



Crafting one's own narrative: High-income immigrant parental choices and practices relative to Icelandic compulsory schooling

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Thesis for M.A. degree in International studies in education

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Preface

This 40 ETC credits research paper is the final fulfillment for the completion of my master's degree in International Studies in Education at the University of Iceland.

First, I would like to thank the mothers who generously shared their time and stories with me and made this thesis possible. I give thanks to my academic supervisor Berglind Rós Magnúsdóttir for her belief in my abilities, and for the large degree of academic freedom she granted to me as I pushed through this daunting process in my own way. I also thank the organizers and participants in Menntakvika 2021 for attending my presentation and for providing valuable feedback, and to the anonymous peer-reviewers for their time, efforts, comments and suggestions. These suggestions were integral in the completion of the thesis I'm handing in today. I'd also like to thank Elizabeth Lay for the time she spent reading and commenting on this thesis, for the books she delivered to my home, and for her keen eye for extra spaces after periods.

Last, but not least, a special thank you to my family: to my husband, Eric, for his constant support, to my youngest son, Simon, for joining us in our adventures to Iceland, and to my oldest son, Erik, who remained in the United States, for wearing a mask, and social distancing during the COVID pandemic- or at least for reporting to me that he did.

This thesis was written solely by me, the undersigned. I have read and understand the University of Iceland Code of Ethics (https://english.hi.is/university/university_of_iceland_code_of_ethics) and have followed them to the best of my knowledge. I have correctly cited all other works or previous work of my own, including, but not limited to, written works, figures, data, or tables. I thank all who have worked with me and take full responsibility for any mistakes contained in this work.

Signed:

Angela Shapow

Seltjarnarnes, Iceland October 2021

Abstract

Dealing with a foreign education system is becoming more and more common among parents. Even Iceland, a distant island in the North Atlantic, has transformed in the last 20 years. Currently, 16% of the Icelandic parent population in the Reykjavik metropolitan area is of foreign origin. The aim of this thesis is to explore the parenting practices of the more privileged cohort of the migrating parents residing in Reykjavík from the mothers' perspective. Participants in the study were seven high income mothers, who were not partnered with an Icelandic native, with at least one compulsory school aged child being educated in Iceland. First, the study provides a descriptive analysis of the parenting practices broadly as reported by the mothers. It then provides a more nuanced analysis of how these practices can be analyzed using Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus and how transnational perspective influence these practices. This qualitative exploratory study is based on individual, semi-structured interviews. My findings show that high income immigrant mothers in Iceland act much the same as high income immigrants in other countries. The research also showed that these mothers' practices were not only motivated by a desire to optimally situate themselves and their family members on a field, but also by other values such as advancing social justice and maintaining transnational ties.

Ágrip

Að búa til sína eigin frásögn: Hátekjur innflytjenda val og venjur í tengslum við íslenska grunnskóla

Það verður æ algengara að foreldrar þurfi að takast á við erlent menntakerfi. Meira að segja Ísland, fjarlæg eyja í norður-Atlantshafi, hefur gjörbreyst síðustu 20 ár. Á þessari stundu eru 16% íslenskra foreldra á stór-Reykjavíkursvæðinu af erlendu bergi brotin. Tilgangur þessarar ritgerðar er að kanna uppeldisaðferðir efnaðra foreldra í hópi innflytjenda sem búa í Reykjavík frá sjónarhorni móður. Þátttakendur voru sjö mæður með háar tekjur, sem voru ekki í sambandi með Íslendingi, sem áttu að minnsta kosti eitt barn á grunnskólaaldri í íslenska menntakerfinu. Könnunin lýsir fyrst greiningu á uppeldisaðferðunum í grófum dráttum eins og mæðurnar lýstu þeim. Því næst er skoðað hvernig má nánar greinar þessar aðferðir með því að nota hugmyndir Bourdieus um fé, svið og veruhátt og hvernig þverþjóðlegt sjónarhorn hefur áhrif á þessar aðferðir. Þessi eigindlega könnun er byggð á hálfformlegum, einstaklingsviðtölum. Niðurstöður mínar sýna að hátekjumæður í hópi innflytjenda haga sér á mjög svipaðan hátt og hátekjumæður í hópi innflytjenda í öðrum löndum. Könnunin sýnir líka að aðferðir þessara mæðra voru ekki aðeins knúnar af löngun til að staðsetja þær og fjölskyldur þeirra á sviði, heldur líka af gildum eins og að stuðla að félagslegri réttisýni og að viðhalda þverþjóðlegum böndum.

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1 Overview

The aim of this study was to explore the parenting practices of the more privileged cohort of the migrating parents residing in Reykjavík from the mothers' perspective.

Participants in the study were seven high income mothers, not partnered or parenting with an Icelandic native, with at least one compulsory school aged child being educated in Iceland. The study focused on two main areas: first, a descriptive analysis of the parenting practices broadly as reported by the mothers and second, a more nuanced analysis of how these practices can be analyzed using Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field, and habitus and how the practices are influenced by transnational perspectives.

A plentitude of educational research shows a positive correlation between active parental participation and student achievement and adjustment (Nieto, 2010). Stakeholders, from policymakers to parents, consider parent participation to be a key component in compulsory education. In addition to consultation with schools, parents support their children's education in several ways, ranging from providing supplementary education to overseeing homework.

Dealing with a foreign education system is becoming more and more common among parents. Even Iceland, a distant island in the North Atlantic, has transformed in the last 20 years. Currently, 16% of the Icelandic parents' population in the Reykjavik metropolitan area is of foreign origin. This dramatic increase has impacted the educational system.

My findings indicate that high-income immigrant mothers in Iceland act much the same as high-income immigrants in other countries. The research also showed that these mothers' practices were not solely motivated by a desire to optimally situate themselves and their family members on a field, but also by more communitarian values such as advancing social justice, maintaining transnational ties, and achieving balance across divergent fields.

1.1 Main contribution

This study's main contribution is to expand the exploration of parental choice and practices to include the choices of immigrants with a privileged educational, economic, and professional status who have chosen to reside in Iceland but also participate in the transnational knowledge economy that extends national boundaries. They are immigrants but in a different position than most others, not so much by educational attainment, as many immigrants in Iceland come with higher education credentials, but more due to their access to highly skilled positions in areas such as technology, education, or finance. Due to their family's collective skill sets, and worldwide deficits in their areas of expertise, they have broad flexibility in residential choice that allows them to choose not only a school for their children, but also to choose which country's school system is most likely to align with their vision for their children. A failure to study privileged immigrants may reproduce "a skewed image of migrants and immigrants as predominantly non-western, non-white, non-elite subjects, while at the same time failing to take seriously the experiences of migrants that do not fit this image" (Kunz, 2016, p. 89). In other words, immigrants are a diverse group of people, with many intersecting factors shaping their identities and possibilities (Barglowski, 2019). Policymakers and advocates need information on migrants of different classes to identify and address unmet needs across classes and to identify systemic strength, weaknesses, and modes of operation. While recognizing that most immigrants in Iceland are white, it is important to avoid contributing to the stereotypical idea of all immigrants as non-white, non-elite, and non-western.

The following research questions guide this study:

- *What are high-income immigrant mothers' perceptions of Icelandic compulsory schools and what is their point of comparison,*

- *How do high income immigrant mothers support their children's education at home,*
- *How do they interact with the compulsory school, and*
- *How do they select schools?*

Finally, the study asks:

- *How can these practices be analyzed using Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field, and habitus, and*
- *How do transnational perspectives influence these practices?*

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has ten parts beginning with the introduction that outlines the purpose and value of the study. Chapter two gives a broad overview of the Icelandic country context including the educational field and recent research on parental participation in Iceland. Chapter three then details the theoretical framework and how the theoretical framework has been used in prior educational research broadly across a variety of contexts Chapter four details the Icelandic country context. Chapter five then outlines the methodology employed.

Chapters six through nine contain the findings from the interviews. Chapter six addresses the mothers' perceptions and experiences of the educational systems of their home countries and how they compare the educational system in their home country to that of Iceland. While this chapter does not directly answer a research question, it was a necessary precursor to latent analysis of the research findings using the selected theoretical devices. Chapters seven through nine are organized according to Aldeen & Windel's (2015) taxonomy of parental involvement and sets forth the mothers' reported practices. Chapters ten and eleven analyze the findings and contain the discussion portion of this thesis. Finally,

chapter twelve reflects on the research holistically, comments on the study's implications, and presents areas of suggested further research and practical application.

2 Theory and research

2.1 Bourdieusian Field Theory

This section focuses on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and transnationalism as a perspective and unique habitus, providing the framework for the data analysis. These frameworks are appropriate to this study because, as immigrants, these mothers simultaneously react to the values of two or more national fields. Adopting a transnational perspective provides a rich explanation of the tensions, commonalities, and balances the mothers must make in this transnational space. Research has shown that access to capital across systems shape individuals' transnational practices. This makes a Bourdieusian theoretical framework, widely used to explain choices and practices in the educational field (Lareau & Weininger, 2003), a natural fit for this study.

Holistically, Bourdieu's theory has been criticized as vague, incomprehensible, incomplete, and not universally applicable. (See e.g. Riley, 2017; Sullivan, 2002). Yet, his ideas of cultural capital, habitus, and field have gained widespread use as analytical devices in explaining human behavior, especially in education (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). This thesis is limited to Bourdieusian conceptualization of capital, the habitus, and the field, and does not address his theories holistically. This section of the thesis explains Bourdieu's notion of capital, how it manifests as a habitus in the embodied form on fields, and how a habitus interacts on and is influenced by fields.

2.1.1 Bourdieu's conception of capital

Bourdieu developed a concept of capital that includes social capital and economic capital in addition to the economic capital theorized by Marx (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital includes social networks and personal relationships (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron,

1990). Social capital is recognized by group memberships such as inclusion in a family, a church, a school, or a nation (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural capital, an individual's possession of cultural knowledge, resources, and practices, includes familiarity with institutional contexts, processes, and expectations (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014) and subjective aspects such as levels of confidence and entitlement (Reay, 2004). Reay (2008) included confidence with the educational system, academic knowledge, and information about schooling as aspects of cultural capital that impacted the degree to which mothers felt empowered to intervene in their child's education. Kimelberg (2014) used these same aspects of cultural capital to explain why some middle-class mothers chose lower-performing urban public schools instead of higher-performing suburban or private schools. She explained that the mothers' confidence in their ability to provide academic-cultural at home enabled them to send their children to school to foster social-emotional wellbeing and personal growth instead of academic-cultural capital (Kimelberg, 2014). Unlike economic capital, cultural capital cannot be transmitted instantaneously, and thus it takes time to develop (Bourdieu, 1986).

Embodied cultural capital includes practices such as body posture, mannerisms, tastes, and linguistic markers such as accent and dialect. Language is a critical component of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991) and manifests as linguistic capital. Bourdieu conceptualizes language as both a form of communication and as a mechanism of power. For instance, the use of different dialects, accents and language can signal an agent's degree of power on a field. This determines who has a "right" to be listened to, to interrupt, to ask questions, and to lecture, and to what degree" (Burke, Crozier & Misiasze, 2017, 68). Thus, access to language learning has an important impact on the development of cultural capital and how immigrants are received on a field.

Under a Bourdieusian model, capital only exists on fields which legitimize its function. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Capital, in any form, can gain and lose value depending on the field in which it is activated. This is especially relevant to international migration studies because people's movement between national fields will likely implicate the value of their capital in and between fields. (Joy, Game, & Toshniwal, 2020). Additionally, because cultural consumption requires the finite resources of time and money, engagement with one country may diminish the capacity to engage in another.

2.1.2 The habitus: embodied cultural capital in the field

Habitus is viewed as embodied cultural capital enacted on a particular field (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Under Bourdieusian theory, habitus is an agent's collection of perceptions, dispositions, and adaptations to a field (Bourdieu, 1986). A person's habitus is informed both by childhood experiences acquired in the family home (primary habitus) but also from experiences outside the field of the family such as through schooling, and employment. Because the habitus is developed through experience it does change. Likewise, because two people will never have the exact same experiences, two individuals will never have the exact same habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). However, segments of society (and times) that share similar conditions of existence will share a similar, but not identical, habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). Depending on the accessibility of experiences and circumstances, some expressions of habitus will be common while others will be rare, as access to certain experiences are limited by access to various types of capital and other circumstances (Bourdieu, 1990).

A 'well constituted habitus' is in alignment with the field in which it is activated- where an agent has 'a sense of one's place.' (Bourdieu, 2020). Bourdieu holds that cultural capital, like economic capital, only exists relative to specific fields, the social context in which agents operate. Fields are not autonomous and can be connected to other fields.

