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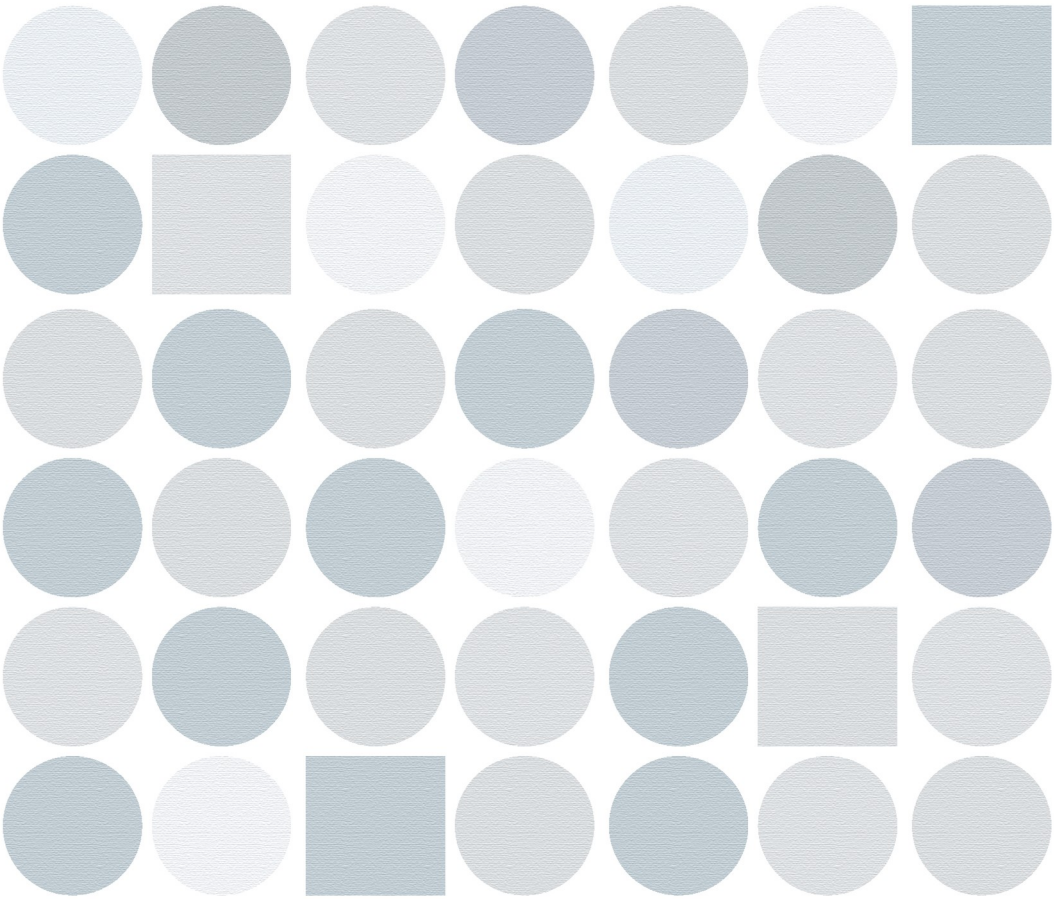
The Parent–Teacher Encounter

A (mis)match between habitus and doxa

Maria Mersini Pananaki



Doctoral Thesis in Education at Stockholm University, Sweden 2021

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Maria Mersini Pananaki

Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Friday 4 June 2021 at 10.00 online via Zoom, public link is available at the department website.

Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to study how parents and teachers experience their encounter and how they negotiate their positions in the field of schooling with respect to legitimate knowledge claims about the child and the ideal form of home–school collaboration. The aim is operationalised through the following research questions: 1) How do parents and teachers utilise their social and cultural resources in their encounters? 2) How can certain resources function as *forms of capital* in relation to different practices in the field? 3) What practices do teachers and parents employ to preserve and/or subvert their relative positions in their encounters?

The theoretical framework is grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice and the main conceptual tools are *habitus*, *capital* and *doxa*. Specifically, the thesis explores how parents and teachers rely on their dispositions to understand their encounter, how parents' social and cultural resources evolve into forms of capital, and the different practices that parents and teachers employ to negotiate shared beliefs in the field of schooling. The parent–teacher encounter is viewed as a *social practice* that emerges in the interplay between subjectivity and objectivity.

The study employs a qualitative design to examine teachers and parents of children in Swedish compulsory schools in the Stockholm urban area (grades one to nine). The data consists of individual interviews with seven teachers and eleven parents as well as observations in four development conferences. The empirical results show that the teachers talk about parents as a *collective* and have unified opinions about home–school collaboration. Although their practices mainly stem from a collective habitus, they also employ different collaboration strategies in encounters with parents. The findings on the parents point to differing positions in the social space due to their varying backgrounds in terms of culture, educational level, family structure and the like. Some parents use their social and cultural capital to negotiate with the teachers and claim accommodations whilst others struggle to express themselves in front of the teachers and to understand the dynamics of the Swedish school. The prerequisites for a successful collaboration that parents and teachers negotiate revolve around transparency, trust, mutual respect and engagement in the student.

Furthermore, the thesis develops the notion of *parental school capital*, which is informed by the intersection of four components: *educational capital*, *sociocultural context of upbringing*, *family dynamics* and *student's schooling situation*. Based on the analysis, the most powerful combination is high educational capital, upbringing in Sweden, shared responsibilities between parents, and a stable student performance. This combination often leads to the acquisition of certain advantages in the schooling field. The analysis further shows that the school doxa works unproblematically as long as there is a match between parents' and teachers' habitus. However, there are instances of mismatch when parents and teachers address problematic situations in an attempt to negotiate their positions and subsequently challenge the doxa.

Keywords: *parent–teacher encounter, social practice, parental school capital, collaboration, habitus, doxa, schooling field.*

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In order to succeed,
we must first believe
that we can.

Nikos Kazantzakis

Preface

The initial idea for this doctoral thesis was born back in 2015 after I completed my Master's degree in International and Comparative Education at Stockholm University. In my master's thesis, I explored teaching strategies in multicultural classrooms and one of the interview questions for the studied teachers was about their collaboration with parents. All teachers answered that they had a great relationship. A few months after having completed my Master's, I enrolled in the SFI school (Swedish for Immigrants) to learn Swedish. Most of my classmates had school-age children and in our discussions about Sweden, I remember them always talking about their struggle to communicate with their children's teachers and to understand the Swedish education system. The contrast between the teachers' answers and the parents' descriptions aroused my curiosity about the topic and, in combination with my love for research, led me to pursue a PhD in Education. At first, my intention was to focus on teachers' and immigrant parents' experiences of home–school collaboration. However, the more I discussed the topic with people within and outside of academia, the more insight I gained into Swedish parents' struggles with their children's schools. For that reason, I decided to expand my target group and include parents of different backgrounds and with different life trajectories. Of course, none of this would have turned into a doctoral thesis without all the people whose assistance was a milestone in its completion.

Firstly, I would like to thank the participants in the study. I have greatly valued your willingness to share your experiences with me and I hope you enjoyed participating in the study as much as I enjoyed meeting and working with you. I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Carina Carlhed Ydhag, Petra Roll Bennet and Meeri Hellstén. Carina, my main supervisor, thank you for your continuous encouragement and willingness to assist in any way you could throughout this venture. Your invaluable guidance always pushed me to sharpen my thinking and is wholeheartedly appreciated. Petra and Meeri, thank you for your wise counsel through all these years and for always being supportive and enthusiastic about my project. I would also like to thank Ali Osman for his guidance during the first year of my PhD; thank you Ali for encouraging me to think out of the box. Special thanks to Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg and Jonas Gustafsson who read my draft at the half-time seminar, to Stefan Lund and Leena Alanen who read my work for the ninety percent seminar, and to Joakim Landahl who read the final version; all of your input has been incredibly valuable. Throughout the years I have also been an active member of the Adult Learning research group and seminar, and the Educational Sociology and Educational Policy seminar. Thank you to all my colleagues for all I have learned through my participation in our meetings. Thank you also to the International and Comparative Education research group; it was a major learning experience to take part in the study visit to Tokyo University.

A big thank you to Tanya O'Reilly, Carles Fuster, Anthemis Raptopoulou, Brendan Munhall, Dagmar Hedman, Noam Ringer, Tobias Malm, Aron Schoug, Reed Curtis, Ali Mohamed, Natalie Nielsen and the rest of my PhD colleagues; thank you for the stimulating discussions and advice during different phases of my project and most importantly, thank you for all the good times and laughs we shared. There are also many others who directly or indirectly have lent their hand in this journey. Thank you to Anna-Lena Kempe and Matilda Wiklund for their support as Directors of Research Studies. Thank you also to Christina Edelbring, Emma West, Eva Olsson, Christer Paulin and the rest of the administrative personnel in the Department of Education. I was also fortunate to have Laura Machat-From serve as academic editor; thank you Laura for the exceptional work with proofreading.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to my family for always encouraging me to chase my dreams, and my dear friends in Sweden and Greece who helped me get through my PhD by providing advice and a sounding board when needed. For the end, I left my beloved partner Akis. I cannot begin to express my appreciation for your unconditional love and support. Thank you for always being there for me, believing in me and, at times, tolerating me. Thank you also for your wise comments on my work and the design of the cover page illustration.

Although the road to the PhD has been a bumpy one, it has also been a journey of personal growth and change, and I am proud to have made it through to its end.

Stockholm, April 2021
Maria M. Pananaki

Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to study how parents and teachers experience their encounter and how they negotiate their positions in the field of schooling with respect to legitimate knowledge claims about the child and the ideal form of home–school collaboration. The aim is operationalised through the following research questions: 1) How do parents and teachers utilise their social and cultural resources in their encounters? 2) How can certain resources function as *forms of capital* in relation to different practices in the field? 3) What practices do teachers and parents employ to preserve and/or subvert their relative positions in their encounters?

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problematic situations in an attempt to negotiate their positions and subsequently challenge the doxa.

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1. Introduction

> The joint responsibility of the school and guardians for the pupils' schooling should create the best possible conditions for the development and learning of children and youth.
>
> (The Swedish National Agency for Education)

> We realised that the school places much responsibility on parents in a very unstructured way, not like, "this is how we do it together" but "this is what you must do".
>
> (David, parent in this study)

> I think that the teachers should stop criticising the parents and vice versa, because some parents expect you to be a parent to their child.
>
> (Maya, teacher in this study)

The parent–teacher encounter is today a well-established social phenomenon in Sweden and internationally; parents and teachers contact each other on various occasions and in different ways about student-related matters. This encounter can be formal (organised meetings) or informal (morning chats), direct (one-on-one meetings) or indirect (emails, newsletters) as well as individual (parent-teacher-student conference) or collective (parent evenings).

Research has already highlighted the advantages of a close parent–teacher relationship; such a relationship contributes to students' academic and behavioural achievement (Shepherd & Kervick, 2016), decreases potential disruptive behaviours (Lewis et al., 2011) and leads to lower dropout rates (Carreón et al., 2005) and positive schooling experiences (Kim, 2009). How can home and school accomplish collaboration? Epstein (1995; 2011), who has long researched the area of home-school-community partnerships, suggests that schools need to create an action-team consisting of educators, parents, administrators and students, and develop a plan identifying starting points and working on them on an ongoing basis. A firm basis will in turn create space for discussion, questions as well as processes for problem-solving (ibid.). On a more general ground, literature suggests that mutual feelings of trust, openness, flexibility and two-way communication (Keyes, 2000) as

well as commitment to meeting the social, cultural, economic and physical needs of parents (Lewis et al., 2011) might optimise parental involvement and improve collaboration.

Nevertheless, studies have shown that parents and teachers may come across several challenges in their encounter. Some of these concern power relations between professionals and parents (e.g. Lai & Vadeboncoeur, 2013; Ranson et al., 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999), cultural and linguistic barriers in case of ethnic-minority parents (e.g. Denessen et al., 2007; Kim, 2009; Carreón et al., 2005) as well as misunderstandings and conflicts in the implementation of special education services (Shepherd & Kervick, 2016; Thatcher, 2012; Zhang & Bennett, 2003).

In the Swedish context, although the school curriculum stresses the importance of teachers' and parents' joint responsibility for children's schooling, real-life examples, e.g. David's and Maya's quotes above, illustrate that collaboration is not always smooth and linear. Media outlets[1] in fact reveal an ongoing debate regarding the role of home and school in students' education as well as the amount and type of parental involvement. On the one hand, teachers argue that they either feel pressured by parents who question their methods and constantly make requests or they face difficulties in getting parents to actively engage in their children's schooling. On the other hand, parents argue that they sometimes feel unwelcome in school and unable to take part in school practices.

Swedish research on families and schools[2] has looked at Swedish middle-class parents (Forsberg, 2009), ethnic-minority and newly arrived parents (Bouakaz, 2007; Bunar, 2001; 2011; 2015) and has analysed the parent–school relationship in the Swedish historical context (Erikson, 2004). As these studies show, the education field – in the West in general and in Sweden in particular – has undergone several changes and has in its contemporary form given parents greater responsibility for decision-making for their children's educational trajectories. According to Tallberg Broman (2009), parents' ability to control children's experiences in different social spaces has implications for their social and cultural resources; the resourceful parents are usually the ones who can take advantage of this increased responsibility. For instance, Forsberg (2009) suggests that the studied middle-class parents see themselves as responsible for their children's rearing and homework and there is an (often implicit) demand on the teachers to discuss potential behavioural issues in their encounters. Conversely, the encounter of ethnic-minority parents –

[1] Skolvärlden, 2020; SVT nyheter, 2019; Dagens Nyheter, 2019.

[2] Extensively discussed in section 1.3, "Introducing the field of schooling".

mainly from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and usually non-Western contexts – with the Swedish school works in a different way. Bouakaz (2007) and Bunar (2001; 2015) have found that parents and teachers often hold different views of their roles and responsibilities regarding children's education, which causes misunderstandings, disappointment and a 'blaming the other' attitude.

The aforementioned Swedish discourse on home–school relations is the starting point that led me to further research the issue and explore aspects of the parent–teacher encounter that focus on understandings and mutual expectations on the one hand and misunderstandings and challenges on the other. Building on a cultural sociological approach with focus on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, the general purpose of this thesis is to look at issues of power and asymmetrical relations that arise between and are formulated by parents and teachers. Under the microscope are the struggle for domination over legitimate knowledge of the child and views on the *best* form of home–school collaboration.

The central aim is to explore parents' and teachers' experiences of their encounter and the way they negotiate their positions in the field of schooling.[3] In particular, I look at the way individuals utilise their social and cultural resources and how certain resources might function as *forms of capital* in relation to specific practices in the field (Bourdieu, 1986). Based on these points, I also study practices that teachers and parents employ to preserve and/or subvert their relative positions in their encounter.

The analysis builds on a qualitative study of teachers and parents of children in Swedish compulsory schools in the Stockholm urban area (grades one to nine). In the study, I have chosen to include parents from varying socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds as well as both mothers and fathers. As Karlsson (2006) contends, Swedish research on families and institutions usually focuses on a specific social marker, such as ethnicity, that might subsequently overshadow the significance of other structures, such as gender, age, social class and more. Vincent (2017) further points out that "intersectionality emphasises fluidity, and the importance of different locales, situations, spaces, times, different dispositions and subjectivities, for understanding particular interactions and identities" (:551). Bearing these intersectionality issues in mind, I have drawn focus on parents of different backgrounds and trajectories.

[3] See section 1.4, "Aim and research questions".

1.1. Thinking with Bourdieu

Although I outline Bourdieu's theoretical and methodological framework in greater detail later in the thesis (Chapters 2 & 3), I already here would like to introduce some aspects of his take on social research. In a Bourdieusian tradition, theory and empirical data are intertwined. Following this line of thought, the introductory chapter is theoretically informed.

Bourdieu, quoting Immanuel Kant's dictum, has said, "theory without empirical research is empty, empirical research without theory is blind" (Bourdieu, 1988: 774-775). Specifically, Bourdieu (1990a) has underlined that his theoretical concepts are "*open* concepts designed to guide empirical work" (: 107, emphasis in the original). He further argues that the notions of habitus, field, and capital cannot be used separately but only within the framework of the theoretical system they constitute (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this line of thought, his concepts can be understood as "epistemological matrices lying at the generative root of the action of knowledge formation itself" (Grenfell, 2009: 32). Furthermore, central to his view has been the notion of reflexivity in relation to the "*social and intellectual unconscious* embedded in analytic tools and operations" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 35, emphasis in the original). The process of reflexivity, according to Bourdieu, must be a "*collective enterprise"* with the purpose of buttressing *"the epistemological security of sociology"* (ibid.). Due to the connection between theoretical concepts and empirical inquiry as well as empirical inquiry and reflexivity, Jenkins (1992) has pointed out that Bourdieu is "good to think with" (:2, 115).

'Thinking with Bourdieu' does not only refer to the specific concepts that he has developed through empirical work but also to his overall view of scientific research, a view that has guided this thesis as well. For this reason, I have chosen to already at the beginning of the thesis connect to the theoretical framework. Here, I would like to first say a few words about Bourdieu's break with dichotomies and then focus on the Bourdieusian perspective on the field of education that is central for the thesis.

Bourdieu has been an adversary of the dichotomy between constructivism and structuralism, or subjectivist and objectivist forms of knowledge, and his *social praxeology* aimed at merging together methodological binaries such as structure–agent, system–actor, the collective–the individual (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 2-3, 11, 15). As Bourdieu (1990a) writes:

> By structuralism or structuralist, I mean that there exist, in the social world itself (…) objective structures which are independent of the consciousness and desires of agents and are capable of guiding or constraining their practices

> or their representations. By constructivism, I mean that there is a social genesis on the one hand of the patterns of perception, thought and action which are constitutive of what I call the habitus, and on the other hand of social structures, and in particular of what I call fields and groups, especially of what are usually called social classes. (:123)

His take on social research has in other words its basis in the "*primacy of relations"* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 15, emphasis in the original); a dialectical relationship between individuals' thought and activity (habitus) and the objective world (field) (Grenfell & James, 1998). It is these relations that constitute the structure of a field.

In connection to the above, Bourdieu in his work has used the term *space* to describe not only a physical space, but also a social space. Collectives of people occupy a common social space that is the *field of power*, which can be understood in terms of multiple fields, such as the economic field, the education field and more (Thomson, 2008, emphasis in the original). What happens in the field of power affects what happens in the different subfields, and vice versa; "a mutual process of influence and ongoing co-construction" (ibid.: 71). In each of the fields, there are relations of power in which agents and institutions 'fight' over something that is common to them (Broady, 1996: 42).

Education as a field is an area to which Bourdieu has dedicated much of his research, and his primary interest has been to study mechanisms of domination as well as the reinforcement and reproduction of social inequalities, as in the French education system (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; 1979; Bourdieu, 1996a). On the one hand, "the Bourdieusian interpretation of education has traditionally been associated with the institutionalisation of a system of cultural reproduction where dominant values and ideas become a form of domination and symbols of superiority of one social class over another" (Murphy & Costa, 2016: 6). On the other hand, education can also be regarded as a field that encourages change or transformation (ibid.). Bourdieu (2007) has described his own transformative experiences within the education system in his *Sketch for a self-analysis.*

In this thesis, although the object of study (parent–teacher encounter) is positioned within the broader field of education, it is more precisely positioned in a sub-field, that of schooling. As pointed out by Flynn (2016), "Education as a 'field' is a broad construct and one that has been subdivided by researchers in order to explore the interrelationships of fields within fields" (:156). The subfields, or fields within fields, are microcosms with their own logic, rules and regularities that carry with them effects from the broader fields of which they are part (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 104).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the field of schooling consists of several actors: educational agents and educationalists designated by the state, districts, municipalities and the like; actors in the school, such as principals, teachers and other school personnel; and finally, students and parents. These actors relate to a common belief, or in Bourdieu's terms, a common doxa, around which they are situated and position themselves to compete over legitimate knowledge claims about expertise, criteria for academic success, proper social behaviour and more. The thesis' central focus is on parents and teachers and the way they are positioned and negotiate their positions in the field.

In this section, I have given a general overview of the Bourdieusian perspective and its connection to the thesis while in the rest of the chapter, I will be more specific about where the object of study is situated in the field and how it is operationalised in the research area.

1.2. Defining the parent–teacher encounter

The present thesis uses the term *parent–teacher encounter* to refer to the object of study. Before explaining the logic behind this choice, it is worth outlining the different terms used across literature to describe this phenomenon. The most common ones are home–school or parent–teacher *relationship*, *collaboration*, *interactions* and *partnership*, which are often used interchangeably (Bouakaz, 2007). *Parental involvement* is another prominent term, with its Swedish equivalent being *föräldrainflytande*, which translates to *parental influence*. According to Erikson (2004), this term is rarely used in international literature, while terms such as *samverkan*, *samarbete* and *deltagande* are most commonly used internationally and translate respectively to *cooperation*, *collaboration* and *participation*.

In addition, previous studies illustrate that there is not yet a consensus on a single definition of the studied phenomenon, and researchers attach different meanings to it (Burke, 2012; Lewis et al., 2011; Bakker et al., 2007; Bailey, 2001). For instance, Joyce Epstein (2011) has created a model for parental involvement that is divided into six types: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. Manz, Fantuzzo and Power (2004) build, among others, on Epstein's six-pronged framework and distinguish between school-based involvement, home-based involvement and home–school conferencing. The first concerns parents' engagement in school activities, e.g. volunteering and fundraising, the second is concerned with behaviours that promote children's learning at

home whilst the third refers to communication between parents and school personnel about children's schooling experience and progress.

In this thesis, *encounter* is an umbrella term that includes terms such as relationship, collaboration and involvement. It is in other words an open term in the sense that it does not presuppose that parents and teachers experience collaboration. The type of collaboration and/or relationship between a teacher and a parent varies and depends on different factors, such as one's experiences, background, social and cultural resources and the structure of the field of interaction. In addition, the term *encounter* does not limit itself to one specific aspect of the parent–teacher relationship and/or parental involvement; it can be both home-based and school-based, implicit and explicit, individual and collective, and more.

It is also worth noting here that I interchangeably use the terms *parent–teacher* and *home–school*. *Parent* and *home* refer to a child's parent(s) but they also denote carers/guardians. *Teacher* refers to a student's class teacher but also denotes a mentor or another person from the educating personnel. *School* refers to both the educating personnel and the school management, and in general, it denotes the Swedish compulsory school, i.e. grades one to nine.

Apart from the more descriptive definition of the object of study, I would also like to define it in analytical terms. The parent–teacher encounter is viewed as a *social practice*, which, in a Bourdieusian sense, emerges from the previously mentioned social praxeology, "the meeting of two evolving logics or histories" (Bourdieu, 1993b: 46). Bourdieu (1973) has described practice as

> at one and the same time, necessary and relatively autonomous by reference to the situation considered in its precise immediacy, because it is the product of the dialectical relationship between a situation and a habitus, understood as a system of durable and transposable dispositions which, integrating all past experiences, functions as a matrix of perceptions, of appreciations and actions, making possible the accomplishment of an infinite variety of tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes, practical metaphors, in the strictest sense of the term, which permit the resolution of problems having the same form, and thanks to incessant correction of the results obtained, that these results dialectically produce. (:67)

In this line of thought, the analysis is not solely based on individuals' own interpretations of their encounter or on the objective structures of their positions, but on the bridging of those two; an interplay that takes place in a specific social space, i.e. the field of schooling.

1.3. Introducing the field of schooling

This section consists of two main parts. The first focuses on the education field at a macro/policy level and discusses major socio-political developments in the field of schooling, and implications for the parent–teacher encounter. The second part discusses previous research on families and institutions that concentrates on a micro level, i.e. it sheds light on different actors' views of home–school collaboration, e.g. professionals, parents and students, in relation to social variables and the actors' positioning in the field.

In Bourdieu's line of thought, it is not possible to write a 'previous studies' chapter presented in an 'objective' way because social scientists and the products of their research, in this case this dissertation, are integral parts of the field of study and construct the object of study. For that reason, I outline the previous literature already at the beginning of the thesis in order to introduce the field and contextualise the studied social practice.

1.3.1 Swedish educational policy and socio-political debates

The parent–teacher encounter as a social phenomenon in Sweden has been shaped under the influence of socially, culturally and historically situated conditions. The purpose of this section is to provide a historical background of socio-political developments in the field of education and discuss the implications that these developments have had for the parent–teacher encounter as a social phenomenon. Although the purpose of the thesis is not to conduct a field analysis, this part presents previous research in order to contextualise the social practice that I am studying. As Bourdieu has argued, one needs to retrace the history of the emergence of the object of study (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 238), examine the social space in which interactions, transactions and events occur (Bourdieu, 2005: 148) and investigate how previous knowledge of the studied object is generated and whose interests it serves (Bourdieu, 1993a).

Before delving into the above, I will first provide a brief overview of today's school system in Sweden and the current form of home–school collaboration that to a greater or lesser extent applies to all schools.

The Swedish school system and the contemporary form of home–school collaboration

To begin with, the nine-year compulsory schooling starts at the age of six and consists of four stages: the preparatory preschool class (*förskoleklass*, lasting one year), the early years (*lågstadiet*, years one to three), the middle years (*mellanstadiet*, years four to six) and secondary education (*högstadiet*, years seven to nine). The school system is governed by the state but it is the municipalities that are responsible for compulsory school, upper secondary school (*gymnasium*) and municipal adult education. Furthermore, there are two main types of schools, municipal and independent. Independent schools are run by a body other than the municipality but just as municipal schools, they need to be approved by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) and are obliged to comply with the Swedish Education Act, although they may have their own specific rules and educational lines. Moreover, independent schools are publicly financed by the municipalities and all children have the right to attend. In both school forms, the parents are responsible for children's school enrolment.

As far as home–school collaboration is concerned, Skolverket illustrates that parents and guardians are competent resources for students' learning and development, and a working relationship between home and school contributes to the achievement of higher equality among students. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the Swedish school curriculum emphasises the joint responsibility of parents/guardians and the school for ongoing dialogue and communication. The general collaboration practices between home and school that apply today are the following: the school organises the so-called *utvecklingssamtal* (lit. development conference) twice a year, usually in the beginning of the autumn and spring terms. The duration of the meeting varies but it lasts approximately 30 minutes. The teacher, the student and at least one of the parents/guardians are expected to attend the meeting and discuss the student's academic and social development as well as their set goals for the upcoming term, documented in the so-called Individual Study Plan (ISP). Depending on the student's schooling situation, parents and teachers might have follow-up meetings, sometimes with the school management and/or other educating staff present.

In addition, schools organise parent evenings approximately twice a year where teachers provide general information about the school concerning e.g. holidays, festivities, school policies and the like. Apart from the formal meetings, parents and teachers often meet up on non-formal occasions such as e.g. children's drop-offs and pick-ups, coffee gatherings, flea markets and more. Schools additionally have an online platform through which parents can get informed about homework and school activities, and some schools

send out newsletters. Emails, phone calls and texts are additional communication channels, most frequently used in higher grades as teachers and parents dot get to meet each other on a daily basis. Last but not least, parents have the right to become members of the school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Each class usually has two parent representatives who attend board meetings with the school principal a few times per year where they discuss school/student-related matters and address potential concerns.

In order to understand the current form of the school system and home–school collaboration, it is essential to take a step back in time. As mentioned above, however, the thesis does not conduct a field analysis. For that reason, I do not extensively discuss the educational discourse at a macro/policy level but I rather present major developments in order to contextualise the social practice in the field of schooling.

A centralised education system

During the 1700s and up to the mid-1800s, the main responsibility for children's upbringing and education was placed upon the parents and was controlled by the church. Parents were responsible for ensuring basic education for their children through homeschooling and those who did not have the possibility of teaching their children were obliged by the church to find a replacement that would take on this responsibility (Mickwitz, 2018). The political and educational scene started changing in 1842 with the introduction of a general public school system, the so-called *folkskolan*. Parents were considered unable to educate their children and the responsibility was transferred from the family and the church to the state (Mickwitz, 2018; Hellstén, Mickwitz, & Scharfenberg, 2020). The introduction of the new school system brought demands on the creation of a common school for all (Lundgren, 2012: 62). This demand was however not realised due to financial barriers such as lack of teaching staff and school premises, and also parents' resistance to enrol their children since they were needed as workforce in the agricultural society of the time.

Student enrolment highly increased decades later, between 1942 and 1952, an escalation that demanded new spaces and a higher number of teaching staff (ibid.). Schooling at the primary level has taken different forms since then, until the parliament introduced a nine-year basic schooling for all in 1962. The goal was the creation of a democratic school and democratic citizens.

Despite the vision of *a school for all*, the nine-year public school received great criticism from both left and right political parties that accelerated in the 1970s. The political debate focused on the failure of the public system to

address social inequalities and students' varying needs (Lundahl, 2004). As a result, although the decentralised school system was officially implemented in the early 1990s, there had been tendencies that pointed towards that direction since the 1970s. Neoliberal ideas of freedom of choice, individual responsibility and the transfer of power to local actors were seen as solutions to address the ineffectiveness of the public school system of the time (Dovemark, 2008). The so-called SIA[4] investigation that was actualised during 1970–1974 and the introduction of the school curriculum in the 1980s are examples of signs of decentralisation (Johansson & Örving, 1993).

Indeed, the educational debate of the time and the tendency towards decentralisation were not only Swedish phenomena but rather Western world phenomena that were very much influenced by the neoliberal ideas that emanated from Margaret Thatcher's and Ronald Reagan's administrations in the UK and USA, respectively (Lundgren, 2012: 69). These ideas originated in the USA back in the 1960s based on, among others, the American economist Milton Friedman (Ambrose, 2016).

The turn to decentralisation

In the school sector, the distribution of responsibility has been divided into three levels: the state, the municipality and the school. The state decides on national goals and the content of the school curriculum; the municipalities are responsible for the schools in their areas and for ensuring that the national policies and the school law are being followed; and the school principals are responsible for the design, implementation and evaluation of an individual school plan with regards to teaching and cooperation with students and parents (Ståhle, 2000).

The turn to decentralisation became even more apparent in the early 1990's with the introduction of different kinds of reforms. In 1991, Skolverket, the Swedish National Agency for Education, replaced the so-called *Skolöverstyrelsen* and became the central administrative authority for the public school system. In 1992, students were enrolled in the school closest to their home, but parents got the right to choose a school through the free school choice reform. The logic behind this reform was that schools, in their efforts to maximise student enrolment, would be forced to increase their standards in terms of the quality of education. Part of the reform was the introduction of a new voucher system (*skolpeng*) in which each school gets finances depending on the number of enrolled students. An additional change that occurred the

[4] Skolans inre arbete [The school's internal work] (1970). The investigation focused, among other things, on poorly performing students and the improvement of the school environment.

same year was the establishment of the previously mentioned independent schools (*friskolor*), also compulsory and publicly financed.

Reforms of lesser or greater extent continued all through the 1990s and 2000s. In 2006, there was the introduction of student documentation in the form of individual study plans, which previously only concerned students with special needs. In 2008, there was the establishment of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*), a supervisory authority for quality assurance of schools to which parents can report a school. Last but not least, in 2011 there was the introduction of a new school curriculum (Lgr 11), which among other things changed the grading system, resulting in students now receiving grades from year 6. The Lgr 11 curriculum still applies today and is revised every few years.

The decentralisation reform in the early 1990s coincided with one of the biggest economic declines since the 1930s and was further followed by a transformation of the country's demographics due to a record high influx of migrants[5] (Lundahl, 2004). The new welfare system and the market-oriented school system in particular did not manage to address the social inequalities that were accentuated during that period. The voucher system and the free school choice reform rather increased societal divisions and segregation between schools, which especially burdened those in socioeconomically vulnerable areas in the bigger cities (Hellstén, Mickwitz, & Scharfenberg, 2020). The aftermath of decentralisation was also depicted in the declining PISA results (ibid.).

Implications for the parent–teacher encounter

The socio-political changes in the educational arena indeed had implications for the parent–teacher encounter. Erikson (2004) in his doctoral thesis developed a typology of four models that relate to the different phases of the parent–teacher relationship from a historical perspective. The *separation model*, according to Erikson, has historically dominated; parents and schools were supposed to have different tasks and roles regarding children's upbringing and education. They were in other words two separate spheres, the school and the home, "minding the gap" (Erikson, 2013: 16). The introduction of *folkskolan* marked this separation through the institutionalisation of teacher education that has given teachers professional autonomy and independence (Tallberg Broman, 2009; 2013).

[5] Although labour migration had already started in the 1960s.

The discourse about parental involvement in school actively started in 1892, when the first parent association was founded in Alnö, Sundsvall. The association later became a national federation named Home & School (*Hem & Skola*),[6] a movement that clearly signified parents' wish for involvement and collaboration with school (Johansson & Örving, 1993). *Hem & Skola* played an active role in the Swedish socio-political debate mainly up to the 1990s and influenced various associations all over the country (Ståhle, 2000; Mickwitz, 2018). One of its central propositions was the inclusion of parental involvement in the school law.

The political agenda in fact drew upon parental involvement during the 1940s and 1950s, with school investigations and commissions that stressed the need for bridging parents' and schools' values regarding child-rearing and education. Moreover, the school investigations and curriculum of the 1960s (Lgr 62) urged the schools to place emphasis on two-way information exchange, i.e. from school to home and vice versa. At this point, the *separation model* according to Erikson (2004) turned into a *partnership model*, built upon the idea of equality; home and school were no longer separate, but overlapping spheres, and the need for a close contact between teachers and parents was emphasised. This partnership intended to reduce the existing distance: "closing the gap" (Erikson, 2013: 17).

In addition, the previously mentioned SIA investigation in the 1970s introduced the so-called quarter-meetings (*kvartssamtal*, similar to today's development conferences) as well as the establishment of parent councils in schools. Erikson (2004) points to a shift from the *partnership* to the *user-participation model* that builds upon democratic ideals where elected parents gained the right to take part in the schools' decision-making processes.

The 1990s marked the beginning of an era that Erikson describes as the *choice model*, which is based on the idea of the autonomous civil citizen. Parents' rights were officially written into the 1994 school curriculum along with the introduction of obligatory development conferences (*utvecklingssamtal*) that replaced the quarter-meetings (*kvartssamtal*), as well as different communication channels that gradually started getting incorporated in the parent–school arena.

Tallberg Broman (2013) describes the contemporary form of parental involvement as 'medialised' due to the use of a range of digital communication channels, 'legislated' in the sense that it is formalised and protected by laws

[6] Initially called *Målsmännens riksförbund.*

and conventions, and 'bureaucratised' through the increased need for documentation, e.g. through forms, questionnaires and more (:29).

Being 'good' in the neoliberal era

With respect to the historical background above, Englund (1993; 1996; 2010) critically contends that the shift to decentralisation has turned the *big democracy* or *public good* into a *small democracy* or *private good*. The first two concepts refer to education as a collective right of citizens while the last two refer to education as part of parents' individual choice and responsibilities. As a result, in the market- and performance-oriented school system, parents have become clients driven by individual interests (Erikson, 2004; Skawonius, 2005; Mickwitz; 2018). Within this system, Englund (2010) continues, there is a risk of increased segregation for those children whose parents do not/cannot make the 'right' choices for them.

Previous research has in fact discussed the notions of being 'right' and 'good' that entered contemporary policy in the era of neoliberalism. As mentioned earlier, the turn to marketisation and individualisation of education is not only a Swedish but also a Western world phenomenon. For that reason, I will continue the discussion by making reference to both Swedish and international research.

Changes in the field of schooling have altered the view of parenthood, professionalism and childhood. To start with the parents, Forsberg (2009) shows that the Swedish welfare state has made attempts to encourage parents to live up to the standards of the constructed ideal parenthood by establishing norms that promote increased involvement and gender equality. Nevertheless, Forsberg continues, there is a discrepancy between the welfare state's encouragements and parents' practices in the sense that it is still unclear whether parents get involved because they really want to or because they are expected to do so within the framework of the constructed ideal parenthood.

Conceptions of the ideal, competent, good or successful parenthood embedded in contemporary school policy implicate what Popkewitz (2003: 53) has described as the *pedagogicalisation* of the parent or what Börjesson and Palmblad (2003: 31) have similarly called *protoprofessonalisation*. Parents are expected to go in line with the school's cultural patterns and recognise the professionals' expertise and authority (ibid.), a process that is rather implicit and constructed through the practices that take place in the meeting between home and school (Markström, 2013). These practices are played out within a spe-

cific field, the field of schooling that entails an inherent order or, in Bourdieu's terms, a silent doxa of how home–school collaboration is expected to work (1977a).

In addition, Swedish and international literature has been critical about how homogeneously the image of the good parent has been presented and how aspects of ethnic background and social class have frequently been ignored. Bunar (2001) mentions that historically, Swedish welfare policies and the authorities responsible for the 1960s labour migration have pointed out immigrants as a group with 'particular needs' (:290). In the landscape of parenting, immigrant parents need to adjust these 'particular needs' to the previously mentioned ideal parenthood. Dahlstedt (2009) in his article shows that Swedish educational policy has promoted a type of partnership between immigrant parents and school where the 'rules of the game' are not played on equal terms. Rather, the rules are dictated by the school. He further suggests that these policies are predicated on a wish for immigrant parents' compliance with the ideals of 'good Swedish parenting' that are often associated with a specific type of 'Swedishness': the white middle-class parent (:202).

Similarly, in the British context, literature critically contends that educational policy has taken on a one-size-fits-all approach towards parental involvement and has situated it in a normativity framework based on principles of universalism (Crozier, 2001; Cruddas, 2010; Klett-Davies, 2010). Socioeconomic factors that affect parenting practices are therefore left unaccounted for. In other words, the notion of the good parent assumes certain qualities of social and cultural capital (Vincent, 2000). In addition, Crozier (2019) suggests that the neoliberal stance has 'trapped' the white middle-class parent in a dominant position that subsequently overshadows white working-class and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families. The last two groups are expected to engage in white middle-class practices of *concerted cultivation*[7] in order to correspond to the ideal of the good parent. Those who do not succeed are 'brought into line' through parental classes, or become marginalised otherwise. Cruddas (2010) further argues that the neoliberal goal is not to turn all parents into middle-class parents but rather to "ensure the dominance of a particular discourse of authoritarian parenting" (:95).

