Transnational Parenting and Cultural Capital


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Abstract

This study explores how English-speaking migrant parents in Sweden value transnational and linguistic cultural capital, and how they draw upon their own cultural resources in order to help their children acquire these forms of capital and inculcate a habitus. Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, social capital and habitus are used in a qualitative study in order to investigate how parents cultural capital was valued in the new cultural context, how they acquired new, more relevant capital for themselves, and how this shaped the aims, expectations and strategies they had to help their children acquire valued forms of capital. Despite possessing a valuable form of linguistic capital, parents sometimes felt themselves to be limited within the Swedish setting, however this was justified due to the opportunities seen to be available for their children. Parents expressed they wished their children to develop a global perspective and develop skills and knowledge that would allow them to operate in transnational settings. In a rapidly changing world, it was difficult to know which skills would be required, but due to their knowledge of multiple national contexts, they felt that they were in a good position to help their children acquire the forms of capital that had been useful for them in their own experiences of migration. The parents negotiated these multiple national settings, taking what they saw as valuable from each, thereby helping their children’s acquisition of both linguistic and transnational capital.

Keywords

Transnational parenting, children’s habitus inculcation, children’s cultural capital acquisition, English-speaking migrants in Sweden, transnational capital, linguistic capital.
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1. Introduction

Migrant parents have aims for their children to acquire valuable forms of cultural capital that are useful in the fields in which they operate, and use their own cultural capital in order to inculcate a habitus for their children. By investigating the experiences of English-speaking migrant parents in Sweden, and their parenting practices, we can see that migrant parents wish to pass on culturally valued types of capital and the advantages that come with them to their children. However, what is considered valuable cultural capital varies between national settings and also over time, so parents are always in a process of negotiating the capital they want their children to acquire.

Both the English language and culture from English-speaking nations has a special status in Sweden and operates as cultural capital. English speaking migrant parents are an interesting case in studying transnational cultural capital because they come to Sweden with a desired form of cultural capital and this has mixed outcomes for these migrants. In current migration policies in Sweden, there is an emphasis on the importance of migrants learning Swedish and taking up ‘Swedish values’ in order to participate and contribute to Swedish society. However, depending on the cultural capital that migrants bring with them to Sweden, there may not always be the same expectations put upon them to do so. Examining the parenting practices of migrant parents, especially those who are in possession of an accepted and desired form of cultural capital within a specific context is valuable because it sheds light on how parents’ possession of different forms of capital results in different aims and expectations for their children’s acquisition of capital as well as differing opportunities to achieve these parenting aims.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this research is to examine, in a Swedish setting, how transnational and linguistic cultural capital are valued by English-speaking migrant parents and how parents use, or intend to use their own cultural resources in order to inculcate a habitus for their children and help
them acquire these valued forms of capital. More specifically, the research tries to answer several questions.

**1.2 Research Questions**

- How did the parents understand their place when they moved to Sweden? How did they feel their cultural capital was valued and relevant in the new cultural context and what strategies did they use to convert capital or acquire new, more relevant capital?
- What aspirations do the parents have for their children regarding the acquisition of cultural capital and what aims do they have for shaping their child's habitus?
- What expectations do the parents have and what strategies do the parent use, or intend to use in order to fulfil these aims? What opportunities and obstacles do the parents anticipate for themselves and their children?

**1.3 Limitations**

The experiences of English-speaking migrants in Sweden are diverse, and the data collected only represents a small number of these parents, therefore the result of this paper cannot be assumed to apply to all English-speaking migrant parents. However, this research attempts to identify factors that these parents might have in common in relation to their parenting practices.

**1.4 Disposition**

This study is divided into five sections, beginning with a section on theory and earlier research which is relevant in answering the questions presented in this study. This is followed by a background section and definitions which help to clarify terms used. The method and data will then be described, followed by the result of this data and an analysis using the theories presented earlier. The study will end with a concluding discussion about the findings.
2 Theory & Earlier Research

In order to examine the experiences and parenting practices of English-speaking migrants in Sweden, I will use Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, social capital and habitus.

2.1 Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, social capital and habitus

In looking at the experiences of migrants and how they raise their children, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, social capital and habitus may be useful. Child-adult relations play a role in re-establishing, shaping and modifying powerful structures (Bourdieu, 1985, 19). Family practices contribute to the reproduction of social structures, because it is through lived experience that children acquire a habitus and imagine their place in the world. Through family practices, children acquire ways of living, speaking and behaving that are more or less valued within the dominant culture.

2.1.1. Bourdieu’s capital in its different forms

Bourdieu names four types of capital, cultural, social, economic and symbolic. These forms of capital are used within social ‘fields’ in order to create and signal individuals’ positions within these fields. These types of capital interconnect to maintain and reproduce the stratification of different groups in society (Bourdieu, 1985, 19; Calhoun, 2003, 294). In this study I will be focusing on cultural and social capital. Cultural capital consists of social assets such as cultural practices and rules that a person can draw upon to achieve success and gain advantages in society. Social capital refers to a person’s social network, this can be in the form of family, friends or acquaintances these can be used in order to gain advantages or benefits such as finding employment (Bourdieu, 1985, 16).

2.1.2. Cultural capital and habitus

Bourdieu looked at the role of cultural capital in the process of intergenerational transmission of social class, arguing that the transfer of cultural capital between family members shaped the habitus of children, this in turn affects what young people think they can accomplish.
(Bourdieu, 1996, 273). It’s the parent’s task to transmit embodied cultural capital within the family, it is thus intergenerationally reproduced within the family, and this is often seen as the responsibility of mothers in particular (Erel, 2012, 460).

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital exists in three states, embodied, institutional and objectified. These forms of capital can be converted from one form to another. The embodied state includes knowledge, attitudes and practices, it can be linked to a nationality such as possessing language fluency and having familiarity with cultural norms (Kelly and Lusis, 2006, 843). The institutional state refers to formal education and educational credentials and the objectified state refers to objects that are culturally valued such as collections. In this study, cultural capital in its embodied and institutional forms are relevant. It is important to note that these forms of cultural capital are contingent, their value is derived within a certain social context. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is helpful here, it refers to the embodied aspect of cultural capital, a set of consciously or subconsciously prioritised dispositions or practices. It is in the context of habitus that these forms of capital are given meaning and value. Habitus emerges in interactions between individuals in a certain ‘field’, and a person’s habitus determines their capacity to improvise their moves within this field and the feeling they have for the game. It is the ‘rules of the game’ that establish what forms of capital are valued and rewarded in a particular field. Individuals themselves have no control over the ‘rules of the game’ however, these rules are reproduced by individuals through social practices. For Bourdieu, it is habitus that is the link between structure and agency. Habitus helps to explain how the values, norms and expectations in a certain field are learned and internalised by individuals, and also how this results in a collectively learned system of rules that shape the value of capital within these fields. So, in this way habitus can be seen in both personal as well as a collective terms. Individuals seek out groups where they can socialise with others who have a similar habitus to themselves (Bourdieu, 1994, 340). Habitus can be linked to a nationality and signal certain skills, qualities and values (Erel, 2010, 648; Kelly & Lusis, 2006, 843).

One criticism of this theory is that even within national boundaries or smaller social fields, it seems to imply that there is some sort of consensus on what is valued. The theory rests on the assumption that there is value in particular ways of being, practices and in certain kinds of knowledge that make up cultural capital. It also assumes that these are set by the dominant
class. This has been noted by some sociologists (Reay, 2004). What must be considered is that what is valued is unstable, everchanging and is always contested.