Individuals' positions within a particular field are determined by their habitus and by the capital they have that is valuable on that field. Fields overlap and exist at various levels, with smaller fields such as the family nested into larger fields such as the education field, the economic field, or the political field. Fields can be broad such as society at large, or highly specific such as neurobiology or methamphetamine dealing. Under Bourdieu's theory, all fields are structured to some extent by the economic and political fields.

The habitus can tolerate change so long as there is sufficient familiarity over time (Webb et al. 2002). When the habitus aligns well with changes in a field the habitus is unlikely to be disrupted. The habitus remains in the background until there is sufficient disjuncture, such as when moments of crisis occur. Where the habitus is less aligned to changes in the field "disruption is inevitable" (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014, 200-01). Linda Asquith (2019, 36), notes that the habitus can tolerate disruption but because the habitus will "become conscious" the individual will experience crisis that creates a feeling of 'being out-of-sync.' This 'out-of-sync' feeling can be a catalyst for change in either the field, in the agent, or in both. Immigration can, but does not necessarily, provide this catalyst.

2.2 A transnational perspective

Theorists have conceptualized transnationalism as dual engagement in two (or more) nation-states (Tsuda, 2012). Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004, 1003) describe this as "living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally." Transnationalism can be conceptualized either narrowly or broadly. When conceived narrowly, transnationalism only includes agents who engage in regular and sustained activities over time across borders (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). However, other researchers reject narrow transnationalism and include several occasional practices such as marriage, death, crisis, and care, (Itzigsohn, Cabral, Medina, & Vazquez,

1999), or “ways of being” as well as “ways of belonging” (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). The focus here, however, is not on narrow or broad transnational practices but rather on investigating and theorizing cross-border sociological constructs that encompass all “activities and practices that include both countries as reference points.” (Itzigsohn, et. al., 1999, 323).

Cultural transnationalism entails simultaneously interacting with the cultural products of both home and receiving society (Tsuda, 2012). This engagement includes the consumption of cultural goods such as mass media, popular culture, and information from both nations and enacting a society's "system of attitudes, beliefs and values" (Tsuda, 2012, 641). Cultural simultaneousness is a dynamic relationship that can be practiced in many ways. Tsuda developed a taxonomy of how actors engage in simultaneousness, including zero-sum, co-existing, and simultaneous engagement methods.

“Zero-sum” transnationalism where engagement with one country may diminish the capacity to engage in another. However, Tsuda also recognizes that “it is often possible for cultural engagement in both the home and host country to simultaneously co-exist.” (Tsuda, 2012, 640). To some extent, most immigrants will be exposed to the food, entertainment, and other cultural activities of their host country, causing them to split their limited resources between two cultures. This is especially true among immigrant children exposed to mainstream culture through school (Tsuda, 2012, 640). Tsuda recognizes that “cultural hybridity is becoming increasingly common in a transnational world, especially among immigrants...allowing them to consume products that simultaneously incorporate cultural elements from both societies. In such cases, increased consumption of one country's culture positively reinforces the other, resulting in a genuinely simultaneous cultural transnationalism” (Tsuda, 2012, 640).

Tsuda believes that “simultaneous and co-existing engagement in both cultures” is more likely “for high-skilled and professional immigrants who are less ethnically segregated and interact much more with the host society. This type of cultural transnationalism is, therefore, equivalent to immigrant biculturalism” (Tsuda, 2012, 641).

2.3 Bourdieusian transnational parental practices in terms of schooling

Several researchers have explored the transnational habitus using Bourdieusian concepts. For instance, Pustułka (2016) applied a transnational perspective to Polish mothers' educational strategies in Great Britain relative to their ethnicity and class standing. She found that strategies varied depending on the mothers' education and social class pre-migration. She classified these strategies as trans-local, cosmopolitan, or hybrid (Pustułka, 2016), classifications that neatly dovetail with Tsuda's taxonomy of simultaneity. Trans-local, or “Mother Poles”, were seen as “resisting integration with the local community.” The goal of the Mother Pole is to prepare their child for a return to the home country. The “intensive-mother” was characterized as striving for cosmopolitan capital. This category of mother tended to choose the local schools to build the cultural capital in the receiving country and did not see much value in Polish Saturday school. Instead, they informally promote Polish at home through Polish books, television, and other media. Pustułka identified the third type of mother as adopting a hybrid approach and found that these mothers struggled to “connect” the two systems. Pustułka noted that the strategies of hybrid mothers “facilitate[d] educational success abroad but maintain[ed] an option for children to connect with and benefit from their Polish heritage.”

An additional researcher who employed a transnational perspective using Bourdieu's concepts is Waters (2005). She studied middle class Hong Kong citizens who migrated to Canada. She described Hong Kong's educational system as having “a culture of intense

academic competition” (Waters, 2005, 366). She found that for these families an “overseas education” was first, a means of “escaping the fierce competition” of the local system, and second, a means of “acquiring something more valuable”. She found that the participants were able “to “buy-out” their child's poor fit with the Chinese national system. Likewise, Erel (2012, 461), in a study of immigrant mothers in London, found that mothers privileged by race or class could “strategically deploy their transnational cultural resources to compensate for shortcomings of economic capital and local cultural and social capital.”

Likewise, in a study on Iraqi immigrant mothers’ living in Australia Al-deen & Windle (2015, 284), found that mothers with high cultural capital emphasized “structured and proactive involvement in homework and extensive amounts of academic supplementation. They found that, despite difficult circumstance of under and unemployment, these mothers sought opportunities to increase their exposure to experiences that would enhance their understanding of the local habitus and learn “to adjust [their habitus in response to the new circumstances” (Al-deen & Windle, 2015, 285). They also found that Iraqi mothers with high cultural capital were able to successful employ strategies that they developed prior to migration- thus, to some extent, their habitus fit the Australian context.

Maxwell and Yemini (2019) explored how different forms of family mobility impacted educational strategies employed by Israeli middle-class families and found that mobility patterns did influence educational strategies as each family prepared their children to navigate different and varied fields. They found that the non-mobile middle class, Israeli professional families who stayed in Israel, made educational choices, and sought to secure advantages for their children “within a framework strongly bounded by the nation-state.” (Maxwell & Yemini, 2019). In comparison, the global middle class, a group of multinational and highly mobile professionals, had a more global perspective and felt as they were

preparing their children for an unbounded future. Finally, the immigrant middle class, a group of Israelis that had permanently relocated to the UK, adopted a more global perspective, but their decision-making became bounded by the nation-state wherein they resided.

In a study of internationally mobile middle class families in Sweden, Waddling, Bertilsson & Palme (2019) explored how different fractions of the 'global middle class' related to the parents' choice of schools, and used 'capital' and 'habitus' to explain difficulties these families faced in converting the assets they brought with them into fungible assets within the fields they choose to interact within in Swedish society. They found that top executives tended to send their children to International Schools. They found that among the upper middle class and middle class, school choice depended upon whether the family had more economic or cultural capital. While both tended to opt for public schools, those opting out that were high in cultural capital were more likely to select a bilingual school and those higher in economic capital an International School.

The variability in orientation found by both Maxwell & Yemini, (2019) and Waddling et. al. (2019) is consistent with Bourdieu's observation that even among the upper-class, educational practices and strategies will vary between the 'economic elite' and the 'cultural elite' (Magnúsdóttir, 2018; Bourdieu, 1996).

3 Icelandic country context: The receiving field

This section addresses the Icelandic Country context with a focus on the receiving educational field. The context of the receiving is important to field theory because how the characteristics of the receiving field compare to the individuals' experiences in their home country will influence their reactions, responses, and adaptations to the receiving field. For instance, where the sending and receiving fields are relatively comparable there will be less of an assault on the habitus and less of an adjustment, whereas when there is more of a disjuncture between the receiving and sending fields it is expected that the adjustment will be more difficult. Thus, understanding the receiving country context is important in making an analysis under Bourdieusian field theory.

3.1 General Characteristics and Societal Structure

Icelanders hold general egalitarianism as a foundational value. (Einarsdóttir, Heijstra & Rafnsdóttir, 2018). This commitment to egalitarianism is evident in the Icelandic constitution, which states, "everybody shall be equal before the law and enjoy human rights regardless of gender, religion, beliefs, origin, race, skin color, economic status, ancestry, and other status." Income inequality is currently one of the lowest in the world.

Icelandic egalitarianism is also evident in Iceland's social welfare policies that provides security through universal healthcare, free university education, nearly 100% participation in highly subsidized early childhood education, and a robust social safety net. Additionally, most Icelandic municipalities provide a recreation credit for children of (amount) to covers the cost of an extracurricular activity for each child. The state provides a yearly per child payment that parents use to support their children. Single parents are eligible for extra funding based on their single status. Additionally, there are no independent private schools in Iceland. 'Private schools' in Iceland are more akin to charter schools. The

government funds seventy-five percent of the tuition cost. Private tuition funds the remainder, which amounts to, on average, 1294 Euros per school year (Auðursdóttir & Kosunen, 2020). In 2018, only five percent of Icelandic compulsory-school-students attended this type of school (Auðursdóttir & Kosunen, 2020).

The small population of Iceland lends to transparency and a society where the individual voice holds more power and is more easily heard than in larger societies. (Ólafsson, 2011). The Icelandic people rely heavily on social relationships (Ólafsson, 2011). Social isolation is relatively low compared to other countries, even for Icelanders living in poverty (Ólafsson, 2011). That over 90% of women in Iceland are employed likely contributes to the low levels of social isolation.

3.2 Language

Icelandic is both the national language and the official language of Iceland (Act 61/2011). In compulsory school, students must take English, which is considered the first foreign language, and Danish or another Nordic language (Ministry of Education, 2011). English language instruction begins in the first grade (Ministry of Education, 2011). “The average Icelandic person is exposed to English almost every day through TV, music lyrics, computer games, the Internet, tourists, and travel (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2007). Additionally, many Icelandic companies use English as their official language (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2007). As a result, many if not most Icelandic citizens have some degree of English fluency.

3.3 Icelandic Compulsory Education Field

The purpose of education in Iceland is set out quite clearly in Icelandic policy documents. The purpose is not to increase economic capital, the national GDP, or create a society of consumers. Rather, Icelandic policy documents frame education as foundational to the survival of a healthy and robust participatory democracy. It is likewise egalitarian and

democratic in aim. The first part of a national curriculum for all school levels, based on the legislative acts from 2008, was published in 2011. The new National Curriculum Guidelines declared that, “the working methods of schools should be based on tolerance and equality, democratic cooperation and responsibility” (Ministry of Education, 2011, § 1.3). A focus on “literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality, and creativity” was established (Ministry of Education, 2011, Preface). The National Curriculum Guideline requires schools to be “the pupils’ refuge where they feel safe, have an opportunity to develop and use their abilities, and to enjoy their childhood” (Ministry of Education, 2011, § 7.4). Play is considered necessary throughout compulsory school, and curiosity is viewed as “one of the most important preconditions of education” (Ministry of Education, 2011, § 7.4).

3.3.1 Structure

The Icelandic school system has some neoliberal characteristics, such as emphasizing choice as a way to enhance quality, individual responsibilities of parents and students, and advocating for more privatization in the system (Dýrfjörð & Magnúsdóttir, 2016). Although the Icelandic system shares some characteristics with neoliberal systems, these characteristics cannot be divorced from the context in which they are imbedded, which in Iceland includes a holistic system of social support and subsidies to further egalitarianism. Additionally, these characteristics are not as pronounced in Icelandic compulsory education as they are in other nordic countries such as Sweden and Denmark (Dovemark, Kosunen, Kauko, Magnúsdóttir, Hansen, & Rasmussen, 2018) or other more advanced neoliberal countries such as the United States (Magnúsdóttir, 2014) or Britain (Reay, 2017).

Many of the larger municipalities in Iceland implemented ‘free school choice’ in the late 20th century, which is allowed by the Act on Compulsory Education (log un grunnskola

91/2008). The aim of free school choice was to increase through school competition and the creation of private schools where the 'money goes with the child'. The OCED feels that free school choice policies could threaten the emphasis on equality in because it sees these policies as contributing to a greater degree of ability and socioeconomic tracking (OCED, 2012). That, however, was not the case following Garðarbær's adoption of free-school choice policies, where, despite open access, more than 90% of parents chose their neighborhood school (Sigurðardóttir, 2011). The parents that participated in that study expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school choice, although the majority chose their neighborhood school.

3.3.2 Research on parental participation in Icelandic compulsory schools

Despite a legislative mandate for parental participation, research of parental involvement in Icelandic compulsory schools is sparse and a relatively new focus area. However, there have been several recent studies.