This tendency has also been observed in other countries that follow the neoliberal model. For instance, Van Laere et al. (2018) and Dannesboe et al. (2018), writing in a Belgian and Danish context, respectively, contend that governments and educational policies in early childhood education expect

[7] Cf. Lareau, 2011.

parents to perform 'well' by taking part in practices that support the institutions' pedagogical approach and promote school readiness. Solvason et al. (2019) in a way summarise all the above in their literature-based article on parenting across educational systems where they write about the silencing of parents. They argue that parents are portrayed as valuable resources for the child, and yet they have no voice.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, developments in the field of schooling did not only alter the view of parenthood in society but also the view of teachers' professionalism. One has to be a 'good' educator; a notion that over time has carried different connotations due to the changing nature of the education field and its doxa. Erikson (2012) analysed the image of the 'good' teacher in relation to the four models of the parent–teacher relationship. In the *separation model*, teachers were expected to be boundary-setters and responsible for turning students into democratic citizens. In the *partnership model*, teachers were supposed to be 'bridge-builders' and responsible for establishing a good collaboration with parents. The good teacher in the *user-participation model*, Erikson continues, was a contact-initiator and one who encouraged engagement in the school's decision-making bodies. In the *choice model*, the good teacher is not only a partner and contact-initiator but also a counterpart who complements parents' wishes and ambitions of their children's successful educational trajectories. Through the decentralisation and the market orientation of the education sector in this last phase, the social status of the teaching profession has decreased (Hellstén, Mickwitz & Scharfenberg, 2020). An attempt to raise their professional status in Sweden occurred in 2011 with the introduction of a teacher certificate (ibid.).

The different ideologies embedded in educational policy on 'good' parenting and teaching share a common denominator, namely the negotiation of responsibility for child upbringing and education. Although this thesis focuses on the parents and the teachers, an interesting question for future inquiry is: where is the child positioned in the discourse?

Critical voices in the sociology of childhood argue that international regulations implicitly divide adults and children into two different types: *human beings* and *human becomings* (Lee, 2001: 5). The former (adults) are regarded as independent and complete whereas the latter (children) are seen as dependent and incomplete. Despite the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are not seen as autonomous human beings since their parents more or less been authorised to control their lives with respect to rearing and the type of education they receive (Englund, 2010: 236). As Mayall (2015) suggests, childhood at a policy level "is seen as a time for socialisation in the interests

of state agendas, and parents are seen essentially as agents in ensuring the conformity of childhood to these state agendas" (:17).

Concluding comments

The continuous developments in the broader socio-political field are structuring and restructuring the field of education (Hardy, 2010). In Bourdieu's terms, the positions of parents and teachers operate in the *field* of schooling through *habitus*. The school, as a social institution, instils specific institutional requirements in its agents, which are tacitly reflected in the organisation of the school, the hierarchical structures and the forms of activity that are taking place (Broady, 1981). In Bourdieu's terms, the *misrecognition* of those institutional requirements or the institutional *doxa* leads to cultural reproduction (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). According to Bourdieu, reproduction (and/or transformation) of doxa occurs through the agents' embodiment of the institution's objective structures, i.e. the products of collective history, which makes it possible for them to inhabit the institution and appropriate its activity (Bourdieu, 1990b: 57).

When one looks at the Swedish context, it becomes apparent that the parent–teacher encounter is a doxic object that has been and is situated within a framework that adheres and adjusts to changing educational policies and political decisions. Teachers and parents thus have to constantly reconsider and renegotiate their positions in order to accomplish a 'working' relationship. The encounter between these positions is a social practice that reproduces or challenges the doxa and the structure in the field over time.

1.3.2 Research on families and institutions

The purpose of this section is to present and discuss research that has been conducted in the area of families and institutions. While the previous section touched upon the parent–teacher encounter on a macro/policy level, this section addresses it on an 'empirical' level, i.e. research that has studied parents' and professionals' perspectives on the matter. This part is closely related to the social practice that is the focus of the thesis.

At the beginning of the section, I provide a general discussion regarding the notion of family and the reproduction of the family's capital in the field of schooling, in relation to Bourdieu and other scholars that follow the Bourdieusian tradition. I have chosen to include this part because it lays the theoretical groundwork for the research that is presented in the rest of the section. The next three parts focus on parental involvement in schooling and child-

rearing with respect to three social variables, i.e. class, ethnicity and gender. Previous research has shown that these three variables have significant effects on home–school relations and intersect to a large extent with each other (e.g. see discussion in Tallberg Broman, 2009: 232-233). I discuss them separately so as to be able to give considerable amount of focus to each one of them. Finally, the last three parts discuss parents' positioning in the school market in relation to school choice, professionals' perspective on home–school collaboration as well as professionals', parents' and children's positioning in institutional encounters, such as the development conference.

Family as a concept and the transmission of cultural capital into the field of schooling

Bourdieu has described the notion of family as a social artefact (re)produced and legitimised by the state (1996b). He specifically talked about family as a classificatory concept due to the reality that has been given to it, or its doxa that is accepted by all as self-evident. Experiencing family as self-evident, Bourdieu continues, derives from the near-perfect match between the subjective and objective social categories. In particular, he writes:

> Thus the family as an objective social category (a structuring structure) is the basis of the family as a subjective social category (a structured structure), a mental category which is the matrix of countless representations and actions (e.g. marriages) which help to reproduce the objective social category. The circle is that of reproduction of the social order (ibid.: 21).

Taking the above into consideration, the family operates as a field of its own with its specific physical, economic and symbolic power relations where its members struggle to maintain and/or transform them (ibid.). This can also be understood as a "family-specific doxa" embedded in real/actual family groups, i.e. a certain conservative orthodoxy of 'what is right' and 'what is done' as well as a subversive heterodoxy (Atkinson, 2014: 228). Orthodoxy/heterodoxy applies to everyday actions, e.g. ways of behaving towards each other within the family, but also to a general model of family construction. The orthodoxy that has been historically shaped and predominates even in the contemporary world is based on a "heterosexual, patriarchal, monogamous, private, nuclear, male breadwinner/female homemaker model" (ibid.: 225). At the other end lie the heterodox non-heterosexual, non-nuclear and ethnic-minority family models (ibid.: 225). The former type, the orthodox one, functions as a model *of* reality in the sense that it mirrors the general practice, and a model *for* reality in the sense that it becomes the dominant paradigm to be followed by social agents (Alanen, 2011: 101). Hence, being a 'normal' family has the potential of securing certain advantages with respect

to cultural and symbolic capital (ibid.). In contrast, families in the heterodox sense, e.g. lower educational and socioeconomic background, single mothers and ethnic-minority parents, are differentiated as 'non-functioning' and 'unfit' for the dominant norms of success (Popkewitz, 2003: 52).

Furthermore, family as a field, as all fields and fields within fields, is only relatively autonomous. The members of family groups are in possession of certain types of capital that they utilise and potentially accumulate in different social fields other than the family (Atkinson, 2014; Alanen, 2011), which forms the key basis for the production of social inequalities (Alanen, 2011: 96).

One of the fields of (re)production of social inequalities is the education field (see e.g. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu has argued that social agents such as schooled (privileged) families use, either consciously or unconsciously, *education strategies* to reproduce or advance their social position (Bourdieu, 1996a: 273). Children through their early socialisation embody the family capital, e.g. skills, knowledge and other types of resources. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) have named this process the acquisition of *primary habitus,* that is, the foundation of all the other forms of *secondary habitus* (:45). The latter is acquired in later socialisation and entails the pedagogical work of the school and other didactic institutions (Wacquant, 2016: 68).

Within this framework, the most powerful/symbolic form of capital in relation to educational investments is *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1986). The reason is that cultural capital can lead to successful educational outcomes and it is seen as earned rather than purchased (ibid.). The domestic transmission of cultural capital into the field of schooling has advantages for those children whose capital goes in line with "the dominant fraction of the dominant class" (Bourdieu, 1984: 88). Children from less privileged groups are not only unlikely to catch up with those who have had a head start from home, but they also acquire a form of negative capital; they have accumulated obstacles to educational success due to a primary habitus that 'deviates' from the legitimate type of habitus in the educational system (Brooker, 2015: 39).

Moreover, British and North American researchers[8] have with the above concepts coined the terms *familial/family habitus* and *institutional habitus*. Familial

[8] See for example: Gewirtz, S., Ball, S. & Bowe, R. (1995). *Markets, choice and equity in education.* Buckingham: Open University Press. / McDonough, P.M. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press. / Reay, D. (1998). 'Always knowing' and 'never being sure': Familial and institutional habituses and higher education choice. *Journal of Education Policy, 13*(4), 519–29. / Reay, D., David, M. & Ball, S. (2001). Making a

habitus refers to an internalised socialisation of children in families, creating certain expectations of what is natural and right throughout their educational trajectories (Reay, 1998: 525-527). Institutional habitus has a similar meaning to secondary habitus and refers to "the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organization" (ibid.: 521). In school culture, the way in which teaching is communicated from teachers and the management to students as well as the school building itself are examples of how the institution socialises the students in relation to education (Poromaa, 2016: 16).

Atkinson (2011) critically argues that the use of these two concepts conflicts with the ontological foundation of the notion of habitus, that of relationalism. Habitus can only function within and in relation to fields. According to him, the aforementioned scholars do not make reference to any contextualising field with respect to familial habitus and they rather treat it as "*substantial* property, a fixed essence defined in and of itself" (:336). Atkinson further opposes the use of institutional habitus and how its collective character has been defined. He specifically claims that the use of the concept in a way qualifies the school as an agent of its own with its own struggles and dispositions. Bourdieu however sees the collective form of habitus as a label for describing resemblances among individuals that are situated in a certain field, e.g. family members, or teachers in a school (:338). Atkinson extends his critique to the 'monolithic' character of familial and institutional habitus that makes little space for internal heterogeneity and difference. Finally, he rather proposes the existence of a "family-specific doxa" and a "school-specific doxa" where the occupants of the respective fields share a common spirit and ethos.

Parents and social class

Before proceeding to the theme of the section, it is worth re-emphasising that class intersects with other social markers, such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality and (dis)ability as well as differing class fractions (Reay, 2010a: 401). Although research on home–school relations has placed a significant amount of focus on the role of social class, it at the same time recognises the aforementioned intersection.

On a theoretical note, Bourdieu opposes objectivist and subjectivist points of view regarding social reality and class. According to him, social agents are neither classified objects nor do they construct social reality. Social class is

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difference? Institutional habituses and higher educational choice. *Sociological Research Online, 5*(4). http://www.socresonline.org.uk/5/4/reay.html.

rather understood as a multidimensional space in which there is competition in the form of power or capital over the appropriation of different kinds of goods available on the site (1987: 3-4). The movement from a theoretical class, or a 'class on paper' to a *real* class, Bourdieu continues, is not given. A class (social, ethnic, sexual, and more) exists when agents (e.g. politicians) hold positions that enable them to authorise a particular form of class and impose it upon those who recognise them as authorised and further recognise themselves as members of this particular class (ibid.).

Research in the home–school arena highlights the different conditions for involvement and experiences of schooling between middle-class and working-class families.

In the Swedish context, Forsberg (2009) argues that although people in contemporary Sweden tend to not identify themselves with any particular class, class does seem to be important. In his doctoral thesis, he found that middle-class parents consider themselves 'child-rearing experts', something that is not explicitly stated in the field of schooling. Parents rather naturally assume their responsibility towards child-rearing. On the other hand, Forsberg continues, teachers are seen as 'teaching experts' and the ones who have primary responsibility for children's learning. Parents and teachers exert control over each other, depending on rearing or learning matters, but they both discipline the child. The mutual control over children's rearing and schooling shows how little space children are given in home–school relations (ibid.).

Another Swedish thesis has explored attitudes towards education among high status parents. Palme (2008) makes a distinction between two groups of professions: writers, film makers, journalists, university teachers, physicians and high-level civil servants on the one hand, and business owners, executives and senior managers in the private sector on the other. The former saw their children's formal education as a means for long-term development of their personality that should not be subjected to parental pressure or different types of incentives, such as payments for reaching high student results (:278). These families were also sceptical towards the conditions of contemporary grading. In contrast, the latter group stressed the competitive character of education and perceived it as a means for successful professional trajectories, whilst they were positively inclined towards grading as a means of measuring knowledge and skills. Palme explains that the first group belonged to a cultural fraction whereas the second was part of an economic one, meaning that resources in the form of economic capital were important for their maintaining their social position.

In connection to the above, Lidegran (2009) in her doctoral thesis shows how children of the education elite inherit the family's educational capital and utilise it for making academic investments. These families transmitted their expectations and understandings of the educational system to their children, which concerned inside knowledge of how the system works and the importance of investment in long-term education. Moreover, Lidegran found that the parents only exerted an indirect control over their children's schooling and did not intervene as long as their performance was high and things went smoothly. Students perceived their parents' attitude as giving them a great amount of freedom (ibid.).

Furthermore, Lund (2012) in his article analyses middle-class and working-class parents' opinions and practices with respect to, among other things, organised leisure activities for children. He shows that high-educated middle-class parents were intensively involved in children's leisure time and enrolled them in a series of extracurricular activities, something that required careful planning and distribution of responsibilities. Parents stressed the significance of these activities for children's development, which can be understood as parents' attempt to make their children autonomous subjects (ibid.). Conversely, although working-class parents expressed a wish for more intensive enrolment in leisure-time activities, they pointed to obstacles regarding issues of time, finances, upbringing and children's capacities.

A more recent study by Sjödin and Roman (2018) has similarly looked at the relation between extracurricular activities and social class among Swedish parents. Although there were similarities in parents' reasoning on the importance of extracurricular activities that crossed class boundaries, the studied middle-class parents enrolled their children in more activities than their working-class counterparts. The study suggests that the working-class parents' lower participation levels relate to the type of cultural and financial resources needed as well as limited control over their working hours.

The Swedish research presented above resonates with a wide spectrum of international literature.

In a North American context, Annette Lareau's *Unequal Childhoods* (2011) analyses the relation between social position and child-rearing practices and their impact on students' academic performance. The findings are based on an ethnographic longitudinal study of African American and White families in the United States. In particular, Lareau has coined the terms *concerted cultivation* and the *accomplishment of natural growth*. Concerted cultivation is a parenting style observed in middle-class parents who enrol their children in organ-

ised leisure activities and teach them how to negotiate with people in authority, e.g. teachers. Lareau shows that both African American and White middle-class parents were playing according to 'the rules of the game' in their interactions with institutions and possessed a sense of self-entitlement that they then transmitted to their children. This self-entitlement enabled both parents and children to make demands on professionals and accumulate their cultural capital (:7). In contrast, working-class/poor families relied on the accomplishment of natural growth. In this context, parents used directives and set clear boundaries between adults and children whilst children had greater control over their leisure time, e.g. free play in the neighbourhood. In contrast to middle-class parents, working-class/poor parents had a deferential attitude towards school. They tended to seek guidance from teachers rather than giving advice and they also maintained a separation between home and school; they held professionals responsible for ensuring that their children learned what they should.

Lareau further shows that concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth lead to academic advantages and constraints, respectively. Patterns of legitimisation have situated concerted cultivation within the "dominant set of cultural repertoires", a practice of child upbringing generally accepted across social institutions (:4). As a result, middle-class children who have been raised/trained according to these principles tend to have higher academic achievement compared to their working-class/poor counterparts. A quantitative study that tested the theoretical validity of concerted cultivation confirmed the correlation between students' test scores and parents' and students' expectations of academic performance (Redford, Johnson, & Honnold, 2009).

Furthermore, distinctions similar to Lareau's have been reported in other studies as well. For instance, Nelson (2010) distinguishes between *parenting out of control* and *parenting with limits*. She found that the first is favoured by elite parents who struggle to manage their children's hectic schedules in their efforts to reproduce their social, economic and cultural capital (:78, 81). The latter is favoured by less resourceful parents (middle and/or working-class) who tend to set rules to their children and impose consequences when these rules are violated (:104). In a similar vein, Calarco (2014) distinguishes between *by-any-means* and *no-excuses problem-solving*. The first is performed by middle-class parents who coach their children to negotiate their needs with teachers and request accommodations (:1016). Working-class parents on the other hand encourage their children to respect teachers' authority and not seek assistance (ibid.). In a later study, Calarco (2018) argues that the middle-class

advantage is in part a negotiated advantage in the sense that middle-class students do not only comply with teachers' expectations but they also know how to request and secure professional support.

In connection to Calarco's argument, Vuorisalo and Alanen (2015) in a Finnish study of interactions between children and preschool pedagogues found that children who have been nurtured with free and/or preschool *conversational capital* hold a good position in the preschool field because they enable educators to create 'authentic' interactions with them (:88). In contrast, children who have not been nurtured in terms of legitimate capital hold a weak position in the preschool field and are given less opportunities to switch their positions.

British research has also focused on the relation between social positioning and parental involvement and has highlighted the significance of parents' cultural capital in their negotiations with institutional actors. Diane Reay (1998), in an early study of two urban schools, shows that mothers in Oak Park, a school located in a middle-class area, were engaging in processes of replicating their habitus while mothers in Milner, located in a working-class area, had to make attempts to transform their habitus in order to fit in the school system. What differentiated the mothers' experiences and positions was their cultural capital. Middle-class women, in contrast to their working-class counterparts, were self-entitled and had articulated knowledge of how the system works. Reay reported similar results also in later studies. She argues that class is linked to aspects of cultural capital, such as confidence, assertiveness, access to information about educational provisions and the like (1999).

Possession of resources in terms of cultural capital may also connect to mothers' habitus in relation to their own schooling experiences. For example, Reay (2010b) found that the studied middle-class mothers often had positive school experiences and parents who actively participated in their schooling. In contrast, working-class mothers were more likely to report negative academic experiences as well as little or no involvement on their parents' side due to double work-shifts and late working hours. These negative experiences disempowered working-class mothers' relation to education that especially burdened those who lacked financial and emotional support from their partners. With respect to interactions with school, these mothers sometimes felt that they "hadn't been listened to" (Reay, 2002: 27).

Reay further points to the unequal conditions that the contemporary educational marketplace has laid out for these two groups. Middle-class parents can utilise their economic and cultural capital to navigate the system and secure educational advantages for their children whereas working-class parents,

and especially ethnic-minority groups, not only lack the appropriate capital but they also need to face the stigma of educational failure that has been placed upon them (2002; 2010a). Nevertheless, class inequality is often hidden behind dominant discourses, such as the notion of race in the USA or rurality in China and Latin America (2010a).

In addition, Carol Vincent (2000) argues that social class is strongly associated with confidence of approach for middle-class parents as they possess the social, cultural and intellectual capital to be able to openly communicate with school and even question a teacher. In a study of different groups of parents, Vincent (2012) found three types of parental intervention: high, intermediate and low. High intervention refers to parents who often initiate contact with school and participate in all school activities; intermediate includes parents who do not necessarily initiate contact with school but almost always participate in activities and meetings; and low intervention concerns parents who have minimal interactions with school. Vincent found that the higher the intervention, the higher the parents' social positioning. As she points out, the studied parents with high intervention levels were in professional/managerial jobs, well-educated and possessed considerable knowledge of educational matters. In another study, Ranson, Martin and Vincent (2004) have shown a correlation between parents' approach to school's communicative practices and cultural capital. Parents of the more advantaged groups made use of different channels and strategies to address concerns and ensure that the school accommodates their wishes. In contrast, parents with less social and cultural resources lacked the ease to make use of different channels and were often disappointed with the infrequent communication opportunities that the school had been offering.

Finally, in the Norwegian context, Bæck (2009) found that middle-class parents felt more 'at home' since schools are imprinted with a type of cultural capital that stems from and corresponds to this particular group. In another study, Bæck (2010) found a correlation between parents' educational level and their involvement in formalised home–school cooperation, i.e. participation in school committees and being parent representatives. The analysis showed that parents with high education backgrounds were more positively inclined towards this type of participation than those with lower educational levels.

To sum up, Swedish and international research has uniformly showcased the significant role that social class plays in parental involvement practices. Cultural capital, in the form of educational qualifications, access to relevant information and a sense of self-entitlement, is possessed by middle-class parents and utilised in order to navigate the school system. Resources in the

form of cultural capital are even transmitted to their children who are trained to claim and secure educational advantages throughout their educational trajectories. In contrast, working-class families often lack legitimate capital and their parental involvement practices do not match the dominant view of 'good' parenting. This in turn leads to educational constraints for their children. In today's competitive educational marketplace, working-class and especially ethnic-minority families are often stigmatised and blamed for educational failure.

Parents and ethnicity

Research shows that ethnicity has a powerful impact on parents' experience of children's schooling. Although a substantial amount of international literature has addressed the issue of ethnicity and parental involvement, in this section I place the primary focus on the Swedish context as it is most relevant to this thesis and the empirical study. In specific, I discuss the issue of ethnicity in relation to migration and involvement in school.

To begin with, Bouakaz (2007) in his doctoral thesis has looked at the involvement of parents with Arabic background in an urban secondary school. He found that teachers and parents were engaged in a symbolic battle of protecting the child (:270). Teachers exerted a form of symbolic violence in the sense that they wanted to show parents how they could best help their children succeed in school and integrate in society while parents wanted to protect their children from the school's influence with respect to cultural values. Moreover, teachers and parents had different views regarding responsibility for children's learning; the former valued parents' participation and engagement in dialogue with them whereas the latter were following a certain cultural model in which the home relies on the professionals and does not interfere in their work. The language barrier, Bouakaz continues, was one of the biggest obstacles that was identified by both teachers and parents. Parents further expressed a wish to acquire more knowledge about the Swedish education system to develop a closer relationship with the school. However, these parents seemed to lack the collective social capital needed, i.e. access to networks that will increase their knowledge, and it is rather questionable whether the school offered adequate resources in order to meet these needs. Bouakaz also argues that the struggles that the studied parents faced were connected to issues of class that did not only concern school-related matters but were extended to the overall socioeconomic situation and problematic conditions in the neighbourhood.

Bunar (2001) in his thesis has discussed the stigmatisation of immigrant-dense and poor neighbourhoods where the residents and the institutions of

the area are labelled as 'different' (:292). This stigmatisation subsequently affects the reputation of the schools and the relation to parents and students. Cultural differences are seen as pedagogical problems, which are then extended to a societal level and lead to cultural shame, mutual accusations and a 'us and them' divide. In particular, Bunar describes the home–school relationship as *unilaterally active* and laden with stigmatised representations (:187). Actors that engage in discussions of how to fix the deficient relationship tend to put the blame on the 'other'; school actors blame the parents' cultural background while the parents and parent representatives blame the school's working methods. The situation leads to lack of trust and inefficient dialogue.

In a later study, Bunar (2015) looked at the communication between school and newly arrived parents where it is apparent that the aforementioned problems still existed. Parents felt that the school did not consider them valuable resources for the children but rather excluded them due to their cultural background and limited linguistic competences. Bunar argues that the parents' group identity was loaded with negative representations of being an 'immigrant' and in this case, 'newly arrived'. As mentioned before, this resulted in lack of trust and an accusatory attitude.

Similar findings have also been reported in Osman and Månsson (2015) who explored Somali parents' experiences of the Swedish school. The studied parents purposefully avoided participating in parent–teacher conferences as they thought that communication was teacher-driven, business-like and reactive (:45). Even when the school made use of interpreters, the parents felt that they could not engage in dialogue as the interpretation was one-way; from what the parent wanted to say to the teachers but not vice versa. Parents further mentioned that the theme of the conferences almost always focused on social aspects and especially children's anti-school behaviour. Osman and Månsson contend that the parents lacked access to social networks that could compensate for the problematic relationship with the school and that could provide them necessary resources to assist their children's academic path. They further illustrate that the exclusion that the parents were facing derived from the context these parents emigrated from, the context to which they immigrated as well as the lack of social capital that could otherwise offer bridging and ideational support to navigate the Swedish school system (:48).

Furthermore, Dahlstedt and Hertzberg (2011) suggest that the problematic relationship between school and immigrant parents does not only result from the lack of resources in a practical sense, but also from the *feeling* of lack of these resources. In other words, schools tend to address the existing issues in a way that makes parents feel inadequate, something that was not observed in parents' interactions in other settings (ibid.).

It is worth reminding here that the problems depicted in the aforementioned studies mainly denote parents of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. It is the intersection of ethnicity with lower social positioning that is most likely to lead to negative experiences of schooling. Immigrant parents are situated in a continuity–discontinuity spectrum that affects the frequency and type of involvement in school (Vincent, 2000). Discontinuity is experienced due to parents possessing a cultural capital that is of different 'currency' (ibid.).

Finally, a Swedish doctoral thesis that explored the academic aspirations of newly arrived students from Iraq shows that in most cases, their ambitions were based on their parents' education and career goals (Sharif, 2017). In particular, the youth from middle-class families said that their parents and extended family expected them to attend high-status educational programmes and pursue professional careers as doctors and engineers. The educational strategies of the youth, Sharif continues, are associated with the family's position in the labour market, their social capital and other symbolically significant assets. Nevertheless, he mentions that all the studied students, regardless of class, gender and ethnicity, valued education and had academic aspirations for the future.

The research presented in this section shows that ethnicity in relation to migration and parental involvement does impact parents' experiences of children's schooling and their position in the field. Practical obstacles such as cultural conflicts and language barriers, but mostly stigmatisation and negative representations of immigrant parents as deficient and incompetent, lead to problematic relations and accusatory attitudes. The studies further showed that it is the intersection of ethnicity with lower social class that is most likely to cause negative experiences. Parents who lack legitimate social and cultural capital do not have access to networks that would give them the chance to increase knowledge about the system and actively support their children in their schooling and future educational trajectories.

Parents and gender

The bridging between objective and subjective structures is also mirrored in Bourdieu's understanding of gender. Based on his ethnographic studies in Algeria, he conceptualises gender in relation to sexual and, by extension, social identity (Bourdieu, 2001). Women and men, through the domestic division of labour, embody dispositions in the form of values, gestures, language and more. These dispositions are then transmitted to the children who learn to experience the wider structural features, understood and entwined with their bodily relation to others (Skeggs, 2004: 21). Bourdieu has highlighted the vital role that mothers play in the generation of cultural capital within the

family by fulfilling a "cathartic and quasi-therapeutic function" (2001: 77). Through patterns of legitimisation that prevail in social processes and structures, femininity is misrecognised as a natural personality disposition (Skeggs, 2004). As a result, mothers feel that they were naturally made for mothering (Reay, 1998).

Nevertheless, Skeggs (2004) problematises the conceptualisation of gender in Bourdieu's work and argues that it cannot only be an unconscious construct or a form of misrecognition but that gender is rather ambivalent in nature. And it is the susceptibility of this ambivalence to change that guarantees the perpetuation of its ambivalent nature (ibid.).

In the field of schooling, studies show that it is mainly the mothers who take care of educational matters and are in charge of the work involved in children's schooling. Reay (1998) contends that the unequal division of labour was rarely problematised by the studied families, and the marginality of fathers was generally accepted. The 'parental' responsibility rather connoted a 'maternal' responsibility (:60). In a later study, Reay (2004) connects the mothers' investments in children's lives to the concept of emotional capital that has been previously introduced by feminist research (e.g. Lawler, 2000 and Bell, 1990). The term has been described as a variant of social or cultural capital.

Reay argues that emotional capital is both gendered and classed.[9] In specific, she found that mothers' involvement in children's schooling mainly stemmed from feelings of anxiety and frustration as well as encouragement and empathy. The generation of emotional capital, she continues, becomes apparent in mothers' efforts to be close to their children while fathers remained at a distance. One of the differences that Reay identified between working- and middle-class mothers is that the former prioritised children's well-being over educational success more often than the majority of the latter.

In Sweden, family and educational policies promote equal involvement of men and women in children's lives. The studied men in Forsberg's (2009) research were actively engaged in everyday practices regarding children's leisure activities, schooling and household in an attempt to live up to the cultural expectations of equal parenting expressed in Swedish policies. Despite the fathers' active involvement, however, Forsberg argues that it was the mothers who assumed greater responsibility for the household and childcare. The parents explained that it was because women were more interested in

[9] There is a debate across literature about whether emotional capital is feminine, gender-neutral, or classed, or whether it lies at the intersection of all three. See e.g. Allatt, 1993; Illouz, 1997; Gillies, 2006; Virkki, 2007; Cottingham, 2016; Zemblyas, 2007; Manion, 2007.

educational matters and were in greater need of taking control and monitoring children's everyday lives.

Furthermore, Widding (2013) in her thesis argues that the teachers' stance towards home–school collaboration reproduces a conservative view of female responsibility that can be traced back to the traditional model of the stable, nuclear family. Within this model, mothers are expected to develop their leadership skills in order to maintain a working collaboration with the school. Student performance is proof of that effort. According to Widding, this expectation applied to female teachers as well. The studied parents expressed greater trust in female teachers as they regarded them more capable of problem-solving. The dominant female responsibility discourse is reproduced in everyday practices in which mothers and female teachers put efforts into maintaining a well-functioning collaboration.

The research above unanimously depicts the dominance of female labour in matters of childcare and schooling. Although contemporary male partners put in efforts to live up to the norms of gender equality, it is still the mothers who assume greater responsibility for taking care of the household and monitoring children's everyday lives.

The school market and school choice

The free school choice reform in Sweden and similar developments internationally in the early 1990s imply an expectation of the active participation of parents in the school market. The historical background presented earlier pointed to the escalation of social and educational inequalities within the market-based system, which were further analysed above in relation to parents' social class, ethnicity and gender. These inequalities also extend to the issue of school choice that is discussed in this section.

To begin with, school rankings at a global level have placed the high-achieving, successful schools at one pole of the educational market and the unsuccessful, poor-resourced ones at the other (Reay, 2010a). These schools are then unofficially ranked by the media and the general public as 'good' and 'bad', respectively (ibid.). Both the official and unofficial rankings construct school reputations upon which families make choices.

Ball and Vincent (1998) distinguish between 'cold' knowledge about a school and 'hot' or 'grapevine' knowledge (:380). The first denotes official statistics about a school in the form of lists of test results and school policies, whereas the second is based on rumours that circulate among parents and in different school-related networks. In their study, they found that professional middle-

class parents were the most suspicious towards grapevine knowledge as they possessed the cultural capital to seek official information about a school and make a decision based on 'objective' facts. The group that benefited most from the grapevine was a mixed group of middle- and working-class parents who made choices based on other parents' opinions. Nevertheless, Ball and Vincent argue that all parents had a sense of ambiguity in the process of school choice and only a few of them could resist the influence of grapevine knowledge.

Swedish literature has focused on how different actors make use of the free school choice policy and how they are positioned in the school market. Kallstenius (2010) in her doctoral thesis shows that parents who held a strong position in the field of education examined different school alternatives and were open to switching schools in case they were dissatisfied with the school in their neighbourhood. Symbolic values, such as the location and reputation of the school (hot knowledge) as well as the ethnic and socioeconomic composition of the student population, were pointed out by the school leaders of the study as important criteria for families' school choice. The inner-city schools were considered as of higher status in contrast to suburban or 'immigrant' schools (ibid.). According to Kallstenius, bad reputation and poor school results have led to an outflow from suburban schools and an inflow to inner-city schools (see also Bunar, 2001; 2009). Students from the suburbs pursued enrolment in a school where they could escape the social and ethnic diversity and learn 'proper' Swedish. Nevertheless, both students and parents were experiencing difficulties of fitting in in the new environment.

Similarly, Ambrose (2016) in her thesis shows that those whose habitus to a high degree matched the dominant school habitus had a greater sense of belonging and performed better in their studies. School professionals in her study described the use of free school choice as 'school-surfing' in the sense that some families tended to switch between schools to see which one is for them (:257). The instability that derived from this mobility, Ambrose continues, led to difficulties to plan for the upcoming school year, solve conflicts among students and deepen social relationships.

Returning to the issue of suburban schools, Bunar (2001) in his research argues that suburban/multicultural schools become stigmatised due to negative representations formed by the media and educational actors. The bad reputation leads to the previously mentioned outflow from the majority of these schools. Bunar characterises the situation as "the official lie about multiculturalism" (:299). He explains that although educational policies are positioned in favour of multiculturalism as an ideology, multicultural schools are paradoxically built on the grounds of the aforementioned stigmatisation as well

as socioeconomic marginalisation and prejudice (:300). Multicultural schools need to rather be regarded as organic parts of the broader school community (Bunar, 2011). Marginalisation and segregation do not only concern particular local communities but rather entail implications for the general societal attitude towards immigrants and immigrant-dense neighbourhoods and schools (:156).

In another doctoral thesis, Skawonius (2005) illustrates that the answer as to why families choose a particular school is not simple. Parents' 'rational' choices, according to her, derive from a complex of different factors, such as the parents' educational trajectories, their economic and cultural capital, place of residence as well as the choices offered in the area. She further argues that choice is a two-way process, from families to schools and vice versa; schools also select their students. In both cases, there are winners and losers. On the families' side, the winners are those who manage to enter the school they want and get the desired education, and the losers are those who do not get to choose or end up in a school with scarce resources and poor quality education (:345). On the schools' side, winners are those who attract students and therefore get more resources in terms of teaching staff and money, and losers are those who lose their students and the chance to get resources to improve the quality of education (ibid.).

In Bourdieu's line of thought, the research presented here shows that school choice is influenced by the dialectical relationship between subjective structures, i.e. one's habitus and resources in the form of capitals, and objective structures, i.e. the socio-geographic space in which parents' choice and the schools are situated. Research has also shown that families and schools are engaged in a symbolic battle of claiming, reproducing and accumulating resources. Parents who hold strong positions in the educational market direct their choice toward the reproduction of the family's capital whilst parents who hold weak positions choose a school with the hope of transforming their habitus and offering better educational opportunities to their children. Schools at their end compete over resources and strive to advance their reputation to attract more students and acquire and/or accumulate resources to be able to improve the education on offer.

Teachers and professionalisation in the home–school arena

The literature in the previous sections has mainly focused on the parental perspective but has also touched upon the schools' and professionals' viewpoints. Here, I expand on teachers' positioning in the home–school arena and their experiences of parental involvement.

To start with, teachers are a relatively homogeneous group in comparison to parents. As Bæck (2009) contends, regardless of background, gender and the specific school in which they work, teachers share similar views regarding parental involvement as they have undergone a common socialisation process throughout their educational and professional trajectories. This does not only concern home–school collaboration but it is part of the broader context of teachers' professionalisation. That is because the school as a social institution fosters certain institutional expectations in the teachers, which are followed and reproduced in the form of everyday 'rituals' (Broady, 1981). Within this framework, teachers have little freedom of choice as their practices are supervised by dominating agents in science and the state (Engström & Carlhed, 2014). In specific, teachers' work-schedules are today filled with extra demands whilst their activities are scrutinised so that institutions keep a good place in the educational market (Bæck, 2015). The increasingly regulatory schooling culture has consequently diminished teachers' autonomy (Mickwitz, 2015: 288) and they often experience a clash between who they are and what they are obliged to do as assigned by the dominant discourse (Grenfell, 2007: 235).

The changes in teachers' professionalism have implications for, among other things, the way they address demands regarding home–school collaboration and parental involvement (Bæck, 2015).

Swedish research shows that teachers struggle to 'protect' their professionalism in their interactions with parents, especially those who possess resources in terms of capital and symbolic power. Dovemark (2008) in her study shows that resourceful parents demanded to get insight into the grading criteria to help their children achieve high results. Although the teachers of the study appreciated parents' willingness to support, they were worried about the additional demands that were placed upon the children and them as professionals. Mickwitz (2015) in her thesis similarly found that teachers felt the pressure to set high grades so that parents will not question them.

In a similar vein, teachers in Tallberg Broman (2009; 2013) have pointed to a correlation between parents' expectations and their socioeconomic background. The more resourceful the parents were, the more demands they had on the school. These parents could and did control their children's experiences in different social spaces, including the school (ibid.).

In case of multicultural schools, Bunar (2011) found that professionals in bigger cities were willing to engage in collaboration with parents and participated in steering committees, organisation of multicultural dinners, educational activities and more. However, when the schools started losing students

due to the previously mentioned outflow, teachers seemed to not recognise the need for pedagogical improvements but they rather thought that parents just had to get more thorough information on the school's mission (ibid.).

Taking the above into account, teachers seem to relate to their professionalism differently depending on what group of parents they interact with. In case of resourceful parents, teachers have to fight to protect their professionalism whilst in case of less resourceful ones, they can exercise and even strengthen it (Enö, 2013). Their persistence in professionalism can be seen as an act of orthodoxy; a conservation strategy to maintain their status and powerful position in the field (Bæck, 2010).

The section below expands the discussion on teachers/professionals by connecting it to different actors' positioning in institutional encounters.

Institutional encounters between professionals, parents and children

In this section, I make reference to research that has studied institutional encounters between professionals, parents and children. Although the primary focus is on schools, I also discuss relevant encounters in other institutional settings, such as preschools, rehabilitation centres and social services review processes.

Literature suggests that institutional encounters are characterised by asymmetrical relations and unequal dialogue between the participants. Granath (2008) in her thesis contends that development conferences in school usually concentrate on the student's imperfections, and that student documentation functions as a tool for negotiating the student's "corrected self" (:204). Granath found that the students tend to engage in different strategies to cope with the power game that plays out during the meeting; the strategy of avoidance, the reserved strategy, the offensive strategy and the strategy of turning down the teacher (:203). Teachers and parents are part of the power game and they all together negotiate the student's development. The paradox according to Granath is that corrections of the student are veiled under a nice, friendly atmosphere and they thus become hard to discern.

Hofvendahl (2006) in his thesis similarly found that teachers tend to 'fold' problematic moments between pieces of good news and mitigating expressions. Although teachers' utterances signify a trouble-initiating action, this is communicated in an unclear way. Hofvendahl further shows that parents' and students' opportunity to raise issues at the closing of the conference is somewhat restricted. Teachers usually make use of pre-closing questions that indicate limited space for the other participants to raise potential concerns.

Furthermore, Asp-Onsjö (2012) in her study of student documentation explains that teachers and parents have differing knowledge about the child; the former see the child in a specific social situation whereas the latter have knowledge in a more comprehensive sense as they have been part of the child's background and history. Ideally, these two pictures would complete each other as they can shed light on the child's development as a whole. Within the school framework, however, teachers tend to communicate their view as a homogeneous unit while parents' and students' opposing views may be left in the 'shadows'.

Similar tendencies have been observed in studies of development conferences in preschool. Markström (2013; 2011; 2009) argues that pedagogues and parents have different positions; that of the expert and that of the layperson, respectively. The institutional meeting as a term per se implies that it will be held in accordance with an institutional logic where the professional is in charge. In that sense, preschool teachers are represented by one institutional voice (2009: 16). The difference that Markström observes between the development conference in school and preschool is that the latter takes the form of a less formal and less authoritative steering. In another study, Vladavic, Simonsson and Markström (2017) have found that parents express a need for confirmation, trust and control. They explain that parents expect a somewhat predictable structure and content in the development conference so that they get the chance to act 'right' and minimise the risk of 'failing' the meeting.