2.1.1 Linguistic cultural capital

Bourdieu also argued for the importance of language and how it is a form of embodied cultural capital. He used the term ‘linguistic market place’ when looking at the relationship between speech acts and the societal context in which they are produced. When speech acts are produced in a societal context, they are given value within the market. In a multicultural and multilingual society, speakers have different types of linguistic capital and produce different linguistic products, and these are valued in various ways depending on the rules of the market. There is often a relation between the distribution of linguistic capital and other forms of capital that individuals have access to. All linguistic exchanges can be acts of power, especially when they are exchanged between individuals who have different amounts of valued capital. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, 145).

2.1.2 Transnational cultural capital

Bourdieu’s theory has been adapted to fit new social phenomena. Of particular relevance for this study is the concept of transnational cultural capital. This type of capital is seen to be relevant across national borders. Due to the process of globalisation, in which the increased exchange between nations has rapidly opened up and transformed societies and labour markets that were previously less connected, a new set of skills is required that are useful beyond national borders. These skills, which help individuals act in transnational social fields could be things such as foreign language skills, intercultural competence such as empathy and understanding for other cultures. Carlton, Gerhans and Hans (2017) refer to this type of capital as ‘transnational cultural capital’. In an increasingly globalised world that is ever changing, parents identify this type of capital as important for their children to acquire. Similarly, Weenink (2009) and Igarahi & Saito (2014) use the term ‘cosmopolitan capital’ when looking at how parents attempt to construct a cosmopolitan habitus for their children, which they see as important in a future globalised job market, but how this capital is distributed unequally amongst individuals depending on the economic, cultural and social capital their families have. Opportunities to accumulate transnational cultural capital are largely determined by class. Middle class parents seek out a transnational habitus for their children and do this more easily due to being endowed with other forms of capital that allow for this (Carlson et al, 2017; Igarashi & Saito, 2014; Weenink, 2008).
2.2 Earlier Research

There has been previous research on how migrant parents use their cultural capital in order to transmit or help their children acquire cultural capital in the new setting. Here I will present previous research on how cultural capital has been looked at within transnational sociology, and also present how cultural capital has been transmitted intergenerationally within families.

2.2.1 Cultural capital across national borders

It is important to note that Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital is originally set within national borders, but what is of interest here is what happens beyond national borders in transnational spaces. Research on transnationalism has made use of Bourdieu’s theory of capital and due to the processes of globalisation, has been applied to transnational contexts (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). The transfer to cultural capital across national borders has been studied widely in transnational sociology in regard to adult migrants, however children are often excluded from this, or seen only in terms of indicating their parent’s success in integration or mobility (Barglowski, 2015). Studies on transnational cultural capital tend to position migrants as either marginalised, or highly skilled ‘expats’, the latter group being largely ignored in transnational sociology (Fetcher and Walsh, 2010). However, English-speaking migrants in Sweden don’t necessarily fall neatly into either of these categories. There is little Swedish research on this topic, while there is a large literature on migrants in Sweden, it mainly focuses on marginalised migrants and their access to capital (Osman & Månsson, 2015). Somewhat privileged English-speaking migrants are most often excluded from the discourse on migration in Sweden.

Cultural capital transmission in transnational settings

Some research has dealt specifically with intergenerational cultural capital transmission in transnational contexts. However this research focuses on migrants who are marginalised in the new country (Blackledge, 2001; Barglowski, 2015; Coe & Shani, 2015; Franceschelli & O’Brien, 2014; Lopez Rodriguez, 2010; Zeitlyn, 2012). Some of these studies and the results that they find are relevant to the questions raised in this research.

Coe and Shani (2015) used Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital in order to investigate how the intergenerational inculcation of social class worked in the context of transnational migration. They explored the parenting practices of Ghanaian immigrants in the USA to see
what types of capital they valued, what types of capital they believed was valued in the and how they tried to shape their children’s life paths. They found that because what is seen as valuable cultural capital is complex, changing and sometimes contradictory between different social fields, parents sometimes found this work difficult. Their study revealed that the inculcation of cultural capital in their children was shaped by their own experiences of transnational migration and the opportunities they had access to.

Erel (2012) looked at the role of mothers in the formation of cultural capital in transnational contexts. She explored how relatively privileged middle-class European migrant mothers in London used their cultural resources strategically between different national settings in order to create opportunities and advantages for their children. She found that mothers used the forms of capital they had in order to compensate for the forms of capital that they lacked. Mothers participated in what she called ‘transnational cultural currency speculation’ of cultural resources by investing in their children’s education in the national setting where they expected the highest returns (Erel, 2012, 461). Middle class mothers played a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing the intergenerational transmission and accumulation of cultural capital (Erel, 2012, 465). Being members of various transnational spaces, she found that the mothers could ‘play the national field’ using the transnational cultural resources they possessed such as various forms of linguistic capital, national capital (citizenship and white ethnic capital), and also social capital (relatives and connections in other countries). They used these resources strategically to invest in their children’s education, in the national settings where they thought they could extract the most value in regards to accumulating capital for their children.

Barglowski (2015) studied the experiences and parenting practices of Polish migrants in Germany. She was especially interested in the parents aims and strategies for maintaining language and educational success as these were expected to be beneficial for them in the transnational social spaces that they occupied. She found that parents cultural capital played an important role, and social capital was often used to make up for lacking cultural capital. Parents wanted to ensure that their children would be incorporated in and have access to transnational social spaces by ensuring their children’s educational achievement and language abilities. She found that parents placed an emphasis on language acquisition because it plays an important role in feelings of belonging, but that the parent’s ability to control the family
language policy was dependent on their access to cultural capital themselves. Similarly, the parents had high aspirations for their children regarding academic achievement but their means to fulfil these aims were influenced by the cultural capital they possessed.

What these findings have in common is that the parents face a difficult situation where they are unsure of what capital will be needed in an everchanging globalising world. They all invest in the child where they think is best, where they think they will get the highest returns. They also all make up for the forms capital that they lack by using other forms of capital in order to accumulate relevant valuable capital for themselves and their children. Since forms of capital can be transformed, parents can use one form of capital in order to compensate other types of capital where they fall short.

### 2.3 Background and definitions

Some background and definitions are needed here in order to clarify the context of this study.

#### 2.3.1 Anglicisation of Sweden

Both the English language and culture from English-speaking nations has a special status in Sweden. Sweden has experienced ‘an overwhelming anglicization’ in recent years, where now English is seen to be functioning as a second language in everyday life (Cabau, 2009, 134). English is associated with prestige, has a ubiquitous presence and is an important part of the linguistic landscape. In the Swedish school system, English is a core subject and Swedes generally have high levels of proficiency (Henry, 2016, 442). Due to English being a highly valued language and Swedes having a high level of proficiency, cultures of English-speaking nations are often seen as being both interesting and accessible.

#### 2.3.2 English-speaking migrant definition

It may be important to include here how English-speaking migrant parent is defined. For the purposes of this study, all English-speaking migrant parents were of interest, so those who spoke English to their children with the hope of passing it on to their children with a high degree of fluency. It could be said that all parents had an English-speaking linguistic habitus that they wished to pass on to their children in the form of English language cultural capital. There were some differences between parents from ‘Anglosphere’ nations and parents from
nations considered outside of this. The Anglosphere is a group of nations that share common historical and cultural ties to the United Kingdom. This is generally considered to be The US, The UK and Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Although all of these nations were once part of the British Empire and have English as the main language, this definition does not include all countries which were once part of the British Empire or have English as an official language. These nations share a similar cultural background, maintain close political and diplomatic relations, and are often relatively monolingual due to a history of language assimilation policies. They are also characterised by liberal Anglo welfare systems which assume a class hierarchy and encourage personal responsibility and individual success.