In a quantitative study of parent-teacher communications in 20 compulsory schools in Iceland, Jónsdóttir & Björnsdóttir (2012) found that 99% of parents supported parental involvement necessary for their children's academic success and that 90% found communication with their child's supervisory teacher to be easy. However, they found that most interactions between teachers and parents were related to poor behavior and academic difficulties rather than "on growing positive relationships or in real cooperation" (Jónsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2012). They found that most parents and schools favored parental participation in the form of attending extracurricular events and social activities (Jónsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2012). In contrast, participation in academic support was less desirable (Jónsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2012).

Peskova & Ragnardóttir (2017) argued that Icelandic compulsory schools do not respond to plurilingual students' needs, parents' expectations, or national policies regarding heritage language learning. Likewise, Gunnþórsdóttir, Barille, & Meckl (2018) found insufficient mutual collaboration and communication between immigrant parents and schools in Akureyri. They found that parents experienced the schools as overly permissive and teachers as ill-prepared to support their children. Gunnþórsdóttir et al. (2018) also found that most parents did not actively or directly address their concerns. However, the parents in that study valued the freedom and independence the system gave their children but wished the curriculum balanced these values with more rigorous academic expectations (Gunnþórsdóttir et al., 2018). Auðardóttir & Kosunen, (2020) found that Icelandic parents who sent their children to private school perceived the public school system as not fostering “a good environment for children to learn,” and as lacking “diverse teaching methods and learning opportunities” (Auðardóttir & Kosunen, 2020, 107). These parents perceive the private school as a “haven” (Auðardóttir & Kosunen, 2020, 107) Auðardóttir & Kosunen (2020) recognized that “further research is warranted to address private school choice as a form of distinction for white, middle-class Icelanders from families with an immigrant background.”

Although most of the parents in these studies were university-educated, the researchers did not mention the participants' income, employment, or in the case of immigrant participants, their class standing post-migration. Post-migration status beyond education is essential to understanding immigrant experiences because cultural capital does not always have a favorable exchange rate (Barglowski, 2019). Many immigrants are underemployed relative to their education (Gao, 2015; Joy, Game & Toshniwal, 2020; Hennessey & Hangen-Zanker, 2020). This trend is also evident in Iceland (Ragnarsdóttir &

Hansen, 2014), with underemployment especially prevalent among immigrant women (Burdikova, Meckl, & Barillé, 2018).

4 Methodology

This study is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with seven high income immigrant mothers with non-Icelandic spouses living in Iceland. The researcher used descriptive analysis to explore the participants' parenting choices and practices in terms of their child's schooling in urban Iceland. The descriptive data was then analyzed thematically to explore the impact of sociological forces on these choices and the mothers' interactions with the schools using a Bourdieusian analytic lens and a transnational perspective.

4.1 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- *What are high-income immigrant mothers' perceptions of Icelandic compulsory schools and what is their point of comparison,*
- *How do they support their children's education at home?*
- *How do they interact with the compulsory school? And,*
- *How do they select schools?*

Finally, the study asks:

- *How do the identified practices can be analyzed using Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field, and habitus, and,*
- *How do transnational perspectives influence these practices?*

4.2 Sampling and Recruitment Strategy

The research was conducted in the Greater Reykjavík area, which houses 63.6% of Iceland's immigrant population (Statistics Iceland, 2019). Compulsory school-aged children in this area had 16% of either or both parents of foreign origin (Magnúsdóttir, Auðardóttir, &

Stefánsson, 2020). Thus, this area provided the highest probability of finding mothers who met the highly restrictive inclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria were: 1) High-income, 2) immigrant mothers, 3) living in Iceland for at least two years, 4) not partnered with or co-parenting with an Icelandic native, and 5) with a child or children enrolled in Icelandic compulsory schools.

Although not part of the inclusion criteria, the call for participants generated all white respondents, limiting the study to white, high-income, immigrant mothers' experiences. Additionally, as the primary researcher's only fluent language is English, the women had to speak English. Also, English is the primary language in the transnational knowledge economy. Consequently, the participants were all fluent in English, three as their mother tongue.

"High income" refers to individuals who possess above-average access to economic capital relative to Icelandic standards. The average monthly household income in Iceland is 667 thousand ISK (Guðjónsdóttir, 2019). Therefore, a person with an average monthly income of over 667 thousand ISK is at least middle income. Managers make, on average, slightly over one million ISK monthly, and professionals earn, on average, approximately 707 thousand ISK monthly (Guðjónsdóttir, 2019). In Iceland, only 5.5% of the population has a monthly income exceeding 1.4 million ISK (Guðjónsdóttir, 2019). For this research, a family with a combined monthly income (from any source) of at least one million ISK (pre-tax) is considered high-income. Consistent with the terminology used by Statistics Iceland, the term "immigrant" means a person born abroad with both parents foreign-born and all grandparents foreign-born (Statistics Iceland, 2019).

As a high-income-immigrant mother with a compulsory school-aged child in Iceland, the primary researcher approached her contacts to recruit participants. While this yielded

three participants, six other mothers declined to participate due to anonymity concerns. Like other Nordic countries, class inequality in Iceland has increased. (Dovemark et. al., 2018). Nevertheless, many Icelanders believe that Iceland is a classless society. (Oddson, 2016). Due to these perceived cultural norms in their host country, the potential participants did not want to be identified as 'high-income' in Iceland. In addition to her contacts, the primary researcher contacted three private schools in the greater Reykjavík area with an above-average concentration of children with two immigrant parents, which yielded no participants. Contact with several transnational organizations also proved unfruitful. The remaining four interviewees were found through a posting on the "International Parents in Iceland" and "Away from Home" Facebook groups, yielding a total of seven participants.

4.3 Participants

The participants are all white, high-income, immigrant mothers living in Iceland with foreign-born husbands. They have all completed at least undergraduate studies. Three have master's degrees, and three have post-graduate or professional degrees. The median household income was 1.7 million ISK with a range from one to over two million ISK monthly. The mothers all reside in a house or flat with multiple bedrooms in a neighborhood relatively high in cultural capital, economic capital, or both. Many of them own their flat or house with no or minimal mortgage payments owed. One mother's husband's employer fully reimbursed the family's housing and school expenses. The participants and their spouses all have careers in highly mobile sectors, mostly education, technology, or engineering. Two mothers did not work in Iceland due to visa constraints, but they did continue some consultancy or freelance work in their home countries.

Three of the women moved to Iceland from Western Europe, one moved from Eastern Europe and three from North America. Unlike most immigrants to Iceland, these

mothers have both high economic and cultural capital, which transferred across international boundaries. Most the participants' specialized employment skills transferred and allowed for employment commensurate with their education post-migration or allowed remote working.

The average age of the participants was 43, with a range from 36-53. The mothers' time in Iceland ranged from three to 24 years, with a median of five. The school-aged children's ages ranged from six to 14 years. Except for one child, all the children were born abroad. Most of the children attended assigned neighborhood schools, with two mothers' children attending private schools (one situated in her neighborhood).

Table 2. Participants' basic Information

Pseudonym	School Type	Sending area	Professional sector in Iceland	Husband's Professional Sector in Iceland
Sarah	Private	North America	none	Financial
Kristi	Private	North America	none	Managerial
Imogene	Public	North America	educational	technological
Trina	Public	Western Europe	technological	technological
Harriet	Public	Western Europe	technological	technological
Phyliss	Public	Western Europe	educational	technological
Wanda	Public	Eastern Europe	educational	technological

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected using open-ended, in-depth interviews conducted in person in English at a location of the participant's choice. The majority preferred an interview in their home with only one participant electing to meet in a local coffeehouse. The interview started with small talk to introduce the interviewer, the purpose of the study, and develop rapport.

The interview protocol was derived from the protocol developed by the PPR research team of PPR from extensive knowledge of the literature (Magnúsdóttir, 2017; Reay, 1998; Lareau, 2002), which they designed using a Bourdieusian conceptual framework. However, the questions are broad, open-ended, and encompass questions drawn from many theoretical vantages within the field. The protocol included items such as, "Why did you move to Iceland?" and "What is your impression of your child's school?" The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim with the support of Speechy, voice-to-text transcription software.

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify two types of themes, semantic and latent. The semantic level is focused on the surface of what the participants said (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To get to the latent themes, the researcher first explored the data at the semantic level using a qualitative descriptive method and then analyzing those findings inductively to produce latent themes. The researcher then conducted a deductive analysis of the interviews consistent with the three broad categories of participation identified by Al-deen & Windel (2015): home-based practices, parent-school interactions, and school choice. Deductive, descriptive analysis was appropriate for this early, semantic analysis, because it sought to first describe the parenting practices in their own words. This adds trustworthiness to the study as readers will be able to see the source data and how it plays out in the further

less descriptive and more analytical discussion. Consistent with the categories of participation identified by Al-deen & Windel (2015), the following were analyzed:

- *How the mothers support their children's education at home,*
- *How the mothers interact with the compulsory school, and*
- *How the mothers selected schools.*

The researcher then further analysed the findings and generated latent themes through inductive thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of analysis: 1) Becoming familiar with the data; 2) Generating initial codes; 3) Searching for themes; 4) Reviewing themes; 5) Defining themes; and 6) Presenting the study. These phases are not necessarily linear, and the researcher moved forward and backward in the analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The researcher followed standard ethical guidelines and reviewed informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw with the participants before data collection. To facilitate anonymity, the researcher redacted participants' country of origin, used pseudonyms for the participants and their children, and did not use the names of the schools or neighborhoods involved. Before data collection, the researcher discussed the impossibility of ensuring 100% anonymity, understanding that Iceland is a small country, and that the immigrant community is even smaller. Pseudonyms were assigned using a random name generator.

4.6 Limitations

This is a qualitative study with a small sample size, as such, it is limited to the participants under inquiry and cannot be generalized. The results are also limited by the

participants' candor as the data comes exclusively from the interviews (Bicchieri, 2017). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, observations of the participants engaging in parenting practices at the time of data collection would have been difficult, if not impossible, and were not conducted. A further limitation of this study is directly related to the researcher as the main research instrument. As I am only fluent in English, this study was limited to English speaking participants.

5 Findings: Participants' backgrounds and impressions of Icelandic schools

The participants' attitudes towards and perception of the education in their home country is important because the experience in their youth help inform their habitus and how they react to Icelandic values and systems. The mothers had varying attitudes towards the schools in their home country with negative memories prevailing (n=4). These mothers described either their or their spouse's frustration, humiliation, or unsuccessful navigation of their home countries education.

5.1 Sarah

Sarah grew up in a small capital city in North America. Her father traveled for work and her mother was forced to resign her position as a teacher when she became pregnant with her first-born and became a stay-at-home mom. Sarah said, "Mom was always around." She described her growing up as "a suburban-ish kind of life." She reported that she did well in school:

I was good at it. I guess I liked it. I knew I was going to go to college. I was in public school. I just went to my neighborhood schools, and I did well without too much stress. I had all academic classes. I was in sports, so I was always playing tennis; I did that after school. God, I then went to class. I was pretty good at studying. I didn't have so much homework because I was pretty good at getting it all done in class.

When asked to compare her schooling to her children's education she said a comparison would be impossible. She described the educational environment in her country for her oldest children as:

Maximizing your child through extra-curricular activities, through sports, through the academics, through performance, through credentialization, through the schools. I

mean just -you are bringing- you're trying to develop a peak child at age 18 for that application.

She said this worked well for her grown children, but not for her youngest, the child she brought to Iceland.

She perceives the Icelandic system as having goals beyond academic optimization. She said the concept of "maximization" of a child is "just the most bizarre thing in the world" to Icelanders. She says in Iceland, due to social supports, there is no sense of urgency like in her home country:

Well, [optimization] doesn't really matter. There's no sense of urgency because their school is almost free. Yes, they are living at home, but they aren't going to have any debt. They have social support around, they don't have to pay for medicine, really. If they have a child.... they just go to preschool.... There's not a cultural urgency here around academic optimization... or money optimization.

Sarah found that Iceland values independence and self-reliance. She found the school aged children to be "somewhat feral."

She believes that everyone in Iceland generally has equal opportunities and that the neighborhood schools are designed to cater to the needs of the population in each neighborhood. She does not find the schools across neighborhood to be identical but finds that they cater to the needs of the populations within those areas. For example, she stated,

I think that the Breiðholt schools are different than the Vesturbær schools. They have different resources in those schools- -because the populations-- I think the immigrant populations are getting language support. You know, Polish kids- I'm sure getting language supports. There's lots of Filipino kids out in Reykjavík they're probably

getting lots of support out there. Now, it's these rich ex-pats that are getting no support, whatsoever.

Sarah supports tracking and ability grouping as long as it is not “too rigid.” She stated that she is:

[Not] a fan of kids getting tracked out of academics just because they're an immature boy and not quite ready for it yet. I'm not in favor of like German-style tracking where you get tracked into-- you take one test and then you're there in, you know, technical school

Sarah came from a system where there was “intense social pressure” to participate as a parent. Having no time constraints from employment, she felt parent participation was under utilised in Iceland. In her experience it was also easy for her husband to get the time off necessary to attend events. She stated, “Here in Iceland, there's a huge amount of potential parent interface... It's not a big deal [to take time off].” However, she did not experience the culture in Iceland as being focused on parental participation at all.