Institutional encounters take place in other fields as well, such as the rehabilitation sector. Carlhed and Göransson (2012) point to the expert–lay divide that exists in meetings between professionals and families. The purpose of these meetings is to build a long-term cooperation in order to effectively address problematic aspects in a child's life-situation. The professionals are trained to carry out this type of work in their everyday practice whereas families take on the role of a user, i.e. they expect to receive some sort of service. As in development conferences in school/preschool, Carlhed and Göransson (2012) argue that professionals and families are positioned in an asymmetrical relationship since the latter lack the 'tools' to meet the former on equal terms. Nevertheless, this asymmetry is hidden behind an informal tone and a friendly atmosphere (ibid.).

Another example is found in a British study of review meetings for children who are in the care of social services. Winter (2015) shows that social workers and parents compete over knowledge of the child. She found that the former acquire a type of *objective/assessed knowing the child* capital whereas the latter possess a *subjective/relational knowing the child* capital (:195-197). The objective

type is occupied with knowledge claims that are based on reporting facts and measurements expressed by the dominant positioning of the professional. This type of capital is therefore regarded as of higher value (ibid.). Parents' knowledge capital, on the other hand, is built upon personal experiences and observations of the child, which is given less value in the field of the review meeting. As a consequence, Winter continues, professionals perceive parents' opinions of the child as heterodox, i.e. instances of non-compliance and distraction. The positioning of the child in these meetings is even more subordinate as they are not given the possibility to tell their story (ibid.).

Social class certainly plays a role in the way families position themselves in these encounters. As mentioned in previous sections, the cultural capital of middle-class parents to a high degree matches the school norms and values. Hence, these parents can relate to the school's 'invisible pedagogy' (see Bernstein, 1975) with greater ease than their less resourceful counterparts. Nevertheless, in Bourdieu's terms, fields entail a silent doxa around which dominant and dominated agents are positioned and position themselves. Given the professional–lay divide, the parent–teacher encounter often entails tensions and boundaries that transgress parents' capital (Bæck, 2009: 350). Institutional practices per se reproduce relations of power "shaped by deep codes that reinforce professional authority and parental deference" (Ranson, Martin & Vincent, 2004 :271).

The research presented in this section shows that institutional encounters, irrespective of the setting in which they take place, share a common denominator: relations of power where the professionals hold the dominant position with respect to knowledge of the rules of the meeting as well as knowledge of the child. Parents' opinions are considered of less value as their knowledge is based on 'subjective' facts and observations of their children outside the school environment. Children possess an even more subordinate position and sometimes engage in strategies through which they try to negotiate matters regarding their development. Although middle-class families may relate to the 'rules of the game' with greater ease, institutional practices reproduce power relations that situate professionals in an upper-hand position. The asymmetry, however, is often hidden behind a friendly and informal atmosphere.

1.4. Aim and research questions

This thesis focuses on the parent–teacher encounter in Swedish compulsory schools in the Stockholm urban area. The aim of the thesis is to study how parents and teachers experience their encounter and how they negotiate their positions in the field of schooling with respect to legitimate knowledge claims about the child and the ideal form of home–school collaboration.
The aim is operationalised through the following research questions:

1. How do parents and teachers utilise their social and cultural resources in their encounters?
2. How can certain resources function as *forms of capital* in relation to different practices in the field?
3. What practices do teachers and parents employ to preserve and/or subvert their relative positions in their encounters?

1.5. Discussion and positioning

In this section, I explain the logic behind the aim and research questions by making some clarifications regarding the analysis of the object of study. I also refer to educational research that has studied the parent–teacher encounter through different perspectives. Finally, I outline the criticism that scholars have conducted on Bourdieu's construction and use of his analytical tools as well as Bourdieu's response to this criticism.

1.5.1 The rationale behind the aim and research questions of the thesis

The Swedish and international background on families and institutions has pointed to the existence of power relations that depend on the changing nature of the structure of the field of schooling, and individuals' habitus in the form of dispositions and available resources that can be utilised in the field.
In the thesis, I explore parents' and teachers' symbolic struggle over dominance and legitimate knowledge about the child and the 'ideal' home–school collaboration through their expressed values and perspectives as well as their positioning and negotiation of this positioning in the field of schooling. It is important to stress that individuals' perspectives are not studied through a subjectivist/phenomenological approach. The analysis rather follows a Bour-

dieusian line of thought, in which one's perspective denotes "a partial subjective vision (subjectivist moment); but it is at the same time a view, a perspective, taken from a point, from a determinate position in an objective social space (objectivist moment)" (Bourdieu, 1987: 2).

With respect to the first research question, I would like to note that I recognise the existence of intersectionality issues in relation to the way different social variables, conditions and spaces influence one's experience and position in the field. As previous literature has shown, the school fosters certain institutional expectations in the teachers, which are reproduced in their everyday practice. As a result, teachers become a more homogeneous group in comparison to parents due to a common socialisation process in their educational and professional trajectories. Parents on the other hand are more likely to have been through different socialisation processes and possess a greater range of social and cultural resources. Although I do not overlook teachers' heterogeneous characteristics, I place the main focus of the analysis on parents due to their diverse backgrounds in terms of social positioning, ethnicity, gender, family structure and the like.[10]

Moreover, the second research question explores how the aforementioned resources can turn into capital in relation to different practices in the field. Activation and mobilisation of capital depends on the structure of the agents' capital, i.e. the volume and type of capital one has access to, the way capital evolves over time and one's ability to use capital as a strategy to 'play the game' within the framework of the social practice (Kloot, 2016: 138). The different practices through which capital is examined may refer to parents' and teachers' positioning in development conferences and other instances of interaction where they negotiate their positions.

Finally, the third research question looks at practices that teachers and parents employ to either maintain or subvert their relative positions. Previous research has shown that institutional practices reproduce relations of power in which professionals are the dominating agents. Nevertheless, parents with certain types of capital have the means to challenge the dominant position through practices of heterodoxy. This question explores these dynamics and, in specific, the way individuals relate to the doxa that frames the social practice.

[10] See Chapter 3, section 3.3, "Participants and contextual information".

1.5.2 Other research perspectives on home–school relations

The studies presented in this chapter are positioned in the area of sociology of education and many of them in a Bourdieusian tradition. However, other previous research has explored the parent–teacher encounter through other perspectives as well, both in the field of sociology and psychology.

Some of the theoretical and methodological models that have been frequently used in the research area are Epstein's model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence (1987 and later versions), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of Parental Involvement (1995 and later versions) and Lave and Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoP) (1991 and later versions).

In particular, Epstein's model is to a large extent inspired by the Ecological model of the American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1974 and later versions). Epstein stresses the importance of cooperation of three spheres: school, family and community. According to her, these spheres overlap and each one of them has unique but also combined influences that contribute to students' educational attainment and social development. Within this framework, Epstein has developed a six-type model of parental involvement that is divided into: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community.

In addition, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model also draws inspiration from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model and is often used in self-efficacy studies. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler argue that family involvement through encouragement, modelling, reinforcement and instruction can help children develop self-efficacy in relation to academic success, but also social self-efficacy in terms of developing positive relationships with others, e.g. teachers and classmates.

Furthermore, Lave and Wenger's CoP is a social theory of learning that is to some extent influenced by cognitivist theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Bandura. CoP sees learning as a process of social participation where mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire are indicators of its formation. Studies (see for instance, Laluvein, 2007; 2010) have used the CoP model to study parent–teacher relations.

Although these perspectives have made important contributions to understanding how different social spheres and environments interact and influence child development, they have not thoroughly addressed issues of power and inequalities or the interrelations and effects of these spheres of interaction on agents' positioning in the social practice (see also Warin, 2016: 36).

The intention of research that is situated in a Bourdieusian tradition, like this thesis, is to problematise issues of dominance, inequality and power by exposing underlying processes and the very logic of the field of study (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1991).

1.5.3 Criticism of Bourdieu

Bourdieu's analytical tools have been subjected to criticism by scholars who question the construction and operationalisation of his theory of practice.[11] The main critiques are directed towards his deterministic approach in relation to the notions of cultural reproduction, power and social class as well as his grasp of human agency and "the ontological mysteries of the habitus" (Jenkins, 1992: 83). Moreover, his analytical tools have been criticised for often being blurry and vague.

Bourdieu has countered the aforementioned criticisms by emphasising the elasticity of his concepts that can *only* be understood if put into empirical work: "one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality" (Bourdieu, 1993a: 271).

Furthermore, Bourdieu points to the fuzzy boundaries of the social world that justify and explain some indefiniteness of the concepts that study it, which also denote the transformative character of human agency. In specific, he argues that the habitus operates and becomes active only in relation to a field. The habitus as a product of social conditioning is endlessly transformed either through a match or mismatch between objective and subjective structures (Bourdieu, 1990b). With respect to the field of education, Bourdieu shows the contradictory character of school-mediated reproduction; the mechanisms that are responsible for distinguishing children based on their

[11] See for example: DiMaggio, P. (1979). Review Essay on Pierre Bourdieu. *American Journal of Sociology*, *84*(6), 1460–74. / Jenkins, R. (1982). Pierre Bourdieu and the Reproduction of Determinism. *Sociology, 16*(2), 270–81. / Giroux, H. (1982). Power and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: Beyond Theories of Social and Cultural Reproduction. *Curriculum Perspectives, 2*(3), 1–13. / Joppke, C. (1986). The Cultural Dimension of Class Formation and Class Struggle: On the Social Theory of Pierre Bourdieu. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 31*, 53–78. / Jenkins, R. (1992). *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge. / Sayer, A. (2005). *The moral significance of class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. / Jaeger, M. M. (2011). Does cultural capital really affect academic advancement? New evidence from combined sibling and panel data. *Sociology of Education, 84*(4), 281–98.

inherited cultural capital can be negotiated through individual and collective strategies, such as student movements, with the aim of transforming the structures of the mechanisms of differentiation and reproduction (1990a: 119, see also *Distinction,* 1984). As a result, habitus can both be transformed and "*controlled* through awakening of consciousness and socioanalysis" (1990a: 116, emphasis in the original).
Additional explanations of the non-deterministic approach of Bourdieu's concepts concern the unending 'game' that takes place in a given field, which always implies a potential for change (Thomson, 2008). Grenfell and James (1998) further argue that all agents are free to 'play the game' and everything is negotiable, yet not equal. The misrecognition of the legitimate is what drives the social processes (ibid.).

Criticisms of such nature are important for reflexivity in terms of the application of concepts to the object of study. The 'openness' of Bourdieu's tools allows one to utilise them in different times and spaces and even invigorate them through empirical inquiry.

1.6. Outline of the doctoral thesis

In Chapter 1, I introduced the object of study and situated it in the field of schooling by making reference to the Swedish and international context in terms of socio-political developments in the education field and previous research in the area of families and institutions. I also presented the aim and research questions of the thesis and discussed the thesis' positioning in the research field. In Chapter 2, I present and discuss the theoretical framework of the thesis and specifically, I make reference to epistemological considerations and theoretical tools. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodological principles of the thesis and the methods used for the design, implementation and analysis of the empirical study. In Chapter 4, I present the study's findings and discuss them in relation to previous knowledge in the research area. In Chapter 5, I synthesise and discuss the findings and at the end of the chapter, I outline methodological reflections with respect to the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical grounds of the thesis are situated in *cultural sociology*. Cultural sociology developed into a research tradition through the intersection of sociology and anthropology (Walker, 2001). The first generation of scholars from the field of sociology are Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber and Georg Simmel, whilst those from the field of anthropology are Bronisław Malinowski, Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Scholars of the Frankfurt school and critical theory, such as Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm, are also considered to be part of this tradition. Pierre Bourdieu belongs to one of the later generations of cultural sociologists and his theories are mainly oriented towards ideas of action, culture, power, social stratification and sociological knowledge (Swartz, 1997). The relevance of this theoretical perspective to the field of education is that it enables one to explore social aspects of learning, schooling and conditions of the broader educational system.

This chapter is a continuation of the previous theoretically informed introductory chapter. Here, I provide a detailed description of the theoretical framework of the thesis in relation to Bourdieu's sociology and the conceptual tools that have been used for the analysis of the parent–teacher encounter.

2.1. Thinking relationally

One of the central ideas in Bourdieu's theory of practice is the notion of relationality. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Bourdieu's main objective has been to bridge two "irreconcilable perspectives", objectivism and subjectivism (1989: 15). For that reason, he aimed at developing a third mode of sociological knowledge, the *praxeological* one, through which objectivist and phenomenological forms of knowledge are combined (Bourdieu, 1973). Drawing upon this logic, the perception of the social world is seen as a result of "double structuring", objectivity and subjectivity, where both contribute to creating "a world of common-sense or, at least, a minimum consensus on

the social world" (Bourdieu, 1989: 2; 1984: 468). Bourdieu's view of the aforementioned subjectivity–objectivity interplay is also mirrored in the relational way he has developed his "conceptual triad", i.e. field, habitus and capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 25); the one does not exist without the other.

2.1.1 Field

As explained earlier,[12] agents act within the broader social space, or field, that is divided into different fields and fields within fields. According to Bourdieu, a field is defined as

> a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs)* in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 98, emphasis in the original)

Nevertheless, a field in Bourdieusian terms is not an empty space but rather 'a space of play' that exists as long as its agents, or players, invest in it:

> We have an *investment in the game, illusio* (from *ludus*, the game): players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in the belief (*doxa)* in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning (…) In other words, there are cards that are valid, efficacious in all fields – these are the fundamental species of capital – but their relative value as trump cards is determined by each field and even by the successive states of the same field. (ibid., emphasis in the original)

This thesis analyses the parent–teacher encounter according to the praxeological logic.[13] The central analytical tools are habitus, capital and doxa. In the sections below, I explain the meaning of these concepts and how they relate to the object of study. Considering that the study has not conducted a field analysis, the notion of field is not developed but is rather used in relation to the other concepts in order to contextualise the studied social practice.

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[12] See Chapter 1, section 1.1, "Thinking with Bourdieu" and section 1.3, "Introducing the field of schooling".

[13] See Chapter 1, section 1.2, "Defining the parent-teacher encounter".

2.2. Habitus

Bourdieu has developed the concept of habitus in an attempt to explore how behaviour can be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules (1990a: 65). Specifically, he defines habitus as

> systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively regulated and regular without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals, without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of the conductor. (Bourdieu, 1977a: 72)

In other words, habitus is a property of social agents at an individual and collective level. It is a *structure* in the sense that it comprises a system of dispositions that generates practices, beliefs and actions (Bourdieu, 1990b). It can also be understood as *structured* because it reflects one's past, and as *structuring* because it guides one's actions in the present (Maton, 2008).

As mentioned before, habitus does not act alone but only exists in relation to a field; a meeting of two evolving logics (Bourdieu, 1993b: 46), or a relation between two realisations of historical action (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 126). On the one hand, the field structures the habitus through agents' embodiment of its objective structures (ibid.) and on the other hand, the habitus gives meaning to the field through the structuring activity of agents (Bourdieu, 1986). Based upon this logic, habitus reflects one's position and conditions of existence in the social world as it implies a "sense of one's place" but also a "sense of the place of others" (Bourdieu, 1989: 19; 1990a: 13; 1984; 1987: 5).

In addition, Bourdieu describes habitus as *primary* and *secondary* or as Wacquant (2014) names it, *generic* and *scholastic*. The former is acquired through the family and is "the basis for the subsequent formation of any other habitus" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977: 45). The latter is acquired later in life through one's interactions with didactic institutions. Bourdieu (1984) contends that although secondary habitus vary in form considering that they are acquired in different times and spaces, they all share a similar characteristic; they interact with "the demands of the dominant fraction of the dominant class" (:88). Individuals or social groups who have acquired a type of primary habitus that 'deviates' from the dominant fraction might experience

what Bourdieu names the "hysteresis of the habitus"; a "structural lag" between opportunities given in a field and the dispositions to grasp them (1977a: 93; 1990b; 2000). As Wacquant (2014) explains, "the greater the gaps and frictions between the successive layers of schemata, the less integrated the resulting dispositional formation is likely to be" (:8). According to this logic, conservation or modification of one's position in the field depends on whether there is agreement or disjuncture between one's habitus and the social world (Bourdieu, 1986).

In the thesis, the notion of habitus is used to explore how parents and teachers rely on their dispositions and positions in the social space to make sense of different parenting and school practices, and also negotiate conditions of parental involvement and home–school collaboration. In Bourdieu's line of thought, teachers and parents of the same or similar socialisation processes in terms of education, upbringing, and the like, are more likely to share similar features in their habitus. These similarities might result in a shared understanding of how school works and the expectations that parents and teachers have of each other. In contrast, individuals whose lifestyle is different from the dominant school-like culture might have different understandings and experiences of the parent–teacher encounter that affect the way they are positioned and position themselves in the schooling field.

2.3. Capital

Bourdieu, during his ethnographic studies in Kabylia (Algeria), observed what is valued in a given society that enables people to acquire different types of goods and services. This is what he has later named *capital*. According to Bourdieu (1986), capital is

> accumulated labor (…) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. It is a vis insita, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also a lex insita, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world. (:241)

In other words, agents or groups of agents who possess resources that are valued as legitimate in a certain society are in a position to utilise and possibly accumulate them in their social interactions. Bourdieu identifies three main forms of capital: *economic*, *social* and *cultural*. Economic capital is connected to one's monetary items and property rights. Social capital is concerned with one's access to social circles and networks. Cultural capital rather appears in three different states: the *embodied*, the *objectified* and the *institutionalised* state

(ibid.: 243). The first refers to one's mental and bodily dispositions, the second to possession of different types of cultural goods such as books and clothing, and the third concerns properties in the form of educational qualifications. When the aforementioned forms of capital are given more value in relation to others, they turn into what Bourdieu calls *symbolic capital* which can be understood as having the capacity to "both constitute and maintain power structures" (Swartz, 1997: 8).

In the thesis, I look at the way parents' social and cultural resources may evolve into forms of capital in their negotiations with teachers. Although I do acknowledge the heterogeneous characteristics of the teachers, they comprise a more homogeneous group when compared to parents as they are internal members of the school and have been through a similar socialisation process in their educational and occupational trajectories. Parents on the other hand, possess a greater range of sociocultural resources given their diverse educational and cultural backgrounds.

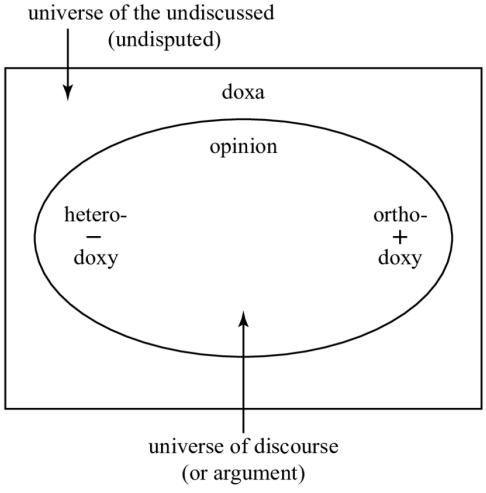
In the schooling field, economic capital might manifest itself in parents' socioeconomic situation and the resources that they provide to their children. Social capital may refer to membership in the school's parent council and participation in social networks with other school parents. Cultural capital may concern one's knowledge of the education system. According to Bourdieu, the most powerful form of capital in the education field is cultural capital due to its hereditary character[14] which carries greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies compared to other more obvious forms of transmission, such as economic capital, that tend to be more strongly censored and controlled (1986: 84). For that reason, I place stronger emphasis on the analysis of individuals' cultural capital and its symbolic character in terms of the power it provides to its occupants. A concept that relates to the institutionalised state of cultural capital is *educational capital* (Bourdieu, 1984). In Bourdieu's terms, educational capital can be understood as qualifications that the education system recognises, i.e. degrees, grades, assessments of educational achievement and the like. Broady (1990) further explains that in the education system, cultural capital can be converted to educational capital, which can later be turned into other forms of capital, such as economic capital in the form of salaries and symbolic types of capital linked to different occupational areas (:216). In the thesis, I use the concept of educational capital as a form of cultural capital and its institutionalised state to explore how parents' educational level might influence their interactions with the school,

[14] See Chapter 1, section 1.3.2, subsection "Family as a concept and the transmission of cultural capital into the field of schooling".

school practices regarding student support and parental involvement, and one's sense of self-assurance when interacting with institutional actors.

2.4. Doxa

Bourdieu describes doxa as "a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma" (Bourdieu, 2000: 16). Drawing upon this logic, doxa can be understood as a set of field-specific beliefs that informs the habitus of the agents that operate in the field (Deer, 2008). It can also be regarded as the determinant of the stability of a field's objective structures as it contributes to the "misrecognition of forms of social arbitrariness that engenders the unformulated, non-discursive, but internalized and practical recognition of that same social arbitrariness" (ibid.: 119). Figure 2.1 below provides a visual representation of the concept.



(Bourdieu, 1977a: 168)

Doxa can be reproduced or converted by dominant and dominated agents that occupy positions in a given field. In Bourdieu's terms, *orthodoxy* concerns actions that comply with what is considered to be *ortho* (right); natural ways of thinking, speaking and acting (1977a: 169). In other words, it refers to a match between dispositions, 'feel for the game', and position, the game itself, that explains what an agent needs to do without this necessarily being a product of conscious calculation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 128). *Heterodoxy*

occurs along with the emergence of competing beliefs in the field that manifest themselves in the form of opinions/arguments (Bourdieu, 1977a). Dominant agents have the capacity to restore the "primal state of innocence of doxa" (ibid.) through what Bourdieu named *symbolic violence* (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2001). The concept can be understood as a process of maintaining the power structures through activation of the dominant agents' symbolic resources (Swartz, 1997: 8).

In the thesis, I use the concept of doxa to explore how teachers and parents 'play the game' in the schooling field and whether they engage in practices of orthodoxy and heterodoxy to either maintain or challenge dominant beliefs in regard to parental involvement, home–school collaboration and 'best' practices for student support. I further use *doxa* to draw attention to the *ideal* and *real* function of the studied social practice; what individuals are expected to do (orthodoxy) and what they actually do in practice (orthodoxy/heterodoxy).

2.5. Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the main conceptual tools that have been used for the analysis of the studied social practice. The thesis follows the logic of *praxeology*, the interplay between objectivity and subjectivity. This logic also applies to the use of analytical tools that in Bourdieu's terms are placed in a dialectical relationship; the one does not exist without the other.

The first analytical tool of the thesis is *habitus*, which comprises a system of dispositions that is structured by and structures the field. Agents or groups of agents who acquire a type of habitus that is not in accordance with the objective structures of a given field might experience a hysteresis effect; a structural lag between their dispositions and their ability to grasp certain opportunities in the field. In the thesis, I use *habitus* to explore how parents and teachers rely on their dispositions and experiences to make sense of their encounter. The second conceptual tool is *capital*, which refers to the possession of certain resources that are recognised as valuable in agents' social interaction. Capital is found in three main forms: economic, social and cultural. When these are given more value in relation to others, they turn to symbolic capital. In the thesis, I examine how parents' sociocultural resources evolve into forms of capital. I place the main focus on cultural capital because of its hereditary character which, according to Bourdieu, is more powerful and relevant to the field of education. The third concept is *doxa*, which denotes shared beliefs and natural ways of speaking and acting that go in line with

field-specific values. Dominant and dominated agents may maintain or challenge the natural order through orthodox and heterodox actions. *Doxa* in this study is used to explore practices that parents and teachers employ to negotiate shared beliefs in the field of schooling in an attempt to either maintain or challenge them.

The following chapter outlines the methodological principles of the thesis and the methods used to conduct the study.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological principles that constitute the groundwork for the empirical research. I present the methods followed for the study's design, implementation and analysis, and I also address ethical considerations and the steps that I took to protect the participants' integrity and identity.

3.1. Methodological principles

In a Bourdieusian tradition, methodology and theory are not separate but rather intertwined. Bourdieu's theory of practice can be better understood as a theory of research practice, as the theoretical concepts only can make sense when applied to practical research (Grenfell, 2008). As a result, this section in a sense extends the discussion of the previous chapter since the methodological principles intersect with the theoretical ones.

Influenced by Durkheim's (1966) principle of "treating social facts as things", Bourdieu calls for an *epistemological break* or *epistemological rupture* with everyday modes of thinking during the construction of the scientific object (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1991; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The purpose of this rupture is to move past the scientific *skholé*, i.e. the pure intellectual gaze, and rather perform a scientific engagement in the construction of the object of study (ibid.). Central principles in this process are the examination of the positions that agents occupy in the social space (objective structures) as well as their lived experience (subjective structures) in order to explain the reconstruction of categories of perception and appreciation, or their dispositions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 11). A crucial component in the examination of these structures is the notion of reflexivity. Bourdieu distinguishes three levels of bias that one has to address through reflexivity: the social origins of the individual researcher, their position in the academic field and the intellectualist bias that concerns the way a researcher treats the object of study (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 39). A concept that Bourdieu (2003) has developed to guide the process of reflexivity is *participant objectivation*. This concept refers to the systematic exploration of the "unthought categories of

thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" (ibid.: 40). In other words, participant objectivation can be understood as analysing the construction of the analysis as it occurs (Grenfell, 2008: 227); if ignored, one risks becoming "the *instrument* of that which one claims to think" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 238, emphasis in the original).

With respect to the above, I implemented the empirical work through an iterative process in which I went 'back and forth' between theory and field/data. The theoretically informed research design of the study has been based on the previously mentioned ideas of the *epistemological break* and *participant objectivation*. The purpose of using these ideas was to enable me to not only explore questions that related to participants' own interpretations of their encounter, but also questions about social aspects and the contextual influence of the field, which have implications for individuals' positioning in the social space. As Tavory and Timmermans (2014) contend, researchers perceive and interpret phenomena by being in a constant interplay between "observation (the sign-object) and the way that the researcher's socially cultivated position – habits of thought and action – helps shape the interpretant" (:41). One of my main objectives has been to delineate these position habits through a self-reflexive understanding of my own doxa of the studied social practice. In Chapter 5, I will delve deeper into these points by reflecting upon my methodological techniques for the implementation and analysis of the empirical work.

3.2. Research design and instruments

The first step of the empirical study was to test my research instruments, including myself as a researcher. For that reason, I conducted one-on-one interviews with two teachers, two parents, a school principal and the chairperson of a parent organisation, and carried out observations in two parent evenings in the school where the principal was working. These initial interviews and observations allowed me to get a first impression of the ongoing discourse in the field and prepare for the main empirical study. Even though the interviews with the school principal and the chairperson provided a useful overview of the field, I decided to only proceed with teachers and parents for the main empirical study, as their views were more relevant and specific to the aim and research questions of the thesis – how parents and teachers are positioned and position themselves in the social practice. As for the observations, although it was interesting to see the general school practice in relation to parent evenings, I decided to focus on development conferences since individual meetings entail more focused discussions, actions and reactions.

The second step was to redesign my interview and observation guides (see Appendices 1, 2 & 3). The logic behind the interview questions is based on the previously mentioned iterative process. Specifically, I utilised the main conceptual tools (habitus, capital, doxa) and developed questions that revolved around individuals' dispositions, positions and position-takings. For instance, I asked them about their experiences of collaboration, the structure and content of their encounters, communication about different sorts of issues, and strategies to tackle potential challenging situations. In Bourdieu's terms, these conceptual tools have not been used in the sense of 'grand theorising', i.e. as empty theoretical constructs. They have rather been utilised as dynamic concepts in the sense that I also asked unplanned questions depending on the course of the interview, in which the respondents were asked to further elaborate and give examples of the situation/event they were describing. The observation guide followed a similar logic; I aimed at observing specific points with the help of theory, but also made space for further points of observation that would potentially come up during the meeting. My role during the observation was that of the impartial observer. Although I sat together with the participants, I did not take part in their discussion so as to not disturb the 'natural' process of the meeting.[15]

The third step of the empirical work was the recruitment process. The target groups were teachers and parents of children in Swedish compulsory schools, grades one to nine. My intention was to recruit participants from different schools and backgrounds in order to get a more diverse sample. The Stockholm urban area served this particular purpose well thanks to the diversity of its population in terms of socioeconomic and ethnic background. In the first half of the recruitment process, I used a *strategic* approach in the sense that I strategically contacted schools located in selected areas to get the aforementioned diversity in my data. However, the response was low and for that reason I proceeded to a *snowball approach* (Bryman, 2012) in which I contacted schools in various areas, made posts about my research on social media, got in touch with parent associations, and also mobilised my social network to help me find participants that fulfilled my inclusion criteria. In Bourdieu's line of thought, this unstrategic approach is not problematic as long as the aim of the study does not require personas and institutions that alone mark a crucial position in the field of study (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 243). This study does not include such an intention and therefore, the strategic and the snowball approaches were both suitable. The final sample consists of eleven parents and seven teachers, some of whom work/have children en-

[15] This point is further discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.4.2, "Dynamics between the researcher and the research participant".

rolled in the same school and others in different ones. In the following sections, I provide detailed information about the participants, data collection and data analysis.

3.3. Participants and contextual information

The eleven parents in the study have varying backgrounds in terms of culture, socioeconomic background and family status. In Table 3.1 (below), I present information regarding the parents' fictive names, cultural background, educational level, occupation, family status and children's school grade. The children's names are also fictive. With respect to cultural background, I make a basic distinction between Swedish and immigrant parents.[16] The role of *culture* in this study connects to the knowledge that the parents possess about the Swedish education system and schooling in particular. The reason why I do not further distinguish between the immigrant parents is that the specific country of origin was not significant for the parents' knowledge of schooling in Sweden. What differentiated the amount of knowledge was their educational level. For that reason, I divided parents' educational level in three categories: *high* (+), *intermediate* (+/–) and *low* (–). High refers to tertiary education, intermediate to post-secondary non-tertiary education and low to upper-secondary education. I have not created any further sub-categories for the three groups because the intra-differences in parents' educational level have not been significant for this particular study. The last column summarises the aforementioned information in the form of *codenames*. The purpose of the codenames was to guide the analysis in regard to parents' social and cultural resources.

[16] By immigrant, I mean parents who were born and raised in a different country than Sweden.

Table 3.1: Parents' Background Information

Fictive names	Cultural background	Education level	Occupation	Family status	Children's school grade	Codename*
Lena	Immigrant	High	Researcher	Nuclear family, 2 children	Chung: 4, Jia: preschool	(M, +, NF, IMM², 2, 4)
Viktor	Swedish	High	Political scientist	Nuclear family, 2 children	Alicia: 1, Petra: preschool	(F, +, NF, SWE, 2, 1)
Sofia	Immigrant	High	Architect	Nuclear family, 2 children	Paula: 5, Martina: 1	(M, +, NF, IMM, 2, 5 & 1)
Olivia	Swedish	High	Lawyer	Nuclear family, 2 children	Ellen: 1, Doris: preschool	(M, +, NF, SWE², 2, 1)
Ingrid	Swedish	High	Lecturer	Nuclear family, 2 children	Maria: 2, Anna: preschool	(M, +, NF, SWE², 2, 2)
Andreas	Swedish	High	Client manager	Single-parent family, 2 children	Helena: 8, Katrin: high school	(F, +, SPF, SWE, 2, 8)
David	Swedish	High	Study and career counsellor	Single-parent family, 2 children	Axel: 7, Joel: 2	(F, +, SPF, SWE, 2, 7 & 2)
Robert	Swedish	Intermediate	IT-technician	Nuclear family, 3 children	Kristine: 5, Ebba & Marie: 8	(F, +/–, NF, SWE², 3, 5 & 8)
Heleni	Swedish	Intermediate	Nursing assistant	Nuclear family, 2 children	Christos: 1, Dimitra: high school	(M, +/–, NF, SWE², 2, 1)
Olga	Immigrant	Low	Hairdresser	Nuclear family, 2 children	Alexander: 3, Amelia: 1	(M, –, NF, IMM², 2, 3 & 1)
Nora	Immigrant	Low	Hairdresser	Single-parent family, 6 children	Arya: 6, Roza: 1, Dilsad: high school	(M, –, SPF, IMM, 6, 6 & 1)

* M or F: Mother or Father; +: high educational level; +/–: intermediate educational level; –: low educational level; NF or SPF: Nuclear Family or Single-Parent Family; SWE or IMM: Swedish or Immigrant; SWE² or IMM²: spouse also Swedish or Immigrant; First number: Number of children; Last number: Children's school grade (1–9).

In the above table, I have only included the initial school grade, i.e. when I first met the parents. With some of them, I conducted follow-up interviews and observations when the children were a grade older. I will provide more information on this in section 3.4. The table below includes information about the participating teachers. The information concerns their fictive names, cultural background, educational level and years of teaching experience. Teachers' cultural background is also divided between Swedish and immigrant. In this case, however, the distinction did not play any significant role because all teachers regardless of culture were immersed in the Swedish education system through their educational and/or professional trajectories. Moreover, their education level is divided in master's and bachelor's degree since all of them had tertiary education.

Table 3.2: Teachers' Background Information

Fictive names	Cultural Background	Educational level	Years of teaching experience	Teaching level
Anton	Immigrant	Master's	~2	Grade 6
Maya	Immigrant	Master's	~6	Grade 4
Vicky	Swedish	Bachelor's	~5	Grades 6–9
Petra	Swedish	Bachelor's	~10	Grade 2
Ingela	Swedish	Bachelor's	~7	Grade 3
Amalia	Swedish	Bachelor's	~1	Grade 4
Pia	Swedish	Bachelor's	~12	Grade 3

To add to this, Table 3.3 provides contextual information about the schools. The information concerns the type of school (municipal or independent), the percentage of students with foreign background (both parents born outside Sweden) and the percentage of parents with post-secondary education. The statistics were retrieved from the official database of the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket).[17] In the last column, I categorised schools as + and –. This distinction was based on Skolverket's statistics on the average percentage of parents with post-secondary education in schools in the Stockholm region. According to these statistics, the average is 67% (grades 1–9, school year 2019–2020).[18] As a result, schools that score above average have been categorised as + and schools that score below average have been categorised as –. This information about the schools is provided

[17] https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik
[18] https://siris.skolverket.se/reports/

to contextualise parents' and teachers' experiences of their encounter. Information about participants who work/have children in the same school is presented in the same row.

Table 3.3: School Context

Teachers & Parents	Type of school	Percentage of students with foreign background	Percentage of parents with post-secondary education	Parents' education level in the school
Anton, Maya, Vicky, Andreas	Independent	52%	85%	+
Petra, Viktor, Olivia, Sofia	Municipal	13%	82%	+
Heleni	Municipal	28%	80%	+
Ingrid	Municipal	15%	80%	+
Lena	Municipal	49%	77%	+
Olga	Municipal	23%	73%	+
Ingela	Municipal	32%	64%	–
David	Municipal	28%	56%	–
Pia, Amalia, Robert	Municipal	83%	48%	–
Nora	Independent	82%	40%	–

3.4. Data collection

The data collection for the main empirical study took place between the autumn term of 2017 and the spring term of 2019. Within this timespan, I conducted one-on-one interviews with all the participants, with some of them more than once, and observed 4 development conferences. The meetings that I observed were between Vicky and Andreas, Amalia and Robert, Viktor and Petra as well as Olivia and her child's teacher who did not have the possibility to participate in an interview and is therefore not included in Table 3.2.

In addition, the interviews and observations were audio-taped upon agreement and later transcribed. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours, while the observations lasted about 30 minutes. As for the location, the observations took place in the schools. The interviews were conducted

in different places depending on the participants' preferences – in the schools, their home, cafés or libraries. The language used in the interviews was Swedish or English depending on the participant's choice. Specifically, the interviews with Anton, Maya, Vicky and Lena were in English whilst the rest of the interviews were in Swedish. The language of the observed conferences was Swedish.

As mentioned earlier, the data collection has been a dynamic process. After I transcribed and read through the first material, I decided to conduct follow-up interviews with 5 participants: Lena, Sofia, Olivia, Ingrid and Amalia. The purpose of these interviews was to pose additional questions about certain points of discussion in the first interviews. At the time of the follow-up interviews as well as the observation of Viktor's and Petra's meeting, the students were a grade older.

3.5. Data analysis

Lantz's (2013) model (see Figure 3.1 below) functioned as a tool for the analysis since the suggested steps aligned with the study's methodological principles, i.e. an iterative process between theory and data.

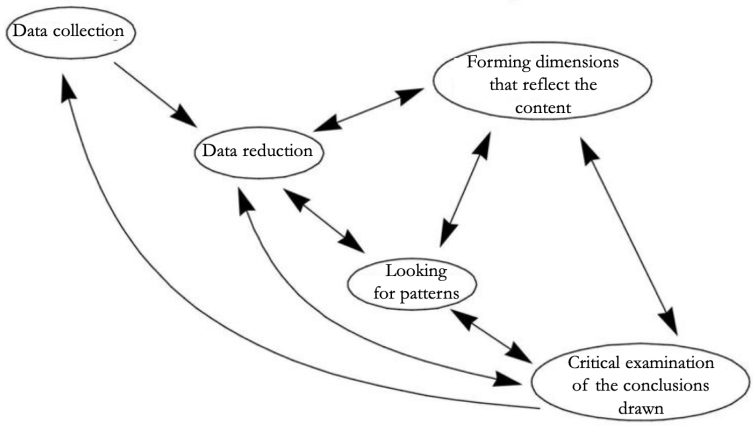


Figure 3.1: Lantz's model of analysis of qualitative data, p. 140 (own translation)

The steps that the model suggests are: a) going back and forth between reading through the data as a whole to acquire a 'global' understanding of the studied phenomenon and focusing on particular themes that the data presents; and b) conducting an initial coding of the data based on participants'

own interpretations, and then a secondary coding in which these interpretations are analysed with the help of theoretical tools.

During the data analysis, I first read through each transcript to get a sense of what my data shows. I then conducted an initial coding based on points that the participants brought up, and later conducted a secondary coding by operationalising the study's main conceptual tools. I conducted the initial and secondary coding in the form of a matrix for each of the participants.[19] Specifically, each matrix consisted of two 'sub-matrixes'; the first included the initial coding and was based on themes that the participants raised in the interviews and observations, while the second one included the secondary coding where I analysed the initial coding with the help of my conceptual tools. Here, the use of *codenames* assisted the analysis of parents' backgrounds in terms of their social and cultural resources, education, family structure and more. By applying this method to all of my interview and observation material, I managed to get a compact overview of the data. This way, I was able to compare and contrast the material and eventually create bigger themes.[20] It is also worth noting that my data analysis mainly builds upon my interviews whereas the observation data is complementary. The reason is two-fold: first, I did not get access to observe all participants' development conferences and as a result, my observational data does not represent all participants; second, the observation of the development conference is just one of several different aspects of the social practice. I further reflect on these points in Chapter 5.