3. Method and data

A qualitative study with semi-structured interviews was chosen as the method. Interviews were conducted in order to gain a deeper insight as to how parents use their cultural resources in order to help their children acquire cultural capital that they see as valuable. In this section the method, data collection, validity and ethical implications will be described.

3.1 Method

In order to investigate how English-speaking migrant parents use their cultural resources in order to help their children acquire the forms of capital that they see as valuable and how this shapes their parenting practices, 12 interviews were conducted in a qualitative study. A qualitative method was chosen because it would be the best way to investigate how cultural capital plays a role the experiences of parents, the meanings that parents attach to English in the Swedish context, and how this shapes their parenting practices. When looking at how parents are able to and choose to transmit forms of cultural capital to their children, it is important to capture how the parents feel and understand, and how this shapes their aspirations for their children. The interviews were open and semi-structured, this method was chosen because it allowed for open ended answers and the possibility for the parents to give in depth, spontaneous answers (Ahrene & Svensson, 2015, 46; Aspers, 2007, 137). The reason why this is helpful compared with other approaches, such as structured interviews, is because it allowed for themes to emerge that were unexpected.
3.1.1 Selection of participants

Participants were recruited by posting in Facebook groups that are specifically aimed towards English speaking parents in Sweden. There were four groups where an invitation to participate was posted. International parents in Sweden, The Stockholm international parents meet-up group, Mums in Sweden - English speakers, and English-speaking moms in Sweden. It was mentioned in the post that I was a mother of two small children myself and also my nationality, this was necessary in order to post in some of the Facebook groups as membership in these groups is only for those who fulfil the requirements of living in Sweden and being a parent. This may have influenced the type of respondents who showed interest in participating in the study.

The criteria and motivations were as follows:

- Must be a parent with a child under 10 years.
- Must be living in Sweden and intend on raising their child/ren in Sweden for a few years of their childhood. This is to make sure I am exploring the experiences of parents specifically in the Swedish cultural context.
- Must be from an English-speaking nation and/or actively speak English with their child/ren with the intention of passing on English as a primary or secondary language.

I was interested in parents of young children because aspirations are easier to capture at this age, also parents with young children are more concerned with language acquisition. The criteria made it possible to include people with diverse backgrounds with only English language capital, and the aim to pass it to their children as the unchanging variable. Other than these requirements the participants were chosen randomly in order of their response. The response was overwhelmingly mothers who wanted to participate in the study. There were 42 mothers who responded and two fathers. Of these parents I chose the first ten mothers and the two fathers to be participants in the study. This choice was made because I was interested in how gender might also shape parenting practices and had wanted the study to be about parents, not only mothers. The participants had a diverse range of nationalities, ethnicities and incomes, so this allowed the possibility to examine similarities and differences in using cultural capital and parenting practices while keeping the English-speaking variable. All participants, except one, could be seen as possessing high institutional cultural capital, and had university degrees.
3.1.2. Description of participants

The parents who participated in the study were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years in Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacha</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Russia/England</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayeed</td>
<td>Bangladesh/Australia</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mia</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mina</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The parents came from a variety of English speaking backgrounds and varied in gender, class, and levels of institutional, linguistic and transnational capital. Two parents had come to Sweden to study, then met a Swedish partner then decided to remain in Sweden. The other ten parents had moved to Sweden to follow a partner who was either Swedish or who worked in Sweden.

3.2 Data collection

Interviews took place during April 2019 at times and locations most convenient to the parents, they all took place at cafés, or at the respondents’ homes. I conducted all interviews myself. I
chatted with all respondents before and after the interviews in order to enable a good interviewing environment, help establish ‘an ideal conversation’ without power relations and establish background information (Aspers, 2007, 134-135). Eleven of the twelve interviews were recorded, except one because the respondent did not wish to have her voice recorded, in this case, extensive notes were taken throughout the interview and a report was written up directly after. During the interviews, five questions were asked of all parents (bilaga 1), and then further, differentiated questions were asked based on the parents’ responses. This allowed for a varied, spontaneous conversation in which different themes could be touched upon. The main questions covered the parents feeling of the relevance of their cultural capital when they came to Sweden, the aims, expectations they had for their children, the strategies they used or intended to use in order to fulfil these, and what opportunities they saw for their children. Aspers argues that a researcher should avoid falling into the ‘interview trap’ in which questions are made and answers are expected by the researcher (Aspers, 2007, 134). I used visual elicitation during the interviews (Aspers, 2007, 146). A picture that I had drawn was placed on the table during interviews to help illustrate the idea of a ‘cultural toolbox’, this represented the concept of cultural capital (bilaga 2). I introduced the toolbox in each interview as being the set of skills, knowledge, abilities and behaviour that a person can use in order to navigate the society that we are in, and also to achieve success. Culture can be seen as a toolkit which individuals can use in order to solve different problems. When encountering a problem, a person acts with the tools available to them (Swidler, 1986, 273). I encouraged the parent to think about their own toolbox, as well as the types of tools they hoped for their child to acquire. The picture also helped keep the conversation on topics relevant to cultural capital.

3.3 Analysis of material

All recorded interviews were transcribed, parents were given a pseudonym. Grammatical errors and colloquial language were changed to make reading easier. Since I transcribed this myself, I was able to listen and read quite a few times, this gave me the opportunity to write notes about recurring themes in the interviews, especially those themes that did not relate to the structured interview questions. After transcribing, the interviews were coded according to the marginal method (Aspers, 2007, 172).
3.4 Ethics

Ethical guidelines were followed according to The Swedish Research Council’s principles for research in the humanities and social sciences (Vetenskapsrådets riktlinjer för humanistiska och samhällsvetenskaplig forskning) (2002). These are based on four principles that the researcher should consider: to inform, to gain informed consent, to ensure confidentiality, and use of information. Participants were informed of the studies aim and how their information would be used. A consent form with information about the study was given and also explained verbally before the interview. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, that answering questions was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw their participation in the study at any time during the interview or afterwards. Information gathered was only used for the purposes of this study. Measures were taken during transcription to guarantee anonymity. Names of participants and their families were removed when transcribing the data and replaced with words such as ‘child’ or ‘husband’. Details about workplaces, places of residence, and schools were also removed or changed (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015, 28-29). This was to ensure that identities were confidential.

It is important to take power relations into consideration when interviews are the chosen method of collecting data. (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015, 29-30). The relationships between interviewer and participant felt balanced due to having a similar background, this helped to facilitate what Aspers describes as ‘an ideal conversation’ where steps are taken to ensure that both parties steer the conversation (Aspers, 2007, 135). During the interviews, it was occasionally assumed by the participant that I was an expert, particularly regarding children’s language development. A few parents may have assumed that they could, as a result in taking part in the study, increase their knowledge about children’s language development and that this would be an advantage for their children. This was reflected on as being particularly relevant to this study, because I am interested in the ways in which parents use strategies to accumulate cultural capital for themselves in order to benefit their children.

3.5 Validity of data

One of the shortcomings of qualitative research is the difficulty in making generalisations. The validity of the data must be taken into consideration in all research, and credibility is particularly important in the case of qualitative research, where the role of the researcher can
influence the type of data collected and the number of subjects who are studied is small. Even if qualitative research cannot make generalisations in the way quantitative research is able to, reoccurring patterns in norms, emotions and ideas which are taken for granted can be revealed (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015, 53). It is difficult to draw conclusions from a study consisting of only 12 parents from diverse backgrounds and therefore their experiences cannot be generalised. The purpose of this study is not to generalise the experiences of English-speaking migrants in Sweden, but to identity and examine the reoccurring ideas and expressions of this group of parents. The interview can be site of identity construction, for both the interviewer and interviewee. When a person talks about themselves and their experiences, they choose to present these in a particular way. That which is said during an interview can be influenced by many factors such as the time, place, and the relationship between those having the conversation, therefore there is no guarantee that material derived from an interview is ‘true’ (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015, 54). Factors that could have influenced the validity of data in this study are the way the participants were recruited and the way the study, and researcher was presented. There were a large number of respondents from New Zealand and Australia, probably because I mentioned that I was from New Zealand myself.