Overall Sarah’s impression of Icelandic schools is that they are “solid“. However she also reported that she found the schools to be “unambitious in the sense that probably, be good-- for families who go away, come back and find them probably a little bit less solid than the families who are in them. I think they educate the kids on a basic level.” Sarah pontificated, “Are they educating them perfectly for the future? I don't know.”

5.2 Kristi

Kristi went to a rural school in North America in a small town where her family owned and operated a large orchard. Her father only completed high school, but her mother finished college. However due to gender discrimination she was unable to work in her field and instead taught grade school. Kristi described her mother as omni-present:

Even though she was never my teacher, she just was always there and I never-- Her friends were all teachers, so all my friends' moms were teachers and if I ever screwed up, it was just like-- [I] couldn't really get away with much. It was just very-- My situation was just really different, because like I said, my mom was a teacher, small town, she's just always there. My mom, every vacation that we had off, she had off.

She describes the small rural school as not preparing her adequately for college. She stated, "When I was there, when I graduated from high school, we didn't have finals and I went to college and I went final, what's a final... I [didn't] know what a final [was]." She said her experience is very different from what her children are experiencing. It is important for her that they are prepared adequately for college and can keep up with rigorous academic standards.

Kristi did not give many details about her husband's schooling other than that it was very different from hers. He went to a private religious school in big city. Kristi reported that he talks about his schooling in a positive manner.

Kristi's focus in Iceland was on providing continuity for her children across multiple international assignments. Therefore, she limited her participation in Icelandic society to her children's private, international school and interacted mainly with other expatriate families. She reported tension with Icelandic values. For instance, regarding personal finance, she stated, "Most people live paycheck to paycheck. They seem to put very little into savings. We can tell that from the cars they drive, the vacations that they take--- We have to put stuff into savings. We have to."

Kristi also found it difficult to connect to Icelandic people in her neighborhood. She stated,

There were a couple of boys about [child's] age that lived across the street. I don't think they spoke English. We tried to go introduce ourselves and they ran away from us... We said, 'Let's just keep to ourselves.' It was painfully obvious that we were different.

Kristi regretfully reported missing major family events in her home country such as funerals and missing out on time with aging relatives. During days of national celebration in her home country, she did not send her children to their Icelandic school.

Kristi did not address her opinions regarding equal opportunities in the Icelandic educational system or her opinions on tracking or inclusive education.

5.3 Imogene

Imogene is a North American daughter of a bookkeeper and shop-owner. he attended both public and private schools for compulsory school. She lived in the same town for most of her schooling but went abroad for her undergraduate studies and returned to her home country for graduate school. She reported that educationally, her parents were supportive. She said, "I was an avid reader. They always bought me books and took me to the library often. I think in those ways, it was quite supportive. They gave me free rein to make my own decisions."

A typical day in middle school for her included a started at 8:30 and went until 4:00, when her mother would pick her up after work and take her to scouts which her mother led. At home should read, do homework, and spend time with her family. On weekends she visited extended family, attended religious services, and spent time with her friends.

Imogene reported that her husband's educational experience was not satisfactory and that, "He actually stopped going to school when he was in ninth grade. He tested out of

high school. He just didn't fit into the, I guess, educational paradigm there". He did not gain satisfaction from the compulsory school system. Instead, she reports that "He worked a bunch of odd jobs and attended his local community college and various courses that he was interested."

She reports that her son's experiences in Icelandic school are like her experiences growing up. "I grew up like in a ... pre-standardized testing era. So, it was very much arts, music, and reading were at the forefront of education. The same with writing, it was a little bit more reader-response at the time, but it was all very much like fictional, creative writing." She reported that now in her home country, her son would never get that experience. She is unimpressed with the advancing neoliberal values developing in her home country:

It's all very much more like nonfiction and there's a lot of standardized testing going on, a lot of expectations that are not similar to my educational experience.... I'm not a fan of [the direction towards more standardized curriculum and more achievement testing in my home country] it's one of the reasons why I wanted to come over here and teach.

Imogene supports inclusive education and does not think "any school private or not should have the right to reject any kind of student." However, she does not feel that there is "a lot of leeway for people who are outside of their box." She stated that she felt

there was no desire or drive [in the Icelandic schools] to challenge students who are not in their band. Does that make sense? It's like one size fits all for everyone... I don't feel like they meet children with varying needs very well in that regard for high-performing children in certain areas.

Her main concern for immigrants in the compulsory school, is the lack of quality, consistent, and professional development for Icelandic as a second language at the compulsory level. She feels the teachers are not “equipped to handle [foreign families]” and do not know how to “disseminate information, point us in the direction of resources...”. She feels that “something needs to be developed if Iceland is going to continue trying to attract international businesses and want them to bring their business here...”. She feels “a huge divide between immigrants and foreigners there and the opportunity available” due to language barriers. She says this is true even in industries where English is the language of the workforce. She reports, “for some of these companies that sell themselves as international, there is underlying expectations though to know Icelandic and if you don't, then it's to the detriment of your ability to, you know, guys in the ranks there.”

Imogene feels that “there's still a lot of room for growth in terms of innovation and curriculum and ways to teach.” She finds the system to be “very old school in a lot of way,” but feels the schools are open to this growth. She reports that overall, she is happy with the compulsory schools in Iceland. She reports that she has come “to accept a lot of things.” Her hopes for her child coming out of compulsory school is I just hope that “he, I guess, in terms of the kind of person that he is that he's just a thoughtful, humble and kind person. If at the end of training, he ends up being that type of person, I think that my hopes will be achieved.”

5.4 Harriet

Harriet is a Western European daughter of a bookkeeper and a shop-owner. She describes herself as “not someone who wanted to work a lot and I got my high school diploma. I didn't study for it, but I still got it. Didn't get good grades but couldn't care less now. I wasn't really the most motivated and that was mostly because the teachers were just

boring.” She describes school growing up as “very conservative,” very strict, very old, very boring, and absolutely totally different from [Iceland] because students in her home country were expected to fit in the norm. She repeated the sixth grade due to illness and not being able to pass all her courses. She said, “If you'd have two Fs in two subjects, you repeat the class.” She reported,

If you don't fit in the norm and if you don't go the pace they do, there's nothing you can do really. In the school system that I was in. In the other schools, it's a little different. I think it's changing a bit now.

Harriet describes her parents as “totally supportive” but without pressuring her. She felt that they knew she would “find her way” even if she brought home a bad grade. She says that academically, at a certain point her parents were no longer able to offer support as both only completed education to the eighth grade. However, she states that, “when they stopped being able to help in math, we got math tutors and stuff like that. They really supported us. School was important according to them. It's important to us here. It is important.” She feels that her parents gave her freedom to explore her interests and try many different things.

Comparing her education in her home country to the education her children are getting in Iceland, she relays that it is “totally different. As I said, if you needed to perform, you needed to function, everybody got the same. When I was young, you had one educational plan and everybody had to do the same speed and the same stuff and if couldn't, you couldn't. That was my experience. She said she had requested that one of her children repeat a grade, but that it was not allowed in Iceland.

She feels that children in Iceland are given equal opportunity from the school system- that they are given the opportunity to learn in their time and get individualized plan when they are needed. She does worry that parents without an Icelandic background will be able to equally help their children outside of school:

Sixth grade is already my limit of what my Icelandic grammar and all that stuff can do. I wonder if they don't get equal opportunities because maybe parents from different countries are not speaking the language could not help. You know what I mean?

She has also experienced that “not everybody is as lucky as getting the support for their kids without having to go through like have a medical or psychology diagnosis.” She hopes the inclusive environment continues, “that every kid gets equal opportunity to learn in their pace, and in their time frame and gets help with the issues they have, even though it's not something major.” She thinks language learning support needs to improve. It is disappointing to her that the Icelandic reception group that her children attended is no longer in operation:

So, I think every school somehow or at least, maybe five neighboring schools together, they need to have a plan and there needs to be a plan and tact of how they integrate the kids that are coming from other countries into the system.

She also sometimes feels there is a lack of respect shown to teachers. She also worries that “that they are completely behind the world academically in their grades” and how this might impact them if they want to go to university abroad.” But she contributes this worry to her own lack of knowledge and not something systemic with Icelandic schools: “it's just my lack of knowledge of how it's going to be.”

Regarding her husband's schooling she reported that "For him, school was a necessity that had to be done..." She feels this attitude has followed him into his employment where "the job is more something to make money and have a good income and then come home and do some fun stuff." She says it is different for her, that she loves her job. She reports, "I'm in a position where I love my job. I made my hobby into my profession. I'm very lucky in the sense that I can get paid for something I love to do. It's not just something to make money."

She wants something similar for her children. When asked about her hopes for her children, she reported, "I just want them to be happy and good citizens that they can find a way to support themselves." She continues, "but mostly that they find a job that they love because that is so important... Before I had kids, it's always like, only when you go to university and have a really good paying job, you'll be happy. That's bullshit." I always said that I will live in Iceland until I have kids when they go to school and then I will move away because I don't want to go them to the school system here and now it's the complete opposite.

5.5 Trina

Trina is also from a Western European country. She grew up the daughter of a nurse and a mechanic. Regarding her own schooling she reported that she did "good" and that she "liked it very much." She said her parents did not have that much influence but provided "the usual, practicing reading and helping here and there but the further we got the less they could help." She did not remember homework as a daily thing but did remember practicing at home on occasion. Because of a very limited homework schedule, she was able to spend most of her free time "outside with friends," in "less organized activities than we do nowadays with kids."

She misses the large span of unstructured time she was able to experience as a child. She reports that her children, “basically don't have any time for that because we pick them up at four and then it's reading and then dinner and then bedtime routine. They have basically no unstructured time in the week. It's what annoys me the most.” She finds that homework “eats up a lot of time that [she] would like to spend playing with them.”

In describing her husband's educational experience, Trina reported that her husband was an average student and made a minimal effort because “he wasn't very much entertained or wasn't very much-- He didn't think it was fun to learn because his teachers were old-school.” She reported that his love of learning came from outside of school when “he found (an) area of study which he loves... He focused on that area on his own because he thought it was fun.”

She likes the Icelandic schools which she characterizes as a system that “trie(s) to put the fun into learning, that's maybe a good thing because if you have fun learning, then you want to do it no matter what you're learning...” She values the inclusivity of Icelandic schools, though she feels the schools are overburdened. She noted, “Well, they are very adaptive and embracing for difference in the sense of when you don't quite fit in, it's not, you're not a bad child, you have a difficult day.” She appreciated the flexibility that allowed her children some choice.

She finds the focus on social skills to be different than in her home country: “It's more, how to say, collaborative, more togetherness, all together criticism. One has to really do that well, change. That's criticism.” She finds that people in Iceland are less direct than in her home country:

You won't get any change done if you're that direct, because they're just cutting you off at some point. They get way more involved to preparing-- when I was a child, we had our fights. I can't remember adults going in the middle of it a lot. Maybe you have always heard, boring child that could as well be, and not in bad fights, but here it's very closely monitored how they interact, and very much mediated. My feeling. Again, maybe I just have troubled children, that could also be. [laughs].

In general Trina does not feel that children in Iceland have equal opportunities. She bases her opinion "on the fact that I see how much we help our children in catching up, and also you see that the whole, the reading learning, which is basically very fundamental is pushed to home. Whoever can put in the time. Just imagining a family with three or four kids, or just someone working two jobs, no."

She feels that the values and practices in Icelandic schools can be supportive of inclusion, "but they need to fund it better and pay the people better, so they help them actually." She reports that although her school has support services, she feels that the service providers "are probably totally overloaded. What we always get to here is, "Sorry, there is more severe cases."" She also believes that there needs to be more support in teaching Icelandic to foreigners. Although her school has support for this, the provider was out on sick-leave, and no one stepped in to fill her role. In general, Trina feels that Icelandic schools are "trying but underfunded. We can't put pressure on and they're really trying, now at least."

She also related differences in the approach to math and natural sciences:

You see the different culture and how schools teach, especially if you go Eastern Europe. That's a lot of focus on science and mathematics. It gets less the more west

you go, I think. At least I always had the impression-- I was teaching at the university in [home country] and when we got students from Poland, for example, they were extremely good, especially in mathematics and stuff. Russia as well. I don't know if it's still like that. All changes over there.

When asked what the university should focus on in studying the educational system, Trina stated, "tell them the schools need more money, because I think they could do an amazing job with the inclusive thing. I like the concept but it can't work if they don't have enough people."