3.6. Ethical considerations

According to the regulations of the Swedish Ethical Review Authority,[21] research that includes

> the processing of sensitive data (i.e. data about race or ethnicity, political opinions, religious or philosophical persuasion, membership in unions or information regarding health or sexual life) should apply for ethical vetting. (own translation)

Considering that my study includes data on some of the aforementioned aspects, I applied for ethical vetting at the Swedish Ethical Review Authority in 2017. I further considered the guidelines of the General Data Protection

[19] See Appendix 6 for an example
[20] See Appendix 7 for an example
[21] Formerly Etikprövningsnämnden (EPN), now Etikprövningsmyndigheten (see etikprovningsmyndigheten.se).

Regulation (GDPR)[22] that were implemented by the European Union in 2018. The ethical guidelines revolve around confidentiality and protection of individuals' identity and integrity, which I took into account during the study design, implementation and analysis.

During the recruitment process, I sent an information letter (see Appendix 4) to potential participants where I informed them about the aim of the study, the form of participation (interview/observation), their right to get access to information that I have about them (as assigned by the Personal Data Act, which was later replaced by GDPR), as well as their right to cancel their participation at any point of the research process without this in any way affecting their profession and/or children's schooling. Furthermore, the participants signed an informed consent form (see Appendix 5) after they received the aforementioned information as well as answers to potential questions concerning the study and/or their participation. The parents' informed consent also represented their children's consent in the four development conferences that I observed. In addition, the recorded material was safely stored in my personal data folder at the university's server and I was the only person to have access to it. Finally, I presented participants' background information in a way that to the greatest extent possible protects their identity.

[22] See https://gdpr.eu/.

4. Exploring the social practice

In this chapter, I present and analyse the study's findings based on the interview and observation material. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the observation material is complementary as I have not observed all participants' development conferences. The observational data are thus analysed along with the interview data. While the development conferences are one part of the social practice, the interview data allowed for a more thorough exploration of the studied encounter. Whilst analysing the data, I also refer to previous literature in order to engage in dialogue with studies in the research area. A further discussion of the results is provided in Chapter 5.

The chapter consists of two main sections: the first focuses on the teachers and the second on the parents, and each section is divided into two parts. The first part of the teachers' section presents participants' views under common themes as the teachers in this study talked about parents as a *collective*, i.e. they did not focus on a specific parent, but they reasoned about collaboration and parental involvement in more general terms. The teachers therefore represent homogeneous position-takings in the field as they all are institutional agents, i.e. internal members of the school. Some of their descriptions however also pointed to a variation of experiences. These are presented in the second part of the section where I outline different collaboration strategies that they employ to tackle challenging situations in encounters with parents.

The section on the findings regarding the parents follows a different structure. The first part of the section presents each participant's story separately. This is to show parents' diverse positions in social space due to their various backgrounds in terms of culture, education, family structure and their children's schooling situation. I therefore bring up points that are unique in their stories that might have been omitted had I followed a different layout. Nevertheless, parents also shared joint views mainly in relation to parental involvement in children's schooling, which I present in the second part of the section, named *Commonalities*.

4.1. Teachers' views of parents as a collective

In this section, I present the teachers'[23] views revolving around the ideal parent–teacher encounter, the purpose of parent–teacher collaboration, the school management's presence in parent meetings, and collaboration with immigrant parents. The last part of the section focuses on teachers' experiences in cases of disagreements and complicated situations with parents.

4.1.1 *Ideal* and *actual* parent–teacher encounters

One of the themes that was common among the teachers was their view of the *ideal* parent–teacher encounter and the way they *actually* experience it in their everyday work.

Some teachers described the *moderately involved* parent as the ideal one. For example, Petra contends that an effective home–school collaboration does not have to always be in the form of direct contact. Parents may instead check on the school's online platform to get informed about their children's progress, help out with homework, prepare their children for their school day (e.g. gym clothes and snack bags), and reach out to the school if need be. Petra describes this as moderate involvement, which corresponds to her view of the ideal home–school collaboration. Amalia similarly sees this type of involvement as the ideal one. According to her, a moderately involved parent is one who shows up at development conferences and parent meetings, reports sick leave for the child and contacts the school for questions.

Although teachers have generally positive experiences of collaboration with parents, they admit that things are not always smooth. In particular, some teachers made reference to *overly involved* parents who want to have a say, so to speak, in teacher practices.

Petra comments:

> Of course, one can question things but it's also important to let the school decide in matters where we are the professionals. (Petra, teacher, own translation)

Vicky further points out that certain parents are not satisfied with their children doing just well in school and always push them to perform even better.

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[23] For an overview of the teachers' backgrounds, see Chapter 3, section 3.3, "Participants and contextual information".

> There is a lot of pressure, the parents feel pressure and especially the students feel pressure because they have to apply to schools with their grades, and certain schools have high standards, and parents want them to go there. (…) Mostly status and living up to a picture of what the family is and how ambitious the family is and what goals the family has. Parents can be very ambitious and might project that onto their children. (Vicky, teacher)

On the other hand, Amalia and Pia observe that certain parents are *under-involved* in the sense that they do not read the school's newsletters and are not aware of the topics of discussion in development conferences. The teachers attribute this behaviour to language barriers or cultural differences – parents who do not speak Swedish or parents who believe that their children's education is solely the school's responsibility. I will return to this point later.

Furthermore, most teachers pointed out that a crucial component of an ideal relationship is to have a clear view of parents' and teachers' different roles in children's schooling.

Vicky argues:

> I think that society would benefit from realising that parents are the main people in the students' lives, they are the ones that can set boundaries and enforce rules in a different way, and it is for their (the students') best because if you have a good learning environment, which I think we have most of the time, students will like learning (…) and I think more students would do that if there were limits and boundaries and parents showing that they respect the teachers. (Vicky, teacher)

Moreover, Maya observes that an unclear view of these different roles usually leads to conflicts.

> I think that the teachers should stop criticising the parents and vice versa, because some parents expect you to be a parent to their child. (…) One group (teachers) thinks that the parents are extremely demanding, the teachers are annoyed because parents do not do as they like and then some parents…it's maybe their personality, maybe a cultural thing but some parents just don't think it's their place to get involved. (Maya, teacher)

In addition, even though teachers acknowledge the importance of home–school collaboration, they think that one needs to dedicate a lot of time and effort to accomplish a working relationship and address the families' varying needs. Ingela mentions:

> We talk about this in a teacher-development group I participate in. What is it that takes so much time? It is the parent contacts. Parent contact is what takes

> most of our time. Time to make you as parent understand that your contributions, your help and your knowledge are crucial for your child's development. (…) You can be in a phone call for an hour and the answer comes in the last minute. The whole first hour is a prelude. It's hard. (Ingela, teacher, own translation)

In a similar vein, Petra contends:

> I think that the parent–teacher relationship is very important. At the same time, there should be a well-working communication and I think there is too little because one doesn't have enough time. It's incredibly time-consuming. (Petra, teacher, own translation)

In general, most teachers argued that an effective home–school collaboration does not exclusively depend on individual practices but it rather constitutes a societal question that requires investment in resources by different actors involved in the education sector.

Teachers' views above relate to the work of Crozier (2000), who illustrates that teachers usually have two different types of relationships to tackle; the overly involved middle-class parents on the one hand, and their under-involved working-class counterparts on the other. Similarly, here, when teachers refer to the overly involved group they mainly refer to parents of a higher socioeconomic status, while the under-involved one denotes parents of a lower status and, in this case, a foreign background. This is also confirmed by the school context on which the teachers' experiences are based; the teachers who work in schools where parents have high educational capital talk about the first group (overly involved) whereas the teachers who work in schools where parents have lower educational capital talk about the second (under-involved). However, they admit that it is possible to come across both types of involvement in the same school as well.

Moreover, schools' activities are today under scrutiny as part of the process of deciding which school/institution will win in the provision of the limited resources available (Bæck, 2015). The existing competition has affected the conditions of the teaching profession and, subsequently, the way the teachers address the demands for parental involvement (ibid.). In Bourdieu's terms, the existing institutional doxa that results out of this competition creates tension between the *ideal* and *actual* encounter with parents. Drawing upon the teachers in this study, it is apparent that they have to continuously juggle between living up to school expectations of home–school collaboration and addressing the families' varying needs by efficiently distributing school resources. The *moderately involved* parent is viewed as the ideal kind because it 'fits' well with the circumstances of teachers' professionalisation in the sense

that it does not make demands as high as the overly involved and under-involved parents; for the former, teachers have to control parents' influence in school practices, and for the latter they have to put efforts into making parents become more actively involved.

4.1.2 A child-oriented collaboration

Another common theme among the teachers in the study is their view of home–school collaboration as child-centred. In specific, the teachers argued that the purpose of collaboration is to help the student develop academically and socially.

Vicky defines collaboration with parents as a bridge between the teacher and the student:

> Most of all I think that the relationship between me and parents is obviously mainly to help the student in different ways. It can be educational, it can be social, it can be about informing them about something that happened in school that might affect their lives in different ways, it can be health issues or it can be something academic. (…) I think that is the main purpose but of course also the informational part. For example, in parent meetings we inform about the grading system, policies and such things. (Vicky, teacher)

Moreover, Amalia observes a connection between parental involvement and student performance:

> The students whose parents don't communicate with the school are very anxious and worried. (…) I have a student with whom there are problems in the classroom, he misbehaves and he doesn't do what he is supposed to do and I have emailed the parents but I didn't get an answer and then it becomes difficult. (…) I actually think that parents play a big role in the way their children behave. But that's not always the case. One may come from a difficult family situation and still do one's best. (Amalia, teacher, own translation)

In addition, Ingela draws upon the knowledge she gained during her teacher education and argues that home–school collaboration is a triangle between the home, the school and the student. She emphasises the term *home* because according to her experience, it is not always the parents who take responsibility for children's schooling but it can be the grandparents or a sibling. Even if this is not optimal, she says, one has to compromise and work with what is available.

Ingela further adds that she is more than willing to sacrifice her own personal time for parents who care and show an interest in their children's education.

> I got a message from a parent today, "Hey Ingela, is there anything else we can do in math? The book is very easy". So, I dedicated time to this even though I have a day off. (…) Although it's absolutely not stated in my work description, I am glad to and proud of being able to have this contact with this family because I think that if you as parent want your child's best, more than just providing food and clean clothes, then it's a gift for me to be able to contribute to this. (Ingela, teacher, own translation)

Teachers also addressed the issue of the children's positioning in development conferences. Anton argues that the meetings are organised with the student at the centre and the purpose is to help them learn how to reflect upon their work, set goals and come up with a plan through critical thinking and problem-solving. He also points out that the teacher's and the parents' role during the meeting is to support the student and give advice on their set goals. Similarly, Petra states that student-led meetings get the students engaged in their learning while they at the same time become more knowledgeable about their progress and development.

Nevertheless, Vicky's experience is that development conferences are mainly teacher-led and she contends that the teaching staff and the management in her school are currently discussing possible changes in the structure of the meeting.

> I think in other schools, as in our school, you're just stuck in what has always been and we're reflecting on it but we haven't really gone further than reflecting, so I think it's a process. I think schools are moving to more student-centred and student-led development conferences but I don't think they are there yet. (Vicky, teacher)

Ingela additionally stresses the importance of following up on the individual study plan that is set in the development conference in order to really help the students achieve their goals.

> What do you do with this document? Do you interpret it in any way? Or is it like, "yep, we have now filled out the document and we move on". (Ingela, teacher, own translation)

It is apparent that the teachers all acknowledge their responsibilities for the students' schooling and development. These responsibilities depart from a professional point of view that has been cultivated during their educational

and professional trajectories. In specific, teachers have learned, through either education or experience, that they need to maintain regular communication with parents and inform them about different child-related matters. While the teachers value the parents' input, it is at the same time framed by professional documentation; an orthodox tool that is part of teachers' institutionalised habitus. In other words, the 'rules of the game' expect parents to be present and support the student, but the final evaluation of the child is made by the teachers/school.

There are parallels here to Winter's (2015) *objective/assessed knowing the child* capital and *subjective/relational knowing the child* capital (:195-197). The first is owned by the professionals and is based on reporting facts and measurements, whereas the latter is owned by the parents and is concerned with opinions and personal observations of their children. As a result, even though the responsibility of collaboration is regarded as distributed equally between the teachers, the parents and the students, it is the professionals' knowledge about the child that has more symbolic power in this encounter; it is part of the natural order.

4.1.3 The school management's presence in parent meetings

An additional theme that was brought up by the teachers concerns the school management's presence in meetings with the parents. Many of them mentioned that the (vice) principal and/or special educator tend to accompany them in 'complicated' meetings, i.e. when there is a disagreement with a parent or a student-related issue that needs to be addressed.

According to Ingela, some parents tend to take things more seriously when the principal or the special educator attends the meeting.

> It has to do with the fact that some parents want to feel important. If the vice principal sits there, then you are important. Because the vice principal's time is valuable. Is the special teacher, who has so many children, sitting there? Then you are important. (Ingela, teacher, own translation)

In a similar vein, Pia argues:

> It gets clearer for some parents in a way, like "now it's the principal who's talking". So, sometimes a teacher needs the principal but other times it's important to not bring them in too early in the process because the parent might feel like, "oh it's really a crisis!" (…) When it comes to students with special

> needs, then it's most common to bring in the special teacher in order to offer more competence and support. (Petra, teacher, own translation)

Ingela's and Pia's descriptions show that symbols, in this case the principal, are interpreted differently depending on the situation and the parent.

For Vicky, the management's presence can sometimes function as rule enforcement in cases where parents insist on their opinion.

> Since I'm the educating teacher, I still have to explain the reasons for a grade, for example, but if they just cross that line and if they don't want to listen, if they just want to get their way, it causes more management issues. (…) They (management) pretty firmly tell the parents that this isn't your job and they offer support by showing policy, showing the rules, showing regulations that in fact parents are not allowed to try to influence grades for example. (Vicky, teacher)

The teachers further outlined that the general school practice is to talk to each other prior to a parent meeting in order to divide responsibilities and formulate a unanimous opinion. Since there are different actors involved, e.g. teachers, the principal, special educator, and sometimes the psychologist and the social services, they say that it is necessary to assess the situation before the meeting to be able to give accurate information to the parents.

In addition, collaboration with the management is seen by many teachers as an important component of professional development. Most of them experience positive collaboration in the sense that they receive support when needed.

However, positive collaboration can mean different things. Anton contends that one can maintain a good relationship as long as one goes in line with the school's expectations.

> Generally, I feel that they (the management) support you especially if you follow the school's expectations. If you have the mission statement, you follow the school documentation and the Swedish law, if you're doing these things, the management definitely has your back. (Anton, teacher)

In contrast, Maya, who works at the same school as Anton, experiences collaboration somewhat differently. Specifically, she mentions that the school owner can sometimes be restrictive towards new ideas.

> I said to the principal here, "this isn't the place where you might get new fresh ideas from the teachers that are coming in", because the owner of the school is very particular about how she wants things to be and even though she

> doesn't come to the school, she makes all the decisions. The final decision is hers. (Maya, teacher)

In Bourdieu's line of thought, teachers hold an orthodox position in the field as they are institutional agents and thus dominant actors in their interactions with parents. Their descriptions in this section reveal a sense of necessity to establish and maintain their dominant position. When the individual teacher cannot do it, then it is the management's job to step in and claim it.

Furthermore, it is apparent that it is not only the parents' but also the teachers' positions that are being negotiated and monitored. Teachers act within a particular institutional framework in which they are trained to find solutions and make decisions (Engström & Carlhed, 2014). Maya's quote showed that there can sometimes be mismatch between a teacher's habitus and institutional expectations, which can lead to heterodox practices in the form of arguments and competing opinions within the field.

4.1.4 Gains and struggles of immigrant parents' involvement

Teachers who worked in schools with a high percentage of students from a different cultural background made reference to both advantages and challenges in collaborating with parents. The teachers specifically emphasised that they see a lot of advantages when it comes to teaching in multicultural schools and collaborating with immigrant parents. For example, Pia and Amalia think that the students in their school are very tolerant towards each other's differences because they all have different backgrounds.

> Here, it's taken for granted that we are different, that we have different traditions and it's very positive that they (students) are tolerant towards this. (Pia, teacher, own translation)

> We have many cultures in the school, which is good in a way because they all come from different countries, they have different languages and cultures so I haven't heard anyone saying anything ugly about anybody else regarding their origin. Because everybody is so different. (Amalia, teacher, own translation)

They also argue that it would be more challenging for one foreign student to be in a fully Swedish school or vice versa.

Furthermore, Vicky compares her current school to her previous one where she says there were different kinds of problems in regard to discipline. She thinks that one reason why her current school is successful in that respect is that parents come from different cultures.

> On a general basis, the school has a higher level of rules and discipline and I think that is because we come from different cultures. I think other countries have higher standards for how to behave in school and how to talk to your teachers and classmates and I think that shines through…that's the policy of the school and that's how we want it and parents choose us because of that part. (Vicky, teacher)

Nevertheless, teachers also point to different kinds of challenges. Amalia mentions that communication with parents who do not speak Swedish can be complicated. She gives an example of a meeting with a parent:

> I was there with the teaching assistant and the mother and we talked about the student behaving in a not so nice way and the mum was smiling and we're like, "oh the message is not conveyed". (Amalia, teacher, own translation)

Amalia further mentions that she tackles such communication issues by booking interpreters. According to Ingela's experience, however, some parents get offended when she books interpreters for them for development conferences. As a result, she has to find alternative ways of communicating.

> I booked an interpreter and the father got very offended, sad and disappointed in me, "why did you book an interpreter, I have been living in Sweden for more than 10 years!" and of course I couldn't say, "it is because you don't understand what I'm saying" so I said instead, "Oh I'm sorry, it was an administrative mistake." So then I had to adjust the language and play theatre in order to explain what reading comprehension means. (Ingela, teacher, own translation)

In addition, Amalia points out that there usually is low attendance at parent evenings, which she attributes to cultural differences with respect to parental involvement.

> Some think that the school takes care of everything. It can be one reason why some parents don't have any communication with the school. Because this happens in some countries. The school is the school and you are there, they'll take care of you. I'll do it when you're back home. (Amalia, teacher, own translation)

Pia also picks up on the point of low attendance and argues that parents' life conditions often prevent them from getting involved in their children's schooling. In particular, she says that there are single mothers who do not have the time to get involved in school due to late working hours, parents who cannot read in Swedish or in any other language and therefore cannot help with homework, and parents who are not positively inclined towards the school as an institution due to negative experiences of their encounters with

authorities such as the social services. However, Pia observes that parents tend to show up more often to informal events such as coffee gatherings, flea markets and school celebrations, or when they are invited to talk about their cultures and cook a traditional meal. Pia's description shows that parents and teachers may have different understandings of what home–school collaboration means. Parents might for different reasons not have the possibility of getting involved in formalised collaborations, e.g. parent evenings and development conferences, which often are defined by professional terminology and school policy; however, they are rather positively inclined towards a different type of collaboration – an informal one.

Teachers' statements in this section are in line with previous literature on ethnic-minority parents, e.g. Bouakaz (2007) and Bunar (2001; 2015). As these studies have shown, teachers and parents tend to have different views of what parental involvement means, which can sometimes lead to different kinds of misunderstandings. The results also show that one's life conditions play a significant role in the extent and type of involvement. Parents of a lower socioeconomic background do not have the time and resources to get involved as much as the contemporary form of schooling would expect them to. In fact, teachers to a great extent recognise the existing inequalities with respect to immigrant parents' conditions for involvement and they make efforts to overcome the barriers and facilitate collaboration. However, the existing natural order has created certain demands on the teaching profession that leave little space for them to offer greater help to the parents.

4.1.5 Different strategies of inviting parents to collaborate

The previous sections focused on teachers' shared views of home–school collaboration. However, teachers also shared different experiences of encounters with parents where they employed various strategies to tackle issues and accomplish collaboration. Specifically, teachers gave examples of incidents that they managed to handle on their own and incidents where they needed a colleague's or the management's support.

To begin with, Anton made reference to a student in his class who he said had problems with discipline. Anton decided to talk to the student's parents and claims that the parents blamed his teaching methods. He told me that he did not get into an argument with them but managed to tackle the issue with a professional attitude. Specifically, Anton invited the parents to a museum visit with him and the students in order for them to see and observe.

> I remember the parents didn't come here to the school but they met us at the museum for like 10 minutes. They observed us and said hi and then they left. And since then I have had no problems. (…) I think that the parents believed almost everything that the child would say but I think towards the end, we improved and during the spring term I could see that the student started behaving better because the key was to get the respect of the parents. (Anton, teacher)

Anton invited parents to collaborate through a 'see what I see' strategy, i.e. he let them take part in his teaching practices in an attempt to show transparency and eventually establish a good relationship with them.

Furthermore, Ingela shared her experience of an encounter with a mother of a student with learning disabilities. She described that in the beginning, the mother was not receptive to dealing with her child's issues and Ingela tried to handle the situation with a non-accusatory attitude.

> I didn't say "think about your son", I thought instead that if I arouse her curiosity, if I raise questions…something that led her to become ready to take the matter further. She said, "Ingela, can you ask the special teacher if my son can be tested? Can you book a time with the school psychologist?", something that I had already thought but she wasn't receptive. (Ingela, teacher, own translation)

Ingela applied a similar method with a foster family of two unaccompanied refugee children. According to her, the foster parents were angry with her because they thought that Ingela did not set the same standards to their foster children as she did with their classmates. She says:

> So, I booked another meeting with the foster mum, the vice principal, the special teacher and me to explain in a subtle way…because we didn't want to offend her. My strategy is that if she understands on her own what the reasonable requirements are…and so she said, "I discovered that the children haven't even been to a school before", we said "aha", we already knew but this is when we could start cooperating. (Ingela, teacher, own translation)

In both cases, although Ingela was aware of the steps that they needed to take to support the students, she used patience as a strategy of collaboration in the sense that she did not impose her professional opinion on the parents but rather presented the situation and waited until the parents could see it on their own.

Pia's approach to dealing with challenging situations is similar to Ingela's. Pia argues that parents in general never are receptive in a situation where the

school takes on a judgemental approach. For that reason, she invites parents to collaborate by showing patience and understanding.

> It's always important to be a little humble but also clear about what the school's role is and what the home's role is. If you think that the home doesn't take as much responsibility as they should, then of course you have to say it and talk about it even though it's hard to do. It's about building a relationship and if you build a good relationship, it gets easier to have this uncomfortable conversation, not easy but easier. (…) And then you need to give it a little time. If you talk to a parent for the first time and they say "no, it's not like that, I don't agree" but then when you talk the second or the third time, then they say "yes, we've noticed it at home too. Is there anything we can do?" (Pia, teacher, own translation)

Moreover, teachers shared examples of incidents that did not necessarily lead to a positive outcome. Specifically, Vicky talked about a meeting with the parents of a student who got a low grade. According to her, even though she and her colleagues showed policy documents and presented arguments for the student's grade, the parents were not satisfied.

> It became a very locked situation where the parents also started talking about me, talking about the school, talking about the class in a not so respectful way. (…) In the end we went on, we tried to show them examples and when it came too far from the actual discussion we said we hear what you say but this is the information we have to give you now, this was in the middle of the semester so there was still work to do, but this is as far we got in the conversation and then we ended the meeting. (Vicky, teacher)

Drawing upon Vicky's experience, an important element of a successful collaboration seems to be mutual respect. Furthermore, Amalia made reference to an incident that caught her by surprise. She talked about a student in her class who grabbed another student and Amalia called the student's mother to let her know about what happened.

> She (the mother) got angry and she was like, "don't call me about the smallest thing". It's not a small thing that your child just grabbed somebody else. And I said that things happen every day and I don't reach out but this is serious. But after some time, she came to the school and apologised. (…) It was me and the teaching assistant and she was very angry in the beginning and said that she will go to the principal if we cannot handle the situation and we said that she may go because the principal is already aware of this but then she changed her mind and apologised and said that she didn't know exactly what happened even though we had already informed her. (Amalia, teacher, own translation)

Amalia further added that the mother was frustrated because she has three children, one of whom has several problems and the school often calls home to complain. Another element of a successful collaboration, based on Amalia's description, seems to be understanding the family's life-situation. According to Petra, teachers need to communicate with each other to gain knowledge on that matter to be able to address issues in the best way possible.

In addition, Maya's example concerns a father who, according to her, overused her contact details by emailing and texting to complain about her and the school.

> There was always an issue with him and his family, there were always unpleasant emails, like "my son said this and this, and this is how it is and this is unacceptable" (…) and I wrote him back and said "your assumption first of all is extremely rude because it's as if you don't respect me as a person, you're telling me that your 10-year-old said this and this is how it is, that's rude". The mother got really offended by that response and came into the school to talk to me and I spoke to the mum and after that conversation it all smoothed out. (Maya, teacher)

Maya tried to work with collaboration by setting boundaries and being straightforward regarding her view of the parent's behaviour. This is another example of the necessity of mutual respect in order to establish a good relationship.

The teachers' descriptions show that they constantly come across different kinds of situations that they have to address and deal with. Depending on the occasion, they employ different practices: inviting parents to take part in school activities as a way to gain their respect; providing indirect support until the parent becomes receptive to a problem; showcasing policy documents in order to strengthen one's argument in front of the parents; and setting boundaries to parents' right to reach out to the school. Drawing upon their experiences, it is apparent that the teachers negotiate the way and the extent to which parents will get involved in different school-related situations. Although teachers may employ certain practices based on their own dispositions, i.e. individual habitus, the overall negotiation with the parents departs from a collective type of habitus since they all are internal members of the school. Within this framework, the elements that the teachers seem to value as important for a successful home–school collaboration are transparency, patience, understanding and mutual respect.

4.2. Parents' personal views of encounters with teachers

In this section, each parent's story is presented separately due to their heterogeneous views and experiences in regard to their encounter with the school. The order of presentation is based on parents' educational level, from *high* to *intermediate* and *low*.[24] I also refer to the parents' *codenames* to guide the analysis in terms of their sociocultural resources.

In general, the parents made reference to issues that revolved around the role of the teacher in children's schooling, home–school collaboration and parental involvement practices. Parents shared examples of school-related situations that pleased them, disappointed them, caught them by surprise and/or annoyed them.

4.2.1 Lena

Lena[25] migrated to Sweden five years ago along with her spouse, John, and their two children, Chung and Jia. Lena and John are researchers who have lived and worked in different countries around the world. The family moved to Sweden because of a position that John got at a Swedish university.

At the time of data collection, the family lived in central Stockholm. Lena was not working as a researcher but she was engaged in a career-network organisation while taking Swedish language classes. Chung was enrolled in a municipal school close to their neighbourhood and attended the school's international track, grades four and five in the first and second interview, respectively. Jia had started the preparatory class at the time of the second interview and was enrolled in a different school than Chung, also located in central Stockholm. Lena mainly talked about her son and his school.

Contemplating child-rearing practices

Even though Lena is generally pleased with Chung's academic progress, she wants him to switch to the school's Swedish track in order to become better integrated in the educational system. According to Lena, Chung cannot currently transfer due to his limited language proficiency in Swedish. Lena brought up the question with the teacher who suggested that Chung signs up

[24] See Chapter 3, section 3.3, "Participants and contextual information".
[25] Lena (M, +, NF, IMM², 2, 4) = Mother, high educational level, nuclear family, immigrant parents, two children, oldest child in grade four.

for football and joins sleepovers with Swedish classmates to improve his language skills.

Lena comments on the teacher's suggestion:

> My son is already going to karate and he (teacher) is like "yes, but karate is only listening to instructions, you need to go to soccer". Soccer and sleepovers are the solution to everything! It's too much for the parents. My son is already going to quite different classes at the weekends and soccer is too much I think. It takes time and it is early wake-up. We'll see. (Lena, parent)

According to Lena, her son is enrolled in different types of organised leisure-time activities, a parenting style that has parallels with *concerted cultivation* (Lareau, 2011). Concerted cultivation tends to be favoured by middle-class parents and viewed as a practice of 'good' parenting.[26] Drawing upon the quotation above, the teacher however does not fully approve of Lena's choice of activities. He rather gives directives and suggests the 'right' practices: "you need to go to soccer". The teacher's suggestions might be based on the 'rules of the game', in this case established beliefs about students who want to switch tracks in the school. Although Lena initially found the teacher's suggestion too much to ask, she eventually considered it as an option: "We'll see".

Negotiating parental involvement in a bullying incident

Lena made reference to an incident where one of Chung's classmates was being bullied and Chung took the initiative to tell his classmate's parents. Lena and other parents in the class were concerned about the incident and she, as parent representative of Chung's class, attempted to obtain more information about the matter.

> What happens is that they have a teacher, a counsellor that talks to the children regularly, at least once a week and so they checked on what happened and the teacher worked close with the counsellor. (…) I would try to ask if there is any progress and what we (parents) can do but then the teacher thought that this is quite common and that they have already dealt with it. (Lena, parent)

The excerpt above shows disjuncture between Lena's expectation of getting insight into the situation and the teacher's response that, in a sense, rejected her efforts of involvement. Crozier (2001) contends that schools tend to view parental participation as a potential threat to their harmonisation and philosophy of having a unified vision. In this line of thought, Chung's teachers

[26] See Chapter 1, section 1.3, "Being 'good' in the neoliberal era".

might have – consciously or unconsciously – embraced an approach that minimises the chances of potential deviation from the school's 'normal' practices of handling this type of incident, should Lena and other parents have gotten involved. In Bourdieu's terms, this incident can be regarded as an act of symbolic violence in the sense that the professionals maintained their orthodox position by opposing to heretical actions, i.e. parents' request for access to detailed information.

Moreover, Lena illustrates that the school's strategy in this kind of situation is to let the teachers make the final decisions:

> The principal's message was that they have given the power to the teacher so you talk to the teacher and he would emphasise that we have a policy, and all the teachers are following it. So, whatever decision they make is final. (Lena, parent)

However, the teachers do not entirely decide out of their very own personal judgement; their decisions are made within the framework of policies and working strategies that the school (field) has laid out for them. Teachers are expected to be performing conservation practices (orthodoxy) that serve the purpose of maintaining and/or reproducing the school's norms on the 'acceptable' ways of parental involvement practices.

In addition, Lena claims that she not only did not get information about the incident, but the teacher also got rather annoyed because Chung told his classmate's parents.

> It was actually quite strange because after that incident I think the teacher is not really happy with my son. We did have another meeting, it was a follow-up development conference and it was me, my son and the teacher. He was saying "oh well, you need to tell your mum what happened". It wasn't a good meeting. I feel like I appreciate his honesty but I also feel like the teacher is quite childish and he's trying to retaliate in a lot of ways. (Lena, parent)

The dynamics in the aforementioned meeting point to an existing power asymmetry between the teacher, the parent and the child. Chung's teacher came into the meeting with an already established opinion, representing the professional's point of view, which, in Bourdieu's terms, is imbued with symbolic power. Lena on the other hand came in as an external member of the school (layperson) and although she felt disappointed, she did not take the issue further. As for Chung, even though his intention was to help out his classmate, his behaviour was seen as deviant and in need of being 'fixed'. Miller, Hilgendorf and Dilworth-Bart (2014) suggest that "one-on-one interactions between families and schools provide the basis for school staff to

determine if parents' efforts to support their children comply, or fail to comply, with the evaluative standards of the schools" (:330). Calling the mother to this meeting and urging Chung to explain his 'problematic' behaviour might imply that Lena should have handled the situation in a way that complied with the school's evaluative standards. Nevertheless, Lena's description shows that communication in the meeting was not accomplished due to a lack of openness towards discussing this type of issues.

Making sense of teacher practices

Lena shared an example that caused confusion to her and other parents of the class. She specifically talked about the teacher's decision to take a day off from school on a weekly basis.

> He (Chung's teacher) decided that he can't do everything within his working hours and still have his leisure time, it's really Swedish (…) He has decided to take a day off and for this day, the school has arranged for a substitute teacher and it's supposed to be an easy day with gym and social classes but after these classes they have a teacher from year two or one that is repeating everything they already know so they feel they're wasting their Monday. (Lena, parent)

Lena further mentions that this information came through the children without the parents having been informed in advance about the change. In my question about whether they brought it up with the teacher or the school management, she answered:

> No because the teachers can decide about their working place so it's not something that we can talk about. I don't think any parent brought it up. We just accepted it. It's the Swedish way. (Lena, parent)

Lena's descriptions show a need for transparency and openness between home and school. In this case, however, the school made a unanimous decision without initiating any form of dialogue with the parents, even though it was a decision that directly affected the children's schooling. Although the parents felt uncomfortable, they eventually complied with the decision; an action that seems to be an outcome of the conditions of the natural order.

Moreover, Lena interpreted the teacher's decision as the "Swedish way". This example illustrates how one's habitus forms one's understanding of teacher practices. Specifically, Lena talked about parents' different cultural backgrounds.

> Everyone has different expectations from their culture. (…) Even from our background and especially (home country) background we expect everything from the school. We just listen to the discussions and feedback and we don't need to discuss among us. But actually, it seems necessary here to form your own networks and have a lot of sleepovers! I think it's something I'm still figuring out. (Lena, parent)

This excerpt is in parallel with what Brooker (2015) has described as *curriculum awareness* (:42). In this case, Lena's curriculum awareness derives from an interplay between her knowledge of schooling gained back in her home country, and knowledge that she is currently building in the new country. In Bourdieu's line of thought, Lena is going through *hysteresis* as she experiences a discrepancy between her previous experiences and the conditions of home–school collaboration in the new context. Nevertheless, Lena has the potential to transform her habitus as she learns over time how to navigate the Swedish school system and make the 'right' choices for her children. Lena mentioned that the experiences she gained from her interactions with Chung's school helped her frame her decisions for her daughter, Jia. Specifically, she said that she enrolled her daughter in a different school where the teachers have a more positive and welcoming approach towards parental involvement.

4.2.2 Viktor

Viktor[27] is Swedish and works as a political scientist at a governmental agency. He studied political science in different countries, in one of which he met his spouse and moved together back to Sweden. They now have two daughters, Alicia and Doris. The family lives in a north-eastern area of inner Stockholm. At the time of the interview, Alicia was in grade one of a school located in their neighbourhood while Doris was in preschool. When Alicia was in grade two, I observed her development conference along with Viktor and her teacher, Petra.[28]

The 'right' type of feedback

Viktor talked about the type of feedback that he wishes to receive from the school, which according to him plays an important role in students' educational attainment. Viktor emphasises that the teachers need to be open and inform him about how Alicia is doing at school in order for him to be able to provide the necessary assistance at home. He specifically points out:

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[27] Viktor (F, +, NF, SWE, 2, 1)

[28] See Chapter 3, section 3.3, "Participants and contextual information".

> What is important is that the teachers give me a picture of how my child is developing, whether she is learning or not, whether there are areas to which we need to pay more attention, this is very important to me. Or if they notice that something is not good, bullying for example. What does not work needs to be brought up. Otherwise, I don't see any particular need for having a relationship. Of course, it's good to know who the teacher is and to trust the teacher. (Viktor, parent, own translation)

In connection to the above, Viktor was not fully satisfied with the feedback that he got at the first development conference that he attended with Alicia and her teacher in grade one. According to him, the teacher focused too much on Alicia's experience of her learning while Viktor would have preferred to get feedback based on the teacher's point of view.

> It was nice to go there and see her (Alicia's) work but I don't know if it was that fruitful talking to the teacher. (…) It was a lot about what my daughter thought, which is important, but that's not the school's role, their role is to teach stuff (…) I wanted to know, is there a warning? I am not satisfied with things being just okay. (Viktor, parent, own translation)

Viktor further added that the teacher had missed informing him about the level of noise in the classroom that he eventually got to know through Alicia in one of the questions of the individual study plan in which she circled an unhappy face.

> If my daughter hadn't said anything, I wouldn't have known and I think it's weird because the responsibility falls on the teachers to let me know about the situation. (Viktor, parent, own translation)

Drawing upon Viktor's experiences, it is apparent that there is a disjuncture between his expectations of the child's and the teacher's positioning in the development conference, and the actual teacher/school practice in the meeting. Viktor expected a teacher-led meeting in which he would get to hear the professional's opinion about Alicia's potential shortcomings.

Hofvendahl (2006) in his study of development conferences found that teachers tended to avoid direct negative critique so as to not hurt the students. He further showed that parents were afraid that negative comments might put their children in a vulnerable position. In contrast, Viktor encourages such an approach, not because he does not care if his child will get hurt but because he sees advantages of such criticism in the long run, i.e. that the student's future educational aspirations can be fulfilled.

Viktor's definition of the 'right' type of feedback might clash with the teacher's definition due to different dispositions. According to Bourdieu, differences in the properties of habitus might generate different perceptions between agents of what is possible and probable in a given situation (Bourdieu, 1977a: 72; 1973: 66). In addition, the objective structures in the field include certain expectations of how one should carry out such a meeting. Viktor's view of an open communication between home and school demands more than what the teacher provides.

Obtaining information at the development conference

At the development conference that I observed with Alicia's new teacher, Petra, Viktor in a way challenged the doxa. He did so by attempting to gain as much information as possible on the points that he had previously missed, i.e. potential areas of improvement for Alicia, clarifications from the teacher and information about the noise level in the classroom, illustrated in the excerpts below:

> Viktor: Do you feel challenged enough in math? Is it easy? Is it hard?
> Alicia: It's nice to learn something new.
> Viktor: But do you feel you learn new things? Or do you have to repeat things you already know?
> Alicia: No.
> Viktor: No?
> Alicia: No, it's new.
>
> (…)
>
> V: Is there an area you (to Petra) identify? I think there is room to help her even more. It looks like it just goes well but is there an area where she needs more help? Or an area where she is not as strong as others?
> Petra: I don't experience anything like this. We will now go through texts and write texts in different ways and there I'll see if she needs to practice anything but otherwise, there isn't anything. It is mostly to make sure that you (to Alicia) do things that feel challenging enough and fun so that you don't get bored. But nothing where she needs to focus more. You are in line with your level or even ahead.
>
> (…)
>
> V: How is it with discipline in the classroom? I remember in the first grade where you (to Alicia) talked about noise and that it took much time until you got started with the lesson and you were frustrated over this.
> A: There still is a bit of noise but it's better.
> P: Yes, there can certainly be…some days there can be a lot of talking, other days it's very quiet and other days something in-between. But we are working

on it. It certainly needs to be quiet in the classroom. One can also go to the recreation room and sit there and work.