3.6 The role of the researcher

It is important to reflect on the researchers own role in the data collection process. Self-reflection is necessary in order to see how the researcher own role and relationship to the field influences those being interviewed, the material collected and what consequences this has on how data is interpreted and analysed (Aspers, 2007, 62). A dominant view on empirical research is that preexisting data is collected by a researcher, according to this view the researcher should be as neutral and distant as possible in order to minimise their own influence in the research process. This view however is not unproblematic because it reduces the researcher to a passive recipient of preexisting data, who risks contaminating ‘pure data’ making results less objective (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015, 19). I occupy a position within this field myself as an English-speaking migrant parent, and am of course influenced by my own expectations, opinions and knowledges. This role as insider however could be seen as an advantage in many respects because this facilitated interviews in a few ways. It allowed a more open conversation with the participants. They enthusiastically shared their feelings about parenthood and experiences as a migrant to someone that they understood could probably relate. My role as an insider also enabled a rather equal relationship between myself
and the interviewees. A drawback to this was that it was sometimes difficult to maintain the researcher/interviewee relationship and the conversation sometimes went off the topic due to the unstructured nature of the interviews. However, the picture of the toolkit helped to keep the conversation on the relevant topics.

4. Result and Analysis

In this section the findings of the interview material will be presented. The material will be analysed in relation to the theories and terms introduced earlier in the study. The central interview questions which were asked during the interview helped to give an overall picture of how English-speaking migrant parents in Sweden value linguistic and transnational cultural capital and how they use their cultural resources in order to transmit these forms of cultural capital and inculcate a habitus to their children. Not all the questions and answers will be addressed in the analysis, only those relevant to the research questions raised earlier in the study. The parent’s experiences of feeling limited or enabled establishing themselves in Sweden will be presented first. This is important to investigate because the parents own experience of migration affects the types of aims they have for their children.

4.1. Parents: the usefulness of their tools

Similarly to Erel (2012) who found that migrants’ cultural capital is transformed and contested in the new countries setting, parents felt that their cultural toolbox was helpful in some ways, yet lacking in others when establishing themselves in Sweden. The parent’s cultural toolbox needed to be revised, because while some of their tools were valuable in the Swedish context, some were not valuable at all. Parents realised they needed to acquire more relevant forms of cultural capital and were able to go about this in different ways. Parents in the study generally possessed high amounts of transnational cultural capital, they had lived and worked in countries besides their own and they saw this as being advantageous in easing their transition into Swedish society. The forms of institutional and linguistic capital they possessed however were not always relevant in the Swedish setting, and the parents were sometimes not able to use these forms as they had expected to.
4.1.1. English speaking cultural capital: possibilities and limitations

Many parents had difficulties translating their institutional cultural capital in the Swedish setting, especially those parents who lacked relevant institutional cultural capital. When Craig arrived in Sweden six years ago to be with his Swedish partner, he expected to find work in landscaping, a field he had previously worked in in New Zealand, Australia and The UK. Instead, he struggled, “Finding work was tough, I was a little bit arrogant thinking I had all this international experience in my field working for high-end clients but it didn’t work.”

Similarly, Victoria a 35 year old mother who moved to Sweden three years ago from the UK, had difficulties establishing herself in the Swedish job market after a successful career in HR in London. “People said I should work unpaid for half a year just to get experience and I said “no” it’s better that I stay at home and invest in my child than to work half a year for free”.

The parents had expected that it would have been easier to use the forms of capital that they possessed, but many parents felt they had to ‘start over’ in Sweden. Although the English was helpful in gaining employment, finding work was generally difficult for most parents. Some mentioned they had to ‘start from scratch’ or ‘downgrade’ in the job market, or work unpaid in order to obtain work experience in the Swedish setting, which is seen to be valuable by Swedish employers. Mia, a 35 year old mother who moved to Sweden from India 7 years ago found work after one month in her field as a lawyer. “It was easy to find work, but it was difficult to go up the ladder, I had to start all over again”. Similar to other findings, parents who lacked relevant institutional cultural capital in the Swedish setting often relied more heavily on their national cultural capital in order to find work in the field of hospitality, as an au pair or as a teacher. In these cases their nationality, cultural knowledge and way of speaking was seen to be an advantage and their habitus signalled that they were suitable to work in these jobs (Kelly & Lusis, 2006, 843; Erel, 2012; Lan, 2011). Sometimes these jobs helped in gaining new connections and some learnt some Swedish at the same time. Parents were able to use their English linguistic capital, and convert this into economic, social, and Swedish linguistic capital.

Lisa, a 37 year old mother who had worked as a curator in a museum in Ireland before moving to Sweden 9 years ago struggled as well, and only found work when she downgraded her labour market expectations and drew on her national capital to find employment:
I had real trouble finding work here in the beginning, but eventually I found work in the Irish bars, they liked that I was Irish and had the accent, I suppose I fit into the image they were trying to promote.

She said she would not have got this job without being Irish, and she continues to use her Irish national capital in her new line of work as an upper secondary school English teacher. She expressed that she feels people think she is a better teacher because of her background, which Swedish people associate with stricter discipline and higher standards, although she thinks that this is not the case as says she ‘was not even that good at English at school’ and also lacks institutional cultural capital in the form of a Swedish teaching degree:

“Kids, teachers and parents listen to me in a different way than they do to the Swedish teachers. It’s easier for me to control a classroom, and the difficult kids… it’s probably because I sound like I’m from a tv show or something…I’m not the typical relaxed casual Swedish teacher, people don’t see me like that, and I don’t see myself like that either.”

Here, she draws upon the cultural capital she has, and this operates to make herself more easily heard, and she is seen as being more legitimate in her role as a teacher as her national capital signals a more authoritative schooling background. Similar to other findings where nationality is linked to habitus, not only does her English-speaking habitus signal to others she is suitable for this job, but she also sees herself as fitting into this and believes she is suitable for the job herself (Kelly & Lusis, 2006).

Parents often mentioned that they were aware of certain privileges in Swedish society in relation to being a native English speaker. They occasionally or exclusively used English instead of Swedish in situations in order to get special treatment and better outcomes for themselves. Sacha, a 39 year old mother who moved to Sweden 10 years ago from New Zealand and worked as a researcher explain why she uses English in daily life.

“I think if you go into shops and speak bad Swedish, you get treated badly, if you speak English, they don’t even need to know how long you have been here for, they take the time.”

Louise, a 43 year old mother from England, moved to Sweden five years ago and did not speak Swedish herself as she did not need to for her job in a technology company. She said her Irish husband who was fluent in Swedish after living here 20 years preferred to use English while out.

“My husband has stopped speaking Swedish while he’s out, because his observation is that people are nicer to him. You get better service, people are nicer and more friendly towards you.”
Swedes were friendly towards them in ways they acknowledged did not apply to all migrants in Sweden. Like findings in other national settings, the participants who were white, often mentioned that it helped that they ‘blended in’ to Swedish society and experienced white privilege. White migrants can use their ethnic capital in order to be seen as having a more legitimate place within the nation (Hage, 2000, 53; Hubinette & Lundström, 2011, 44).