5.6 Phyliss

Phyliss is from a Western European country. Her mother was a teacher and her father a professional. She reports negative memories of the educational system in her home country. She felt that the system there would be a poor fit for her shy child, who would not do well in the interrogation style of assessment she felt was prevalent in her home country.

Phyllis reported that her mom was supportive and her schooling and helped at home but said mostly schoolwork is the student's responsibility. She said, "there is a huge load of homeworks, and there is a kind of punishment if you don't do that. The next day, you are either shamed for not having done it, or you get really some bad grades, so you don't want to be-- There's a bit of pressure."

Regarding her husband's education, Phyliss reported that it was like her own but "he wasn't a super good student" and made the minimum effort just because he wasn't very much entertained or wasn't very much-- He didn't think it was fun to learn because his teachers were old-school." She said he then "found this area of study which he loves, which is mathematics and computer programming, especially. He focused on that area on his own because he thought it was fun."

In general, Phyliss reported that she finds that the teachers and staff at the compulsory schools “want to be working with children, and they care about children, about education,” but feels they are “overworked,” and “have too many things to do and little time for a little pay also because, at the end, everything ends up being a matter of money because if you're paid, you care. “

In comparing her education to her son’s education in Iceland, she stated, “This is like I won't say a joke, but it's much more fun.” She said that as a teacher, she sees that “the children [in Iceland] really love to go to school.” She feels that

They like to go to school because it's fun because you feel that you are learning, and the efforts are mainly done during school time and pretty much nothing at home or is not that heavy a load. Still, they retain the fun part of learning. It's not just heavy and boring and difficult...

She further relayed:

I'm so happy that we don't have to do homework like my friends in [home country], where after school they have to go home and sit for two hours and help [their children] write and read and learn history and geography and this poem by heart....

However, she also acknowledged that she "wouldn't mind having a little bit more of homework..."

Phyliss wished the schools provided support in Icelandic language learning across the curriculum, especially in music, where she feels knowledge of the language helps kids understand and memorize the lyrics to songs.

She does not believe that children in Iceland have equal opportunities. She stated, “Those who have already a rich family or a very supportive family or a politic family, they have more doors going to open for them. Those who are, let's say, poor parents, they're

going to maybe have more difficulties.” She feels that the less connected a parent is the less opportunities their family will be presented with. She said, “if you don't know anyone, you're not going anywhere, which I thought it was only possible in big countries and corrupted countries.” She supported inclusive education and said that “it's also good to show the rich children that there are different realities in the world.” She also felt that integrating boys and girls was very important. For inclusive school to work she feels that the “number of students makes a lot of difference.” She states from personal experience that,

I've worked in where classes were 25, and one teacher for 25 is not going to do any good to any of them unless there is-- It's kind of a natural selection. The ones who are good and tend to raise their hands, they're going on; the others are just forgotten because there are too many, and one teacher cannot do that.

She feels a need for more support “for that one teacher that has to take care of all these children at once.” However, she still finds her son’s public school to be “a good school” and “well-organized.” She reports that she is learning from his teacher:

I like the teacher a lot. Actually, I'm learning from her to talk with my younger students because she's every time, this is a great thing. Every time she speaks to the children, she lowers herself to the children heights and she talks to them directly with eye contact, very calmly trying to explain quietly what they have to do and what's going to happen.

Her hope is that at the end of compulsory schooling her child will exit with critical thinking problem solving skills, “not notions, learning by heart, tons of poems or pages of history, it's not that important, especially now with the Google internet, you just Google it. If you don't remember ‘when was George Washington born?’ You don't remember? You just

Google it. It's there. You need to be able to know how to get that information that you need.”

5.7 Wanda

Wanda grew up Eastern Europe. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom during her primary school years and later worked as a bookkeeper doing clerical work. Her father was a shop-owner. Of the school system in her home country she reported, “It's a heavy school system, and they're still going on with that.” She said she “had double the homework and lots of tests” in comparison to her son’s compulsory education in Iceland. She said, in her home country, “you sit in the classroom desk and the teacher is talking tells you to do exercises.” She said, “soft skills like cooperation, negotiation, anything like that wasn't really encouraged, lots of memorization.” She said she did “very well” in this system.

She reported that her mother “was very involved” in her education and would help her with her studies. She would check her homework and make sure she stayed up with her class. She said that her mother always knew what the topic was in every class. She said the system “was definitely stressful.” Reporting on the school she said, “Usually, the day was long at school and then at home, I still had to do homework.” Wanda also participated in many extra-curricular activities including sports and music, but still “had time to play with friends.”

She said that due to her husband’s father’s work, he attended school in many countries and always attended the public school. As a result, he speaks many different languages. She said her husband feels school is important.

She reported, that “Language barriers [were] definitely a little bit there” and that she would like to see the schoolbooks. She felt that:

If I see schoolbooks, not just when he's done with them at the end of the year or semester, but actually during the semester, then I know what topics they are covering, and I know what is the level and what he has any problems with? If I just get it at the end, I feel we are delayed. I would like to have more input there.

Wanda does not feel that all children in Iceland have equal opportunities. She stated, "No, probably not. Probably migrants-- probably they don't." Regarding inclusive education Wanda felt "that should be the general rule, how it should work." And then elaborated that tracking might be good for high performers. She stated:

In that respect, that's not a bad I would say, it's worse when somebody thinks that you are a low score and a failure and then doesn't challenge anymore, because think that you would not be able to do that anymore. Anyway, I think it's important actually to challenge kids.

Wanda's general impression of the Icelandic school is that it is "quite bad in math." Wanda reported anxiety regarding a perceived weakness in the mathematics curriculum. However, she admits that "content-wise, I'm always not sure how much they are doing." She reported that when her child was in the first grade, she asked the teacher about the math curriculum for the year. She stated, "The teacher said that they are supposed to learn how to do addition. I said, 'Addition? Yes, sure. Until what? Until 100 and what?' She said, "Until 10." Then I was devastated because it's like, up to 10? Seriously?"

She says that in her work she can "see that [Icelandic students' mathematics] level in general, their level of math is much lower than what was mine after high school. I didn't really have a math profile." She says having this knowledge contributed to her stress:

when [the teacher] told me that the first-year grade they just count until 10, because then I thought, then every year, they're back, they're falling back as compared, let's

say to [home country]. Then, obviously, they are not able to cover all the material, because they're just too slow.

Wanda reported, "I come really from a different background and different attitudes to the school. Especially when I arrived here, I was a little bit shocked." In a group conference the parents were asked what they wanted their children to achieve in their ten years of primary schooling. Wanda was surprised that the parents "were basically talking about soft skills." She elaborated,

I want that my child be this happy, I want that they have good friends that they know how to live together, all this soft stuff. I was so surprised because nobody said I wanted my kid knows Math, English, and Geography, let's say... At the end of 10 years, I wanted my kid to [have] a background to knowing all these things and not only has a nice time without being stressed.

However, she has begun to internally acclimate to the new system. She relayed,

As I said, I learned a little bit how to cope with the school. My expectations as well changed a little bit over the time. I actually start to appreciate from perspective of a parent that they don't have homework every day and they actually have free time to do other things. I'm actually happy about that.

6 Findings: Home-based support

This section focuses on the educational activities, as reported by the mothers, that take place in their homes and that are organized outside of school. Home based practices include leisure time, summer break, academic work completed at home, school homework, and other educational activities that take place outside of school.

6.1 Leisure time and recreation

Leisure time for the children is filled with reading, playing chess, and other strategy games and outside activities with their families such as horseback riding, skiing, sledding, and taking walks or hiking. The children also play outside with friends from the neighborhood and school. They might have sleepovers with friends or go to the pool, watch television, or play electronic games. The mothers reported that they travel a lot. They might also take “trips to the summer cabin to change up [the] routine” on weekends or breaks.

All of the mothers provided their children with multiple athletic activities ranging from basketball, handball, and traditionally upper-class sports such as horseback riding and skiing. These mothers found recreational activities to be a method for their children to make friends. Aptitude and participation in sports were also seen as a way to integrate quickly with Icelandic peers. Regarding her child, Imogene reported that “socially, he's fine because he plays football. I think that makes a world of difference here in this particular community. I don't know about others. He plays handball as well. He has lots of friends on those two teams.” Sarah, however, reported that integration into popular sports was not possible for her son due to his age at immigration,

When [he] came here, he was too old to insert himself into the handball, football programs. And he's now a swimmer. The kids get so rigorous so quickly in those sports here that he was too old to start. It means he's not an athlete.

However, he found meaningful connections through other sports clubs.

Likewise, Harriet reported that her daughter made connections through her swim team, but friendships developed primarily through classmates at school. She stated,

Now, for example, [my daughter], she has some friends in swim training, who go to different schools ... they don't meet on the weekends or so. They meet in swim training, but that's it. If she has friends over on weekends and stuff, it's always from her school or class.

Younger children also attended their school's after-school programs. Trina noted that her children had "basically no unstructured time in the week because of this." She pointed out that this is "what annoys [her] the most."

Although the parents reported using their cities' recreation subsidies for their children, expenditures exceeded this subsidy. Thus, their extensive participation in recreational pursuits came at both an economic and a time cost. Imogene reported,

I think that we pay 20,000 a month for his music because he's two instruments. Before, when he was one, I think it was cheaper, I don't know. But then also, this year, he has a music theory class, which added a fee too. I think football is eight a month, 8,000. I'm not sure, but I think altogether, it's 80,000 for the year, and I think that's the same for handball too.

With the younger children, the parents also spent time commuting and supervising extracurricular activities. Sarah mentioned, "You go into the [activity], and the moms go sit together and chat, and the kids do their thing." However, as the children got older, she

noted, “that’s abated just because when they are younger, you’re doing things with the kids and the parents are together.” Imogene also noted that as the children got older, parents spent less time driving the children to activities. Attending tournaments also involved a time commitment, especially if competitions were abroad.

Wanda and Harriet, the mothers with mostly younger children reported trying to limit television watching and electronics. Harriet however, allowed television on weekends, which she consider to be a form of language support because she required the children to watch programming in her mother tongue or in English.

Next to school, recreational activities were the main way that the mothers reported the children made connections with the locals and formed friendships. Sarah reported that her oldest formed friendship mainly through basketball. Imogene relayed that sports were a gateway for friendship and social life. However, she also noted that even without sports he had developed community connections:

He also plays [two musical instruments]. He used to go to art school for evening classes. He has friends that don’t play sports but are into arts. He has a separate set of friends as well that he’s actually becoming closer with I think now that he’s done now with his sports phase, according to him, right now.

6.2 Summer

All the families spend an extended time of four weeks or more in their home country over the summer. The children may go alone to spend time with grandparents while the parents continue working in Iceland or they might be accompanied by their mothers, or by both parents. In addition to trips to the children’s parent’s home countries, the mothers arranged for their children to participate in summer courses called ‘skemman’ or ‘námskieð’,

that last from one to two weeks and focus on a discrete topic or skill such as robotics, horseback riding, sports, or arts and crafts.

Mostly, the parents did not express concerns with the structure of the summer courses. However, two mothers reported difficulty finding programming that supported their work schedules and their children's needs. Trina found the traditional 'námskieð' program to be stressful for her children, stating, "'For our kids, it's basically a disaster because it's new people, different routines. It doesn't go too well because it's too much stress, too confusing.'" Subsequently, she has had difficulty coordinating care for her children over summer. She noted that "The days when I was totally away, my husband had to work. There were about three or four days when I went to work with [the children], [they had] their tablets, and sat there." For her, ideally, the school would offer a summer program "basically in the same environment they know, most people they know. I think that would help them tremendously."

Harriet likewise found the 'námskieð' program difficult to coordinate. She reported that, she "took [parental leave] that the first two summers they were here -for two months. That helped. I couldn't take any more. Now it gets easier that they're a little bit older. It's always a headache." For the summer of 2020 she hoped to have a relative from her home-country visit to help with childcare. However, her relative would only be available for two weeks. When asked what would be ideal for her, she replied, "Honestly, longer school because three months of summer vacation is just insane. What we basically do is, so they don't forget everything, we homeschool a bit. That's not a lot but we make sure they don't forget stuff." She noted, "also what we know from Germany so shorter summer vacation. All together it's probably the same amount of vacation but it's distributed over the year." She also acknowledged, "We're lucky that we can afford [namskeið] because they're not cheap. I

have a lot of friends, our families, I know that they can't afford it and they have trouble finding, some [thing to do with their kid].”

6.3 Academic homework

The mothers mostly reported that homework from the schools was not intense and consisted mainly of a packet of math or Icelandic work to be returned the following week. In addition to the packet, the children were also required to log between 15-20 minutes of reading daily. The parents expressed concerns about a perceived over-focus on reading in the schools combined with a weak mathematics curriculum. All of the mothers sought opportunities to subsidize math instruction through supplementary education for their older children. Sarah stated, “That might be something to do in the spring or summer is to give him some independent study math program if he wants to do something fun and interesting.”