(excerpts from Alicia's development conference, own translation)

Based on the excerpts above, Viktor seems to be comfortable negotiating the type of feedback that he wishes to receive and he even manages to get in-depth information from the teacher. As previous literature has shown,[29] resourceful parents know how to ask for things and demand further accommodations for their children. In Bourdieu's terms, Viktor utilised his *linguistic capital* (1977b) to ensure that Alicia is academically on the right path and also make sure that Petra keeps an eye on the noise level of the classroom. Viktor's 'requests' were met with reciprocity by Petra; after Viktor started posing questions and looking at Petra even when asking Alicia, Petra begun to continually follow up on Alicia's answers by providing explanations on the points of discussion. As Bourdieu suggests, "utterances are not only signs to be understood and deciphered: they are also signs of wealth intended to be evaluated and appreciated and signs of authority intended to be believed and obeyed" (ibid.:66).

4.2.3 Sofia

Sofia[30] moved to Sweden four years ago along with her Swedish spouse and their two daughters, Paula and Martina. The family lived in Sofia's home country before where Paula had already started her schooling. Sofia is an architect and at the time of the data collection, the family lived in a north-eastern area of inner Stockholm. Paula was enrolled in grades five and six while Martina was in grades one and two during the first and the second interview, respectively.

"Teachers are open and listen but I want to know more about my children."

Sofia is generally satisfied with her children's teachers but she experiences that their encounters are rather sporadic and that the feedback she receives in development conferences is quite generic. Specifically, Sofia wishes she got to hear more personal things about her children and believes that teachers could dedicate more space and time for parent–teacher interactions:

[29] See Chapter 1, section 1.3, "Parents and social class".
[30] Sofia (M, +, NF, IMM, 2, 5 & 1)

> I wish we had more meetings, more often and without the children. I would ask more personal things about my child. (…) I understand that she (teacher) doesn't contact us because she sees no problems and I really believe it, and not everyone (every parent) would appreciate it, "ah, another meeting". But it would be good for those who would like to talk to the teacher. (Sofia, parent, own translation)

Sofia also expects teachers to give more critical feedback. She shared her experience of a meeting with Paula's teacher:

> The teacher is like "oh your daughter is good" and I think "no, she is not". (…) Here (in Sweden), there are many things I don't know. Maybe it's ok to say "Oh how good! This is excellent!". Yes, it's good but not so good. One can do better. (…) I don't know if it's because they don't see it or just because there aren't any problems. I don't know. (Sofia, parent, own translation)

Although Sofia's spouse is Swedish and therefore familiar with the schooling culture, Sofia experiences difficulties understanding teacher practices in the new country due to hysteresis; she possesses a type of cultural capital that is of different 'currency' (Vincent, 2000).

Sofia further comments that she sometimes feels the need to share things about her children that the teachers might not have noticed. Their limited encounters however do not give her this opportunity:

> I think that they (teachers) think that they are the professionals and responsible, which I also believe, but at the same time, I also can share things about my daughter (…) That's maybe why they push us away. They're like, "we are responsible for this" and I get it, but I also think it's a pity. (Sofia, parent, own translation)

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the professionals have a more specific type of knowledge about the child that is situated within the school framework, whilst parents have a more holistic view as they have been part of the child's history and background. Sofia would ideally like to contribute with her knowledge about the child but the little space that she is given in her interactions with the teacher discourages her from negotiating her wish.

Children's presence in parent–teacher encounters

Another issue that Sofia brought up revolves around the children's presence at development conferences and in daily encounters with the teachers. As Sofia describes, she often finds herself struggling to express her opinion in front of her daughters and prefers some 'alone time' with the teachers to be

able to ask things that she cannot do otherwise. Her view of this type of relationship does not seem to be reflected in teacher practices.

> We are never alone with the teacher, not even for a second. I think it's good to do some part of the meeting with the child and some part without the child, so that we can talk and tell the truth. (…) Next time I think I'll say "ok, mum needs to talk to the teacher for at least 5 minutes before the meeting ends". This is what I think I'll do. Or I'll send an email and ask if it's okay. (Sofia, parent, own translation)

Sofia also gave an example of her younger daughter, Martina, who did not go to school for a few days because she was feeling unhappy. Sofia was disappointed when Martina went back to school because as she claims, she neither got to talk privately to the teacher nor did the teacher follow up on how her daughter was doing after she got back to school.

> They don't ask much. They ask almost nothing. I don't remember them asking "How is your daughter feeling?". I think *we* are supposed to contact *them*. (Sofia, parent, own translation)

Building upon Sofia's descriptions, it is apparent that the current institutional practices lead her to take on a rather deferential approach towards the teachers. The professionals have the symbolic power to decide on the form and frequency of interactions with the parents. Even though Sofia attempted to talk informally to the teacher about Martina feeling unhappy, the teacher did not offer feedback, which eventually discouraged further communication on the matter and caused disappointment on Sofia's side.

4.2.4 Olivia

Olivia[31] is Swedish and she and her spouse, who is also Swedish, have two daughters, Ellen and Doris. Olivia is a lawyer and at the time of the interview, the family lived in central Stockholm. Ellen was enrolled in a municipal school located in a north-eastern area of inner Stockholm as her best friend went to that school, whereas Doris was in a preschool located in the area where the family lived. At the time of the first interview, Ellen was in grade one. The second interview and observation of Ellen's development conference took place when she was in grade two.

[31] Olivia (M, +, NF, SWE^2, 2, 1)

The Swedish philosophy of schooling

Olivia contends that the development conferences at her daughter's school mostly focus on positive aspects of the students' learning and she describes the feedback that they receive as 'soft'. In particular, she mentions that the teacher does not give critical comments during the meeting. If needed, she does it through written assessments that are given to the parents.

In general, Olivia is satisfied with the flow of information from school to home and appreciates that the school provides information that they do not get to know through the child. Nevertheless, she expresses a will to understand more about school practices regarding homework and potential areas of improvement for Ellen.

> One gets a picture, a holistic picture of the different parts, those that we don't discuss at home. They let us know what happens during breaks, that she has to develop, that she needs to raise her hand. Maybe they could let us know whether there is something more that she needs to do at school and why she gets some specific tasks for homework. But in a way, this is how it works in the Swedish school. It's another kind of schooling philosophy. (Olivia, parent, own translation)

Olivia further compares her relationship with Doris' teacher in preschool to her relationship with Ellen's teacher in school:

> We meet the teacher (in preschool) every day but when I go to school to pick up my older daughter, the teachers have already left and it's a pity. (…) I want to meet the teachers more often so I sometimes drop off my daughter in the morning and I say hi and show that I care. One becomes a stranger otherwise. We don't have to meet every day but a few days per week, not only at the development conference. (Olivia, parent, own translation)

Although Olivia wishes that her relationship with schoolteachers would lean towards preschool's pedagogical model, the current institutional doxa seems to be taken for granted, "this is how it works in the Swedish school".

Trusting the teacher

Despite Olivia's wish for more frequent contact and feedback on certain parts of Ellen's schooling, Olivia stresses the importance of showing trust in the professionals:

> If one trusts the school, it goes well. One cannot question everything all the time. I am a lawyer and I know my job. I don't always understand why they

> do certain things at school but I trust them. An ideal relationship is when there is trust between one another and trust in the teachers. (…) I experience that they don't need so much information from us. They mostly give information. And then we get the chance to mention something at the development conference. So, it's mostly one-way communication so far. But if I want to bring up something when we meet, I can. (Olivia, parent, own translation)

Olivia does not experience this one-way communication as negative but she trusts that the school gives her relevant information. Specifically, she mentions that the teacher constantly follows up on Ellen's progress. With respect to the development conference that I observed, Olivia showed that she was especially satisfied with the way the teacher made efforts to keep Ellen feeling challenged in her learning.

> Teacher: Because you already perform well in different parts, we maybe need to look at the goals of grade six when it comes to writing descriptive texts. (…) One can look at expository texts, poems and so on. So, that could be a challenge for you (to Ellen).
> Olivia: Yes, another way of organising a text!
>
> (…)
>
> Olivia: One way to go is to be challenged more and get more difficult tasks.
> Teacher: Yes, and you can choose the most difficult book, for example.
> Ellen: Yes, because group C has the most difficult book.
>
> (excerpts from Ellen's development conference, own translation)

Olivia further points out that she feels confident asking the teacher questions or bringing up issues herself, if need be. Her high educational level in combination with her being raised in the Swedish education system and Ellen's 'smooth' schooling situation seem to add to her comfort of interacting with the teachers.

4.2.5 Ingrid

Ingrid[32] is Swedish and has an educational and professional background as primary school teacher. At the time of data collection, she was working as a lecturer at a Swedish university and lived in an area located in the southern part of Stockholm along with her spouse and their two daughters. Her husband is also Swedish and a teacher. Her daughters, Maria and Anna, were enrolled in a municipal school in their neighbourhood; Maria was in grade

[32] Ingrid (M, +, NF, SWE[2], 2, 2)

two and three while Anna was in the preparatory class and grade one in the first and second interview, respectively.

Technical vs. personalised communication with parents

Ingrid describes her contact with her children's teachers as sporadic and distant. She particularly mentions that the communication usually is one-way, from school to parents, and in the form of emails and newsletters revolving mainly around information about practical things such as lunch bags, holidays and the like. Ingrid feels that the school intentionally keeps parents at a distance, something that according to her becomes apparent the moment one enters the school premises:

> I experience that in school in general and in my children's school in particular there is a big gap, like an operation hall, one must not come in. It is the school-world and you feel it in the hallway. (…) As I experience it as a parent, they (teachers) have talked to each other as to how to work with or against parents. This is how I interpret it. They will collaborate, in fact, as stated in the school curriculum, but they won't be open. I think it is quite strict, based on policy, that they'll keep parents short. We inform them and that's it. (Ingrid, parent, own translation)

According to Ingrid, even though teachers fulfil the requirements of collaboration as stated in the school curriculum, she feels that their relationship is rather distant. In specific, she wishes that teachers took on a more welcoming and inviting approach towards parents, one that does not only focus on general things about the school but also on specific things about one's child.

Ingrid feels that the type of information she gets often is generic and lacks input on her child:

> We get to know what they want us to do, like "practice this, this is the homework", but I miss this kind of small talk about my child or my child's class. Like, "this is what happened or we need this". I do not get this from school. When I do, it is from the after school programme (…) We rather go around what we already know (in the development conference): "this is what we know, this is what she needs to practice" and then we sign and go home. (Ingrid, parent, own translation)

Drawing upon the quotation above, Ingrid strives for a *personalised* rather than a *technical* teacher approach, one that is not only limited to material and practical things like clothes, lunch bags and holidays, but one that provides a holistic picture of her children's schooling experience. In this line of thought, Vincent (2012) stresses the need for more discursive parent–teacher meetings

where teachers do not merely report students' test results but give feedback that fully positions the child within the school.

Having a background in teaching, Ingrid builds on her past experiences and argues that she and her colleagues always have been keen on chatting with the parents and developing a closer relationship. The section below delves deeper into the way Ingrid's parental role intersects with her teacher role.

The double role of being a parent and a teacher

Ingrid shared a negative experience of her encounter with a teacher of Maria's class. As she explained, Ingrid requested a meeting with the teacher to discuss homework tasks which, according to her, were not adjusted to the individual's level and needs. Ingrid further explained that the teacher came to the meeting along with two other teachers, something that caught her by surprise:

> I felt that I wasn't listened to, not taken seriously. Because she knew that I am a teacher, she might have thought that I'd try to impose my opinion, which wasn't my intention. I just wanted to talk and listen. On the one hand, I understand that she needed protection in a way, they are three and I am one, but a dialogue should be equal, right? (Ingrid, parent, own translation)

In addition, Ingrid described an incident related to her younger child, Anna. As she explained, because Anna was not happy at school, they had regular meetings with the school management to follow up on the situation. According to Ingrid, the first couple of meetings were held by the principal without Anna's teacher being present:

> So, after two meetings I asked why isn't the teacher here? You decide but it is the teacher who has daily contact with my child. And then the teacher came in as well. (Ingrid, parent, own translation)

The examples above suggest that Ingrid's teacher habitus intersects with and informs her parental habitus; a process that results in the acquisition of a 'school-like' type of cultural capital. In specific, her sense of self-entitlement in her encounters with school can be attributed to her high educational capital and to the way this type of capital is situated in the field of schooling. Based on her professional knowledge of the school system and terminology, Ingrid is in a position to call the teachers to meetings and make requests.

In addition, Ingrid mentions that she works hard to keep a balance between her teacher and parental role in school-related parenting practices. In particular, she claims that she wants to be a good collaboration partner who does

not impose her professional opinion on teachers. However, she thinks that she sometimes knows better what decisions to make for her child:

> I am the parent and I get to decide over my child. Even though they (teachers) don't do crazy or wrong things, I can sometimes see at home…for example, my daughter says, "I have to do this task but why?" because she already knows it. So, I will ask my child and if she says she wants to do it, then okay but if she says she doesn't want to, then I will write a note (to the teacher). (Ingrid, parent, own translation)

There are parallels here with Calarco (2014) who found that middle-class parents in her study saw themselves as equally or sometimes more qualified than teachers, and did not hesitate to write notes to excuse their children from homework. Similarly, Ingrid takes the initiative to write notes whenever her daughter does not wish to do a particular homework exercise.

To add to this, Ingrid's cultural capital is further boosted by the overall family capital since her husband and father are teachers, too. As Ingrid mentions, the family has professional knowledge of schooling and the children are nurtured with certain values, such as being encouraged to pose questions, discuss, and negotiate. Ingrid gives an example of how Maria did not dare to tell the teacher that she wanted to eat her breakfast an hour later than scheduled.

> I asked her why she didn't want to tell the teacher and she said that she doesn't want to, so we went together and I said "my child wonders if…". Because I want to show my children how important it is to learn to speak up for themselves and if they can't do it, I am there to protect them and be their spokesperson. (Ingrid, parent, own translation)

The excerpt above relates to what Bourdieu has described as the domestic transmission of cultural capital into the education field (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984; 1996a). Children who acquire a primary habitus that goes in line with the dominant doxa in later socialisation processes, i.e. in their interactions with didactic institutions, are more likely to gain social advantages in their educational and professional trajectories. This in turn leads to the reproduction of the family's cultural capital. Similarly, Ingrid's family teaches the children how to negotiate with institutional agents and claim resources and accommodations.[33]

Nevertheless, Ingrid says that despite her negotiations, it is the school that makes the final decisions. She says in particular:

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[33] In parallel with Lareau's *concerted cultivation* (2011) and Calarco's (2014) *by any means problem-solving*.

> I back off and give up. It is the school that decides and evaluates. (Ingrid, parent, own translation)

Even though Ingrid manages to cause 'micro-changes', e.g. requesting the presence of Anna's teacher in the meeting and writing notes to the teacher, parent–teacher interactions are held according to institutional standards, e.g. the teacher being accompanied by other teachers. In Bourdieu's line of thought, the primal state of doxa is protected through the reproduction of the dominant discourses in the field of schooling that situates professionals in a dominant position with the symbolic power to reject parents' opposing views.

4.2.6 Andreas

Andreas[34] is Swedish and a single father of two daughters, Helena and Katrin. Andreas is an engineer and at the time of the interview, he was working as client manager at a company in the private sector. The family lived in central Stockholm and Katrin was enrolled in grade 8 of an independent school located in an area nearby. Helena was enrolled in senior high school at the time. I first interviewed Andreas and then observed Katrin's development conference with Vicky,[35] Katrin's teacher, who also was Helena's former teacher.

Andreas' family struggles and the school as a back-up

Andreas disclosed that he got divorced due to his ex-spouse's substance abuse problem. As Andreas describes, he has been through a tough process of trials and investigations and has experienced discrimination by authorities who have not listened to his side of the story. The situation changed when he switched to new investigators who, according to Andreas, listened to him and his children and he eventually managed to get full custody. The whole process lasted about five years and Andreas mentions that the school stood up for him several times.

> The school helped as soon as this family centre needed to do investigations and interviews and they stood up for me. They called me and informed me whenever the mother wouldn't come to pick up the children and stuff. The school stood up for me so many times in a very stable way so it has been a great help. The teacher and the principal have done more than one can expect, more than other institutions. (Andreas, parent, own translation)

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[34] Andreas (F, +, SPF, SWE, 2, 8)

[35] See Chapter 3, section 3.3, "Participants and contextual information".

Bourdieu (1990b) makes a distinction between 'being heard' and 'being listened to'. Other parents in the study experience that teachers do not listen to their concerns. In this case, Andreas experienced the same situation in his interactions with other institutions, i.e. the family centre, where he thought that the first inspectors did not listen to him.

When it comes to his interactions with the school, however, Andreas feels that he has received great support and says that he would not have been able to cope with the hardships otherwise. In particular, he talked about Vicky's and the principal's support as well as the importance of going in line with school values:

> If I compare Vicky and the principal to the business sector, they're like bam, bam, bam. The other teachers don't have the same management style. (…) Teachers know that they have to carry school values with them. And if they do, they can work in line with the school and have the principal's support. (Andreas, parent, own translation)

In previous sections of this chapter, Bourdieu's concept of doxa is mainly used in relation to parents' limited space to express their concerns and affect school practices. Nevertheless, there are instances when there is a match between doxa and one's habitus. Andreas is one of the parents who is completely satisfied with the school and thinks that the teachers should follow the school's values in order to get the necessary support in their work.

Teachers' support with children's health problems and learning difficulties

Andreas further disclosed that the family's problems had an impact on the children's health, especially Helena's. He mentions that when Helena was in junior high school, she got depression, anorexia and a diagnosis for dyslexia. Vicky, who was her teacher at the time, effectively handled the situation, according to Andreas:

> During this period with Helena's depression and anorexia, Vicky called me in and I had no choice, she led the meeting like, bam, bam, bam and we made a plan to follow through. (…) There were many times I couldn't cope with the situation. It was the teacher who said go and check if Helena has anorexia and I talked to the psychologist and filled out a form. Helena had a serious incident…she got low pulse and the school stood up 100%, the teacher was a great back-up. (Andreas, parent, own translation)

Andreas further points out that Katrin recently got a diagnosis for dyslexia too, but this time the process was much easier because Andreas had already

been through it with his older daughter. Despite his children's school difficulties, Andreas has a positive experience of the type and amount of support that he has received from the school and has developed a close relationship with the teacher.

In the development conference that I observed, Vicky and Andreas complemented each other in helping Katrin manage her schedule. Katrin was at the time struggling to balance schoolwork and leisure time.

> Katrin: It's been a bit hard to plan my time. I need more hours during the day.
> Andreas: You are disciplined yourself but you have a sister who is extremely good at planning and I told you to talk to her and you maybe thought I was joking but I seriously meant it.
> Katrin: Okay, so I'll waste even more time in planning.
> Vicky: The time you think you're going to waste in planning, you'll gain it back in many different ways. If you take 15 minutes at the end of each week to plan for the next one, it will give you much more focus the whole next week.
>
> (…)
>
> V: One needs to have a balanced goal because you also have to read in Swedish.
> K: Yes, but if I read in school, I don't have to read even more at home.
> A: Ah but you have to read more than others! You have a diagnosis!
> K: But it's hard. I don't have the time. That's the problem!
> A: Yes, but I think it's good to have a balance. Watch films a bit less and read a bit more and then it's perfect.
> V: Sometimes you can listen to books instead, in order to find this balance. (…) Because it might feel a bit easier, although it's good to also read to see how the words are spelled but listening can be a good thing too.
>
> (…)
>
> K: There's so much to do. I feel like I also want to live my life!
> A: You have to find a balance. It doesn't work otherwise. And that's why you have to learn how to find the balance. If you have a plan, then you get time for friends and for things you want to do.
> V: And it is like that. Life is like that. Sometimes, there are things you have to do and then there are things that you want to do and you need to find a balance because you don't always get to do what you want to do.
>
> (excerpts from Katrin's development conference, own translation)

In the excerpt above, Andreas contributed with his parental opinion while Vicky gave her professional feedback on the points of discussion. At the end of the meeting, they all set up a plan and Katrin seemed to be pleased with

it. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, Bourdieu contends that people who share similar lifestyles are more likely to share similar characteristics in their habitus. Andreas and Vicky are both Swedish with university education and have known each other for many years as Vicky has been both Helena's and Katrin's teacher. The similar features in Andreas' and Vicky's socialisation processes when it comes to the sociocultural context of their upbringing and educational capital as well as Vicky's insight into the family's life conditions might have contributed to Andreas' positive experience of collaboration and to the development of joint strategies to tackle the children's difficulties.

4.2.7 David

David[36] is Swedish and has two sons, Axel and Joel. David is divorced and he and his ex-spouse are equally engaged in the children's upbringing. At the time of the interview, David was working as a study counsellor. The family lived in a southern suburban area of Stockholm and his sons' school was located in a nearby area. Axel was enrolled in grade seven and Joel in grade two.

Teachers' professionalism and student support

David shared his views on the teacher's role in student support and collaboration with parents. According to him, it all depends on being lucky enough to get a professional teacher regardless of school context. He specifically argues:

> In my opinion, a professional teacher is one who is knowledgeable and knows how important it is to be close to the students, one who knows how things work in school, and how we (parents and teachers) can work together. I don't think it's professional when they go into emotions a lot and say "this is what you parents should do, this is not good", they go into evaluating…the professional ones have a feel for the context, they appreciate us (parents) and see the bigger picture. (David, parent, own translation)

David further elaborates on his arguments above by giving examples of Joel's and Axel's teachers. Joel's teacher is one that fits David's image of the professional teacher. As he claims, the teacher is good, supportive and constantly follows up on the goals that they set in the development conferences. David also feels that Joel's needs are being addressed and that there is always room for discussion in their meetings.

[36] David (F, +, SPF, SWE, 2, 7 & 2)

However, the situation with Axel's teacher is different. Axel faces some behavioural challenges and the school is about to investigate the issue after years of teachers pushing the problem on to the next grade, as David claims. According to him, one reason why they are in this situation is that the teachers have not reached out to him and his ex-spouse. David further stresses the importance of teachers asking for help whenever there are problems.

A professional teacher for David is one who supports the students in all stages of their schooling, as in Joel's case, and one who immediately identifies and addresses problems in students' learning or behaviour, which is something that did not happen for Axel.

In general, David observes that financial reasons in a sense determine the amount and type of help that the students receive. He specifically points out:

> I think the school world functions as if one would build a house and apply for grants. Not so much for the children's best but rather for the teachers' best and for whatever creates more resources, and this is what's happening with all these investigations (for diagnosis). My experience says that it has much to do with finances. It's hard to receive good education in a gym- or music-class with 30 children. And then they pass it on to the parents. That we are the ones who haven't properly raised our children. (David, parent, own translation)

Even though David initially mentioned that getting a good teacher does not depend on the school context, his last quotation shows that it does play a role. This is because teachers do not make decisions exclusively out of their own preferences since the school has laid out a certain space of opportunities and 'free' decision-making for them; one example is that the resources that the school offers determine the amount of help the teachers can offer.

School 'template' on parental involvement

David mainly focused on Axel's schooling situation and shared his experience of the school's communication model in their encounters. He specifically mentions:

> Whenever I contact the principal, they have an advanced 'template', one that the school management follows about how one should communicate with parents. They listen, they understand, but if you say "no, I don't think this is enough", when you don't agree with them, then they change their conversation model, they become uncertain. They say, "I hear you", but they don't listen. (David, parent, own translation)

Again, here David's description connects to Bourdieu's (1990b) distinction between 'being heard' and 'being listened to'. In particular, David mentions that the encounters with school negatively impact his and his son's self-esteem:

> The teachers called at home a couple of times and said that we need to talk to him (Axel). What I tell them is that if we talk to him, we create bad conscience, guilt…that the fault is on me because it is on the school after all. So, we need to work together in this case. How does the school decide that it is only us parents who need to educate our children? It doesn't help because it creates guilt and shame. One's self-esteem is not good (…) We realised that the school places much responsibility on the parents in a very unstructured way, not like "this is how we do it together" but "this is what you must do." (David, parent, own translation)

David feels that the school tends to lecture the parents and blame them for their parenting whenever problems arise. This situation fits well with parents' *proto-professionalisation* or *pedagogicalisation*.[37] Parents are 'educated' to adjust their parenting styles to established principles of child-rearing and schooling. Those who do to correspond to this picture are blamed for not passing the 'right' values on to their children.

Moreover, David's feelings of guilt and low self-esteem may link to what scholars have described as *emotional capital*.[38] In particular, drawing upon her research Reay (2004) illustrates that the generation of emotional capital becomes apparent in mothers' efforts to be close to their children while fathers remain at a distance. David's case however shows that he as a father also possesses emotional capital, as he puts efforts into remaining involved in his children's schooling because of either frustration or empathy. David specifically mentions that he is the one who has the main responsibility for dealing with Axel's school and helping out with the difficulties that he is facing while his ex-spouse is mainly responsible for Joel's schooling.

Furthermore, although David says that he feels less confident in his encounters with school, he still manages to convey a sense of self-entitlement that can be attributed to his educational and professional background:

> I have noticed that the teachers do not discuss things with each other. One teacher says "it's a disaster" and another says "we're working on it". I listen first and then I say "thank you, it's tough, but how much do you talk to the

[37] Börjesson & Palmblad (2003), Popkewitz (2003); see also Chapter 1, section 1.3.1, subsection on "Being good in the neoliberal era".

[38] For example, Reay, 2004. See also Chapter 1, section 1.3.2, subsection on "Parents and gender".

> principal? How much do you talk to the mentor?" (…) I am actually quite aware of what to ask and demand. The student-counselling programme has so much about conversation methods and we have been trained in holding these kinds of talks for almost our whole education. (David, parent, own translation)

David relies on his habitus, i.e. past experiences and professional knowledge, to gain certain advantages in his interactions with teachers. As in Ingrid's case, this is not only a result of his educational capital but also of the way this capital is situated in the field of schooling. David possesses knowledge of the 'inner' workings of the school with respect to relevant language and dynamics, which enables him to navigate the parent–teacher encounters with greater ease and to negotiate resources for his son.

4.2.8 Robert

Robert[39] is Swedish and together with his spouse, who also is Swedish, he has three daughters. Robert has technical training as construction worker and is further educated in information technology (IT). At the time of the interview, he worked as IT-technician at a hospital and the family lived in a northern suburb of Stockholm. His younger daughter, Kristine, was in grade 5 while his older daughters were in grade 8 of a municipal school in the area. In addition to the interview with Robert, I observed Kristine's development conference with her teacher, Amalia.[40]

Student support within a decaying school system

Robert talked about the Swedish education system and the struggles that the students and the teachers face to meet the requirements of an increasingly demanding school curriculum. In particular, he argues that today's school has deteriorated in terms of quality and that the current curriculum leaves little space for student support. He further adds that these demands have changed the role of the teacher, who nowadays needs to juggle between teaching and a variety of other tasks, such as meetings, documentation and different kinds of preparations.

Robert gave an example of his daughters' school where they decided to cut homework assistance out of the budget, following the municipality's guidelines. Although the teachers now offer some assistance on top of their working hours, Robert, as a member of the parent council, urges the school to take the matter under serious reconsideration.

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[39]Robert (F, +/–, NF, SWE[2], 3, 5 & 8)

[40] See Chapter 3, section 3.3, "Participants and contextual information".

> I wish they invested a bit more in homework assistance. They had it before and I brought up the issue because I see that the more they grow up, the more they need homework assistance. So, instead of having to do it at home, they can go there and do it (…) There are students who are more introvert and don't dare to raise their hands or say or ask. Kristine doesn't want to raise her hand. But if there is homework assistance, these students can get help. (Robert, parent, own translation)

Moreover, Robert believes that the school should reconsider the way they distribute their resources and suggests that they should spend less on IT and invest more in other areas, e.g. homework assistance.

> And then it's also that they invest huge amounts of money in IT. It's okay to learn with a pencil, books and paper. I don't even remember when the last time was that I saw my children writing with a pen. Now everything works with apps but it is nice to write, too. (Robert, parent, own translation)

Robert's statement stands in contrast to his occupational status. Even though he works in the IT-sector, he would prefer if the students learned in a more traditional way. In fact, Robert several times drew upon his past experiences to make comparisons between today's schooling and his days as a student.

Based on his descriptions, it is apparent that the teachers are expected to follow the school's and the municipality's policies that decide which areas they need to focus on and which they can pay less attention to. Consequently, the teachers only manage to make modifications within the system by sacrificing their own personal time, e.g. by offering homework assistance outside of their ordinary working hours.

Communicating issues at the development conference

In the meeting that I observed between Kristine, Robert and Amalia, Robert tried to negotiate some of the aforementioned issues. Specifically, part of the talk focused on homework and the use of computers.

> Amalia: The homework will be on the computer where I send links to the tasks. For some, it is easier to do the multiplication tables on paper but for most of them it will be through computers.
> Robert: Because for some tasks, it's easier to see how it goes when you write on paper and make notes in the tables.
> A: Yes, that's true. But this week, only some of them will get the computers and we will mostly work in the book.
> R: Is this something new for the class? To take the computers home?

A: Yeah, last year's 5th graders didn't do so well. (…) Because everyone wants to take them home but they have to take care of them as well…

(…)

R: I read some notes regarding computers on the school's website and it was a bit unclear when the school is supposed to replace a computer or when the parents should do it.
A: Yeah, this is something the students asked me too. (…) I also feel it was a bit unclear. There was a lot of text.
R: Yeah and the content was like…aha.
A: I'm going to check with the principal.

(excerpt from Kristine's development conference, own translation)

Building upon the excerpt above, Robert expressed his doubts to Amalia regarding the use of computers for homework and managed to get her to talk to the principal about the existing rules. Although change of the school practices requires time and investments of symbolic capital, Robert seems to have challenged the 'rules of the game' since he brought up issues that are only considered legitimate in other forums, i.e. a parent evening or meetings of the parent council.

4.2.9 Heleni

Heleni[41] is Swedish and she has two children, one daughter from a previous marriage and one son with her current husband, also Swedish. Heleni had been working as a hairdresser for over 20 years but at the time of the interview, she had started pursuing a career in the nursing-assistant sector and was doing her practice in a hospital. The family lived in a suburban area west of Stockholm. Heleni's son, Christos, was in grade one of a municipal school located relatively close to their area and her daughter, Dimitra, was in senior high school.

Experiencing positive collaboration

Heleni thinks that teachers today are often afraid of students and do not apply any discipline in the classroom. She observes though that Christos' teacher has all the characteristics of an efficient teacher which, according to

[41] Heleni (M, +/–, NF, SWE2, 2, 1)

her, refer to being moderately strict, a problem-solver and a good communicator.

As far as matters of discipline are concerned, she mentions:

> The teacher is nice, she is young. When I first met her, I was like "aha, she is kind and sweet", but then I saw that she is also strict, which is good because she should be. She is like, "get your book and get in the class". My daughter also had a teacher who was a bit older, she was very kind and sweet but she was strict and the children were like, "oh no, she's scary!" but everybody loved her. (Heleni, parent, own translation)

Heleni also points out that Christos' teacher takes initiatives and even offers her assistance in things that are outside of her work duties. She specifically gave an example of Christos' mother-tongue classes.

> There was a specific time when my son should have gone to the classroom but he forgot and he went in late and it happened quite a few times and I was like, "he is very young, he doesn't know when it's time to go". So, I brought it up and the teacher said that it's not her area but she helped us. She found a solution and I thought it was very important. (Heleni, parent, own translation)

Furthermore, Heleni experiences that the teacher is effective with respect to communication with parents. She is satisfied with the information that she gets about Christos' progress and appreciates that the teacher makes use of different communication channels; emails, notes, the school's online platform, phone calls and development conferences. Heleni was especially pleased with the teacher's input in the last development conference where she presented Christos' work throughout the term and showed the progress that he has made. Heleni thought that this was really important because one as a parent might not notice their child's development in such detail.

Her experiences come in contrast to those of parents who wished to get more information and feedback on their children. Heleni's current relationship with Christos' teacher points to a match between her habitus and the school doxa.

A 'lagom' parent–teacher relationship

Heleni outlines the picture of an ideal parent–teacher relationship and says that it should be 'lagom', i.e. 'just the right amount'.

> The ideal parent–teacher relationship is having a little bit of everything, like the one I have now. I think that one as a parent cannot expect and demand

> that the teacher will immediately find a solution or that they will answer emails at once. But it's good to get an answer. I don't necessarily need to get an answer to my question right away but something like, "oh yes, I am going to check and I'll get back to you". This is enough for me. It means that you saw my question. (Heleni, parent, own translation)

Heleni further made a comparison to the relationship that she had with Dimitra's primary school, which was much different than the one that she currently has in Christos' school.

> There was a totally different relationship. It was very tight knit between parents, teachers and all students. (…) We had parent–teacher meetings once a month and we were like a family and the children felt safe. (…) But I wouldn't have the same time today, if it was my son's school for example. (Heleni, parent, own translation)

Heleni also added that she used to be more flexible with her job and it was easier to engage in a more intensive relationship with the school. The different conditions in her current situation, i.e. the shift in her career and studies, would not allow a more active involvement. This example shows the transformative character of habitus that might over time change one's conditions and expectations of collaboration with school, and involvement in one's children's schooling.

4.2.10 Olga

Olga[42] migrated to Sweden five years ago along with her spouse and their two children, Alexander and Amelia. Her spouse had previously migrated to Olga's home country where they met. Olga explained that they decided to move to Sweden because of the racism they had been experiencing in her country and mentioned that they did not want their children to experience it too. When they first came to Sweden, Olga worked for a cleaning company until she learned some Swedish and found a job at a hair salon. At the time of the interview, Olga had recently opened her own hair salon in their neighbourhood while her husband, although educated as a social worker, worked at an inventory company due to his lack of Swedish skills. The family lived in an area in the southern part of Stockholm and their children were enrolled in a municipal school in the area, Alexander in grade three and Amelia in grade one.

[42] Olga (M, –, NF, IMM2, 2, 3 & 1)

The struggle to (re)act to potential injustice

Olga explored aspects of Swedish society and school by drawing comparisons between Sweden and her home country. Specifically, Olga observed that the teachers are friendlier in Sweden and do not get annoyed whenever she happens to drop off her children a bit late in the mornings. Nevertheless, even though she stated that she generally felt safe leaving her children at school, she made reference to a few instances in which she experienced that teachers discriminated against her children.

> I asked the teacher once, "why do you write that my daughter doesn't eat pork?". They thought she is Muslim because she is dark-skinned and I asked her to change it and she was like "hmm". (Olga, parent, own translation)

The teacher's answer seems to have turned down Olga's effort to accomplish dialogue in this particular case. Olga further mentioned that she feels that the teachers had not been treating her and her son the same as Swedish families:

> I think they (teachers) don't have the same approach as with Swedish parents. Especially with my son. Sometimes they call and say that my son did something but when something happens to him, they forget to let me know. Sometimes I think they blame him because he is not Swedish. But I'm not 100% sure. It just feels that way. (Olga, parent, own translation)

As Olga mentioned, she is attentive towards potential discriminatory practices and wants to protect her children from experiencing something similar. However, her limited resources in terms of cultural capital do not let her confront the teachers in the form of a discussion or argument, something that links to what Bourdieu (1999) calls *small suffering*. In this case, small suffering refers to Olga being aware of the possible injustice towards her children but not being able to react due to lack of the 'necessary capital', i.e. Swedish language skills and insight into the Swedish schooling culture.

Taking care of children's schooling as a non-Swedish speaking family

A point that Olga brought up many times in the interview concerns her limited language skills in Swedish, which stand as a barrier in her interactions with teachers:

> The language. That I cannot speak very well so sometimes I don't understand what they mean. (…) I don't like talking to the teacher actually. I don't know. Maybe because I'm not Swedish and I'm not sure what they think of me or

> my children. I'm also a bit shy. Everyone is kind but when I have to ask something, I'm thinking "oh my, why do I have to ask?" (Olga, parent, own translation)

Olga does not point to any similar feelings at her job, e.g. talking to customers, but specifically at school. The lack of linguistic and cultural capital in regard to schooling perhaps adds to her struggle when interacting with the teachers. Despite her lack of confidence, however, she makes efforts to ensure her children's safety at school. For instance, she made reference to an incident with Alexander's teachers from the after school programme:

> My son has once said (to the teachers) that my mum said it's fine to go home and they said okay, without calling me. He can leave school whenever he wants and I told them that they have to call me. They said okay but it happened a few times that they haven't called. That's why I remind them every morning that today I want him to stay until that time and after that, he can go home. (Olga, parent, own translation)

In addition, language is also an issue with respect to the distribution of school-related responsibilities at home. Olga mentions that she has full responsibility for her children's schooling since her husband does not speak Swedish:

> I do almost everything and my husband helps with my daughter's homework because it still is easy. But he once helped my son and it was a disaster! (Olga, parent, own translation)

As Bourdieu contends, linguistic capital is associated with symbolic capital, which is "inseparable from the speaker's position in the social structure" (1977b: 647). The family's low linguistic and, thus, symbolic capital affects Olga's current positioning in the parent–teacher encounter. However, Olga might over time expand and accumulate her resources by acquiring deeper knowledge of the dynamics in the field of schooling and by applying the experiences she gains from Alexander to Amelia.

4.2.11 Nora

Nora[43] came as a migrant to Sweden 19 years ago along with her spouse at the time, with whom she has six children. Nora is now a single mother and solely responsible for her children's upbringing since her ex-spouse has moved back to their home country. At the time of the interview, the family

[43] Nora (M, –, SPF, IMM, 6, 6 & 1)

lived in a southern suburb of Stockholm where Nora runs her own hair salon. Two of her children, Arya and Roza, were enrolled in an independent school located in the area in grades six and one, respectively. Her son Dilsad was in the first grade of senior high school while the rest of her children were older.

Parenting school-age children as single, immigrant mother in Sweden

Nora mentions that she is fully responsible for the family's household, the children's schooling and dealing with the hardships that come along the way since her ex-husband only visits them twice per year. In specific, Nora stated that Dilsad was dealing with learning difficulties when he was in primary school and the investigations showed that he only had language problems, as he was fluent neither in Swedish nor in his mother tongue. However, Nora believes that Dilsad's problems were caused by her when she was pregnant due to the problematic relationship with the children's father.