Where they had come from, different social rules applied, and these often did not apply in Sweden. Sweden was seen as a society with high levels of conformity and rigid systems that were difficult to question. Sayeed, a 38 year old father who grew up in Bangladesh, moved to Australia as a teenager, then moved to Sweden 10 years ago thought the norms and values in Sweden resulted in a conformist way of thinking. “In Sweden people can’t think outside the box, you can’t get things done here because people just wanna follow the rules, even if they don’t make sense.” All parents experienced difficulties in navigating social situations, fitting in and making friends with Swedes. Anna, a 28 year old mother from the US who moved to Sweden to study, then remained after meeting a Swedish partner, felt that being friendly was not a quality that was appreciated in Sweden.

“I’m an extroverted, happy, smiley kind of person and I felt that not only was that rejected here, but it was actually scorned upon, and that felt like a shock to my system because I felt like that was one of my better qualities.”

While not all parents expressed themselves as strongly as Anna, all mentioned that they had come from more open societies where it was easier to interact with other people and make friends.

**4.1.2 Acquiring Swedish linguistic capital**

Learning the Swedish language was often seen as difficult. Two parents had not attempted to acquire any Swedish linguistic capital at all, but most parents had realised that although English is a valuable language in Sweden, they were limited without Swedish. Helen, a 36 year old mother who moved to Sweden from Australia eight years ago, thought that although English was a huge advantage, it was also limiting without Swedish:

“You are handicapped without Swedish, it prevents you from doing certain things, you also get trapped with that the doors that open for you because you are a native English speaker also feel like the only ones that open for you, and then you end up trapped, you know, how do you get out of this situation? This little expat English speaking community.”
The parents who had learned Swedish expressed that they were happy to have done so because it put them in a more advantageous position, opening up for more possibilities in Swedish society and had made life easier for them and their children. Many parents had come from monolingual societies where almost no one is bilingual and had never expected to learn another language in their lifetime. Anna, from the US never imagined herself being bilingual, or having bilingual children. “I never would have imagined myself being bilingual because of the place where I grew up…I grew up in Minnesota and nobody speaks another language unless your, you know, and then you never even use it.” She, like many of the other parents interviewed from monolingual backgrounds, felt as if it was an achievement and saw it as a huge advantage that their children would be bilingual.

Parents expressed that their ability to acquire relevant linguistic capital in the Swedish setting was often hindered by the fact they already possessed high levels of English linguistic capital. Swedes often had low expectations of English speakers to learn their language, were surprised when they could speak Swedish and often continue conversations in English. Helen, an Australian mother of two explains:

“I’ve experienced it when I’m out in a café or shop, and I’m speaking Swedish with a person, then when I speak English to my kids, then they automatically assume that I can’t speak Swedish, and they communicate with me in English, but when you are learning a language, you want those opportunities to use it.”

Here, she highlights her experience of feeling misrecognised as an English-speaker who does not speak Swedish and that this results in lack of opportunity to learn. It could be interpreted that there are low expectations for English-speakers to acquire Swedish linguistic capital, because they already possess a valuable form of linguistic capital in the ‘linguistic market place’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, 145). Other parents also felt that there were low expectations for them to learn Swedish compared with other migrants and they felt this was due to a combination of not needing to, the perception that English speakers are not good at languages and difficulty in developing their skills even when they wished to do so.

**4.1.3. Social capital**

It is also important to note that parents relied on social capital in the form of partners, co-workers and fellow English-speaking nationals in order to navigate the Swedish system and help acquire forms of relevant capital in the Swedish setting. This social capital was helpful in finding work, dealing with the Swedish Migration Office, accessing language learning
resources such as SFI and navigating the Arbetsförmedlingen Swedish Job Agency, resulting in easier access to resources such as instegsjobb (The step-in job scheme for migrants). Craig, a 34 year old father from New Zealand, got help from his Swedish partner in order to use the system to find employment.

“It was actually my partner who helped me get onto the instegsjobb, I wouldn’t have figured it out without her, coz Arbetsförmedlingen were hopeless... It was my partner who helped me sign up to SFI too, it’s hard to figure out all this stuff on your own.”

English speaking migrants were in a good position to acquire relevant forms of capital due to their social networks.

**4.2 Aims for their children: “I want my kids to be better than me!”**

Similar to other findings on cultural capital and transnational parenting aims, parents had high aims for their children to gain widely valued skills that were useful in multiple contexts (Coe & Shani, 2015; Barglowski, 2015; Erel, 2012). In this section, those aims regarding language (linguistic cultural capital) and the skills that parents identified that they thought would be helpful for a changing globalising world (transnational cultural capital) will be discussed.

### 4.2.1 Linguistic Cultural Capital

Parents expressed different aims for their children regarding acquisition of linguistic cultural capital, but in general they hoped and expected that their children would acquire both English and Swedish fluently. Several parents also had aims for their child to acquire additional languages to certain levels of fluency. Children’s acquisition of linguistic capital takes time and effort and is seen by parents as a source of pride. It is also a signifier of parenting success (Barglowski, 2015, 16). Parents must use the resources available to them to establish contexts in which children can acquire and maintain the desired language skills.

Parents who had grown up as monolingual were more idealistic in their children’s language aims and expressed the importance of learning any language other than English, whether it was seen as a valuable language on a global scale or not. Most of these parents, including both of the parents who did not speak Swedish at all, drew upon discourses relating to children, bilingualism and its positive impact on brain development. Louise, from England identified this:
“I guess I’ve read a lot of things about the longer-term impact of being bilingual on the brain structure, so I notice it definitely with my son that he picks up other languages very quickly”.

Louise saw being bilingual an advantage, even if Swedish itself might not be helpful for her children because the families long term plans were to leave Sweden.

On the other hand, parents who had grown up multilingual and were from non-Anglo countries were more practical in their language aims for their children. They used their own knowledge and experience regarding multilingualism and how languages were valued in linguistic marketplaces and had more concrete aims about prioritising what they saw as valuable. Anika, a 25 year old mother from India who moved to Sweden 3 years ago and worked as a scientist did not want her daughter to learn her mother tongue (Tamil) at school.

“I don’t want her to have the extra lessons (in Tamil) at school, because I think it will be too much for her, at school I just want her to focus on what she needs to do. I will teach her Tamil like a fun part. When she grows up she will know this is my mother tongue and it’s her choice whether she wants to carry on with it.”

Additional languages to the dominant ones that they had chosen to pass on were seen as extra, and were less prioritised. Even though the parents themselves were fluent and literate in additional languages. They wished for their children to be able to speak and understand at least the main languages in their home countries and this was made in relation to accessing popular culture such as Bollywood movies that they wanted their child to appreciate, being able to understand what was happening around them, and ensuring they could communicate with relatives.

Three parents in the study mentioned they thought native English-speakers were not effective communicators and lacked cross cultural competence, they were seen as having difficulties accommodating and adapting to others. Victoria explains how she feels about this.

“I think English speakers often live in a bubble, they always expect people to adapt to them, so they never bother learning languages...they are not so good at languages, but you know, they don’t really make the effort.”

Victoria highlights one of the effects of possessing a desired form of linguistic capital in a marketplace intersecting with lacking the ability to be flexible and adapt to other cultures, qualities that are associated with transnational cultural capital. Parents expressed they saw this it as an advantage that their children would avoid this due to them being multilingual with opportunities to develop skills of flexibility and empathy. Being an English speaker was often
associated with not having confidence or ability to learn new languages and an upbringing in an Anglo nation, which are often monolingual was associated with difficulty developing the skills of adaptability and empathy towards speakers of other languages and less opportunities to develop intercultural competence. Helen from Australia wished for her children to have access to languages and culture.

“I grew up in a white pocket where I didn’t get exposed to so many migrants, and it meant I developed stereotypes about certain groups. I mean I had no idea!...The migrants who were there were expected to assimilate to Australian culture, so they lost the language in one generation. Now we live in a much more globalised, I mean with refugees and these sorts of things, it’s like, I want them to not develop stereotypes and have a better understanding of how other people can be.”