The mothers subsidized math instruction through play with the younger children. Wanda for example states that they will play “either a board game or sometimes it's also computer games... It's something that is beautiful to see, to watch, or it has a purpose to make you think about problems..”

Trina, a parent of children with special needs, felt over-burdened with the responsibility of teaching her children to read, stating:

I did a lot of stuff myself in the beginning, especially for him learning to read because the learning curve is too steep, so we always stop in the middle and do stuff by ourselves... It eats up a lot of time that I would like to spend playing with them.

[Homework is] supposed to be only 15 minutes a day per child, but it ends up being half an hour per child.

As the children got older, providing supplemental support became harder for Imogene. She expressed frustration:

Sixth grade is already my limit of what my Icelandic grammar and all that stuff can do... Because now, [my child is] in sixth grade, she comes home with Icelandic grammar, I'm like, 'I can't help anymore,' and it gets even more difficult.

As they get older direct participation in homework waned for the other mothers too due to the children's increasing maturity and self-direction. The mothers, however, did remain involved.

For first year Sarah's son had a home tutor for all academic subjects. She reported that "He's pretty efficient" and that he gets it done during class time. She reports of her child:

He comes home, and he has his leisure time. He does work sometimes. He's working on a speech. He talks about his friends going on and on about how much work they have and how stressed they are. He says, 'I just do the work, and then I'm done.'

Which is, actually, somewhat new for him to be saying that.

Kristi reported that she does most of the homework support which consisted mainly of her directing her child to the correct resource to find the information. Kristi is concerned about over reliance on technology. Even if calculator allowed in class, she wants him to show his work. She said, "pushes him hard." Kristi reports she is rather uninvolved with homework, however, she also reported, "Let me put it this way. I didn't think I would have to pass (child's grade) twice."

In addition to supplementary Icelandic instruction, Imogene also provides enrichment activities in subjects her child is strong in and sends him to two hours of

weekend native language and cultural heritages classes that she designs for a total of between 8-10 hours of supplemental instruction weekly.

On preparing her older child for upper secondary school, Sarah notes:

It caught me by surprise; it's like, Oh, [my child is] a freshman in high school. Oh, he only has three more years... Even for him to apply to college in [home country], you have to check all the boxes of what classes you've taken. 'What has he taken? How am I going to figure this out? I need to start crafting that academic resume and if we need to supplement, do so.

6.4 Icelandic language

The mothers in this study expressed that they were unsure about resources available for Icelandic language learning and found that in the compulsory schools, the teachers were unable to provide direction to help with Icelandic learning and support at home. This made the mothers anxious about their children's progress in Icelandic. Communication with the Icelandic teachers was shaped by the teachers mainly communicating in Icelandic. The parents were frustrated that the teachers did not help them to find relevant resources to help their children

Likewise, Sarah reported that the Icelandic teacher at her children's school struggled to teach inclusively, "[The teacher] said it's been a little bit of a struggle with the Icelandic kids having their program and the other kids having a different one..." The mothers also felt the system was not designed to deal with the variety of students learning Icelandic, which lead to frustration for both the child and the parent. Sarah expressed frustration,

It's just too hard... in that Icelandic class [some children] speak Icelandic at home, so the teachers are working on their academic Icelandic. Then there are three to four other kids who are just learners, and she doesn't really have a way to teach both

ways. She's finding it frustrating like everyone else has found it, and [child] hates it because he's like, 'It's a waste.'

Sarah also found it difficult to communicate with her children's Icelandic teacher relating, The communication from the teacher who is teaching the kids Icelandic is only in Icelandic, and I emailed back to her, I don't speak Icelandic at all. Can you help me understand how I can support my kid in your class, and she said... 'I'll let you know.'
[But she never did.]

Phyllis wished the schools provided support in Icelandic language learning in music. She stated,

I also notice as a music teacher in primary schools is that bilingual children tend not to take part in activities like singing because the singing is always mostly done by heart, either you understand the lyrics, all of them and you remember it easily, or you can not take part.

All the mothers provided supplementary instruction in Icelandic and paid for home-based materials to support their children's language acquisition. Imogene reports,

He's been seeing someone [for Icelandic] every week since we've moved here, it's changed people over time. So on Monday, he gets extra tutoring.... He's down to once a week before it was two to three times a week. A teenager was coming over and reading, listening to him read. We have grammar books that his school has given us to help him, that he's been working on too like exercises. Twice a week, he was [reading to] a retired Icelandic teacher. They were correcting his pronunciation and helping him with his grammar.

With supplementary education and four years in Icelandic schools all of the children with the exception of Sarah and Imogene's are fluent. Despite supplementary education,

Sarah's children's Icelandic remains rudimentary. Sarah attributes this to the weak delivery of Icelandic instruction in school. Sarah is aware of the English based International Baccalaureate program at Hamrahlíð College but does not want her child instructed by a non-native English speaker. She laments how the inadequate provision of Icelandic instruction at her school will impact her son's future education, "...My son is not getting Icelandic in school, so how could he even go to menntaskoli? That's not an option for me. That shouldn't be a punishment then, right?"

As with the other mothers, Imogene was frustrated about resources for supplementing Icelandic simply not being available. She found that compulsory schoolteachers could not help with Icelandic learning and support at home. That made her and other parents anxious about their children's progress in Icelandic. The communication with the teachers was shaped by the fact that they mainly communicated in Icelandic and did not help them find relevant resources to help their children.

Likewise, Sarah reported that the Icelandic teacher at her children's school struggled to teach inclusively, "[The teacher] said it's been a little bit of a struggle with the Icelandic kids having their program and the other kids having a different one..." The mothers felt the system was not designed to deal with the variety of students learning Icelandic, which lead to frustration for both the child and the parent.

Phyliss wished the schools provided support in Icelandic language learning across the curriculum, especially in music, where knowledge of the language helps kids understand and memorize the lyrics to songs. Wanda, who does not speak English as her primary language, also perceived risk in Icelandic neighborhood schools relative to her son's early exposure to other students' poor English.

The mothers mainly attributed this weakness to a lack of resources within the system. Imogene noted,

The teacher training is just not there, and the resources for the parents are not there... They don't know how to disseminate information, point us in the direction of resources [for Icelandic as a Foreign language] ... There is not a lot of "Icelandic as a Foreign Language" teachers here. His last two Icelandic tutors have been drama teachers. They have no linguistic background at all. They're learning as they go as well, which is not an effective approach.

Sarah also felt the issue was systemic:

[the teacher] doesn't really have a way to teach both [the native speakers and the newcomers]. She's finding it frustrating, like everybody else has found it, and [my child] hates it because he's like, "It's a waste." ...I think it's not the teacher's fault, it's a structural problem.

6.5 Heritage language and culture

All of the mothers valued continued education for their children in the parents' heritage language and valued a cultural connection to their home country. However, little value was attached to heritage language classes offered in the area unless the mother was able to volunteer her time with the organization.

Although attending formal heritage classes were seen as 'just as more schooling' all of the parents subsidized cultural and heritage language learning at home. Imogene provides her children with substantial instruction in heritage and language learning. She did not feel that the return on the effort of attending heritage classes was enough unless she was in control of the content at the heritage language course.

He doesn't participate in heritage classes because it was on Saturday extra thing to go somewhere, coordinate, get there ...I didn't know any parents neither. And he didn't really know anybody in the classroom.... The break is too short, so he didn't really get any friends there neither.

Harriet felt the same,

In the beginning, they were in [heritage language] school for six months, but they wanted to stop... We just didn't want to put one more thing of school or especially because it's Saturday mornings, you know our weekends are holy because there's so much stuff going on during the week....

Despite non-attendance at formal heritage language courses, all the mothers valued and wanted to provide language and cultural knowledge to their children. Imogene stated that she requires her child to take an online history course, complete grammar homework in his heritage language that she designed and participated in an online phonics program. All the mothers had similar expectations. They read books in the family heritage language, traveled to the home country frequently, and watched television in the heritage language. Harriet "[does] something at home, but not officially."

The mothers valued continued education for their children in the parents' heritage language and valued a cultural connection to their home country. However, little value was attached to heritage language classes offered in the area unless the mother was able to volunteer her time with the organization.

7 Findings: Interactions with the school

This section focuses on the mother's interactions with the schools. School based interactions various ways methods of communication and participation ranging from direct communication with the teachers to sending emails, volunteering, attending, and planning school events, and participating in parent associations.

7.1 Volunteer work in the classroom

The mothers with access to time resources converted this to cultural capital by volunteering in the classroom. Sarah and Kristi dealt with the anxiety of not having insider knowledge of the school by volunteering in the schools and providing the school with resources.

Sarah used her time resources to volunteer in the classroom. She also converted her economic and social capital into the Icelandic cultural capital she lacked by arranging for a teacher to work at the private school the first year she was there, who also provided her son with academic support. She relayed,

We did end up facilitating a [home-city] teacher to come and spend his sabbatical year himself here working. He worked half time at [the private school] and basically tutored [my child] because we really wanted to push [him] over. ...The teacher we brought was teaching [my child's] section of math, which was great. He got to see [my child] and the other kids in action, and he could help us evaluate the teachers in the program and everything.

Sarah is the "room parent" for her child's cohort. She describes this role as,

...last year there were two of us and the homeroom teacher wanted to have a monthly get-togethers for the kids. They did an escape room thing or they went down to the

bounce house or they did a movie. The other room parents and I supported that a little bit by providing popcorn or making sure the kids had rides or things like that. Then we gave an end of the year classroom gifts to the teachers that we coordinated.

Sarah relayed that, over the past academic year, the majority of her duties were focused on planning for an international spring class trip. She also coordinated a meeting for parents of students about to graduate to menntaskoli about “what might happen for high school.” This meeting focused on her perceived need for more options for English speaking students beyond the International Baccalaureate program.

Kristi also volunteered significant time at the school. She believes, "If you're involved, I think the schools are more apt to help you if you need it. If you make your face seen there.” Accordingly, Kristi uses her free time to make her face seen. She reported that, “Once a week, like just today, I do a teachers' aid type work on Fridays for a couple of hours, whatever they need me to do...Mainly I do a lot of laminating and making copies....” Kristi also ran a school-wide carnival one year and attempted several other community building activities.

7.2 Communications with the school and teacher

Email and in-person communication were the preferred methods of expressing concerns. Sarah noted,

If I need to talk to a teacher, I will email and communicate that way, and I get emails....

The information that I need comes from [my child's] home teacher. We got an email from her with the final schedule and some of the parties the kids were having. We get heads up information or emails when big events are happening.

Phyliss similarly notes,

You always get emails from them that informs you about what's going to happen and if there's a special day or if there is lice, for example. What else? If they need to take a special lunch box with them the next day or some other activities, but you don't actually need to reply.

Harriet stated, "If there's real issues that need to be addressed, I always ask for a meeting. The teachers are usually very cooperative. They have their weekly meeting times and stuff like that, or we just find a time that suits us."

Wanda reported that she recognizes the teacher but that she found it easier to speak with "the health teacher because she's [her nationality]." Wanda reports that she gets more information from this teacher than from her child's main teacher.

All the parents attended parent-teacher conferences twice a year. Because Trina's children have special needs, she meets with the school every six weeks in addition to the regular parent-teacher conferences. (Maybe a Trina quote here)

Mentor and school newsletter was another way that the parents and schools exchanged information. Imogene described Mentor as, "An online platform that allows me to access and communicate, I guess, with the school." Wanda was frustrated that the Mentor was not in English. She stated:

I think [Mentor] could be somehow a little more transparent for foreign parents because all the Mentor is in Icelandic. I need to sit with Google translator and try to understand it, and most of the time its nonsense. That's a bit of a problem.

All the mothers appreciated getting newsletters. For these parents, the newsletter was sometimes the only glimpse into what was happening in what they considered 'a black box.' On what happens during her children's day, Trina stated:

Our daughter isn't quite ready to tell us herself so we don't really know. This is a black box on that one. She has a really great class teacher now so I trust she addresses it but I would say it's not systematic. I don't know. It's a black box.

Wanda also reported wanting to know more about what was happening in the classroom:

Something that I miss a little bit is that I would like to see the school books because if I see school books, not just when he's done with them at the end of the year or semester, but actually during the semester, then I know what topics they are covering and I know what is the level and what he has any problems with? If I just get it at the end, I feel we are delayed. I would like to have more input there.

When her child got a new teacher, Harriet found that the success of parent-teacher communications could be teacher dependent, something she referred to as "the teacher lottery." She stated,

Her teacher was basically not communicating with us so problems and the behavior got worse and worse and worse because partly they were also just hidden from us or told us Fridays. Always Fridays, I would get a phone call.... There was basically- a wall between us and the teacher.