> I was almost separated from my ex-husband and he was in my belly and I had problems and he got everything…from the belly. (Nora, parent, own translation)

Nora's guilt for Dilsad's past problems accentuates her feeling of responsibility towards her children. Her experience opens up for a discussion regarding motherhood and mothers' involvement in children's lives. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, Bourdieu (2001) highlights the central role of the mother in the family that fulfils a "cathartic and quasi-therapeutic function" (:77). Moreover, Reay (2004) points to the plethora of investments that mothers make to address children's needs. In this case, Nora makes double investments as she is not only in charge of her own responsibilities as a mother but also of the responsibilities that her ex-husband would normally have had, had he stayed present in the children's lives.

In addition, Nora mentions that she works the biggest part of the day while her children contribute to the household; a practice that shares similarities to what Lareau (2011) calls *the accomplishment of natural growth* or what Nelson (2010) calls *parenting with limits*. However, Nora's parenting style does not wholly fit these profiles. While Nelson (2010) found that the studied working-class parents used to set strict rules for their children and impose consequences whenever these rules were violated, Nora described a different approach. In specific, she shared an example of her daughter, Arya, who was caught with notes during a test at school:

> I don't know why she did it. She cries whenever we talk about it. You know, if you feel you are a good student and you do something wrong…she cries. And I promise, when she cries I do too (…) I hugged her and bought her

> things and I said, "it's fine, we all make mistakes". (Nora, parent, own translation)

As this excerpt shows, instead of scolding or punishing her daughter for her (alleged) misbehaviour, Nora comforted her and explained that everyone has the right to make mistakes. Nora's descriptions are in parallel with research on migrant mothers' kin work in the public and private spheres, which includes mothers' engagement with social cohesion, contribution to children's educational work, and caring strategies such as giving their children time and intimacy (Reynolds, Erel, & Kaptani, 2018; Roll Bennet, 2018).

Learning through the teachers

Nora expresses her gratitude for her children's teachers and the help that she has received over the years:

> I feel that the teacher is like a second mum for my children, I promise. She looks after them, more than I do because I work all the time and they are very close. And the girls love their teachers, you know, like we all did as children. The teacher means something. (Nora, parent, own translation)

Bouakaz (2007) in his study found that parents showed a material trust in school, i.e. an appreciation of the material help that today's schools provide to their children, something they did not receive when they were students themselves. Based on this material trust, parents tended to delegate all school-related responsibilities to the teachers. In Nora's case, however, it seems that the trust that she shows is more than a material one; she characterises the teachers as second mothers to her children who take care of them more than she does since she lacks the time to be as involved as she would like to.

In addition, Nora mentions that her social contacts (in the neighbourhood, at work, with other school parents) are with people from a similar linguistic and cultural background as hers. Based on her descriptions, it is apparent that Nora's strongest connection to the Swedish schooling culture and society is through her children's teachers:

> Children in Sweden don't have respect. Swedish children are maybe kinder. I have six children, I don't live with my family but if my brother says something, I listen to him. Here in Sweden, children are strong. They can say no (…) The teachers in my son's school called me at home. The problem is that he (Dilsad) is nice and the girls love him and they throw papers to him but he doesn't like it. When this happened, the teachers said that the girls are a disaster (…) Girls are worse than boys in Sweden. (Nora, parent, own translation)

The quotation above points to two things; first, Nora's views are based on a different cultural context than the Swedish one. Her view, "Children in Sweden don't have respect. Swedish children are kinder" can be attributed to her limited social capital with respect to her interaction in Swedish social circles. Second, her children's teachers apparently shape her view of the Swedish school, or her parental habitus in Sweden. The teachers said, "the girls are a disaster" and Nora then says: "Girls are worse than boys in Sweden". As Calarco (2014) contends, working-class parents are less familiar with the contemporary structure of schooling and rely on their own experiences as a guide. Nora partly relies on her primary habitus, i.e. experiences of how she was raised as a child, and partly on the input that she gets from her children's teachers.

4.2.12 Commonalities

Although the parents' stories above differ in various respects, there are common themes that came up in the interviews. In this section, I present their joint views with regards to the different types of parental involvement in their children's school and their contact with other school parents.

School-oriented and own-child-oriented involvement

The first theme connects to parents' involvement in school, which is divided into two types: *school-oriented* and *own-child-oriented* involvement. The former has a collective character and refers to parents being active members of the school's PTA/parent council, volunteering as parent representatives for the children's class, and organising different types of activities such as flea markets, school dances, day trips and the like. The latter is mostly individual and concerns parents who participate in activities that are exclusively related to their own children's schooling, such as development conferences, parent evenings and other events that pertain to relevant information about their own children and their class.

Lena (M, +, NF, IMM[2], 2, 4) is one of the parents who has been more collectively involved; she was class representative for Chung's class in grade four and as she mentioned, her role was to communicate parents' concerns to the principal, and circulate relevant information regarding homework, school policies and the Swedish education system. However, Lena decided not to volunteer as parent representative in grade five because she feels that the parents do not have the power to bring about any actual change. She brought up an example about school renovation that is constantly postponed due to neighbours' complaints:

> The parent representatives suggested to do something to help but then the school doesn't seem to want any involvement from us. So, in some way if there is a change in school, I don't think being a class representative will make any difference because they don't want the help. (…) So, within the class it's okay but outside the class we don't have the power to change anything. (Lena, parent)

Conversely, Robert (F, +/–, NF, SWE[2], 3, 5 & 8), who also belongs to the school-oriented type of involvement, believes that being a class representative does have an effect on school change. He mentions in particular:

> There is a parent council and parent meetings so we are united and there is a chance to accomplish something instead of going one by one. (…) It doesn't have to be a big change but our children enrolled in this school almost directly after it first opened and we can see that things got better. (Robert, parent, own translation)

Another parent who has been collectively involved is Heleni (M, +/–, NF, SWE[2], 2, 1). She was actively involved when her daughter Dimitra was in primary school. The main reason for her high involvement is that the school created the conditions for it. As she pointed out, the school organised monthly parent meetings up until junior high school where the parents worked on different school projects, such as Christmas celebrations. This created a feeling of togetherness and a will to keep working toward the same goal; to create a safe and fun environment for the children.

Other parents, such as Ingrid (M, +, NF, SWE[2], 2, 2) and Andreas (F, +, SPF, SWE, 2, 8), are not eager to participate in the aforementioned types of activities, but they have found alternative ways to also be collectively involved. Specifically, Ingrid takes part in the so-called 'night-walks', a project financed by the municipality where the parents walk around the neighbourhood in the evenings to ensure teenagers' safety. Additionally, Andreas has volunteered as a basketball trainer for the girls in Helena's class as an attempt to help them control their aggression after a fight that took place in the school.

The parents' descriptions above show that parents and teachers do not only negotiate children's schooling at an individual level, but at a collective level as well. In Bourdieu's line of thought, parents engage in practices of orthodoxy and heterodoxy that either go in line with or aim at transforming the school doxa.

In contrast, David's (F, +, SPF, SWE, 2, 7 & 2) and Viktor's (F, +, NF, SWE, 2, 1) involvement is close to the *own-child-oriented* type. According to them, it

is important to be involved in their children's schooling, but not necessarily in their school.

David argues:

> For me, involvement means being engaged in my sons, like how it goes for them. But I am not very involved in the school, I'm not. I am rather involved in my sons' schooling. What *they* need. It's very important for them to know that they have adults that can support them. (David, parent, own translation)

Similarly, Viktor contends:

> I'm actually not very involved in my child's school. I participate in meetings and development conferences but I am not involved in anything in particular. Involvement is important to see that my child did her homework, but it is not related to collaboration with the school. (Viktor, parent, own translation)

The findings show that the parents' reasons for involvement vary; Lena sees it as an opportunity to get more acquainted to the Swedish education system and support other international parents in doing so; Robert believes that a united parent group has the power to improve the school; Ingrid and Andreas are interested in alternative ways of involvement, such as night-walks and training; David strives to gain as many resources as possible for his children; while Viktor thinks that involvement relates to monitoring the student's learning at home.

Moreover, the rest of the parents[44] did not make any particular statements about their type of involvement, but they all assume responsibility for their children's schooling. Specifically, they participate in development conferences and parent meetings and they monitor their children's homework and progress at home.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the contemporary form of schooling entails a certain image of the 'good' parent and certain expectations of parental involvement. All parents in the study try to correspond to that image, either by being collectively or individually involved. Nevertheless, the conditions for their involvement are not equal. Parents who have lower educational and/or cultural capital in relation to the dynamics of the Swedish schooling culture struggle, and sometimes cannot bring themselves to negotiate their involvement in children's schooling. Parents with higher educational and/or cultural capital can get involved more easily and sometimes

[44] Sofia (M, +, NF, IMM, 2, 5 & 1), Olivia (M, +, NF, SWE², 2, 1), Olga (M, –, NF, IMM², 2, 3 & 1), Nora (M, –, SPF, IMM, 6, 6 & 1)

intervene in school practices, although this does not necessarily lead to radical change of the school doxa.

The other parents

Another common theme among the parents is their reasoning about other parents in their children's schools. In particular, some talked about how other parents put pressure on the teachers by asking too many questions, while others pointed to a feeling of exclusion from the school's parent circles.

To begin with, almost all parents described themselves as positively involved, i.e. acquiring the 'right' amount of involvement in contrast to others who, according to them, tend to ask too many questions and sometimes try to impose their opinions on teachers.

In specific, Olivia comments:

> I listen to other parents we hang out with and they have many opinions about the school. I don't have that many. Maybe because I set low standards or maybe because they have different backgrounds and they didn't grow up in the Swedish system. My husband and I are used to our parents' involvement when there wasn't much more than the 'quarter-meeting'. (Olivia, parent, own translation)

Heleni and Andreas similarly pick up on the point of parents putting too much pressure on teachers, something that they have noticed themselves in parent meetings:

> I've noticed at a parent meeting that there were so many questions, so many things that didn't work and I was like, "oh my, they cannot solve everything!". (Heleni, parent, own translation)

> They come up with their opinions. If there is a problem then yes, we should do something about it but if they just have opinions, they only take time from the teacher and the teacher gets locked in this situation. (Andreas, parent, own translation)

In contrast, David believes that all parents in his sons' school strive for a positive collaboration:

> We know there are many parents who impose high standards on teachers, like "my child will get this grade", but we as parents (in this school) talk about creating something so it doesn't become "us and them". (David, parent, own translation)

Based on the descriptions above, it is apparent that parents contemplate the 'ideal' home–school collaboration by comparing their involvement to other parents' involvement in school. According to them, one needs to find a balance between parents' right to an opinion and teachers' decision-making over their children's schooling.

In addition, cultural differences also play a role in parents' experiences of involvement. In particular, Lena talked about an existing debate about homework in Chung's school:

> Like every time you go to parent meetings, the Swedish class would say the children have too much homework and the international class would say they don't have enough homework. And the parents from the Swedish class say that if the other parents want more homework, then maybe their philosophy doesn't fit the school and they should find another school. (Lena, parent)

Lena's quote shows that parents negotiate the 'best' teacher practice for their children. This negotiation does not only occur between home and school but also between different parent groups. Drawing upon Lena, parents from the Swedish-speaking track acquire a type of social and cultural capital that gives them the 'upper-hand' in their negotiations with parents from the English-speaking track.

Parents gave additional examples of how cultural differences affect their experience of schooling in Sweden. For instance, Sofia makes reference to different ways of socialising with other parents in Sweden and her home country:

> What happens in (home country) is that one creates a relationship with other parents, they pick up the children and they go to the park nearby. It is much more spontaneous, like "oh we are here, let's go to the park". Here, one has to plan, which is good, but you have to plan three weeks in advance. (Sofia, parent, own translation)

Sofia's different sociocultural context of upbringing has an impact on her social capital and the way she forms her social networks in the new country. In connection to that, Olga and Lena point to feelings of exclusion from Swedish social circles. In particular, Olga comments on her contact with parents in her son's networks:

> I only meet them when they invite us to some child's birthday party. Other than that, I have some contact with parents from Alexander's football team. But when we go somewhere with the team, I see that they are all together and we are not with them. They try to talk to us but because it's only us who aren't

> Swedish, so they are together and we are in our corner. It doesn't feel equal. (Olga, parent, own translation)

Moreover, Lena's feeling of exclusion stems from the school's unequal distribution of information between Swedish and international parents:

> The Swedish parents seem to know and they organise activities like cakes and things like that but as a foreign parent I don't know. There is no one to tell us and we don't even know how to ask and I have asked as a parent representative if we can sell cakes at one of the events and they said, "oh no it's only for certain years" (…) There are a lot of unwritten rules. (Lena, parent)

The situation that Lena describes goes back to the type of cultural capital imprinted in the school, which gives more power to certain groups and less power to others. This in turn has implications for one's social capital, i.e. the possibility to access certain social circles. Although Lena is an active member of the international parent network, she does not have access to Swedish networks and therefore lacks input on the dynamics of the Swedish schooling culture.

Parents' descriptions in previous sections have pointed to a 'us and them' divide between home and school. This divide concerns cases when parents felt that the school lectures them on how to properly raise their children or when the school did not listen to their concerns. This section shows that the divide also can occur between different parent groups. Parents compete over legitimate knowledge of the 'ideal' home–school collaboration and the 'best' teacher practices. Parents with high cultural capital sometimes impose this knowledge on parents with lower cultural capital and with fewer possibilities of accessing social networks that will give them insight into the dominant schooling culture. The existing tension can be traced back to the unequal conditions for involvement in the field of schooling that informs and is informed by the broader education and social field.

4.3. Summary of the findings

4.3.1 Teachers

As far as the findings on the teachers are concerned, the first part of this section consists of the following themes: a) *ideal* and *actual* parent–teacher encounters, b) a child-centred collaboration, c) the school management's presence in parent meetings and d) gains and struggles of collaboration with immigrant parents.

To begin with, teachers described how they think of the ideal parent–teacher encounter and how they actually experience it in their everyday work. The *moderately involved* parent is often described as the ideal kind and refers to parents who come to obligatory meetings, check on their children's progress and reach out to the school if need be. Although most teachers have positive experiences, they argue that collaboration is not always smooth. On the one hand, they point to *overly involved* parents who interfere in teacher practices and project their high ambitions onto their children. On the other hand, they refer to *under-involved* parents who do not follow up on their children's progress and do not attend parent evenings and development conferences. In addition, some teachers stressed the importance of delineating the teachers' and the parents' role in children's schooling in order to avoid conflicts and disagreements. They argued, however, that improvement of collaboration does not only depend on individual practices. They thought that this rather constitutes a societal question that requires investment in different kinds of resources.

Furthermore, all teachers regarded the parent–teacher encounter as child-centred. They specifically said that the purpose of home–school collaboration is to offer the best assistance possible to the student. With respect to development conferences, all teachers are in favour of student-led meetings as they thought that this structure helps the students develop their critical thinking and engage in their learning.

The teachers further made reference to the school management's presence in parent meetings. The general practice is that the school reaches an agreement about the structure and content prior to the meeting with the parents. Some teachers argued that parents tend to take things more seriously when the principal or the special educator attends the meeting while others thought that the management's presence can sometimes function as rule enforcement.

Last but not least, teachers shared experiences of collaboration with parents of foreign background and identify both advantages and disadvantages. Some observed that the students were more tolerant toward each other's differences due to their different backgrounds, while one teacher thought that their school was successful in discipline-related matters because parents of different cultural backgrounds have stricter rules and principles. The challenges that some teachers identified were language barriers and different understandings of parental involvement practices due to cultural differences. Teachers put efforts into tackling the language barrier by either booking interpreters or finding alternative ways of communicating with parents. One teacher observed that parents tended to be more active at informal occasions, such as coffee gatherings and flea markets.

The second part of the findings pertaining to the teachers focused on their varying experiences of encounters with parents. Teachers shared examples of disagreements or occasions where they had to communicate a sensitive message. During these encounters, some teachers managed to handle the situation on their own while others needed the management's or a colleague's support. In some cases, there was a turning point, i.e. a shift from negative to positive communication, while in other cases, teachers handled the situation without necessarily reaching a positive outcome. Depending on each case, they employed different collaboration practices: they invited parents to take part in school activities as a way of gaining their respect; they provided indirect support until the parent became receptive to a problem; they showed policy documents in order to justify their decision; and they set boundaries to parents' right to reach out to school.

From an analytical point of view, the experiences the teachers expressed illustrate that they continuously have to juggle between living up to school expectations of home–school collaboration processes and addressing families' varying needs by efficiently distributing school resources. In Bourdieu's terms, the existing institutional doxa creates tension between the *ideal* and the *actual* parent–teacher encounter. The teachers' view of the *moderately involved* parent as the ideal type of involvement is a result of teachers' professionalisation in the field of schooling.

Moreover, all teachers acknowledge their responsibilities with respect to children's schooling. One of them is to maintain regular communication with parents and inform them about different child-related matters. Although the parents' views of the child are valued by the teachers, it is the teachers' views that have more symbolic power as they are framed by professional documentation and terminology.

Furthermore, the structure of parent–teacher meetings points to the necessity to establish and maintain the professionals' orthodox position. This positioning is subject to monitoring and negotiation within a certain institutional framework in which teachers are expected to find solutions and make decisions. This can sometimes lead to mismatch between a teacher's habitus and the institutional expectations in the field.

In addition, teachers recognise the unequal conditions for immigrant parents' involvement in their school, e.g. lack of Swedish language skills, low educational background, negative experiences with authorities, or late working hours. Although they put efforts into facilitating home–school collaboration, they are not in a position to cause radical changes. That is because the institutional doxa has created certain demands on the teaching profession that leave little space for them to be able to offer greater support.

Finally, teachers' examples of collaboration practices showcase that they constantly negotiate the way and the extent to which parents will get involved in different school-related situations. The practices that the teachers employ derive to some extent from their individual habitus and to a great extent from a collective type of habitus, as they all are internal members of the school. The elements that seem to be important for a successful home–school collaboration are transparency, patience, understanding and mutual respect.

4.3.2 Parents

With respect to the findings on parents, the first part of the section presented each parent's story separately. Although parents in general had positive experiences of collaboration, they pointed to problematic areas with regards to the teachers' role in their children's schooling and their expectations of home–school collaboration. Parents shared experiences that varied depending on their background, family structure and children's schooling situation.

In specific, some parents struggled to become acquainted with the Swedish schooling culture, which sometimes led to misunderstandings and disagreements between home and school. Other parents felt that the school blamed them for their children's learning difficulties and alleged misbehaviour, which induced guilt and created a discouraging atmosphere. In addition, some parents wished that the teachers took on a more *comprehensive* approach to the provision of feedback on students' progress, while some of them preferred teacher-led development conferences with focus on the professionals' point

of view. Finally, there were parents who only experienced positive collaboration with their children's school and were satisfied with the type of assistance offered to address the family's/student's needs.

The second part of the section presented parents' common views. The themes that have been identified are a) *school-oriented* and *own-child oriented* involvement and b) the *other* parents.

The *school-oriented* involvement referred to parents who were members of the school's PTA, volunteered as parent representatives and organised school activities. Conversely, parents that took on the *own-child-oriented* approach tended to participate in activities that were exclusively related to their own child's schooling, such as e.g. development conferences or homework monitoring/assistance. There were also parents who did not say anything in particular about their type of involvement but they all assumed responsibility for their children's schooling. The findings showed that the reasons for parents' involvement, either collectively or individually, are rather mixed; it can be an opportunity to become acquainted with the Swedish education system or to bring about changes in the school practices; and it can also be a way of gaining resources for one's child or monitoring the child's progress at home.

In addition, some parents characterised themselves as positively involved whilst they observed that other parents in their children's schools tended to put a lot of pressure on the teachers. These parents believed that one needs to find a balance between getting involved and letting the professionals be in charge of educational matters. Furthermore, parents of a foreign background sometimes felt excluded from Swedish parent circles due to limited Swedish language skills or knowledge of the school dynamics in Sweden. This sometimes led to debates between Swedish and international parents, or affected the way one socialised with other school parents in the new country.

From an analytical point of view, the parents' habitus affected their experiences of the parent–teacher encounter, expectations of home–school collaboration and child-rearing practices. In general, parents who possessed high levels of education tended to feel more comfortable in their interactions with the school than less educated parents. The parents who had a professional background relevant to the education sector, i.e. teacher or student counsellor, had deeper knowledge of the inner workings of the school and knew how to negotiate with the teachers. That is probably due to the way their educational capital is situated in the field of schooling.

In contrast, parents who were not Swedish lacked the cultural capital with respect to the Swedish schooling culture. The highly educated parents, although familiar with the school in general, sometimes struggled to understand teacher practices. As for the less educated parents, one parent could not bring herself to express her concerns to the teachers, while another parent only learned about the school and Swedish society through the teachers due to her lack of social capital, i.e. contact with other Swedish networks.

In addition, the findings showed that there sometimes was a mismatch and other times a match between a parent's habitus and the school doxa. Parents either tried to challenge the doxa due to situations that troubled them or complied with the school norms. The match or mismatch between doxa and habitus may have been influenced by one's background, family and/or student situation as well as the school context.

Finally, parents' descriptions depict that the competition over legitimate knowledge of the child and the 'best' teacher practice can lead to a divide both between home and school and between different parent groups. Parents with high cultural capital sometimes imposed their knowledge on less resourceful parents who had fewer possibilities of accessing social networks that would give them insight into the dominant schooling culture. The existing tension can be traced back to the unequal conditions for involvement in the field of schooling that inform and are informed by the broader education and social field. What seemed to encourage the accomplishment of a successful collaboration and parental involvement were openness, trust and engagement in the student.

5. Reconstructing the social practice

The purpose of this chapter is, first, to synthesise the study's findings (5.1, 5.2 & 5.3) by continuing the analytical discussion of the previous chapter and, second, to conduct an evaluation of the empirical inquiry by discussing methodological implications (5.4).

Let us begin by returning to the central research questions of the thesis:

1. How do parents and teachers utilise their social and cultural resources in their encounters?
2. How can certain resources function as *forms of capital* in relation to different practices in the field?
3. What practices do teachers and parents employ to preserve and/or subvert their relative positions?

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the parent–teacher encounter is viewed as a social practice, which in Bourdieusian terms refers to the interplay between the subjective and the objective structures of a given field. Following this line of thought, the first two sections of the chapter (5.1 & 5.2) are concerned with the subjective dimension of the social practice in the sense that they focus on individuals' habitus and capital. Here, I develop the discussion by giving specific examples from the study's findings. The third section of the chapter connects to the objective dimension of the social practice as it focuses on the way individuals' dispositions are enacted in the schooling field. At this point, I include a more general discussion.

Moreover, each section relates to one of the research questions. Section 5.1 addresses the first research question. Here, I place the main focus of the discussion on the parents as they comprise a more heterogeneous group in terms of sociocultural resources. The themes in this section concern the way in which parents negotiate what they see as necessary for a successful collaboration with the school. At the end of the section, I further discuss how the teachers in the study position themselves in relation to the aforementioned negotiations.

Section 5.2 relates to the second research question. Here, I look at how the parents' sociocultural resources may evolve into forms of capital in different school- and student-related situations. In particular, I introduce the concept of *parental school capital* and analyse four components that add to its formation: *educational capital, sociocultural context of upbringing, family dynamics* and *student's schooling situation*. I first discuss each of the components and then, how they intersect with each other to inform parental school capital.

Finally, section 5.3 addresses the third research question. In this section, I discuss how parents and teachers position themselves in the schooling field and how they 'play the game' by engaging in processes of orthodoxy and heterodoxy to reproduce or challenge the school doxa.

5.1. Negotiating prerequisites for a successful collaboration

When describing their prerequisites for a successful collaboration, the parents and teachers refer to openness, transparency, trust, mutual respect, patience and engagement in the student. In the following sections, these prerequisites are summarised and discussed under three main categories: a *personalised* encounter, a *diversified* encounter and a *trusting* encounter.

Based on parents' and teachers' descriptions, the negotiation of the aforementioned encounters revolves around three process dimensions: relationship, information exchange and involvement (Carlhed, 2003).[45] In specific, the participants in this study strived for a closer relationship; parents desired more in-depth feedback from the teachers, and teachers wanted moderate involvement from the parents. These points are developed in detail below and as mentioned before, the focus is placed on the parents.

5.1.1 A *personalised* encounter

As the study's findings show, it is apparent that many parents wish that teachers took on a more *personalised* approach in terms of the home–school relationship and provision of feedback on students' academic and social development. In this section, I discuss whether and, if so, how parents negotiate and claim this approach.

[45] In Carlhed (2003), these dimensions are discussed in relation to family-oriented services in early childhood intervention, but they apply to the school context as well.

To begin with, a wish for a more personalised approach is evident in the case where Lena's (M, +, NF, IMM[2], 2, 4)[46] son, Chung, spoke up about a bullying incident. According to her, the parents in his class became concerned and requested more information from the school. Lena utilised her position as parent representative and asked for input from the teacher. However, as Lena described, the teacher rejected her request by telling her that they had already dealt with the issue. The reason was that the school had certain policies that the teachers needed to follow to handle this type of situations. This incident can be seen as part of the "universe of the undiscussed" (Bourdieu, 1977a); Lena was denied access because her involvement deviated from the school's 'normal' practices of handling this type of situation.

In addition, Viktor's (F, +, NF, SWE, 2, 1) view of a personalised encounter does not revolve around his relationship with the teacher, but around the type of feedback that he gets regarding his daughter, Alicia. In the development conference that I observed, Viktor obtained more professional feedback from the teacher, Petra, by utilising his linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977b). Viktor negotiated his need of professional feedback, and the teacher reciprocated by giving detailed information on Alicia's progress. In other words, Viktor brought his arguments to the surface, or into "the universe of discourse" (Bourdieu, 1977a), and challenged the existing doxa, since the teacher is usually in charge of the development conferences.

Furthermore, Ingrid (M, +, NF, SWE[2], 2, 2) pointed to a personalised approach when she argued that teachers should not only focus on general and practical things but also on more personal information about one's child. Ingrid's negotiation practices fit well with what Bourdieu called the domestic transmission of cultural capital into the education field;[47] children through their primary socialisation at home gain resources that they later can utilise in their interactions with didactic institutions. In this case, Ingrid monitored her daughters' development and taught them how to negotiate with professionals to claim certain accommodations in their schooling.

Moreover, Sofia's (M, +, NF, IMM, 2, 5 & 1) wish for a personalised encounter was apparent when she emphasised that the teachers' input on her daughters was sporadic and *too* positive. Although she made attempts to initiate informal conversations with the teachers to talk about her children, the little space that she was given in their interactions discouraged her from explicitly expressing her concerns. Sofia's descriptions connect to Lareau (2011) who contends that parents appear to have an uneven ability to customise their

[46] Mother, high educational level, Nuclear Family, Immigrant (both mother and spouse), 2 children, older child in grade 4.

[47] See Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984; 1996a.

interactions with institutions and persuade the professionals to comply with their wishes (:364).

Additionally, Olivia (M, +, NF, SWE², 2, 1) also revealed a wish for a personalised approach when she pointed out that she would have preferred her relationship with the school to be more like the preschool's pedagogical model where parents and teachers meet on a regular basis. However, Olivia did not demand more frequent contact from the teachers but rather felt responsible for creating a closer relationship. In the development conference that I observed, Olivia listened to the teacher's feedback and supplemented it with comments that encouraged her work with Ellen's development.

Last but not least, Heleni's (M, +/–, NF, SWE², 2, 1) view of a personalised encounter points to the transformative character of habitus, which in this case refers to Heleni's view of the 'right' amount of involvement in school. She used to be in favour of an intensive involvement with school, but now she prefers to be only moderately involved. This change can be explained by the demands of her new professional career that present an obstacle to increased engagement in school activities.

5.1.2 A *diversified* encounter

The study's findings show that the parent–teacher encounter is a *diversified* one. The reason is that the families have varying backgrounds, life conditions and experiences. In this section, I discuss whether and, if so, how the parents negotiate different kinds of needs depending on the families'/students' backgrounds.

To begin with, Lena asked the teacher for his opinion about her approach of helping Chung improve his Swedish. Based on her descriptions, Lena's child-rearing practices seemed to correspond to Lareau's (2011) *concerted cultivation*, a parenting style that is considered to be in line with the dominant view of 'proper' parenting. Nevertheless, Chung's teacher did not approve of it. He rather suggested enrolment in alternative extracurricular activities that would help Chung improve his language skills. Despite Lena's initial negative reaction, she considered following the teacher's recommendation. This example shows that the teacher's view has higher symbolic power. As the professional one in this encounter, his knowledge is regarded as more legitimate.

Furthermore, David's (F, +, SPF, SWE, 2, 7 & 2) main concerns revolved around the type of assistance that the school offered to his son Axel. David engaged in a symbolic battle with the school where he attempted to claim

certain resources for his son. The way his educational capital was situated in the field of schooling enabled him to make requests and even question the teachers about their methods. In particular, he used the knowledge that he gained from his educational and professional background as a study counsellor to negotiate with institutional actors such as his son's teachers, special educators and the school management.

Moreover, Andreas (F, +, SPF, SWE, 2, 8) had to support his daughters with their health problems and learning difficulties. Despite his negative experience with other institutions, Andreas thought that his children's teacher, Vicky, as well as the school principal fully addressed their needs over the years. In the development conference that I observed, Andreas' and Vicky's views of the best way to help Katrin achieve her goals aligned. This might be explained by the similar features in their habitus and Vicky's insight into the family's life-situation.

In addition, Olga (M, –, NF, IMM^2, 2, 3 & 1) stated that she struggled to pose questions and confront the teachers in situations that troubled her due to her limited linguistic capital and knowledge of the school's expectations of her involvement. Olga's descriptions link to what Bourdieu (1999) calls *small suffering*; wanting to talk but being unable to do so due to lack of legitimate capital in a given field.

5.1.3 A *trusting* encounter

Drawing upon the study's findings, it is apparent that parents regard the notion of *trust* as a crucial component of home–school collaboration. In this section, I discuss the ways in which the parents experience (mis)trust in their encounters with the school and how they position themselves in that respect.

To begin with, David experienced mistrust towards the school due to the way they had been handling his older son's difficulties. His mistrust did not concern a particular teacher but was mainly directed to the school as an institution. As pointed out by Broady (1981), teachers follow certain institutional expectations that are reproduced in their everyday practice. Building upon David's case, these expectations might not always allow teachers to adequately address all students' needs, which can sometimes lead to conflicts and mistrust between home and school.

In addition, Viktor pointed out that he felt safe with Alicia's school because it reminded him of his own school as a student. His view connects to Vincent (2012) who illustrates that Bourdieu's concept of habitus would position *trust*

in deeply embedded dispositions that have been produced through socialisation. Viktor's own schooling experiences are part of his dispositions and add to his trust in Alicia's school. Drawing upon the views he expressed, his trust was 'shaken' when Alicia's former teacher did not inform him about the level of noise in the classroom. Viktor rather expected a more professional approach, which for him meant being informed about the issue by the teacher and not his daughter.

Moreover, Ingrid's mistrust was evident when her daughter's teacher was accompanied by two colleagues at a meeting that she requested. Ingrid thought that the teacher brought the colleagues for 'protection' because of her teacher background. The intersection of Ingrid's parent habitus with her teacher habitus might have been regarded as a threat to the teachers' professionalism. As a result, they presented themselves as a homogeneous unit to maintain their dominant position in the field.

As for Olivia, she was one of the parents who emphasised the importance of trusting the professionals. Specifically, Olivia mentioned that she trusted that the teacher gave her relevant information about Ellen's progress. Although there were aspects of the Swedish philosophy of schooling that according to her, might improve, she did not see any reason to intervene in teacher practices as long as things went smoothly in her daughter's schooling.

In addition, Robert's (F, +/–, NF, SWE[2], 3, 5 & 8) approach regarding trust was similar to David's. Robert was satisfied with Kristine's class teacher but was critical towards the education system. Drawing upon his experiences, the current school curriculum and the way the resources were distributed in this specific school burdened the teachers, who had to sacrifice time outside of their ordinary working hours to help out the students. They further burdened the parents who had to find ways to support their children with homework; a kind of support that was sometimes taken for granted by institutional actors.

Furthermore, the views Olga expressed show that her trust in the teachers was disturbed due to a series of incidents. In specific, she noticed that the teachers sometimes made assumptions about the family's religion and tended to blame her son because of his immigrant background. Olga's descriptions are in parallel with Bunar (2001; 2015), who depicts how immigrant parents' group identity tends to be laden with negative representations that often lead to stigmatisation and misunderstandings between home and school.

In contrast to Olga's experiences, Nora (M, –, SPF, IMM, 6, 6 & 1) expressed great trust in the teachers. Specifically, she regarded them as more competent

in taking care of her children due to her limited ability to help out with schoolwork and long working hours. As Lareau (2011) contends, less resourceful parents tend to seek guidance from teachers rather than giving advice. Nora utilised the teachers' guidance to expand her knowledge on the Swedish school and society.

5.1.4 Teachers' positioning

Based on the analysis of the results on the teachers, it is apparent that they also employ practices that relate to parents' views of a personalised, a diversified and a trusting encounter.

The teachers' view of a personalised approach is evident when they describe home–school collaboration in terms of a child-oriented one. For instance, Vicky regarded collaboration as a bridge where the school gets an insight into how the student is doing at home whilst the parents are informed about how the student is doing at school. Ingela further mentioned that she was willing to dedicate a big part of her working hours and private time to collaborating with parents who showed interest in their children's schooling by e.g. initiating contact with her to request more homework tasks. Another example is when Anton reasoned about the parents' and the teachers' role in development conferences, which was to help guide the students in their own learning. According to the teachers, bonding between home and school often has positive outcomes in terms of students' performance and sense of security.

Nevertheless, although the teachers stressed the importance of a child-centred and personalised collaboration, they thought that one needs to delineate parents' and teachers' different roles in children's schooling. In specific, Maya suggested that parents cannot expect teachers to take on the role of the parent, while Vicky argued that when it comes to discipline, it is the parents who really can set boundaries and enforce rules on their children. Moreover, Petra recognised the parents' right to question school practices but at the same time, she emphasised the importance of their professionalism, i.e. letting the teachers do their work. As showcased in the previous chapter, it is not only the parents who negotiate their involvement in their children's schooling, but also the teachers who negotiate the way and the extent to which parents will get involved.

In relation to the diversified approach, the teachers acknowledged the families' varying needs in their respective schools. These needs stemmed from e.g. the student's schooling situation or the family's background and life con-

ditions. In specific, the teachers made reference to different types of collective and individual practices that they had been employing to address these needs.

With respect to immigrant parents who did not speak Swedish, Amalia mentioned that she tended to book interpreters to be able to convey information in an accurate way. Ingela on the other hand sometimes had to find alternative ways of communicating with them as some got offended by the presence of an interpreter. Additionally, Pia observed that immigrant parents were more likely to participate in informal activities and for that reason, the school organised coffee gatherings and other types of events of an informal character. On a general note, the teachers stated that they frequently had to remind the parents of the importance of home–school collaboration because according to them, many of the parents were not familiar with the values of the Swedish school. In a similar vein, Bunar (2011) found that the studied teachers thought that collaboration would improve if they got parents to become acquainted with the school's mission.

Furthermore, the diversified approach also relates to cases where the teachers had to communicate a sensitive message to the parents. Their strategy was to respect the student's specific needs. For instance, Ingela guided the parents until they became receptive to a problem, while Petra and Pia avoided contacting parents with an accusatory attitude as this usually led to a 'locked' situation. Pia further added that she tended to get informed about the families' life conditions and adjusted her practices to them.

The teachers also argued that a working relationship with parents is built upon trust. Although they encouraged the parents to pose questions, they at the same time stressed that the parents needed to trust their expertise. Some teachers also gave examples of how they worked to gain parents' trust. For instance, Anton invited a student's parents to take part in school practices in an attempt to show transparency and eventually gain their trust and respect. At the same time, Anton might have experienced parents' questioning of his methods as mistrust on their end. Furthermore, Ingela avoided lecturing parents on the 'proper' assistance that they needed to offer to their children until the parents acknowledged the problem on their own. This way, Ingela felt that she was gaining parents' trust and that they then could start collaborating 'on good terms'.

The discussion in this section reflects the previously mentioned contrast between the parents' varying views/experiences and the teachers' more homogeneous ones. Parents' experiences vary according to their sociocultural re-

sources, which inform their type of involvement and positioning in their interactions with the school. Some parents made requests and claimed accommodations from the teachers by mobilising resources in terms of cultural, educational and social capital; others made attempts to negotiate, but not in a way that led to the desired result; and some of the parents chose to take on a neutral stance, as they were satisfied with the type of collaboration they had with their children's teachers.

In contrast, although the teachers applied some individual practices depending on different student- and parent-related situations, these were informed by a collective type of habitus. For instance, they were all in favour of a personalised encounter, but not *too* personalised; parents needed to acknowledge the professionals' authority. As Bæck (2010) illustrates, teachers' persistence in their professionalism reveals an act of orthodoxy that aims at maintaining their dominant position in the schooling field. At the same time, the teachers however recognised the unequal conditions for involvement among different parent groups and problematised the conditions of their own professionalism. Nevertheless, the limited time and resources available in the field prevented them from challenging institutional expectations. This sometimes led to friction and mistrust between home and school.[48]

5.2. The notion of parental school capital

The discussion in the preceding section showed that all parents in the study to a lesser or greater extent utilise their sociocultural resources in their interactions with the school. However, there are only certain resources that may evolve into capital; this happens when they facilitate parents' interactions with institutional agents, i.e. the educating personnel and the school management.

Drawing upon Bourdieu, the activation of parents' resources in the field of schooling leads to the formation of a certain type of capital that I name *parental school capital.* Parental school capital is embedded in one's habitus and can be regarded as a form of symbolic capital since it connects to resources that are situated in the field of schooling. These resources give parents a certain power in their negotiation with institutional actors. Based on the study's findings, parental school capital is informed by the intersection of four components: *educational capital, sociocultural context of upbringing, family dynamics* and

[48] I will expand on these points in section 5.3.

student's schooling situation. I will first discuss the effects of these components separately and then discuss how they intersect with one another.

5.2.1 Educational capital

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the concept of educational capital connects to cultural capital and its institutionalised state and in the thesis, is used to explore how it may influence parents' positioning and their sense of self-assurance in their interactions with institutional actors. Lidegran (2009), also drawing upon Bourdieu, suggests that educational capital refers to the possession of resources that are recognised as valuable in the field and gives insight into the way individuals and social groups use the education system (: 11-12). Parents in the study are categorised according to their educational level, which is divided into *high* (+), *intermediate* (+/–) and *low* (–). *High* includes parents with university education, *intermediate* refers to post-secondary non-tertiary education and *low* to upper-secondary education. Although there can be differences among the higher educational levels, these have not been significant for the parents in this study.