This was important for her because aside from her upbringing in an English speaking country making it more difficult for her learning languages, she also felt that when she grew up she was sheltered from other cultures and she did not feel she grew up with the skills of being able to relate to people from a wide range of backgrounds. She was aware of this in her own case and wished for her children to develop these skills.

4.2.2 Skills for a changing world: transnational cultural capital.

A central theme that arose during the interviews was that the parents felt that the world had changed a lot during their lifetime and that they did not know what type of skills would be helpful in their children’s futures. Because the parents had experienced difficulties in converting their cultural capital in a new setting, they expressed that they wanted their children to acquire skills such as adaptability and open-mindedness that would help them in a changing world that was becoming more connected across national borders. Mina, a 31 year old mother from the US, moved to Sweden four years ago and works as a researcher. She saw the advantages of raising a child in a transnational setting.

“I think speaking other languages and having connections to other cultures does kind of equip you with the ability to see things from other perspectives. For example, you might have to adapt yourself to people around you, like choosing which language to speak and choosing which cultural norms to adhere to and which one to push down.”

Not only did parents want their children to be able to fit into both Sweden and their home countries but they also stressed the importance of their child being able to fit in and find their place in other national spaces too. Besides this, reoccurring skills and values that were mentioned were critical thinking, thinking outside the box, friendliness, tolerance, kindness and empathetic.
Victoria grew up in Russia but moved to the UK to study and spent her adult life there before moving to Sweden 3 years ago. When asked about the qualities that she thought were most important for children to develop, and whether possibilities for this were enabled or limited in the Swedish setting, she answered the following:

*In Sweden people don’t think outside the box, but our kids will be more open to ideas. I would like for my daughter and any future kids to grow up with a mindset that we are not limited to Sweden right here right now, because the world is so big, distances are only getting smaller, technology is moving so fast, she might want to get a job elsewhere you never know what kind of skills will be required in 20 years... It’s the social skills that play a big role and how you equip the next generation to be successful in the future because the big changes that happened in Russia overnight, people just didn’t adapt, many people couldn’t cope. It’s the social skills that make or break what kind of success you’re going to have and the possibilities you can achieve when your older.*

In this answer, Victoria touches upon several themes that were reoccurring in other parents answers too. First, she mentions that she thinks that Swedish society is characterised by conformity, and that her children will not be like this due to her being from elsewhere, and able to challenge this attitude. Second, she goes on to say that she wants her children to have a more global perspective, and not be limited by national borders. Thirdly, she talks about the changing world and the uncertainty of the skills required within this world. Finally, she states that despite not knowing the skills required, she believes that due to her experience she is quite certain that it is social skills and the ability to adapt that will determine chances of success. Summarised in one answer are the themes that were typical for the material gathered as a whole.

**4.3. Parents expectations**

Here I will discuss the expectations parents had in terms of fulfilling their aims regarding acquisition of cultural capital and also what imaginings parents have for their children’s futures.

**4.3.1. Expectation to fulfil aims: Individualism vs “lagom”**

Parents were confident that they would meet their aims in terms of their children acquiring language and cultural knowledge of their home countries. However, a theme that emerged during interviews was the values, skills and habits encouraged in the different in schooling systems. All parents mentioned their concern about the Swedish school system not being competitive enough and how this might conflict with values that were seen as important in
their home countries. Lucy, a 34 year old mother from England who moved to Sweden nine years ago and is now studying to become an elementary teacher, said that her son played down his maths ability at school and was probably under stimulated because he wanted to avoid sticking out as good at maths. “My son said he finds the questions too easy, but doesn’t wanna say so, in case the other kids find them hard. I think he has internalised jantelagen!” Other parents also mentioned the “Law of Jante” (jantelagen) or the Swedish concept of “lagom” and talked about how this attitude could be seen as conflicting with the competitive values that were seen as not only valuable but sometimes seen as necessary in their home countries in order to achieve success. In the schooling systems in these nations there is more emphasis put on individuality, personal success and higher incentive to achieve excellence.

Although no questions were asked during the interview about the Swedish school system and it was not originally thought it would be a relevant topic to this study, ten of the twelve parents, from all national backgrounds mentioned they were concerned about how the Swedish school system does not encourage students to ‘be the best they can be’ and this was seen as a potential disadvantage for children later in their life. That the parents used the discourse of ‘the uncompetitive school system’ reflects the difficulty parents have when operating in multiple national settings themselves and preparing their children to do the same. When asked about how belonging to two cultures, might impact on her son, Anna answered the following:

“Swedish society doesn’t encourage kids to be the best you can be as an individual, I mean if my son is really talented at something then I want him to be able to foster that and work on it…the American system encourages individualism, and that could be an advantage.”

In this answer, Anna identifies individualism as a trait celebrated in the US, where she grew up, and her uncertainty over whether her sons’ talents will be recognised and encouraged in Sweden. It highlights the values inherent in the liberal Anglo societies which the parents know with familiarity. Victoria stresses the importance of being the best you can be as an individual in a society that rewards this:

“The UK is a very individualistic society, people understand that everything in the life depends on themselves, the better you perform at school, the better university you will get into and the better job you will get. You need to rely on yourself and on your family, and they rely on you too. The values are very different, they are about performance and succeeding, not because people are obsessed with money, but because it influences the quality of your life.”
With this answer she highlights the importance of this way of thinking in these societies. She goes on to talk about the problems of the law of Jante in an international setting:

“"My industry is an industry where the better you are, the bigger money you will get. There was nothing wrong with being the best in your class and having the top grades, in fact you would get a gold medal and it would be a huge achievement and huge advantage in getting entrance to a good university. It’s not only for your self-esteem but I mean in New York and London, its hugely competitive, there’s not enough really high paid jobs for everybody and to get there you need a proven track record in your work and university life.”

Victoria expects that her children will be go on to lead lives across national borders and because of her own experience, she sees the importance of certain skills and values in an international context, which she recognises is very competitive.

Like the parents in other studies on cultural capital and schooling, these parents, regardless of their own education and social class, had a good knowledge of the education system in Sweden (Lopez Rodriguez, 2012). They were aware of the norms and expectations set by the educational institutions, and even in the cases where parents lacked Swedish linguistic capital, they felt as if it was accessible to them. Despite having high aims for their children within this system, they had mixed expectations for their child to succeed to their full ability within the school system, without guidance ‘in the right direction’ from themselves.

4.3.2 Expectations for fitting in.

Most parents expressed the importance of their children being able to fit into both Sweden and their home countries to some degree, with many parents expressing they imagined their children not only being fixed to a particular country, but rather having a ‘global identity’.

Helen from Australia expressed the importance of having a transnational identity.

“I want them to feel Swedish, but I also want them to feel global. I don’t want them to feel like they don’t belong somewhere, I want them to develop the skills and the confidence to make their place anywhere, and that’s kind of why I think that living in Europe in this kind of environment where they get exposed to a lot more languages and cultures is a benefit to them.”

They had various aims for their children acquiring the right type of cultural capital that would allow them to fit into Sweden, the parents’ home country and beyond. Parents from the less culturally dominant nations of Australia, New Zealand and Ireland had intentions to teach their children what is different and special about life in those nations.
These parents drew upon the social capital available to them in Sweden in the form of friends from the same or similar countries in order to teach their children about what life is like in their home country. Regular trips back to the home country (requiring economic capital), as well as visits from abroad and contact with other families from similar countries (social capital) were mentioned as important in developing a habitus that would allow them to fit into various national settings.

