur- og religionsmøder*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
- Peacock, J. and Holland, D. (1993) 'The narrated self', *Ethos*, 21(4): 367–83.
- Pedersen, M. and Rytter, M. (2006) 'Indledning. Nye fortællinger om at høre til i Danmark', in Pedersen, M.H. and Rytter, M. (eds) *Den Stille Integration. Nye fortællinger om at høre til i Danmark*. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 7–17.
- Preis, A.-B.S. (1998) *Kan vi Leve Sammen? Integration mellem politik og praksis*. Viborg: Munksgaard.
- Quraishy, B. (1999) *Fra Punjab til Vesterbro: det pakistanske samfund i Danmark*. Copenhagen: Forlaget Etnisk Debatforum.
- Rezaei, S. (2002) *Indvandrerjede Virksomheder*. Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, AMID Working Paper 8/2002.
- Rytter, M. (2003) *Lige Gift: en antropologisk undersøgelse af arrangerede Ægteskaber blandt pakistanere i Danmark*. Copenhagen: Københavns Universitet Institut for Antropologi, Specialrækken, 261.
- Rytter, M. (2006a) 'Ægteskabelig integration: pakistanske og danske arrangerede ægteskaber', in Pedersen, M.H. and Rytter, M. (eds) *Den Stille Integration. Nye fortællinger om at høre til i Danmark*. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 18–43.
- Rytter, M. (2006b) 'Pakistan tur/retur: Forhandlinger af hjem og tilhørsforhold inden for Flergenerationsfamilien', *Tidsskriftet Antropologi*, 51: 111–28.
- Rytter, M. (2007a) 'Giftermål över gränserna: arrangerade äktenskap bland dansk-pakistanier i Malmö', in Eastmond, M. and Åkesson, L. (eds) *Globala Familjer: Transnationella nätverk och integrationens gränser*. Göteborg: Gidlunds, 175–204.

- Rytter, M. (2007b) "‘Familien Danmark’ og ‘De fremmede’". Slægtskabsbilleder i Dansk Integrationspolitik', in Olwig, K.F. and Pærregaard, K. (eds) *Integration: Antropologiske Perspektiver*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 63–86.
- Rytter, M. (2010a) "‘A sunbeam of hope’": negotiations of identity and belonging among Pakistanis in Denmark', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(4): 599–617.
- Rytter, M. (2010b) "‘The family of Denmark’ and ‘the aliens’": kinship images in Danish integration politics', *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, 75(3): 301–22.
- Rytter, M. (2012) 'The semi-legal family life: Pakistani couples in the borderlands between Denmark and Sweden', *Global Networks*, 12: in press.
- Sayad, A. (2004) *The Suffering of the Immigrant*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Schmidt, G. (2011) 'Law and identity: transnational arranged marriages and the boundaries of Danishness', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37(2): in press.
- Schmidt, G. and Jakobsen, V. (2000) *20 år i Danmark: en undersøgelse af nydanskernes situation og erfaringer*. Copenhagen: Socialforsknings Instituttet.
- Schmidt, G. and Jakobsen, V. (2004) *Pardannelse blandt Etniske Minoriteter i Danmark*. Copenhagen: Socialforsknings Instituttet.
- Schwartz, J. (1990) 'On the representation of immigrants in Denmark: a retrospective', in Røgilds, F. (ed.) *Every Cloud has a Silver Lining*. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 42–52.
- Shakoor, T. and Riis, R.W. (2007) *Tryghed blandt unge nydanskere*. Lyngby: Trygfonden.
- Shaw, A. (2000) *Kinship and Continuity: Pakistani Families in Britain*. Amsterdam: Harwood.
- Shaw, A. (2001) 'Kinship, cultural preference and immigration: consanguineous marriage among British Pakistanis', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 7(2): 315–34.
- Smith, L.H. (1996) *Indvandrere med egen Forretning. En kultur analytisk undersøgelse af selverhvervende indvandrere i København og deres livsformer*. Esbjerg: Sydjysk Universitets Forlag.
- Werbner, P. (1990) *The Migration Process: Capital, Gifts and Offerings among British Pakistanis*. New York: Berg.