Parents with high educational levels[49] demonstrate that they have access to educational capital by expressing confidence and self-esteem in their interactions with the school, as well as having knowledge of schooling and the education system in general. Educational capital is also shown in the anxiety and concern for their children's educational progress that parents express. An example of how educational capital is used can be found in how Lena felt confident enough to volunteer as parent representative for the class and how she was prepared to take on the responsibilities that came with this role. Nevertheless, she was also anxious about Chung's Swedish language skills and his integration in the school system. In Viktor's case, his educational capital and parental confidence are shown in the case where he did not hesitate to take control of Alicia's development conference. Viktor was worried that the lack of feedback on his daughter's potential shortcomings might be harmful for her future educational trajectory. In specific, he thought that it is the teacher's responsibility to give warnings to the parents even in the early years of schooling so that they can be alert and monitor their children's performance at home. In a similar vein, Sofia also expressed anxiety about her daughters' educational progress. Even though her children's schooling situation was smooth and stable, she stressed the need for more personal and in-depth input. Furthermore, Andreas thought that the school had more expertise in

[49] Lena, Viktor, Sofia, Andreas, Olivia, David and Ingrid.

handling his daughters' health problems and learning difficulties, and he remained confident in his interactions with the teacher. In the development conference, he was active in the discussion and urged Katrin to get organised with her school schedule and also gave her suggestions on how to do so. Finally, Olivia's views point to a different way of using educational capital. She stated that she always was prepared to initiate contact with the teacher in case she observed a change in her daughter's progress, but she did not see the need to get more intensively involved as long as things went well. Olivia's approach has parallels with what Lidegran (2009) found in her study, namely that parents in the education elite exerted an indirect influence on their children's schooling; they were well aware of their performance but they did not intervene as long as everything went smoothly.

As far as David and Ingrid are concerned, these two parents possess a type of educational capital that is well situated in the field of schooling, i.e. being a student counsellor and a teacher. Their educational and professional backgrounds equipped them with inside-knowledge of the workings of the school. In specific, David and Ingrid negotiated with their children's teachers by utilising professional terminology and different kinds of techniques related to conflict-management and problem-solving. This approach led to certain advantages in terms of resources and accommodations for their children.

It is important to emphasise that all parents, regardless of educational level, assumed responsibility for their children's schooling and had high aspirations for their future educational paths. The difference that educational capital made was that the parents with a high level of education expressed more opinions about the 'best' practice for student support and were more assertive in their negotiations with the school. Parents with low educational background[50] gave the educators greater freedom, either because they trusted their expertise or because they were not confident enough to express their concerns to them. Parents with an intermediate level of education[51] are rather mixed; Robert engaged in a collective type of involvement as parent representative with the hope of influencing school change, whereas Heleni did not have the time to get involved as much as she used to in her daughter's school but she initiated contact with her son's teacher when needed.

The discussion about educational capital connects to previous literature on parental involvement and social class. Parents with educational capital tend to navigate the system with great ease because their values and actions are

[50] Nora and Olga.

[51] Robert and Heleni.

associated with a middle-class standard that is dominant in today's educational market and is shared by institutional actors. Specifically, the educational marketplace allows the middle classes to utilise their cultural, social and economic capital to replicate their habitus and secure advantages for their children (Reay, 2002; 2010a; Calarco, 2014; 2018). The working classes on the other hand need to transform their habitus to match school values and they even have to protect themselves and their children from the stigma of educational failure (ibid.).

5.2.2 Sociocultural context of upbringing

Another component that informs parental school capital is the sociocultural context of upbringing. Parents who grew up in the Swedish education system have more knowledge about school policy and their rights as parents. Although they may not understand all aspects of contemporary schooling, they rely on their habitus, including previous experiences as students, to make sense of today's school practices. For instance, Robert drew upon the traditional way of learning when he was a student and urged the school to invest less in IT resources and more in homework assistance. Furthermore, Olivia argued that she and her husband were used to the Swedish school philosophy and they could therefore understand and sometimes justify certain school practices. Olivia further suggested that other parents with whom she socialised might have identified problematic aspects in their children's school as they grew up with a different school system.

In fact, immigrant parents with general knowledge of schooling struggled to understand some aspects of the Swedish school. Although they possessed cultural and social capital, this capital had a different 'currency' (Vincent, 2000). For example, Lena observed that Swedish parents knew a lot about the school's unwritten rules and felt that she had to expand her social capital beyond the international group in order to get access to more information about school dynamics. Furthermore, Sofia made comparisons to her home country and highlighted the different ways of socialising with other school parents. In particular, she was used to a more spontaneous way of socialising whereas in Sweden she had to get used to new dynamics to be able to create social networks.

In addition, although Olga made comparisons to the school system of her home country to understand aspects of the Swedish school, she lacked knowledge of her rights as a school parent. Her limited language skills in Swedish also discouraged her from addressing different types of concerns.

Finally, Nora's knowledge about schooling in Sweden was based on her children's teachers. According to Nora, her social network included people from a similar linguistic and cultural background, so the only 'inside-information' about schooling was from the teachers.

Drawing upon the discussion in this section, the sociocultural context of upbringing has implications for one's position-takings in the schooling field. Parents with Swedish upbringing are more likely to relate to the school doxa due to the values that they have embodied throughout their social trajectories. As Bourdieu contends, "when habitus encounters a social world of which it is a product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 127). In this line of thought, parents with a different upbringing might feel like a 'fish out of the water' as they are not familiar with the Swedish school doxa, but familiar with a different type of doxa, i.e. different values regarding schooling. Consequently, the parents sometimes experienced a mismatch between their habitus and the values of the new natural order.

5.2.3 Family dynamics

The third component of parental school capital is family dynamics in relation to the distribution of school-related responsibilities between the parents. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Bourdieu (1996b) has described the family as a field with specific power relations among its members. In this line of thought, Atkinson (2014) suggests that the dominant/orthodox view that applies still in today's societies is that of the nuclear family. The families who belong to this category have a more advantageous position in the broader social field compared to other types of families, such as single parents, who often are portrayed as non-functioning and unsuccessful (Popkewitz, 2003).

According to the results, the family's position in the field of schooling is not always determined by the family structure but mainly by the way the parents distribute school-related responsibilities between each other. Most of the nuclear families[52] mentioned that they and their spouses equally contributed to their children's schooling. This involved homework monitoring and assistance, participation in development conferences and parent meetings as well as initiating contact with the teachers. However, this was not the case for all the nuclear families. Olga mentioned that she had to take on the main responsibility for school-related matters as her husband had limited abilities to

[52] Lena, Sofia, Ingrid, Viktor, Olivia and Heleni.

help out with homework and could not attend parent meetings because of his lack of Swedish language skills. Furthermore, Robert mentioned that due to the flexibility that his job offered, he was able to be more actively involved in school compared to his spouse.

Differences of such nature are also observed among the single-parent families. Neither Nora nor Andreas had their ex-spouses' support so they had to juggle between participating in their children's schooling and taking care of all the other aspects of their children's lives. In contrast, David and his ex-spouse distributed responsibilities equally; he was responsible for their older son's schooling while his ex-spouse had taken on the responsibility for their younger child.

The difference that the family dynamics make is that parents who contribute equally to their children's schooling are more likely to claim resources from the school, partly because of practical ease, i.e. more time to get involved, and partly because of the possibility of negotiating as a homogeneous unit. Conversely, Reay (2010b) found that working-class mothers who did not have their partner's support reported negative experiences. In this study, there were not any significant differences with regards to gender for parents who did not have their (ex-)spouse's support – there were both mothers and fathers who assumed responsibility – but there were differences in terms of socioeconomic status. Parents with economic capital possessed more resources, i.e. monetary items and time, whereas parents with a weak socioeconomic situation had to dedicate the biggest part of their days to work, which sometimes led to the delegation of child-related responsibilities to the teachers.

5.2.4 Student's schooling situation

The last component of parental school capital is the student's schooling situation. The students' social and academic development affected parents' concerns about their child and their type of involvement in school. This applied to parents of children in all school grades/of all ages. The biggest difference when it comes to age is that the younger the children were, the more frequent contact the parents had with the teachers, mostly because they dropped them off at school.

However, what is most significant is that regardless of age, parents of children with a 'smooth' schooling situation did not have to intervene beyond the ordinary. Although parents such as Viktor, Ingrid and Sofia expressed

anxieties about their children's educational progress, their stable development and positive feedback from the school did not call for any additional investments. The fact that Viktor and Ingrid negotiated in meetings with teachers seemed to be a 'natural' reaction due to their habitus rather than the result of an active decision-making process. In contrast, parents of children who dealt with learning or behavioural challenges had to make greater emotional and practical investments. For instance, David had to constantly follow up on his son's progress and make sure that the school offered proper support. In addition, although Andreas was satisfied with the teacher's help with his daughters' health problems, he still needed to get intensively involved in both school and other institutions such as family centres, medical centres and the like.

5.2.5 Intersection of the four components

As mentioned at the beginning of the section, parental school capital equips parents with symbolic power in their positioning towards the school, and is informed by the intersection of four components (see Figure 5.1 below).

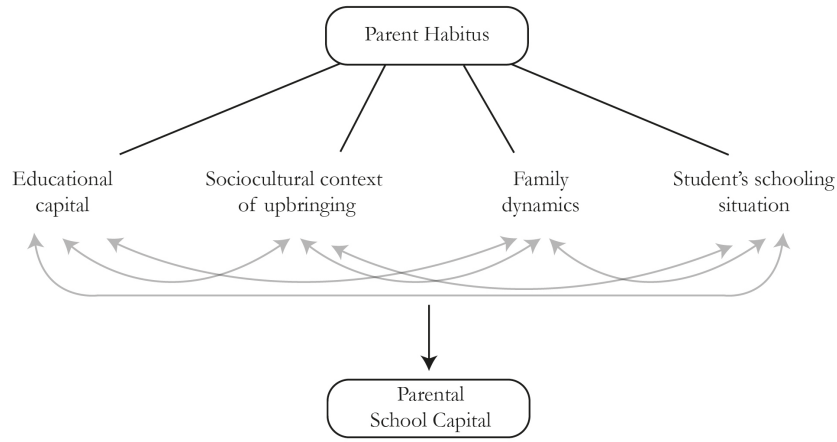

Figure 5.1 The four components of parental school capital

Educational capital and sociocultural context of upbringing are associated with a type of situated knowledge; parents with a high level of education possess general knowledge of schooling and those who are raised in Sweden have

specific knowledge of the Swedish school system. In addition, the family dynamics in relation to school-related responsibilities connect to practical ease and boost of the family capital; parents who share responsibilities have more time to engage in children's schooling and may negotiate with teachers by taking a unified stance. Finally, parents of children with a 'smooth' schooling situation need to intervene less in comparison to parents of children with difficulties, as the latter often struggle to get the proper support for their children and have to negotiate with different institutions. Most parents in the study possess at least one component that contributes positively to parental school capital and they even have the potential to expand it. According to Bourdieu,

> the strategies of a "player" and everything that defines his [*sic*] "game" are a function not only of the volume and structure of his capital *at the moment under consideration* and of the game chances (…) they guarantee him, but also of the *evolution over time* of the volume and structure of this capital, that is, of his social trajectory and of the dispositions (habitus) constituted in the prolonged relation to a definite distribution of objective chances. (Bourdieu in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 99, emphasis in the original)

In this line of thought, parental school capital is not a static but rather a dynamic construct. The results show that it has evolved through changes in the parents' habitus, e.g. life conditions, educational and professional development and experiences gained. Specifically, parents have over the years expanded their knowledge on the Swedish school system and apply the experiences gained from their older children to their younger ones. Transformations of such nature give them the potential to change their strategies in the 'game', not in a mechanically calculated way but as a natural result of these transformations.

Drawing upon the analysis in the sections above, the most powerful combination of parental school capital seems to be: high educational capital, upbringing in Sweden, shared responsibilities between parents, and a stable student performance. This combination often leads to the acquisition of certain advantages in the schooling field. The advantageous position is explained by the school-specific doxa that benefits certain families and disadvantages others. In the following section, I will expand the discussion on this last point by looking at the way parents and teachers negotiate their positions within the doxic framework.

5.3. Playing the game in the schooling field

In the sections above, I discussed how parents and teachers utilise their sociocultural resources and what types of parental resources turn into capital. Up to that point, I mainly focused on the subjective structures of the social practice, i.e. how individual habitus and dispositions inform the parent–teacher encounter. In this section, I will move on to the objective structures, i.e. how these dispositions are enacted in the field and make individuals engage in different types of practices in an attempt to maintain or subvert their relative positions.

As Bourdieu points out, a social field is a field of struggles in which agents occupy certain positions:

> the field as a structure of objective relations between positions of force undergirds and guides the strategies whereby the occupants of these positions seek, individually or collectively, to safeguard or improve their position and to impose the principle of hierarchisation most favourable to their own products. (Bourdieu in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 101)

The practices that agents employ to negotiate their positions are informed by the specific doxa in a given field. In Bourdieu's terms, doxa is regarded as the natural order that manifests itself in the form of shared beliefs and opinions. The natural order is sustained through orthodox practices and can be challenged through heterodox ones. In the schooling field, the teachers are the dominating agents as they are internal members of the school, while the parents are the dominated ones since they are external actors and comprise a more heterogeneous group in terms of capital. The study's findings show that parents and teachers engage in practices of both orthodoxy and heterodoxy to either maintain or challenge the school doxa.

5.3.1 Practices of orthodoxy

Orthodox practices often occur when the doxa works unproblematically. By unproblematically I mean that when the conditions of home–school collaboration, or the 'rules of the game', are accepted by all sides, then there is a match between the different habitus and the school-specific doxa. One example is the development conference. Building upon the findings, the conferences were organised according to standard principles regardless of school context and grade. The teachers called the families to a meeting to discuss the students' progress, and the students were asked to answer standardised questions in a form that was given to them prior to the meeting. During the

meetings, the teachers were asking the questions and the students were responding whilst the parents had a complementary role. Some parents posed questions and talked in the middle of the meeting while others waited for their turn at the end. Either way, the natural order of the development conference was not disturbed because the structure of the meeting and the given timeframe equipped the teachers with symbolic power with which they could control the issues that were raised at the conference. Although some parents expressed doubts about the teachers' feedback, they did not interfere in a way that would be uncontrollable for the teachers. Furthermore, the presence of the students seemed to sometimes work as a 'shield' for the teachers because the parents did not want to raise issues that troubled them in front of their children. In other words, there was a shared belief among the participants regarding what issues were acceptable and which ones were regarded as 'taboo'. As long as this belief was not altered, the doxa could be maintained and reproduced. This description connects to previous literature that points to existing asymmetrical relationships in institutional encounters. The professional–lay divide is produced and maintained through institutional practices that encourage teachers to present themselves with one institutional voice while parents and children tend to take on a deferential position (Markström, 2009; Ranson, Martin & Vincent, 2004).

Another example where orthodoxy is evident can be found in parents who are completely satisfied with their children's progress and school practices in relation to student support. In this case, parents acknowledged the teachers' expertise and did not see the need to be more actively involved. The teachers experienced this type of parents' positioning as freedom in the sense that they could do their job without any 'disturbances'. Indeed, the teachers encouraged the parents to raise questions but not in a way that would change the dynamics of the professional–lay divide. As a result, the doxa and the habitus worked harmoniously as long as the parents were *moderately involved*. The teachers' orthodox stance towards the parents was not necessarily a result of their own will. In order to accomplish a 'working' relationship, they had to balance the *ideal* and the *real* collaboration; the first refers to the norms and standard practices of parental involvement in the schooling field that the teachers were expected to follow, and the second concerns the reality of parental involvement that they encountered in their everyday work.

5.3.2 Instances of heterodoxy

Although the parent–teacher encounter was a doxic one, there were instances of mismatch between the school doxa and agents' habitus and actions. These

instances occurred when parents and teachers, either collectively or individually, raised problematic issues. In these cases, they employed heterodox practices to negotiate their positions and subsequently challenge the doxa. The overall negotiation of positions concerned parents' request to get access to the school's inner workings and teachers' efforts to control parents' access.

In particular, some parents problematised the provision of feedback from individual teachers or the assistance that these had been offering to their children. Parents with increased parental school capital wanted access to information, initiated contact with the teachers and demanded special accommodations. Depending on the nature of these demands, teachers either responded to their wishes or requested support from the school management to deal with the issue. Some of these issues were also extended to a collective level. The parents demanded changes either through the parent council or through their participation in parent evenings. Again, depending on the volume of these demands, the school made changes or rebuffed the requests.

In addition, the teachers problematised certain parental behaviours, especially when the parents where *too* involved or when they were not involved at all. In the first case, the teachers tended to show policy documents that were used as orthodox tools to protect their positions. In the second case, they had to remind parents of the importance of their involvement. As mentioned earlier, the doxic ideal promotes a moderate extent of parental involvement, and both overly and under-involved parents disturbed its natural course. The teachers, who were regarded as delegates of the school doxa, had to employ practices to maintain or restore its primal state (Bourdieu, 1977a).

In many cases, parents' and teachers' irritation was not directed towards each other but towards the education system. Parents acknowledged that teachers were under a lot of pressure due to the demands of today's school curriculum. At the same time, however, they tended to relate problematic experiences to individual teachers because as mentioned above, they were seen as delegates of the school doxa. Moreover, the teachers problematised the conditions of their profession in general and the conditions for parental involvement in particular. Collaboration with parents was sometimes experienced as an additional burden, not because they did not think it was important but because they did not have the means to live up to the norms of the ideal home–school collaboration. As a result, the teachers related their problems to specific groups of parents since they struggled to control their involvement to comply to the aforementioned norms.

The discussion here connects to the profiles of the 'good' parent and the 'good' teacher, endorsed in school policy within the framework of the neoliberal education system. Parents are expected to comply with the dominant patterns of 'good' parenting that are associated with affluent, native white middle-class practices. This dominant standard often ignores socioeconomic factors and assumes certain qualities of social and cultural capital (Vincent, 2000). As a consequence, families who do not have the possibility of living up to the picture of ideal parenthood are either 'brought into line' through parenting programmes or become stigmatised and segregated (Crozier, 2019). Families who fit these 'criteria' also often seem to be forced to correspond to the dominant discourse of authoritarian parenting (Cruddas, 2010). In the Swedish context, Dodillet and Christensen (2020) argue that despite the idea of *democratic parental involvement,* parental influence is limited by professional discourse that functions as a scientific instrument for effective realisation of policy (ibid.: 389-390). In a similar vein, the 'good' educators are expected to on the one hand employ practices that encourage parents' aspirations for their children's educational trajectories (Erikson, 2012), and on the other hand control the extent and character of parents' participation in school practices. What seems to be at stake with the promotion of these ideologies is the conformity of childhood to state agendas across educational systems (Mayall, 2015). Parents and teachers are expected to contribute to the creation of citizens that will perpetuate the dominant discourse. In this line of thought, parental involvement as a discursive practice fosters values that prompt actors to rather unstrategically legitimise certain discourses and disregard others (Freeman, 2004: 573). These discursive practices are rooted in the socially, culturally and historically situated natural order.

5.3.3 (Mis)match between habitus and doxa

Drawing upon the discussion in this chapter, this section summarises the logic of the social practice in relation to the parent–teacher encounter. The study's results suggest that the parent–teacher encounter is formed through practices and instances of (mis)match between individual/collective dispositions (habitus) and institutional conditions (doxa). The illustration below visualises this logic.

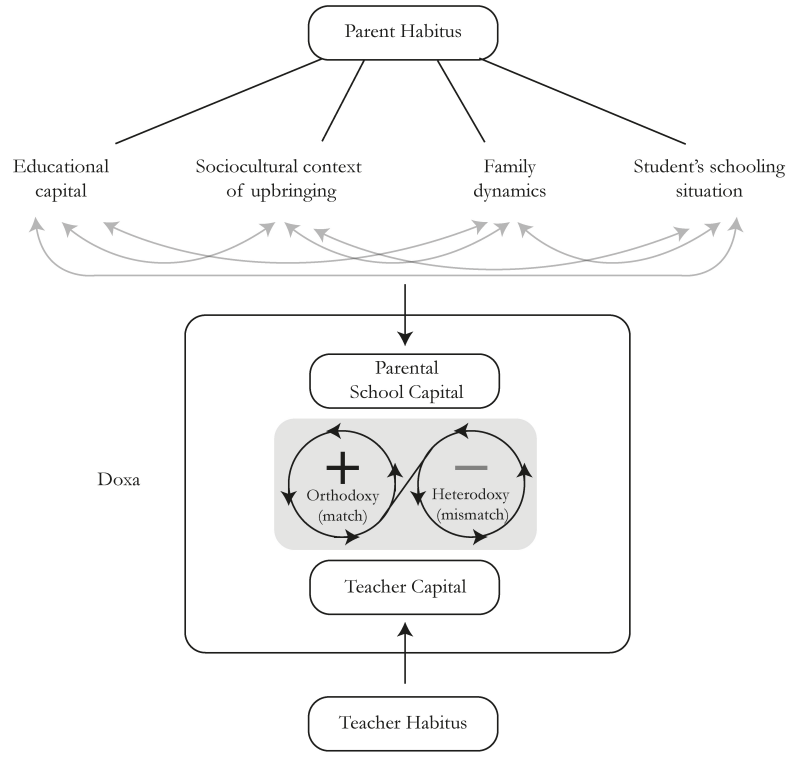

Figure 5.2 The logic of the parent–teacher encounter

Parents and teachers utilise their capital to claim or control access in the field. The volume of their capital depends on their habitus, which has been influenced by fields that are directly or indirectly connected to the schooling field, e.g. the education field, the family field and professional fields. The school-specific doxa works undisturbed when the agents comply with it and employ orthodox practices to maintain its course. However, agents can also challenge it through heretical actions, which either momentarily interrupt or even crash it. In other words, the 'rules of the game' can be reproduced or transformed through the continuous interplay between subjective and objective structures in the field.

5.4. Methodological reflections

This section addresses methodological reflections in relation to the validity and trustworthiness of the study. The main point in question when it comes to validity and trustworthiness is how one can assure "the accuracy and inclusiveness of recordings that research is based on as well as efforts to test the truthfulness of the analytic claims that are being made about those recordings" (Silverman, 2002: 201). The sections below discuss these issues in relation to a) reflexivity, b) dynamics between the researcher and the research participant, and c) use of language.

Before delving into the aforementioned points, it is worth briefly reminding of the methods of the empirical study. I have used qualitative research methods and specifically, I conducted one-on-one interviews with 11 parents and 7 teachers and I observed 4 development conferences. The participants were recruited through a *strategic* and a *snowball* approach; in the first, I got in touch with selected schools in the Stockholm urban area and in the second, I contacted different schools and parent associations, shared information about my research on social media and mobilised my social network. The interview and observation data was audio-recorded upon agreement, and then transcribed and analysed based on Lantz's (2013) model[53] for analysis of qualitative data.

5.4.1 Reflexivity

One of the central ideas that I considered in the design, implementation and analysis of the empirical inquiry is the notion of reflexivity. As mentioned in previous chapters, reflexivity in a Bourdieusian sense relates to the process of developing methodological tools that enable one to think sociologically about the researcher and the researched by moving beyond social and intellectual biases (Murphy & Costa, 2016). My own social conditions have certainly influenced my pre-understandings of the studied phenomenon, i.e. definitions of 'best' parenting and teaching practices, the 'ideal' parent–teacher collaboration and more. As a first step, these pre-understandings have allowed me to identify my research interest. As a second step though it has been important to diminish the possibility of their infiltration into the research field. According to Bourdieu (2003), one can accomplish this by being reflective in relation to the effect of the used method and the knowledge produced.

[53] See Chapter 3, section 3.5, "Data Analysis".

One way in which reflexivity was guided in this thesis was through the use of Bourdieu's conceptual tools *habitus, doxa* and *capital*; first, because they are designed to be used as 'open' concepts in relation to the empirical work and second, because the concepts themselves call for a break with orthodox language, which enabled me to be reflexive towards my own doxa of the studied social practice. Another element that facilitated reflexivity was the notion of *relationality*. By this I mean that I conducted the empirical study through an iterative process in which I constantly went back and forth between theory and data to test, (re)design and (re)apply my research instruments, such as when I conducted follow-up interviews with some research participants in order to get more information on certain points of discussion. Moreover, there were various instances of reflexivity during the process of data analysis when I had to find a balance between giving space to participants' own voices and positioning them within the theoretical and methodological framework. The application of a primary and secondary analysis based on Lantz's (2013) model helped in that respect.

Although one cannot claim that these practices have completely eliminated one's own biases during the research process, they have been essential in developing the aforementioned methodological approaches in consideration of issues of validity and trustworthiness.

5.4.2 Dynamics between the researcher and the research participants

The dynamics that unfold between the researcher and the research participants relate to both the recruitment and the data collection process. As far as recruitment is concerned, the participants in the study were partly recruited through the use of *gatekeepers* (Malone, 2003). In other words, there were third persons who acted as mediators, e.g. the school principals for the teachers and the teachers for the parents. A limitation of recruiting through gatekeepers is that it creates a form of power-relationship in which potential participants may feel obliged to take part in the study if asked by a person of higher authority. Taking this risk under consideration, I made sure to emphasise that participation in the study is voluntary in all stages of the research process. The principals further informed me that it is up to the educating personnel to decide whether they will participate or not. The same applied to the teachers who shared information about my research with the parents in their class. In addition, parents functioned as gatekeepers for their children when they were asked for their consent regarding my presence in the development conference. I again stressed the voluntary character of their participation. The reason I did not conduct observations with all the interview participants was

in fact because usually one of the three parties (parent, teacher, student) did not wish to take part in the study. The ideal scenario would have been to observe all the interviewed parents and teachers, as this would have enabled me to look closer at their position-takings during the meeting. The observation method proved to be a vulnerable element of research design as it required much time and effort to engage individuals; this needs to be taken into account in future studies.

The dynamics that evolve between a researcher and a research participant also become apparent in the interview process. Bourdieu (1999) has described interviewing as "a sort of *spiritual exercise* that, *through forgetfulness of self*, aims at a true conversion of *the way we look* at other people in the ordinary circumstances of life" (:614, emphasis in the original). An interviewer needs to understand the respondents' problems and points of view as her or his own by grasping their social conditions that are associated with their position and trajectory in the social space (ibid.: 613). In this line of thought, Bourdieu contends that the closer the social proximity between the interviewer and the respondent, the greater the chances to tackle the distortions that arise in regard to the distance between the objective of the study as interpreted by the respondent and the object assigned by the researcher (ibid.). My own positioning towards the interviewees was that of the *insider* and the *outsider* (Jahan, 2014). The insider position refers to my interaction with participants of a close social proximity in terms of e.g. educational level and also those with whom I shared similar dispositions in relation to social processes, i.e. immigration. In these cases, there was a common understanding regarding the points of discussion, or a shared doxa. The outsider position relates to instances when the respondents shared information with which I was unfamiliar, e.g. details about their children's school, their home countries and the like. The advantage of this position is that I enriched my data with unplanned and unexpected descriptions that added to my understanding of the social practice. Furthermore, although I acknowledge the dominant position of the researcher in these interactions, I made efforts to conduct the interviews through a form of active listening that balances the 'laissez-faire' of non-directive interviewing and the interventionism of the questionnaire (Bourdieu, 1999: 609). Moreover, participants had the chance to choose the location of the interviews themselves, which took place at the schools, their homes or in public spaces such as cafés and libraries. Choosing a location with which they were familiar might have added to their comfort of sharing their experiences during the interview.

The asymmetrical relationship between the researcher and the researched also applies to the observation process. In this case, my presence in the room and the recording of the meetings connoted an indirect symbolic violence in

the sense that they might have affected participants' words and actions. With this in mind, I chose to remain an impartial observer; first, so as to not disturb the 'natural' flow of the meeting, as much as this is possible, and second, because an active participation implies an excessive immersion in the context of interaction that would have hindered the close observation of actions, reactions and position-takings in the meeting.

My approach towards the recruitment and data collection process has taken into account matters of validity and trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations.

5.4.3 Use of language

One issue that I had to tackle during the research process was the language. The languages used during the empirical study were Swedish and English, depending on the participants' preference. One of the challenges that I encountered during the interviews was that I sometimes could not accurately express myself in Swedish since it is neither my mother tongue nor my second language. In those instances, I had to repeat my questions and pose them differently. Judging from the participants' answers, no further communication problems occurred since I got responses that were relevant to my questions. Another issue concerned participants who were not fluent in Swedish or English and sometimes struggled to find the right words when describing a situation. In these cases, I would ask them to elaborate on their answers by providing further explanations and examples of the incident they were describing, or I would ask my question in different words. Based on the answers that the respondents gave, communication was accomplished.

Language also played a significant role in the process of data analysis. I chose to analyse the interview and observation material in the language in which they were recorded and transcribed so that I would not neglect any important information embedded in participants' words, e.g. metaphors and expressions that would lose their meaning if directly translated to English. After the analysis, I translated the parts that I used as quotations in the reporting of the findings. Use of authorised dictionaries and consulting colleagues who are native speakers of Swedish and English helped me ensure that I translated participants' answers as accurately as possible.

5.5. Concluding remarks

This thesis has carefully examined a social practice that tends to be taken for granted, and has highlighted social aspects of schooling in regard to home–school collaboration and parental involvement. The outcome of the chosen theoretical tradition for the analysis of the parent–teacher encounter has been twofold; first, it gave voice to individuals' agency as it allowed for the exploration of their dispositions at an individual level, and second, it enabled the examination of the effects of these dispositions when enacted in the field of interaction. Moreover, the purpose of the study was not to generalise the results in a statistical sense. The intention was rather from a micro level to illustrate the heterogeneous ways in which parents and teachers are positioned and position themselves in the social practice. These positions sometimes aligned with and at other times deviated from the general patterns of teaching and parenting that are ascribed to individuals and social groups according to their cultural background, class, profession, or family structure and the like.

Furthermore, that the thesis is situated in the educational sciences certainly has implications for the field. The study depicted prerequisites for successful collaboration that revolved around notions of trust, respect, openness and transparency. The illustration of these prerequisites contributes to an increased understanding of parents' and teachers' expectations of each other and the way these expectations can be utilised to acquire deeper knowledge of each student's situation and conditions for learning. The study also pointed to inequalities that arise as a result of the institutional conditions of home–school collaboration in the schooling field. Although all parents and teachers assumed responsibility for the students and were positively inclined towards collaboration, there were significant structural factors that hindered communication. On the one hand, parents sometimes struggled to express their concerns to the teachers and claim resources, which is something that especially burdened families with limited social, cultural and economic capital. On the other hand, teachers often encountered difficulties in living up to the demands of their profession with regards to parental involvement, which led them to struggle to control parents' influence in school practices. The thesis' results resonate with previous studies that identified similar obstacles, tracing back to the early 1990s until today. This calls for increased actions to address the existing inequalities at a societal and individual level. Educational agendas may need to expand the narrow representations of 'best' parenting and teaching practices and rather acquire concrete strategies that embrace the ever-growing diversity of communities and voices in today's society. The state and, by extension, agencies that are responsible for the school sector

and parent–teacher relations, such as the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*) and the National Agency for Special Needs Education (*Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten*), might need to develop clearer guidelines and support-tools for the municipalities and the schools. The principals and the educating staff could also be offered in-service training with regards to home–school collaboration through which they would be able to expand their knowledge and expertise on the matter. Moreover, teacher education and school leadership programmes at the tertiary level could include a more thorough educational plan on home–school collaboration practices; knowledge that the school management and teachers can utilise and build upon in their professional trajectories. Furthermore, the results of the thesis showed that parents seem to expect a different approach from the professionals, sometimes of an informal and more welcoming kind. Hence, the schools may need to create both collective and individually adjusted spaces for parental involvement that correspond to the families' varying needs, backgrounds and socioeconomic conditions. The Swedish national federation Parents' Alliance (*Föräldraalliansen*) can also benefit from the study's results and spread knowledge to parent associations across the country regarding the studied parents' and teachers' expectations, obstacles and prerequisites for a successful collaboration.

Some recommendations for future inquiry in the research area are to investigate the parent–teacher encounter with more parents from diverse backgrounds, develop an understanding of the model of *parental school capital* and test whether it can be developed as a concept. Also, it is essential to explore the child's point of view and positioning; how students experience home–school collaboration and to what extent their agency is taken into account within the framework of the social practice.

Svensk sammanfattning

Titel: Föräldrarnas och lärarnas möte. *(Miss)match mellan habitus och doxa.*

Denna avhandling fokuserar på mötet mellan föräldrar och lärare i den svenska grundskolan. Avhandlingens syfte är att studera hur föräldrar och lärare upplever sitt möte och hur de förhandlar om sina positioner inom skolan med avseende på legitima kunskapspåståenden om barnet och den ideala formen av föräldrasamverkan. Syftet analyseras genom de följande forskningsfrågorna:

1. Hur använder föräldrar och lärare sina sociala och kulturella resurser i sina möten?
2. Hur kan vissa resurser fungera som kapitalformer i relation till olika praktiker inom fältet?
3. Vilka praktiker använder lärare och föräldrar för att bevara och/eller ändra sina relativa positioner i sina möten?

Forskningsobjektet studeras som en social praktik baserat på Pierre Bourdieus analytiska verktyg, dvs. *habitus, kapital* och *doxa*. Analysen bygger på en kvalitativ studie genom intervjuer med lärare och föräldrar samt observationer i utvecklingssamtal i grundskolor i Stockholm, årskurs 1–9.

Kapitel 1

I Kapitel 1 introducerade jag studieobjektet och placerade det i skolans fält. Jag hänvisade i synnerhet till sociopolitiska förändringar inom utbildningsfältet som visade att mötet mellan föräldrar och lärare är ett *doxic* objekt som följer och anpassar sig till förändrade utbildningspolitiska beslut. Lärare och föräldrar måste därför ständigt omförhandla sina positioner för att åstadkomma ett 'fungerande' samarbete. I kapitlet presenterade jag också tidigare forskning om familjer och institutioner som handlade om föräldrars delaktighet i skolan i relation till sociala variabler, dvs. klass, etnicitet och genus, samt lärarnas professionalisering i föräldraarenan och institutionella möten mellan professionella, föräldrar och elever.

Kapitel 2

I Kapitel 2 presenterade jag det teoretiska ramverket och studiens analytiska verktyg. Avhandlingen följer en *praxeologisk* logik; samspel mellan objektivitet och subjektivitet. Denna logik gäller även användningen av analytiska verktyg som i Bourdieus termer placeras i ett dialektiskt förhållande; dvs. den ena existerar inte utan den andra. Det första analytiska verktyget är *habitus*, som innefattar ett system av dispositioner som struktureras av och strukturerar individens handlingar i fältet. Agenter eller grupper av agenter vars habitus inte överensstämmer med de objektiva strukturerna för ett visst fält kan uppleva *hysteresis*; en strukturell fördröjning mellan deras dispositioner och deras förmåga att förstå vissa möjligheter i fältet. I avhandlingen använder jag habitus för att utforska hur föräldrar och lärare förlitar sig på sina positioner och dispositioner i sina upplevelser för att utveckla förståelse av deras möte. Det andra analytiska verktyget är *kapital* som hänvisar till att agenterna besitter vissa resurser som erkänns som värdefulla i fältet och i agenternas sociala interaktion. Kapital finns i tre huvudformer; ekonomiskt, socialt och kulturellt. När dessa former ges extra värde i förhållande till andra, fungerar det som symboliskt kapital. Det kulturella kapitalet är det som erkänns som värdefullt i samhället i stort medan ett specifikt symboliskt kapital kan även vara något unikt för det aktuella fältet. I avhandlingen undersöker jag hur föräldrars sociala och kulturella resurser utvecklas till former av kapital. Jag lägger huvudfokus på kulturellt kapital på grund av dess nedärvda karaktär och för att det enligt Bourdieu är mer kraftfullt och relevant för utbildningsfältet. Det tredje verktyget är *doxa* som betecknar fältets trosföreställningar och det 'naturliga sättet' att tala och agera som går i linje med fältspecifika värden. Dominanta och dominerade agenter kan upprätthålla eller utmana den naturliga ordningen genom *ortodoxa* och *heterodoxa* handlingar. Doxa i denna studie används för att utforska sociala praktiker som föräldrar och lärare använder för att förhandla om gemensamma övertygelser om föräldrasamverkan i ett försök att antingen bevara eller utmana dem.

Kapitel 3

I kapitel 3 diskuterade jag metodologiska principer som utgör grunden för den empiriska studien och presenterade de metoder som följdes för/i design, implementering och analys. Jag hänvisade också till etiska överväganden och de steg jag tog för att skydda deltagarnas integritet och identitet. Studiens deltagare rekryterades genom en *strategisk* och en *snöbolls*metod. I den första kontaktade jag skolor i utvalda områden i Stockholm för att få diversitet i mina data gällande socioekonomisk och kulturell bakgrund. I den andra kontaktade jag skolor i hela Stockholmsområdet, delade uppgifter om min studie på sociala medier, tog kontakt med föräldraföreningar och mobiliserade även

mitt sociala nätverk. Det slutliga urvalet består av elva föräldrar och sju lärare, vissa arbetar och har barn inskrivna i samma skola och andra i olika skolor. Föräldrarna skiljer sig när det gäller kulturell bakgrund, utbildningsnivå, familjestatus och erfarenheter av föräldrasamverkan. Under datainsamlingen genomförde jag individuella intervjuer med föräldrar och lärare, och med några av dem genomförde jag också uppföljningsintervjuer, och observerade även fyra utvecklingssamtal. Mina forskningsinstrument, intervju- och observationsguider, informerades av det teoretiska ramverket och av de analytiska verktygen. Jag följde i synnerhet en iterativ process i vilken jag gick 'fram och tillbaka' mellan teori och empiri. Under dataanalysen använde jag mig av Lantz (2013) modell för analys av kvalitativt data som uppmuntrade den nämnda iterativa processen.

Kapitel 4

I kapitel 4 presenterade jag och analyserade studiens resultat baserat på intervju- och observationsmaterialet. Den första delen av läraravsnittet presenterade deltagarnas åsikter under gemensamma teman. Anledningen är att lärarna i denna studie talade om föräldrar som ett *kollektiv*, dvs. de fokuserade inte på en specifik förälder men de resonerade om samarbete och föräldrarnas engagemang på mer allmänna villkor. Lärarna representerar därför homogena positioner i fältet eftersom de alla är institutionella agenter, dvs. interna medlemmar i skolan. Några av deras beskrivningar pekade dock på olika upplevelser. Dessa presenterades i andra delen av läraravsnittet där jag beskriver de samarbetsmetoder som lärarna använder för att hantera utmanande situationer i möten med föräldrar. Föräldraavsnittet följde en annan struktur. Den första delen av avsnittet presenterade varje deltagares berättelse separat eftersom jag ville visa föräldrars olika positioner i det sociala rummet i relation till deras olika bakgrund när det gäller kultur, utbildning, familjestruktur och barns skolsituation. Föräldrar delade emellertid gemensamma åsikter främst i förhållande till deras engagemang i barns skolgång, som jag presenterar i den andra delen av avsnittet, som heter *Commonalities*.