Parents from India and Bangladesh had less expectations for their children to ‘fit in’ to their home countries. Anika did not have expectations that her daughter would fit into India. “It’s different, it’s very different…she is expected to behave in a certain way because she is a woman. There is not much gender equality, which she wouldn’t be okay with, so I won’t do that to her.” Mia felt similar feelings for her daughter. “I want her to have some connection to where we come from but I don’t expect her to have too much of a connection either, she is better off here.” They felt as if their home countries were so different to Sweden and that their children had more opportunities available to them in Sweden.

4.4 strategies: “I feel confident I can teach them myself!”

Not all parents felt confident that their child would achieve the level of English that they hoped for, and took active steps using their social and economic capital to ensure their children would develop English skills to a high level of fluency. The strategies used to achieve this were, an English speaking au pair, regular trips back to the parent’s home country or another English speaking country, and reliance on social capital in the form of relatives, often grandmothers, coming to stay in order to develop the child’s English skills.

Due to high levels of cultural capital themselves, they were often confident they were aware of the best ways to help their children attain valuable capital. They were aware of research around multilingual children’s language acquisition, felt confident choosing schools that would help them meet their aims. They saw no barriers to being involved in their children’s schooling despite sometimes lacking Swedish linguistic capital themselves, relying instead on English. They drew upon social and cultural capital in a variety of ways in order to navigate the schooling system in order to unlock the greatest advantages for their children.
Due to their knowledge of what is valued in other school systems and other societies (the societies they want their children to have access to later on) they can compare, contrast and strategise how they could make up for the things they feel to be lacking in the Swedish school setting. They felt like they could teach these things themselves, whether they were linguistic skills, practical skills such as handwriting (there is less a focus on this skill in Sweden compared with other countries), or sports and cultural activities where the child was seen to excel. Lisa felt that she was in a good position as a school teacher to know what skills were lacking in the Swedish context and took extra steps to teach her children in her spare time, or used after school tutoring services. “While I appreciate certain aspects of the school system here, I feel like I know the sorts of things they need and feel confident that I can teach those things myself!” If they felt like they could not teach these things themselves they felt like they could use their social or economic capital in order to help their children obtain these values, skills or forms of knowledge. Furthermore, the parents often expressed that they did not feel bound by Swedish norms and values, but were confident subverting these in order to help their children acquire the forms of capital they thought to be relevant.

What follows is three different examples of strategies that mothers in the study used that might be seen as uncommon by Swedish standards, but normalised in the other national contexts in which the mothers operate. The first mother, Lisa from Ireland, had an au pair, who provided her children with valuable English linguistic capital and allowed her more time to work (therefore helping her acquire more economic capital). The second mother was Helen from Australia who previously worked at a school and now works as a researcher but still works indirectly with schools. She had managed to start her child one year earlier at school, despite this being very uncommon in Sweden.

“Sometimes I think the school system here is quite soft and they sit the bar quite low, but I want my kids to have opportunities to develop good habits of study, of work, from the get-go.”

She wanted her child to be stimulated at school and used her knowledge of the school system, in order to start her daughter a year earlier at school, at a school she had selected herself. The third mother, Victoria, who had the aim to raise her daughter as a balanced trilingual, chose to stop working after a successful international career in HR, and instead stayed at home with her daughter in order to develop the language skills she wanted her daughter to acquire. Aware of this going against the Swedish norm, she felt that this was a crucial time in her daughter’s life to develop skills and would miss out if she was working. “If you lose out on
this time and just have a job for the sake of it, you might miss out.” Her daughter also attended a language school on weekends and extracurricular activities during the week, which she knew was perceived as excessive by Swedish standards, but saw this as an investment in her daughter that was more important. These examples demonstrate that parents can use strategies to make sure their children acquire desired forms of cultural capital and this may deviate from Swedish norms, but the parents feel less expected to adhere to these norms. They feel like they can do things their own way in order to benefit their children.

While having access to different systems enabled parents to use strategies they felt would benefit their children, this navigation of multiple systems also puts pressure on parents, as highlighted by Mia:

“You know, I feel like I’m stuck between two extremes at home there is too much focus and here, I don’t think it’s adequate, so I think that puts a bit of pressure on us to balance this out. ”

Mia expresses the difficulties parents face when navigating different systems and this was common for most parents in the study. Sometimes they have access to different systems, but not always the ability to act how they want to within these, and also no guarantee which strategies will provide the best returns for their investments (Erel, 2012). Overall, parents expressed they could look critically at the school system here because they felt they had additional, valuable knowledge of how things worked in other national contexts. The experiences of English-speaking migrants differs greatly from findings that involve marginalised migrants (Blackledge, 2001; Osman & Månsson, 2015).

4.5 Opportunities and obstacles

Like the parents in Coe and Shani’s study (2015), the parents had access to resources available to them from multiple countries, however this both caused tensions and gave them opportunities, because they felt that an upbringing in Sweden gave access to certain attributes while other forms of desired capital are more easily obtainable in their home contexts.

Some skills, values and forms of knowledge were seen to be easier for children to learn in Sweden than in the parents’ home countries. One example is children learn to be independent and self-sufficient from a young age, this is due to the view of children being competent agents. Environmental awareness, practical outdoor knowledge, access to technology, as well
as the values of democracy and gender equality were seen to be valuable for children in their futures. Mina saw advantages in the school system here compared with the US.

“I feel that being a critical thinker and also developing the ability to understand and relate to a range of different perspectives and be able to understand other people is a bit of a priority of the Swedish education system to a greater extent than it might be in the US, it seems like it’s an explicit goal, cooperation and understanding, that’s something that I would want.”

Besides this, language and intercultural skills were sometimes seen as to easier to acquire in Sweden than in the parents’ home countries. When asked if she thought her children opportunities would be greater than her own, and in what way, Helen answered:

“What we want for our kids is to have the gift of languages, not to be just the English speaker who is learning language as an adult, to have the gift of communication and culture from an early age, I want them to travel, it seems much more like something you can do here… I might not have climbed the Eiffel tower, even though its only 5 hours away, but there is an idea I can give these opportunities to my kids…its more achievable.”

Helen felt her children’s opportunities to acquire linguistic and transnational cultural capital were greater in Sweden than in her home country.

There were many opportunities seen in regards to raising children in transnational families, not only did children have access to multiple valued languages and citizenships from birth, but it was also seen as a benefit within the Swedish setting to gain access to other cultures in Sweden as an outsider, families gravitated towards other families that were transnational. Families lived across national boundaries rather than within them and socialised with other families that did the same, this both helped with children’s English language acquisition, but also allowed children opportunities to develop transnational cultural capital. Louise talked about how this type of upbringing influenced her sons sense of self and idea of what he could achieve.

“This is an example of how it affected him, on a family trip we stopped over in (this country), and it turns out, my daughters friend from dagis had moved to (this country), her dad is the Swedish Ambassador to (this country), so we went to his house, literally my son said ‘I know what I want to be when I grow up, I want to be an ambassador’ and I said ‘Actually, you would be a very good ambassador you know, you’re interested in other people, but you would have to work really hard in school’ But you know he was just like immediately, hmmm, this is achievable, this is something I could do. And I feel like that comes from this kind of upbringing, all this kind of experience they have had.”

Louise felt that she grew up with limited opportunities to acquire transnational cultural capital herself, but that the opportunities available for her children were much more because of the
type of life experience her children had. Children become comfortable operating in certain fields, learning ‘the rules of the game’. Through family practices, children develop their habitus and get an idea about what is achievable for them.

An opportunity that parents identified for their children was the generous Swedish system makes life better here economically than in their home countries, and means there is better chances for maintaining or strengthening one’s social position. Children were seen as more able to participate in sports or cultural activities and enter university. Access to these depends greater on social class in Anglo countries but are much more accessible in Sweden.