After struggling for a year, a new teacher was more receptive to her needs. Anna noted that with this teacher, she has "a little booklet that goes back and forth and they carry it, and we write messages to each other. This works really well because then they tell us basically what went well and what maybe not." She mentioned that she always knows when something goes wrong but had to insist on the communication of positive progress as well. She described the book as a 'game-changer'.

To make these immigrant mothers feel confident in the Icelandic system, the schools need to facilitate their accumulation of knowledge about schools in Iceland. This could

include teaching them how to use and translate the Mentor, providing classes on how the Icelandic curriculum works, and providing information on the pedagogical underpinning to give the mothers more confidence in the system.

7.3 Parent counsel and school events

Sarah took an active role in the parent organization, acting as the room mother for her son's classroom. She however did not take part in the broader activities of the parent association due a belief that her poor Icelandic skills would preclude true participation believing that the school's Parent Council meetings are in Icelandic, and that because of that she would not be able to participate. Parent Council participation of the other mothers was variable depending on time constraints. Trina said her participation was "not very [active] because we also got busy with all the other meetings [for her children's special needs]." Phyliss reported that the parents mainly used the Parent Association for organizing events such as the Christmas party.

Wanda reported that she did not participate in the parent's association although she would attend activities for children that were sponsored by the Parent Council. She said she did participate in any of the activities that were for parents only because they either conflicted with other activities that her family had already committed to in advance and due to not having evening childcare.

Interestingly, the purpose of the Parent Council as stated in the law is to involve parents at a policy level. (cite). However, despite a reported disappointment in the level of transparency and a perceived weakness in the mathematics curriculum, consistent with Gunnþórsdóttir et. al. (2018), the mothers' participation in parent council was limited to organization of school events and less focused on supplementing the schools' expertise on policy and curriculum matters.

The mothers participated in school events through attendance, planning, and in Sarah's case, donating supplies. School events ranged from coffee and tea 'meet and greets' for parents to Christmas, Advent and events where children performed. Wanda reported:

It depends on the event. If it's something that [my child is] performing, then if he's playing the piano, my husband has gone to a lot more of those, which the students performed a musical instrument in front of the school. I haven't been able to go in the middle of the day then he'll go, but if it's something that [my child is] not performing and it might just be listening, then I usually go myself.

Wanda felt somewhat ill informed about the purpose and content of these events.

She stated,

Now, there was a play. They invited parents to come, talk about this, except we didn't really know what we were invited for. It was a big surprise that it was actually our son playing on the scene. It's, of course, he didn't tell us neither.

Kristi attempted to bridge her traditions from home and other assignments to the Icelandic school context. However, she reports these attempts were unsuccessful. Describing her experience running a cultural celebration popular in her home country, Kristi reported,

I guess because it was an [international family] running it [Person] just gets this freaking sea of a notion that it's all about the [international kids]... You know what? I don't need that stress. With as many teeth as I had to pull the year before to try to get volunteers and to try to get help to pull that together, I don't need this.

She also attempted to introduce a tradition from her home country of collecting flowers at the end of the year for teacher appreciation. This, however, also fell flat:

Usually at the end of the year, I'll collect money to do arrangements for the teachers.

We used to that at [previous schools in home country and abroad]... Every kid, we

would have them bring three flowers... and then we'd have so many flowers to be able to fill all these vases for our teachers during the teacher appreciation week. I just thought, well, that would be something to do here. We tried that the first year we were here, it didn't really work to have kids bring three—They didn't really get it... to bring three flowers.

8 Findings: School selection

This section discusses school choice broadly. All the mothers, apart from Kristi, actively choose Icelandic schools. School choice within Iceland did not vary considerably among the participants. Six of the seven mothers sent their children to schools within their neighborhood. Sarah and Kristi sent their children to private schools- Sarah to a private school in her neighborhood and Kristi to a private school outside her neighborhood. The remaining mothers chose assigned neighborhood schools. In line with their class status, they all resided in medium or high-income neighborhoods in cultural or economic capital (Magnúsdóttir et al., 2020).

8.1 Inclusive practices and a holistic pedagogy

Harriet originally came to Iceland for adventure but stayed for her children's educational experiences. She adopted children with special needs from abroad. Harriet has been in Iceland for a long time; however, her children came to Iceland as school-aged children. She felt that her home country's educational system would marginalize her children due to their special educational needs. Harriet values the inclusiveness of Icelandic schools. She stated,

[My children] would never manage to school in [my home country], [my home country] never. They would drown and they would probably go in some special needs schools and stuff like that. They would never function in a normal school environment [in my home country] ... The opportunity was there to move to [another county] or move to [home country], but I said, 'We cannot really do that [because of the schools].

For Imogene, Icelandic schools were more resonant with her childhood experiences in her home country, an experience that she did not believe was possible under her home country's increasing neo-liberal policies. Thus, she felt her values in terms of schooling was more aligned with Iceland's school culture than the advanced neo-liberal values developing in her home country. Dissatisfied with the effects of progressive neo-liberal policies on the educational system in her home country, Imogene chose to move to a country where she could subsidize the educational system's focus on "soft-skills" with her educational expertise. She stated,

[We came] just for the different education system and environments. Ideally, we were looking to move here with [Child] in mind, and we just happened to find employment that aligned with our profession.

While academically bright, Sarah's child had special needs that were problematized in her home country's more competitive neoliberal field. Residing in Iceland was an attempt to accommodate her child's varied educational needs. Consequentially, she felt the private school's pedagogical methodology supported his "emotional and intellectual energy". The main reason was to be able to avoid the neoliberal effects of their national school system, such as teaching to the test. Simultaneously, she felt the international curriculum would facilitate her future aspirations for her son to apply to an elite university. Likewise, citizenship in a European country would increase his employment possibilities. Regarding Icelandic schools, she stated,

Yes. [My child], I always felt he's got other things going on, not just his book smarts. Coming here was balancing how to manage the needs of his book smarts and engagement, but also maybe help the overall person may be somewhat synchronized

[chuckles] a little bit. I think that's actually been a positive for being here. He seems to have integrated himself better.

Consequentially, she felt the pedagogical methodology in Iceland allowed for the development of both his "emotional and intellectual energy."

For Imogene, Icelandic schools were more resonant with her childhood experiences in her home country, an experience that she did not believe was possible under her home country's increasing neo-liberal policies. Thus, she felt her values in terms of schooling was more aligned with Iceland's school culture than the advanced neo-liberal values developing in her home country. She specifically moved to Iceland to access the educational system. She reported, "[We came] just for the different education system and environments. Ideally, we were looking to move here with [Child] in mind, and we just happened to find employment that aligned with our profession." Sarah likewise found Iceland to be a refuge from the neoliberal effects of their national school system, such as teaching to the test and the pressure of 'optimizing' children at age 18 for competitive college admissions.

Phyllis reports negative memories of the educational system in her home country and expressed that the system there would be a poor fit for her shy child, who would not do well in an interrogation style of assessment prevalent in her home country. Phyllis stated a preference for the Icelandic system over the system in her home country. She stated,

I'm so happy that we don't have to do homework like my friends in [home country], where after school they have to go home and sit for two hours and help [their children] write and read and learn history and geography and this poem by heart....

Like the parents in Waters' (2005) study, Sarah, Imogene, Phyllis, and Harriet chose Icelandic schools due to a perceived mismatch between their values and the values of their home countries' educational system.

Sarah had the capital necessary to migrate for a better educational match for her child. Like the families in Kimelberg's (2014) study, Sarah felt that her family had the ability to transmit academic cultural capital that would allow her son to eventually flourish in his home country's more neoliberally oriented culture at home by engaging her economic capital to employ academic support tutors while viewing the school as a place for her child to develop socially and emotional and hopefully eventually synchronizing these softer skills with his advanced academic abilities.

8.2 Employment

Trina, who also internationally adopted children with special needs, reports being in Iceland due to the convenience of already being settled there. She felt that culturally, finding employment in her home country would be complicated while living abroad. Wanda also moved to Iceland due to employment opportunities for her and her husband. Likewise, Kristi was in Iceland due to her husband's employment. However, where the other families decided to go abroad on their own, Kristi's husband's employer assigned him to Iceland, so they are the only ones not choosing the country with self-initiated intent. Kristi and her family accompanied him on a temporary employment assignment. She did not mention alternative possibilities such as boarding schools, staying in her home country without her husband, or leaving her children with relatives.

8.3 Choosing Public or Private Schooling

Although the mothers' reasons for choosing Icelandic schools were similar, they choose different types of schools within the Icelandic system reflexive of how they mobilized their capital within the Icelandic system and their overall goals for their children.

Within Iceland, Sarah chose a private English-speaking school. "The concept of being able to blend the cultural element of interacting with the Icelandic side while still having

academic instruction in English" attracted Sarah to a private school. Her understanding was that the school started due to what she described as:

[...] an obvious need in the country to have English language instruction for the diplomatic kids and the otherwise English speaking kids who live here. There aren't that many options. Not everybody can easily afford it, but that doesn't mean that it shouldn't be allowed. Absolutely, you have to meet the kids' needs and the families' need who don't speak Icelandic... You have to provide them with a choice to come here.

On the other hand, Imogene chose a neighborhood school. She felt that total immersion would aid in her child's Icelandic language acquisition and support social development. She said that "for the first six months that we lived here when he started school and he had no Icelandic background connection, so we put him in the local school. That was difficult." Her strategy worked; four years later, her child is fluent and integrated with the local children. She feels that,

[Academically] he's fine. I think sometimes, with Icelandic, it's a bit hit and miss. Sometimes that's still a work in progress. I think in terms of academic Icelandic, for the most part, I think he's on par, but he still has some gaps to fill.

For Phyllis, whose child attended Icelandic preschool, public compulsory schools were the natural progression. She stated, "We were also considering other school options, but we decided to have him in this one. Now everything is going well so far I don't see why I should change it." She also mentioned that she would not hesitate to switch to a private school if the neighborhood school failed to respond to her child's needs. So far, so good.

Like Imogene, Harriet did not see private schooling as supportive of her child's integration into Icelandic society:

I very much value that the [neighborhood] school is close by, and the kids can walk to the school, gives them more freedom in the future... and then for us that have been here so long, let's face it, the kids will be more Icelandic than [Parent's heritage].

Then it's an integration issue, basically- necessary for [their] integration.

Wanda moved to Iceland due to employment opportunities for her and her husband. She stated that though she supported private schools, she had always attended neighborhood schools. She said, "...it's nice to have choices, but I am happy with the public school, I don't really-- In [home country], actually we have lots of private schools, and I never attended those." She did not feel the private schools necessarily offered an advantage:

Now, I think most of my view, of my impression, is public schools are in general good.

Private they often offer some [extra-curricular] activities since day one but then when you look at students, they are not necessarily much better.

Wanda's choice of a neighborhood was influenced by her experience from childhood. Both she and her husband went to neighborhood schools in multiple locations. They are both successful and fluent in many languages; why wouldn't it work out the same for her child?

Kristi's husband's employer also assigned the family's housing, and thus the neighborhood she would live in. Kristi was the only participant sending her children to a private school outside of her neighborhood. It took her up to 45 minutes to drive to the school from her home. On some days, this meant Kristi spent three hours driving between school and her home. However, Kristi felt the commute was worth it. She liked that the private school provided instruction in English and allowed for continuity to her children across assignments. She described the curriculum as "a big hard plus" due to her familiarity with the curriculum and knowing that it provided her children with a solid academic background. She found the neighborhood school to be inappropriate for her children

because "They don't speak Icelandic. They might as well have been caught flapping on the floor."

Although the mothers mostly opted for neighborhood schools, they reported that they did not choose housing based on access to a 'better school.' Harriet stated, "Of course, we thought about, okay, we need to be near school and stuff, but you're always near school here and you always have decent schools." They all cited selection criteria such as desiring a single-family house, being near the city center, having two bathrooms, having walkability to amenities such as music schools, pools, gyms, and wanting a sea-view.

9 Discussion: Using capital to mitigate risk and facilitate transnationalism

Many of the mothers reported a preference for Icelandic schools and found the Icelandic schools to be the most supportive of the educational goals they had for their children. Despite a preference for Icelandic schools, there were three subthemes regarding perceived weakness in the system: difficulty with Icelandic acquisition, difficulty responding to diverse learners, and a lack of academic rigor particularly in mathematics. Many of the mothers attributed these weaknesses to a systemic lack of resources. For example, they were frustrated because resources for supplementing Icelandic at home were not available. Wanda, who does not speak English as her primary language, also perceived risk in Icelandic neighborhood schools relative to her son's early exposure to other students' poor English. However, they felt they were able to mitigate these risks.