När det gäller lärarnas resultat består den första delen av avsnittet av följande teman: a) *idealt* och *faktiskt* möte mellan föräldrar och lärare, b) ett barncentrerat samarbete, c) skolledningens närvaro i föräldramöten och d) möjligheter och hinder i samarbete med föräldrar med migrantbakgrund. Lärare resonerade om det ideala mötet mellan föräldrar och lärare och hur de faktiskt upplever möten i sitt dagliga arbete. Den *lagom involverade* föräldern beskrivs ofta som den ideala vilket avser föräldrar som dyker upp i obligatoriska möten, kontrollerar sina barns utveckling och tar kontakt med skolan om det behövs. Även om de flesta lärare har positiva erfarenheter menar de att samarbete inte alltid är smidigt. Å ena sidan pekar de på *alltför involverade* föräldrar

som stör lärarnas arbete och projicerar sina höga ambitioner på sina barn. Å andra sidan hänvisar de till *för lite involverade* föräldrar som inte följer upp sina barns utveckling och inte deltar i föräldramöten och utvecklingssamtal. Dessutom betonade vissa lärare vikten av att avgränsa lärarnas och föräldrarnas roller i barns skolgång för att undvika konflikter och oenigheter. De hävdade dock att förbättring av samarbetet inte enbart beror på individuella faktorer. De trodde att detta snarare utgör en samhällsfråga som kräver investeringar i olika typer av resurser.

Dessutom betonade alla lärare den elevcentrerade karaktären av föräldrasamverkan. I synnerhet sa de att syftet med hem–skola samarbete är att erbjuda bästa möjliga hjälp till eleven. När det gäller utvecklingssamtal uppskattade alla lärare elevledda möten eftersom de trodde att denna struktur hjälper eleverna att utveckla sitt kritiska tänkande och engagera sig i sitt lärande. Lärarna hänvisade vidare till skolledningens närvaro vid föräldramöten. En allmän praxis är att skolan når en överenskommelse om struktur och innehåll innan mötet med föräldrarna. Vissa lärare hävdade att föräldrar tenderar att ta saker mer seriöst när rektor eller specialpedagog deltar i mötet medan andra trodde att ledningens närvaro ibland kan fungera som reglerande.

Sist men inte minst hade lärare liknande erfarenheter av samarbete med föräldrar med migrantbakgrund och identifierade både fördelar och nackdelar. Några observerade att eleverna var mer toleranta mot varandra på grund av deras olika bakgrund medan en lärare tyckte att deras skola var framgångsrik i disciplinrelaterade frågor eftersom föräldrar med olika kulturell bakgrund har strängare regler och principer. De utmaningar som vissa lärare identifierade var språkbarriärer och olika förståelser för föräldrarnas delaktighet i skolan på grund av kulturella skillnader. Lärare ansträngde sig för att ta itu med språkbarriären genom att antingen boka tolkar eller hitta alternativ för att kommunicera med föräldrar. En lärare observerade att föräldrar tenderade att vara mer aktiva vid icke-formella tillfällen, såsom fikasamlingar och loppmarknader.

Den andra delen av läraravsnittet fokuserade på deras skillnader och specifikt deras olika erfarenheter av möten med föräldrar. Lärarna gav exempel på oenigheter eller tillfällen där de var tvungna att förmedla ett känsligt budskap. Under dessa möten lyckades vissa lärare hantera situationen på egen hand medan andra behövde ledningens eller en kollegas stöd. I vissa fall uppstod en vändning, dvs. övergång från negativ till positiv kommunikation medan i andra fall hanterade lärarna situationen utan att nödvändigtvis nå ett positivt resultat. Beroende på varje fall använde de olika samarbetsmetoder; de bjöd in föräldrar att delta i skolaktiviteter; de gav indirekt stöd tills föräldern blev

mottaglig för att se problemet ur lärarens perspektiv; de visade upp policydokument för att motivera sitt beslut; och de satte gränser för föräldrarnas rätt att kommunicera med skolan.

Ur en analytisk synvinkel visar lärarnas uttryckta erfarenheter att de kontinuerligt måste balansera mellan att motsvara skolans förväntningar på hem–skola samarbete och samtidigt hantera familjernas olika behov genom att effektivt förmedla skolans förväntningar. I Bourdieus termer skapar den befintliga institutionella doxan spänningar mellan det *idealiska* och *faktiska* mötet mellan föräldrar och lärare. Lärarnas syn på den *lagom involverade* föräldern som den ideala typen av engagemang är ett resultat av villkoren för lärarnas professionalisering inom skolans fält. Dessutom betonar alla lärare sitt ansvar när det gäller barns skolgång. Ett är att upprätthålla regelbunden kommunikation med föräldrarna och informera dem om olika barnrelaterade frågor. Även om föräldrarnas syn på barnet uppskattas av lärarna, är det lärarnas åsikter som har mer symbolisk tyngd eftersom de inramas av professionell dokumentation och terminologi. Strukturen på föräldralärarmöten visar också en nödvändighet för att etablera och upprätthålla de professionellas ortodoxa positionering. Denna positionering utsätts för övervakning och förhandling inom en viss institutionell ram där lärare förväntas hitta lösningar och fatta beslut. Detta kan ibland leda till en missmatch mellan en lärares habitus och de institutionella förväntningarna från fältet. Dessutom beskriver lärare de ojämlika förhållandena för föräldrar med migrantbakgrund i relation till engagemang i sin skola, t.ex. språkbrist, låg utbildningsnivå, negativa erfarenheter med myndigheter och långa arbetspass. Även om lärarna anstränger sig för att underlätta samarbetet mellan skolan och dessa föräldrar kan de inte bidra till stora förändringar. Det beror på att den institutionella doxan har skapat vissa krav på professionalisering som givit lite utrymme för att de ska kunna erbjuda större stöd. Slutligen visar lärarnas exempel på samarbetsmetoder att de ständigt förhandlar om hur och i vilken utsträckning föräldrar kommer att engagera sig i olika skolrelaterade situationer. De metoder som lärarna använder kommer till viss del ifrån deras individuella habitus men i hög grad ifrån en kollektiv typ av habitus eftersom de alla har en yrkesmässig position i skolan. De element som tycks vara viktiga för ett framgångsrikt hem–skola samarbete är transparens, tålamod, förståelse och ömsesidig respekt.

De resultat som framkom hos föräldrarna visade på i stort sett positiva erfarenheter. De beskrev dock problematiska områden när det gällde lärarnas roll i barns skolgång och deras förväntningar på hem–skola samarbete. Föräldrarna förmedlade varierade erfarenheter beroende på bakgrund, familjestruktur och barns skolgång. I synnerhet kämpade vissa föräldrar för att bekanta sig med den svenska skolkulturen, vilket ibland ledde till missförstånd och

oenigheter mellan hem och skola. Andra föräldrar ansåg att skolan anklagade dem för barns inlärningssvårigheter och påstådda dåliga uppförande, vilket orsakade känslor av skuld och skapade en dålig atmosfär. Dessutom önskade vissa föräldrar att lärarna skulle utveckla fler sätt att ge återkoppling om elevernas utveckling, medan andra föredrog lärarledda utvecklingssamtal med fokus på de professionellas synvinkel. Slutligen fanns det föräldrar som bara upplevt ett positivt samarbete med sina barns skola och var nöjda med den typ av hjälp som erbjöds för att tillgodose familjens och elevens behov.

I den andra delen av avsnittet presenterades föräldrars gemensamma åsikter. Teman som identifierades var; a) *skolorienterat* och *eget-barnorienterade* engagemang och b) de *andra* föräldrarna.

Det *skolorienterade* engagemanget hänvisar till föräldrar som var föräldrarepresentanter, medlemmar i skolans föräldraråd och organiserade skolaktiviteter. Föräldrar som använde det *eget-barnorienterade* tillvägagångssättet brukade delta i aktiviteter som exklusivt var relaterade till deras eget barns skolgång, t.ex. utvecklingssamtal och läxhjälp. Det fanns också föräldrar som inte framförde några speciella argument för deras typ av engagemang, men att de tog ansvar för barnens skolgång. Resultaten visar att skälen till föräldrars engagemang, antingen kollektivt eller individuellt, är blandade; det kan vara ett tillfälle att lära känna det svenska utbildningssystemet eller försöka åstadkomma förändringar i skolpraktiken; och det kan också vara ett sätt att få resurser för sitt barn eller uppmärksamma och engagera sig i barnets utveckling i hemmet.

Vissa föräldrar beskrev sig som positivt engagerade och menade att andra föräldrar i deras barns skolor tenderade att sätta mycket press på lärarna. Dessa föräldrar trodde att man måste hitta en balans mellan att engagera sig och låta de professionella ha ansvaret för utbildningsfrågor. Dessutom kände sig föräldrar med migrantbakgrund ibland uteslutna från svenska föräldrasammanhang på grund av begränsad svensk språkkunskap eller av okunskap om svensk skolkultur. Detta ledde ibland till dispyter mellan svenska och internationella föräldrar och påverkade umgänget med andra skolföräldrar i det nya landet.

Ur en analytisk synvinkel påverkade föräldrarnas habitus deras upplevelse av mötet mellan föräldrar och lärare, förväntningar på hem–skola samarbete och barnuppfostran. Generellt tenderade föräldrar som hade hög utbildningsnivå att känna sig mer bekväma i sina interaktioner med skolan i motsats till föräldrar med låg utbildningsnivå. Föräldrarna som hade en yrkesmässig bakgrund som var relevant för utbildningssektorn, dvs. lärare och studievägledare, hade djupare kunskaper om skolans inre arbete och visste hur man för-

handlar med lärarna. Detta beror troligen på hur deras utbildningskapital passar väl in i skolans fält. Det gällde inte icke-svenska föräldrar som saknade mycket av det kulturellt kapitalet i förhållande till den svenska skolkulturen. De högutbildade föräldrarna, även om de var bekanta med skolan i allmänhet, kämpade ibland för att förstå lärarnas praktiker i den svenska skolan. När det gäller föräldrar med lägre utbildningsnivå kunde en förälder inte ge uttryck för sin oro för lärarna medan en annan förälder lärde sig om skolan och det svenska samhället enbart genom lärarna på grund av brist på socialt kapital, dvs. kontakt med andra svenska nätverk.

Dessutom visade resultaten att det ibland uppstod missmatch och andra gånger match mellan en förälders habitus och skoldoxan. Föräldrar försökte antingen utmana doxan på grund av situationer som störde dem, eller följde skolans normer. Att doxa och habitus krockar eller överensstämmer kan ha påverkats av ens bakgrund, familj och/eller elevens situation samt skolkontexten. Slutligen visade föräldrarnas beskrivningar att konkurrensen om legitim kunskap om barnet och om den 'bästa' lärarpraktiken kan leda till ett avstånd mellan hem och skola och även mellan olika föräldrar. Den nuvarande spänningen kan spåras tillbaka till de ojämlika villkoren för samarbete med skolan som bygger på kunskap om det bredare utbildnings- och socialfältet. Det som tycktes uppmuntra ett framgångsrikt samarbete på föräldrarnas sida var öppenhet, förtroende och engagemang för eleven.

Kapitel 5

I kapitel 5 syntetiserade jag studiens resultat genom att utveckla och utvidga den analytiska diskussionen från förra kapitlet. De första två huvuddelarna i detta kapitel koncentrerade sig på de subjektiva aspekterna av den sociala praktiken (individers dispositioner och positioner) medan den tredje delen fokuserade på de objektiva aspekterna (hur dessa dispositioner/positioner antas inom skolans fält).

Första avsnittet satte fokus på föräldrarnas sätt att förhandla om krav för ett framgångsrikt samarbete med skolan samt lärarnas positionering i relation till denna förhandling. Som sagt hänvisar föräldrarnas och lärarnas krav på ett framgångsrikt samarbete till öppenhet, förtroende, ömsesidig respekt, tålamod och till engagemang för eleven. I avsnittet sammanfattades och diskuterades dessa krav under tre huvudkategorier: ett *personligt* möte, ett *diversifierat* möte och ett *förtroendefullt* möte. Diskussionen i detta avsnitt speglar den tidigare nämnda antitesen mellan föräldrarnas mer hetorogena åsikter och erfarenheter och lärarnas mer homogena. Föräldrarnas upplevelser varierar beroende på deras sociala och kulturella resurser som informerar deras typ av engagemang och positionering i skolan. Vissa föräldrar gjorde förfrågningar

och bad om anpassningar från lärarna genom att mobilisera resurser i relation till sitt kulturella, sitt utbildnings- och sociala kapital. Andra föräldrar gjorde försök att förhandla men inte på ett sätt som ledde till det önskade resultatet, medan vissa valde en neutral ståndpunkt eftersom de var nöjda med samarbetet med sina barns lärare. Trots att lärarna tillämpade vissa individuella metoder beroende på olika elev- och föräldrarelaterade situationer, påverkades dessa av en kollektiv typ av habitus. Till exempel uppmuntrade de alla en *personlig* relation men inte *för* personlig; föräldrarna behövde erkänna de professionellas auktoritet. Detta pekar på en *ortodox* handling som syftar till att bibehålla deras dominerande ställning inom fältet. Samtidigt betonade lärarna de ojämna villkoren för delaktighet mellan olika grupper av föräldrar och problematiserade villkoren för sin egen professionalism. Den begränsade tillgängliga tiden och resurserna på fältet hindrade dem från att utmana institutionella förväntningar vilket ibland ledde till konflikter och misstro mellan hem och skola.

I det andra avsnittet utvecklade jag en modell, nämligen *parental school capital,* som kan förstås som en form av symboliskt kapital som ger föräldrarna en viss makt i deras förhandlingar med lärarna som institutionella agenter. *Parental school capital* informeras av samspelet mellan fyra komponenter: *utbildningskapital*, *sociokulturell kontext för uppfostran*, *familjedynamik* och *elevers skolgångssituation*. När det gäller utbildningskapital är det viktigt att betona att alla föräldrar, oavsett utbildningsnivå, beskrev att de tog ansvar för sina barns skolgång och hade höga ambitioner för barnens framtida utbildningsvägar. Skillnaden som utbildningskapitalet gjorde var att föräldrarna med hög utbildningsnivå uttryckte fler åsikter om de 'bästa' praktikerna för elevstöd och att de var mer självsäkra i sina förhandlingar med skolan. Föräldrar med låg utbildningsbakgrund lämnade större frihet åt lärarna, antingen för att de litade på deras expertis eller för att de inte var självsäkra nog för att uttrycka kritik till dem. Föräldrar med intermediär utbildningsnivå var relativt inblandade; en förälder deltog i en kollektiv typ av engagemang som föräldrarepresentant med hopp om att påverka skolförändringar medan en annan förälder inte hade tid att engagera sig så mycket som hon brukade göra men hon initierade kontakt med lärare när det behövdes. Föräldrar som växte upp i det svenska utbildningssystemet hade mer kunskap om skolpolicy och deras rättigheter som föräldrar, varför uppfostran inom den sociokulturella kontexten medför implikationer för ens positionering i skolfältet. Även om de kanske inte förstod alla aspekter av dagens skola litade de på sin habitus, t.ex. tidigare erfarenheter som elever, för att förstå skolpraktiker. De var med andra ord mer benägna att relatera till skoldoxan på grund av de värderingar som de hade förkroppsligat genom sin sociala bakgrund. Föräldrar med en annan uppfostran kunde i Bourdieus termer känna sig som 'fisk ur vattnet' eftersom de var bekanta med en annan typ av doxa, dvs. med andra, olika värden för

skolan. Dessa föräldrar upplevde ibland krock mellan deras habitus och värdena i den nya 'naturliga ordningen' (doxan). Dessutom visade studiens resultat att familjens position inom skolans fält inte alltid bestäms av familjestatus, dvs. kärnfamilj eller ensamstående föräldrar, utan främst av familjedynamik som i det här fallet refererar till hur föräldrarna fördelade skolrelaterade ansvar mellan varandra. Föräldrarna som bidrog lika till barns skolgång var mer benägna att kräva resurser från skolan, dels på grund av praktisk lätthet, då de hade mer tid att engagera sig, och dels på grund av möjligheten att förhandla som en homogen enhet, dvs. båda föräldrarna tillsammans. När det gäller föräldrar som inte hade deras (ex-)partners stöd fanns det inga skillnader i förhållande till kön, då det både fanns mödrar och fäder som tog ansvar, men det framträdde skillnader i relation till socioekonomisk bakgrund. Föräldrar med ekonomiskt kapital hade mer resurser att aktivt engagera sig medan föräldrar med en svag socioekonomisk situation var tvungna att ägna den största delen av sina dagar åt sitt arbete, vilket ibland ledde till delegering av barnrelaterat ansvar till lärarna. Den sista komponenten för *parental school capital* är elevernas skolsituation. Elevernas sociala och akademiska utveckling påverkade föräldrarnas oro över barnet och deras engagemang i skolan. Detta gällde föräldrar till barn i alla skolklasser/åldrar. Den största skillnaden när det gäller ålder är att ju yngre barnen var, desto vanligare var det med kontakt mellan föräldrarna och lärarna, främst på grund av att de lämnade dem i skolan. Det som är mest betydelsefullt är dock att föräldrar till barn med en 'smidig' skolgångssituation oavsett ålder inte behövde engagera sig utöver förväntat engagemang. Föräldrar till barn med inlärnings- eller beteendemässiga svårigheter fick göra mer omfattande emotionella och praktiska investeringar. Analysen visar att det mest kraftfulla formerna av *parental-school capital* är: högt utbildningskapital, svensk uppväxt, delat ansvar mellan föräldrar och en stabil elevprestation. Denna kombination leder ofta till förvärv av vissa fördelar inom skolan. Den fördelaktiga positionen kan förklaras av den skolspecifika doxa som gynnar vissa familjer och medför nackdelar för andra avseende föräldrasamverkan.

Det tredje avsnittet i kapitlet handlade om agenternas *orthodoxa* och *heterodoxa* handlingar som antingen upprätthöll eller utmanade den skolspecifika doxan. Den ortodoxa typen av praktiker förekom ofta när doxa fungerade oproblematiskt, dvs. när villkoren för hem–skola samarbete eller 'spelreglerna' accepterades av båda sidor så fanns det match mellan habitus och den skolspecifika doxan. Ett exempel kan vara utvecklingssamtalet där det fanns en delad syn på hur det ska gå till, vem ska säga vad samt vilka frågor som var acceptabla och vilka som ansågs vara 'tabu'. Även om vissa föräldrar uttryckte tvivel om lärarnas feedback, blandade de sig inte på ett sätt som skulle vara okontrollerbart från lärarnas sida. Dessutom tycktes elevernas närvaro ibland fungera som en 'sköld' för lärarna eftersom föräldrarna inte ville ta upp frågor

som oroade dem inför sina barn. Ortodoxa handlingar skedde även när föräldrar var helt nöjda med sina barns skolgång och skolpraktiker i förhållande till elevstöd. I detta fall godtog föräldrar lärarnas expertis och ansåg inte att de behövde vara mer aktivt involverade. Lärarna upplevde föräldrarnas positionering som en möjlighet till att vara mer 'fri' i den meningen att de kunde göra sitt jobb utan några särskilda 'störningar'. Lärarna uppmuntrade förstås föräldrarna att ställa frågor, men inte på ett sätt som skulle förändra den professionella-lekmanna dynamiken. Som ett resultat fungerade doxa och habitus harmoniskt så länge föräldrarna var *lagom involverade*.

Även om mötet mellan föräldrar och lärare var i stort sett ortodoxiskt, fanns det ibland missmatch mellan skolans doxa och agenternas habitus. Dessa inträffade när föräldrar och lärare, antingen kollektivt eller individuellt, tog upp problematiska situationer. I dessa fall använde de heterodoxa handlingar för att förhandla om sina positioner och utmana doxan. Den övergripande förhandlingspositionen gällde föräldrarnas begäran om att få tillgång till skolans inre arbete och lärarnas ansträngningar att kontrollera föräldrarnas tillgång till detsamma. I många fall riktade sig föräldrarnas och lärarnas irritation inte mot varandra utan mot utbildningssystemet. Föräldrar erkände att lärare var mycket pressade på grund av kraven i skolans läroplan. Samtidigt tenderade de dock att relatera problematiska upplevelser till enskilda lärare eftersom de på sätt och vis definieras som delegater av skoldoxan. Dessutom problematiserade lärarna villkoren för sitt yrke i allmänhet och villkoren för föräldrarnas engagemang i synnerhet. Samarbete med föräldrar upplevdes ibland som en extra börda, inte för att de inte tyckte det var viktigt utan för att de inte hade möjlighet att motsvara normerna för den 'ideala' föräldrasamverkan. Som ett resultat relaterade lärare sina problem till specifika grupper av föräldrar eftersom de kämpade för att kontrollera sitt engagemang på ett sätt som överensstämde med de ovan nämnda normerna.

Studiens resultat och analys tyder på att mötet mellan föräldrar och lärare bildas genom praktiker och instanser av (miss)match mellan individuella/kollektiva dispositioner (habitus) och institutionella förhållanden (doxa). Föräldrar och lärare använder sitt kapital för att kräva eller kontrollera tillgång till fältet och dess syn på ideala praktiker och agenter. Volymen på deras kapital beror på deras habitus, som har påverkats av fält som är direkt eller indirekt kopplade till skolfältet, t.ex. utbildnings-, familje- och olika yrkesfält. Den skolspecifika doxan fungerar ostörd och är tyst när agenterna följer den och använder ortodoxa handlingar för att bevara den. De kan emellertid också utmana den genom heterodoxa handlingar, som antingen tillfälligt hejdar den eller till och med omöjliggör den. Med andra ord kan 'spelreglerna' reproduceras eller omvandlas genom det kontinuerliga samspelet mellan subjektiva och objektiva strukturer i fältet.

Slutord

Denna avhandling har noggrant undersökt en social praktik som tenderar av många att tas för givet. Avhandlingen har belyst sociala aspekter av föräldrars och lärares möten i hem–skola samarbete. Resultatet av den valda teoretiska traditionen för analys av forskningsobjektet har varit dubbelt; för det första gav det röst till individernas agentskap genom att utforska deras dispositioner och ställningstaganden på individnivå och för det andra möjliggjorde det undersökningen av effekterna av dessa dispositioner och handlingar utifrån deras positioner inom fältet.

Syftet med studien är inte att generalisera resultaten i statistisk mening. Avsikten var snarare att från mikronivå förstå och beskriva de heterogena sätten genom vilka föräldrar och lärare placeras och positionerar sig i den sociala praktiken. Dessa positioner anpassades ibland och andra gånger avvek de från de generella mönster för undervisning och föräldraskap som tillskrivs individer och sociala grupper, beroende på deras kulturella bakgrund, klass, yrke, familjestruktur och liknande.

Avhandlingen har bidragit till pedagogik som forskningsfält. Studien har visat att krav på ett framgångsrikt samarbete mellan hem och skola i stort sett kretsade kring förtroende, respekt och öppenhet. De visade innebörderna av dessa krav bidrar till ökad förståelse för föräldrars och lärares förväntningar på varandra och hur dessa förväntningar kan användas för att förvärva djupare kunskap om varje elevs situation och förutsättningar för lärande. Studien pekade också på individuella och strukturella begräsningar som uppstod som ett resultat av de institutionella förutsättningarna för hem–skola samarbete inom skolfältet. Detta kräver ökade åtgärder för att hantera de befintliga ojämlikheterna på en samhällelig och individuell nivå. Olika aktörer inom utbildningsfältet kan behöva utvidga de snäva representationerna av 'bästa' föräldra- och undervisningsmetoder och snarare förvärva konkreta strategier som omfattar den ständigt växande mångfalden i dagens samhälle. Staten och i förlängning myndigheter som ansvarar för skolsektorn och relationen mellan föräldrar och lärare, såsom Skolverket, Skolinspektionen och Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten, kan behöva utveckla tydligare riktlinjer och stödverktyg för kommunerna och skolorna. Rektorerna och pedagogerna kunde också erbjudas fortbildning i samarbete mellan hem och skola där de skulle få möjlighet att utöka sin kunskap och expertis. Dessutom kan lärarutbildning och rektorsprogram på högskolenivå innehålla en mer grundlig utbildning om detta samarbete; kunskap som skolledningen och lärarna kan använda och bygga vidare på i sin yrkesutveckling. Avhandlingens resultat visade också att föräldrar tycks förvänta sig en inställning från yrkesverksamma, som är mer av en icke-formell och välkomnande karaktär. Därför

kan skolorna behöva skapa både kollektiva och individuellt anpassade utrymmen för föräldrarnas engagemang som motsvarar familjernas olika behov, bakgrund och socioekonomiska förhållanden. I den meningen kan t.ex. föräldraföreningar och riksförbundet Föräldraalliansen också dra nytta av studiens resultat och sprida kunskap till föräldraföreningar om föräldrars och lärares förväntningar på varandra samt upplevda hinder och krav för ett framgångsrikt samarbete.

Några rekommendationer för framtida studier inom forskningsfältet är att undersöka föräldrars och lärarens möten med flera föräldrar från olika bakgrunder, att vidareutveckla modellen *parental school capital* och testa hur den kan utvecklas. Det är också viktigt att studera barnets synvinkel och positionering; hur eleverna upplever samarbetet och i vilken utsträckning deras agentskap beaktas inom ramen för den sociala praktiken.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Teachers' interview guide

Introduction:[54]

1. Tell me about yourself (e.g. education, current employment, years of teaching experience, etc.).
2. During your education, did you have any courses/discussions about home–school collaboration?

Questions in relation to parents:

1. What does collaboration/relationship with parents mean for you?
2. How do you experience collaboration with parents in general?
3. Are there any differences in this school and schools where you have previously worked in relation to collaboration with parents?
4. What activities does the school organise for parents?
5. In what way and how often do you communicate with parents?
6. What is the reason of communication?
7. What is your experience of development conferences?
8. Could you give me an example of an effective and an ineffective moment during a development conference?
9. Have you ever had a disagreement with a parent? If yes, could you tell me about it?
10. What is your experience of parent meetings in general?
11. Are there any challenges in relation to collaboration with parents? If yes, how do you tackle them?
12. Are there any specific challenges for different groups of parents? If yes, what are those and how do you tackle them?
13. Is there a parent council in the school? How does it work?
14. What are your views on child upbringing? Do you feel they coincide with parents' views?
15. What are your own experiences of home–school collaboration when you were a student? Were your parents involved in school?
16. Are you a parent yourself? What is your experience of collaboration with your child's/children's teachers?

[54] A Swedish version of this interview guide is also available.

Questions about administration and colleagues:

1. How do you experience collaboration with the school administration and colleagues?
2. What resources does the school offer in relation to collaboration with parents?
3. Are there any challenges in your collaboration with the school? If yes, what are those?

Concluding questions:

1. What would the *ideal* parent–teacher relationship look like for you?
2. How can the parent–teacher relationship improve in general and in this school, in particular?

Appendix 2: Parents' interview guide

Introduction:[55]

1. Tell me about yourself (occupation, education, family, child's school).

Questions about parenting/parental involvement:

1. In what way are you involved in your child's/children's schooling?
2. What activities/meetings does the school organise that are addressed to parents?
3. Do you participate in development conferences? If yes, what is your experience? If not, why?
4. Do you prepare in any way before a development conference? Do you get any preparation material from the teacher/school?
5. Do you participate in other activities/meetings for parents? If yes, what is your experience? If not, why?
6. Is there a parent council in the school and do you participate in it? If yes, what is your experience? If not, why?
7. What is your view on child upbringing? Do you think that it coincides with the teachers'/school's views?

Questions about parent–teacher relationship:

1. What does collaboration/relationship with school mean for you?
2. How do you experience collaboration with teachers in your child's/children's school(s)?
3. How much contact do you have with the teacher?
4. What is the reason for communicating with the teacher?
5. Could you give me an example of an effective and an ineffective moment during a development conference?
6. Have you ever had a disagreement with the teacher/school? If yes, could you tell me about it?
7. Do you face any challenges in your relationship with the teacher? If yes, what are those and how do you tackle them?
8. Do you have contact with other parents in the school? How does collaboration with teachers/school work for them?
9. What are your experiences of your parents' relationship with the teacher when you were a student at school?

Concluding questions:

1. What would the *ideal* parent–teacher relationship look like for you?
2. How can the parent–teacher relationship improve in general and in this school, in particular?

[55] A Swedish version of this interview guide is also available.

Appendix 3: Observation guide

Observation	Focus points
Before the meeting	○ Body language (how they talk, how the greet each other, informal talk) ○ Has the child prepared in advance? ○ Has the parent prepared?
During the meeting	○ Structure and content of the meeting (themes discussed, duration, material used etc.) ○ Body language (how they sit, how they react to what is being said) ○ Is there anyone that helps the child talk? ○ Anything not allowed to be discussed? (taboo) ○ How much of discussion? ○ How much of information exchange/transfer? ○ Directives? ("you should do this and that") ○ Do the parents get the chance to ask questions? ○ Does the teacher answer? ○ Does the teacher/parent use professional terminology?
After the meeting	○ How do they greet each other? ○ Do they all seem satisfied with the meeting? Do they chat?

Appendix 4: Information letter to teachers and parents

A study about home–school collaboration in Sweden[56]

Hello!

My name is Maria Pananaki and I am a doctoral student at the Department of Education at Stockholm University. In my research, I focus on home–school collaboration in Swedish primary schools. Research shows that collaboration between home and school leads to many benefits when it comes to students' learning and social behaviour. In Sweden, there is little knowledge on the relationship between parents and teachers. The aim of my study is to highlight how parents and teachers experience their relationship and what methods they use to accomplish collaboration. Your experiences are important to increase knowledge in the field!

I would like to interview you about your views and experiences of this relationship and I would also like to observe a development conference, which is considered to be an interesting aspect of home–school collaboration. The interviews and observations are going to be audio-recorded and I am going to take notes, with your consent. Taking into consideration your time available, I would like to emphasise that participation in the study will not add to your workload. No preparation is needed on your side before or during the interviews and observations. I estimate that the interview will take approximately 1 hour and a complementary interview might take place, if necessary.

My study is ethically vetted by the Swedish Board of Ethics (Etikprövningsnämnden), which means that all the information will be handled with confidentiality. I am following the Swedish law regarding personal information, Personuppgiftslagen (PUL 1998:204), so all your answers will be safely stored and no unauthorised people will have access. According to this law (Personuppgiftslagen), you have the right, once a year and without cost, to get access to the information we have about you and correct potential mistakes. Participation in the study is voluntary and even if you accept to participate in the beginning, you have the right to cancel your participation any time. The study's results will be presented in the form of a doctoral thesis, in scientific articles and at conferences.

I hope that all this sounds interesting and that you would like to participate! Don't hesitate to contact me (contact details are given below) if you have any questions about the study.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Kind regards,
Maria

[56] A Swedish version of this information letter is also available.

Appendix 5: Informed consent form

Informed consent: "Home–school collaboration in Swedish primary schools."[57]

I have received information that participation is voluntary and I can cancel my participation at any time without this affecting the school staff or children's schooling.

Cross if you agree to participate in the study.

□ I agree to participate in the study: "Home–school collaboration in Swedish primary schools."

Date
……
Participant's signature
……..
Name
……..

[57] A Swedish version of this informed consent form is also available.

Appendix 6: Example of initial and secondary coding

Lena (initial coding)	**Knowledge about school policies/system**	**Communication**	**Development conference**	**Opinion about Chung's teacher**	**School's/teachers' working philosophy (Chung)**	**Expectations & debates among parents**
	Doesn't know much as international parent because of different culture & language.	Chung's teacher relies on the children to inform parents about dates development conferences or that he decided to take a day-off/week from school. More effective in Jia's school: Google group with info from teachers.	Feels informal. The purpose is for the children to learn to self-direct.	Year 4: he is new & both him & parents are trying to adjust. He is liberal & progressive & wants to apply his own methods.	The principal leaves the power to teachers to decide over things that come up in their classrooms. The general aim is to bring high & low achievers to the same level.	International parents want more structure & homework whereas Swedes think students already have enough & emphasise that this is how it is in Sweden.
	Info on school's web & Stockholm's stad is not enough. Needs to be explained by the school, especially grading.	Limited communication with Swedish parents in both schools because of language. Much with international parents of Chung's class through What's app she created.	Good to discuss goals & follow up on them. Hard to discuss behavioural issues.	He's childish & trying to retaliate. He's immature & Lena cannot have any resolution with him because he is stubborn.	Bullying incident: Lena wanted to know more but the teachers said they are taking care of it without providing more info.	In an Asian context, parents are not expected to discuss school issues among them but to show understanding to school practices. Here, Swedes talk about it in their own circles.
	Swedish parents know more than international ones about school policies, assessment, fundraising & organisation of activities.	Parent-child communication: Chung shares much so no need to always ask the teacher. Chung asks things all the time – annoying for the teacher.	Chung's: the teacher targeted him as problem-kid because he helped out a classmate in a bullying incident & got exposed. Told him that he's not perfect.	He is afraid of conflict. Lena wanted to meet to talk about bullying incident. He invited her when the class was starting & children were coming into class.	School doesn't expect international students to stay long in Sweden. If you decide to stay, it's best to enrol in a Swedish classroom instead.	**Other** Concerns about Chung's transition to junior high school. Lena's experience with Chung helps her frame her choices with Jia. Language as hinder for forming networks/enrolling in activities with Swedes.
		Communication as a means to contributing to children's education & safeguarding a good learning environment.	Jia's: overall good. Teacher said she's too quite – John explained that she speaks many languages and might be confusing for her.	Year 5: Things are better but it all depends on teacher's mood.	Teacher suggests enrolment in activities, e.g. soccer, and social gatherings, e.g. sleep-overs for Chung to learn Swedish.	Lena volunteered as parent rep. but didn't do it in year 5 because she realised that neither can she cause change to school practices nor can she gain access to the "inner dynamics"

Appendix 6: cont'd

Lena (secondary coding)	**Knowledge about school policies/system**	**Communication**	**Development conference**	**Opinion about Chung's teacher**	**School's working philosophy (Chung)**	**Expectations & debates among parents**
	Limited cultural & linguistic capital in the school setting due to growing up in different cultural context & acquiring different previous educational experiences (negative capital?) in contrast to Swedish parents who have prior knowledge of the Swedish education system.	Teacher's stance enables or rebuffs communication: Poor in Chung's school, more welcoming in Jia's. Low linguistic capital that leads to low social capital when it comes to networking with Swedes. However, Lena is able to activate her capital in the international parents group as she is a parent rep. where she raises other parents' concerns & also initiates a What's app group. (resources are valued differently even within the school – micro capital?)	Teacher's approach leads to different impressions of the development conference. In Chung's school, Lena felt the teacher was attacking them. In Jia's, the teacher brought up an issue about her being too quiet but it was delivered in a different way, which didn't make the family feel attacked.	Even if Lena and the teacher come from different contexts, there is not a big gap in their background (both Lena and the teacher possess educational resources). This however is not enough for them to find a common ground as there seems to be a clash between teacher's educational approach and Lena's understanding of how it should have been.	Dominant discourse (doxa) that defines what is possible or not. Teachers have been given the power to decide what they will do in their classrooms (but not outside of them? So, they decide within the school framework). Lena attempts to activate her capital by getting involved in the bullying incident (as parent rep.) but the access has been denied by the school team (more legitimate – powerful).	Cultural clash between Swedes & international parents. Different understanding of the "right curriculum". Symbolic violence: this is the "Swedish" and thus, the right way. So, international parents should follow it.
						Other The dynamic character of habitus: building on Chung's experiences to make better decisions for Jia. Again, school's dominant discourse defines what is possible & to what extent parents are allowed to influence school.

Appendix 7: Example of analysis of interview/observation material

View on teacher's positioning	View on parent's positioning & parental involvement	View on child's positioning in school & at home	Dealing with issues regarding the student
-type of feedback -contact with parents -information-transfer: experienced differently by parents (negative, positive, lagom) Expectation vs. institutional response; sometimes coincides, sometimes not Different experiences/expectations for parents depending on their positions in the social space?	-view on involvement of one's self in school & at home (reasons for it) -collective vs individual -view on other parents' involvement, questions, concerns, expectations from school Sometimes agreement among parents, sometimes clash ("jag är inte jobbig förälder som andra")	-values on child-upbringing -how they should behave -positioning of child in development conference -parent-child communication -overall consensus between school's/parents' values but clash in details (more respect – discipline)	How are issues being negotiated between teacher, parent, child: -learning difficulties -health issues -homework -bullying -language barriers Strategies: -leaving the power to the individual teacher to decide -discussing among staff & presenting a rigid picture to the parents -negotiating together with the parents -parents demand more resources/assistance

Analytical points of departure ⇒

The effect of parental capital	Technical vs. comprehensive relationship	(re)Distribution of power & responsibility in parent-teacher-child encounters	The effect of school culture
Parents' knowledge of school discourse variates between Swedish & foreign parents and depends on high, intermediate & low education level. -situated educational capital-maybe the most influential -family capital (grandparents, uncles etc.)	Following school curriculum – giving feedback, informing parents Vs. Either a "warmer" relationship with the parent-part of family issues, children's health problems etc. Or one where the teacher goes more into depth regarding feedback	-positions of teachers, parents & children in development conferences & overall encounters -teacher responsibility/power -student responsibility/power -parent responsibility/power	-institutional agenda regarding parent-teacher relationship & its effect on teachers & parents (more in teachers' interviews) -clash/consensus with parents' dispositions=acceptance on parents' side in the end

Although Swedish educational policy stresses parents' and teachers' joint responsibility for building and maintaining an effective collaboration, media outlets reveal an ongoing debate between home and school regarding the type and amount of parental involvement in children's schooling. This thesis contributes with enhanced knowledge on parents' and teachers' experiences of their encounter and the negotiation of their positioning in schooling.

The thesis illustrates prerequisites for successful collaboration that revolve around notions of trust, respect, openness and transparency. It also depicts inequalities that result from the institutional conditions of home–school collaboration in the schooling field. The results show that parents sometimes struggle to express their concerns to the teachers, which especially burdens families with limited social, cultural and economic capital, whilst the teachers often encounter difficulties in living up to their profession's demands regarding parental involvement.

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