Similar to the parents in Barglowski’s study (2015), the parents felt that they could not re-establish the same life for themselves in Sweden as they had in other countries in relation to their careers, however the quality of life and opportunities available for their children’s futures was often used as a rationalisation for the losses of the parent. All parents saw the opportunities available for their children as greater than their own. Often parents had ‘settled for less here’ but this was justified because the children were seen to have increased chances to acquire linguistic and transnational capital as well as an increased chance of social mobility due to the generous welfare system.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine how transnational and linguistic cultural capital are valued by English-speaking migrant parents and how parents use their own cultural resources in order to help their children acquire the forms of capital that the see as valuable. This study has shown some of the ways parents use their cultural capital in different ways in order to influence their children’s acquisition and inculcate a habitus for their child. Much of what has been shown in this study correlates with earlier research. Similar to previous studies, parents are concerned about how what is considered valuable cultural capital varies across national settings and must negotiate between settings, speculating on what forms will be the most valuable for their children in their futures. However, most previous studies on this topic focus on migrants who are marginalised in their new country, whereas this study looks at the
experiences of somewhat privileged migrants. The experiences of English-speaking migrants differs greatly from findings that involve marginalised migrants.

Parents hoped their children would acquire English fluency, but had different opportunities to achieve this depending on how they could draw upon social and economic resources in order to create a need for their child to speak English. Cultural capital was also important here, with parents describing different learning methods and different resources available to them to use within Sweden. Their children’s English language acquisition was not a main concern however, because parents generally felt confident they could find ways to achieve their aims regarding this.

Parents consistently raised two topics of concern relating to their aims and expectations of children’s cultural capital acquisition: the competing values of individualism in Anglo school systems and *jantelagen* in the Swedish school system. Parents recognised this due to operating in different national context themselves and knowing what is valued in the different systems. The second concern most often raised was that they wanted their children to acquire the desired linguistic capital and not be limited as ‘just the English speaker’. This second concern was only a concern for the parents who grew up as monolinguals. This was due to the parents own experience feeling the limitations of growing up in a monolingual society where languages other than English are not valued, then having difficulty learning other languages as an adult. They saw the benefit of learning multiple languages early and wanted this opportunity for their children.

Sweden was seen as the better setting in order to build confidence and ability with languages earlier, due to the proximity of other countries, and languages being valued. Also, more opportunities were available to build intercultural competence due to more multicultural settings in which the parents and children operated. This is seen to be easier in Sweden than in parents’ home countries. This is recognised due to the cultural capital of parents who operate in both settings. English speaking migrant parents saw their children as having more advantages than children in their home countries due to their children being multilingual, and having the opportunity to acquire linguistic cultural capital due to the proximity of other languages and cultures to Europe and the general openness to these languages and cultures in comparison with monolingual Anglo countries. Some parents were aware that fluency in languages other than English is often not part of the English-speaking habitus, and English
speakers are sometimes poor cross cultural communicators who have difficulty adapting to other cultures and parents wanted to avoid this for their children.

Parents stressed the importance their children gaining skills associated with transnational cultural capital such as adaptability, flexibility, empathy, cross cultural competence, the ability to get on with anyone, anywhere and the ability to find your place anywhere. These skills were assumed to be more difficult to pick up in Anglo monolingual contexts. These skills were seen to be easier to pick up for children who live in transnational contexts. But it is not that parents saw it to be easier to pick up the transnational skills only because they lived here, they saw it as being easier because, as an English speaking parent, they bring these possibilities closer to their child, because they see themselves as being more connected to the rest of the world as an English speaker. They saw these possibilities as greater for their own children than to those children in Sweden who didn’t grow up in transnational families. Parents, who had operated in transnational setting themselves, saw their children as global citizens who were not just bound to Sweden, or the parents’ home country, but to the wider world. Parents could use their capital to inculcate their children’s habitus over a long period, being able to do so by drawing on the forms of capital they had. Some parents felt they lacked economic capital, but could use their non-monetary forms of capital - cultural and social in order to help their child accumulate the capital that they saw as important.

Because children were expected to operate in future transnational spaces, they would need cultural capital that was not only useful in the Swedish setting, but in multiple settings. Therefore, they would need skills, habits and dispositions that would benefit them across multiple national settings. Therefore, the parents were concerned about what they understood as the non-competitive school system. Parents stressed the importance of being motivated and stimulated in school in order to develop valuable skills and habits such as self-discipline, they wanted their children to be recognised for hard work, pushing themselves to be the best that they can be and achieving excellence. These are skills and values associated with more individualistic Anglo societies and were seen to be lacking in the Swedish school system. Similar to previous studies on parenting and cultural capital, this of course creates concern for parents about their children’s cultural capital and habitus because they are aware of differences in values in different national contexts, expect their children to operate in these in the future, but don’t know exactly which values are the best to invest in, and are unsure how successful they will be in instilling these values. Parents in this study however generally felt
that due to their position, they confident having some idea of what skills might be important in the future. They saw social skills, language skills and the ability to be adaptable in a variety of national contexts as important because they themselves had faced these challenges during their own migratory experiences.

English speaking migrant parents felt they had increased opportunities to help their children acquire desired cultural capital and inculcate a habitus for their children for four reasons. Firstly, by raising their children in Sweden as opposed to their home country, this allowed for what they saw as more opportunities to learning languages and experience other cultures than in their own countries. Secondly, as a (somewhat privileged) outsider in the Swedish setting, who has valuable knowledge of and experience in transnational contexts, they can provide their children access to these settings in the form of travel, extended periods abroad, and social contacts outside of Sweden in English speaking and other countries. This will help to form the child’s transnational habitus and prepare their child to operate in transnational settings. The ability to acquire this type of capital would usually be limited by a person’s social class in both Sweden and the parents’ home country.

Thirdly, the generous welfare system and egalitarian values were seen by parent to be an advantage for their children that they would not necessarily have in their own nations that had virtually non-existent welfare models and much more rigid classed and gendered hierarchies. Parents identified this as being a key advantage of raising children here. Opportunities to maintain social position or to be upwardly mobile were seen to be greater in the Swedish setting. Finally, parents felt they were able to contrast and compare the different school and value systems which they had knowledge of. As privileged outsiders, they felt they were able to be critical of the school system and the Swedish norms and values such as ‘lagom’ and ‘jantelagen’ and used strategies to challenge these.

The parents felt that although they had experienced difficulties in converting their cultural capital and did not always possess relevant cultural capital in the Swedish context, they often found ways to overcome this, using the capital they had to make up for these shortcomings. The limitations the parents experienced due to their move to Sweden were often justified because of the opportunities were seen to be greater for their children. They were aware of the opportunities that existed for their children in Sweden compared with their home countries and proved themselves to be skilful navigators of multiple systems, with a global perspective
in mind. They had knowledge of these multiple systems, were able to discern between them, pick what they saw as valuable from each, and felt confident taking steps to compliment what they thought was lacking, thereby enhancing their children’s cultural capital acquisition as they saw fit.

Bibliography


**Bilaga 1**

**Interview Guide**

1. Tell me about when you first came to Sweden, what was easy and what was more difficult for you? Did your experience differ from your expectations? How did you go about making life easier for yourself? Do you think being from (country) helped in anyway?

2. Tell me about the aims you have for your children? Language, schooling, fitting in wise? Do you feel that you actively try to help your child build their toolkit?

3. Tell me about the strategies you use, or intend to use in order to fulfil these aims.

4. Do you think you will be able to achieve these aims?

5. Parents usually hope that their children will have access to more opportunities that they had themselves, what advantages and opportunities do you see as being available to your child due to their background? Do you think they would have any advantages over children who were just Swedish, or just (from your country)?

**Bilaga 2**