9.1 Mitigating risk through supplementary education

All the mothers mitigated the risks they associated with Icelandic schools through supplementary education or enrichment opportunities. They provided the students with additional supports for Icelandic language learning, heritage learning and academic subjects and that is common for other immigrant groups that have the economic capital to do so (Pustułka (2016), Waters (2005), Erel, (2012)). Transnationally these mothers were able to mobilize their capital in various ways to advantage their children.

To ensure her child learned Standard English, Wanda employed her available economic capital to spend six months with her family in an English-speaking country where she enrolled her child in a school that only allowed English. Her child now speaks fluent Icelandic, English, and both of his parent's mother tongues. Participants who expressed

concerns with the Icelandic math curriculum were able to provide math-based enrichment activities through supplementary education or math-based strategy games.

To mitigate the lack of reliable "Icelandic as a second language" support, the mothers subsidized Icelandic and paid for home-based materials. Imogene reported providing extensive support for her children's language acquisition, including multiple private tutor lessons weekly, additional supplementation with grammar workbooks, and working with retired teachers and teenagers on pronunciation. With supplementary education and four years in Icelandic schools, her child is now fluent. Likewise, Trina's and Harriet's children are also now fluent. Kristi, who was not interested in her children learning Icelandic, did not view any weakness in Icelandic instruction as a risk. She did not have a goal of Icelandic language acquisition for her children, who were only in Iceland temporarily. On the other hand, Sarah subsidized her child's Icelandic through language classes available in the community. She was satisfied that he had enough hours of Icelandic instruction to support a permit residence visa.

Imogene heavily subsidized her child's education to mitigate risks associated with falling behind or missing areas of her home country's curriculum, sometimes spending up to 11 hours weekly in extra tuition in academic and language instruction. Likewise, to ensure her child learned Standard English, Wanda employed her available economic capital to spend six months with her family in an English-speaking country where she enrolled her child in a school that only allowed English. Her child now speaks fluent Icelandic, English, and both of his parents' mother tongues.

9.2 Mitigating risk through parental involvement

The mothers also mitigated risk by being involved. Harriet noted, "If you don't be involved in your kids' studies here, I think that can go downhill very fast. If you just let the

kids do stuff. You need to be." Trina echoed this, "I have found out, the more you're involved, the more they actually do stuff for you." Kristi did as well, "If you're involved, I think the schools are more apt to help you if you need it. If you make your face seen there."

The open communication and inside eyes provided knowledge necessary to understand the system, how it worked, what the children did throughout the day, and to effectively evaluate how the system supported their own needs and goals. The mothers in this study had either the time or money resources, or both, necessary to support this type of interaction. Sarah used her time resources to volunteer in the classroom. She also converted her economic and social capital into the Icelandic cultural capital she lacked by arranging for a teacher to work at the private school the first year she was there, who also provided her son with academic support. She relayed,

We did end up facilitating a [home-city] teacher to come and spend his sabbatical year himself here working. He worked half time at [the private school] and basically tutored [my child] because we really wanted to push [him] over. ...The teacher we brought was teaching [my child's] section of math, which was great. He got to see [my child] and the other kids in action, and he could help us evaluate the teachers in the program and everything.

Having these resources allowed her to take a risk:

If the program had been a disaster, we just would have bucked up with the tutoring for the first year and then gone back to [home city]. We were extremely fortunate to have the resources that we had with us, not only to make it academically appropriate for [son] the first year, but to really analyze what was happening, and think, "Okay. We're comfortable with these teachers. We're comfortable about the program. It's moving in the right direction."

Other mothers, who had less time due to full-time employment constraints, relied on the school to provide this information. Trina attributed many of her initial problems to a lack of inside eyes. When provided with better communication, she described it as a 'game-changer.' However, getting to this point took much time and interaction with the school. She used her confidence to approach the school and insist on communications. Overall, the mothers felt that the schools failed to provide the inside information they desired without prompting or action. This perceived lack of transparency was seen as a weakness and caused much anxiety for the mothers.

The mothers had mixed feeling about Icelandic schools; however, many report a preference for Icelandic schools. As discussed above, transnationally, many of the mothers found the Icelandic schools more supportive of the educational goals they had for their children than in other countries where they had resided. Despite a preference for Icelandic schools, there were three subthemes regarding perceived weakness in the system: difficulty teaching Icelandic and difficulty responding to advanced learners, including a lack of academic rigor. In this study, many mothers attributed these weaknesses to a systemic lack of resources within the system- a common complaint in all educational systems.

9.3 Mitigating risk through flexible transnationalism

The mothers in this study had practices that could be seen a highly impacted by both their individual and educational habitus developed in their youth. The habitus of their youth was somewhat but not greatly changed and adjusted post migration to Iceland due to their experiences in the local schools. Most of these mothers had a high degree of overlap in their habitus and where overlap was not evident, the mothers could use their resources to facilitate adjustment or to maintain their original habitus.

Despite their concerns, overall, the parents were satisfied with Icelandic compulsory schools. Imogene said, "I'm happy with them so far... there is a lot of room for growth, but I'm happy with them overall." Likewise, regarding her own child's school, Phyllis states, "It's a good school. I think it is well organized." She feels she is learning best practices from her child's teacher that she has applied to her own work, "I'm learning from her to talk with my younger students... Every time she speaks to the children, she lowers herself to children's heights and she talks to them directly with eye contact, very calmly...". Phyllis does that now too.

As succinctly noted by Sarah, "I felt like we could make that risk [of coming to Iceland] just because of the [resources] we had." She came to think, "It's probably just fine for [my child] not to be taking his [standardized] exams because it allows so much more class time to be dedicated to things that are more beneficial for him..." Likewise, Wanda learned, a little bit how to cope with the school. My expectations as well changed a little bit over the time. I actually start to appreciate from perspective of a parent that they don't have homework every day and they actually have free time to do other things. I'm actually happy about that.

Harriet also came to terms with the focus on reading:

I was freaking out because I think math is important, but then my father at some point said, 'Think about it Harriet, they need to read, but they can always use a calculator for everything math.' Then if I, in my daily job, think about how much math I used and I learned, it's like a joke. So, I completely relaxed about that.

Sarah's resources allowed her to approach her transnational strategy with flexibility. She went in hoping for a hybrid experience that balanced her home culture with Icelandic culture. However, if the balancing did not happen, she was prepared to switch to more of a

zero-sum approach with the support of a teacher from her home country. Luckily, risk fell in her favor and the school program proved supportive of her goals.

Likewise, Kristi approached transnationalism with flexibility. When her attempts at bridging fell flat, she employed more of a zero-sum strategy. This is not surprising given the high mobility of Kristi's family. She did not need to root herself and viewed rooting her children over multiple assignments as detrimental.

Like the mothers in Waters' (2005) study, Sarah and Imogene "bought-out" what they felt was a poor fit of their child to their national system. However, they also had an eye on return. Sarah was explicitly preparing her son for post-secondary studies in his native country. Under Tsuda's (year) taxonomy, she approached transnationalism through a positively reinforcing perspective. This is reflected in her school choice, which is a blend of Icelandic and International children with Icelandic and English spoken at the school. Her school choice encourages increased proficiency in both cultures, thereby "offering access to content from both sending and receiving" cultures (Tsuda, date, 640). She was able to mitigate perceived weaknesses in the school through home study. However also divergent in that Imogene chose neighborhood schools to gain cultural capital in the receiving country and subsidize the lack of home country cultural capital at home through intensive study. In contrast, Sarah chose an English-speaking school where the hope was for the child to acquire cultural capital in both countries simultaneously. This makes Sarah's choices more aligned with Co-existing transnationally and Imogene aligned with a genuinely simultaneous transnational orientation. Although both mothers were motivated by the same catalyst, how their engagement played out differed.

To some extent Trina and Harriet also "bought-out" a poor fit, however this was less directed than the choice of Sarah and Imogene. Unlike Sarah and Imogene, Trina and Harriet

were not preparing their child for a possible return to their country of origin, and they did not come to Iceland specifically for the schools. Like the “Intensive Mothers” in Pulstulka’s study, they “gravitat[ed] more towards the local schooling, ensuring that their children are well-adapted and doing well in the system that will most likely determine their future paths.” (2016, 167). Sarah chose an English-speaking school for the same reason but would still not be seen as an Intensive mother. Her choice was more in line with expanding her son’s opportunities and grounding him in both Icelandic and his home country’s cultures. Phyllis likewise found the Icelandic system to be more in line with her son’s personality.

The mothers began to view school as a place of social and emotional growth like the mothers in Kimelberg’s study. They felt they could subsidize any lacking transmission of academic cultural capital at home in line with the Intensive Mothers in Pulstulka’s study.

10 Conclusion

Consistent with mothers from other research with similar class and marital status, the mothers in this research found ways of being as involved as the system allowed them. In praxis, it was much less than the Icelandic laws and regulations aim for in terms of involving the parents in more systemic aspects of education such as providing input on the school's curriculum guidelines or influencing the school culture (Compulsory School Act, 2008 No. 91, Article 9). Within Iceland, these mothers choose schools within their neighborhoods. However, one of these schools was a private school, and in line with their class status, these neighborhoods are high in terms of either cultural or economic capital (or both) (Magnúsdóttir et al., in review). Their choice of schooling was consistent with the dominant practice of neighborhood schools being the primary choice and perceptions of the neighborhood schools being competent and equal (Auðardóttir & Kosunen, 2020). Though these parents did not respond to a negative dialogue about the local schools like the participants in Auðardóttir & Kosunen's (2020) study, they supplemented a perceived weakness in the Icelandic language and math curriculums. Their parental practices went into compensating for this lack themselves or buying some external help.

The mothers were confident in their interactions with school personnel and advocated for their children through written and in-person communications. When lower-level communication did not achieve the desired results, the mothers did not hesitate to request and attend an in-person meeting. They regularly attended parent conferences, arranged for extra conferences, and attended school events. Despite a concern with the math curriculum, these mothers were not active participants in the Parent Council.

However, if asked for assistance in arranging school events, they offered their time and resources.

Transnationally these mothers all mobilized their capital in various ways to advantage their children. Due to their collection of economic, social, and cultural capital, including transnational capital, they could mitigate the risks inherent in making cross-border educational decisions for their children. The extent to which the games people already play and games in which they are already fluent (their habitus) overlap with the rules and expectations of the new game (the habitus in the receiving field) can facilitate or make engagement more difficult. The mothers in this study have mobility- they have a habitus of relative freedom. They have not exhausted their economic resources in getting to Iceland. Neither their cultural nor their economic capital constrain their choice of neighborhood. Most arrived in Iceland with the economic resources necessary to purchase a home in desirable areas with a minimal or nonexistent mortgage. They are not constrained by necessity.

They have the financial ability to leave. The mothers possess skills that facilitate quickly finding employment elsewhere. They (or their spouse) work in highly skilled, prestigious fields with worldwide demand. They speak English either as their mother tongue or with a high degree of fluency. They have the freedom not just to choose how to deploy their resources during play- they get to choose which games to play. That is not to say that they are not constrained by the rules on the field they choose to engage. They are equally subject to laws, regulations, and the dominant culture. Still, the ability to choose ones' games is a significant advantage because it gives the agents the freedom to choose the games in which they will excel and, most importantly, the power to craft their own narrative.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

General

1. How many people live in your home?
2. Where do you live? What neighborhood?

Background information of interviewee

1. Where do you come from? Where did you grow up?
 - ii. When did you or your family move to Iceland?
 - iii. Why did you move to Iceland?
 - iv. Did you intend to be here temporarily or longer?
 - v. What was most difficult about the move?
2. How was your school experience? How did you do in primary school?
3. How did you do in school? How did you feel? How did you do in your studies?
4. Where did you go after primary school?
5. How did your parents support you during school? (Financial, help by studying, help by working)
6. What did your parents focus on during your childhood (to help with your schooling)?
7. Did you participate in recreational activities outside of school?
8. How was your typical day as a child during school?
 - a. How was your typical day on the weekend?

Background information of spouse

1. What is your marital status?
 - a. If you are separated from the child's parent:
 - b. What is the relationship with the child and other parent and family?

At this point you can:

 - i. Choose to ask more in detail about the spouse
 - ii. Choose to discuss which parent is more active in parenting.
2. Where did your spouse grow up?
3. Where did he/she go to school?
 - a. How did he/she feel about school?
 - b. *Tell me more:* Socially and academically?
4. What did he/she do after finishing compulsory school?
5. What was the typical day for him/her? (*If the interviewee knows*)

Residence

1. When did you move to this neighborhood?
2. How did you end up here?
 - a. Is the interviewee new in the neighborhood / has been here long/ forced to move often? – *Get more details about what caused them to live here and why. Get more details about how much "choice" the interviewee had in their living situation.*
3. How would you describe this neighborhood? *If not stated then keep asking, ex. But what are the neighbors like?*
4. Would you consider living somewhere else?
 - a. If yes, then where and why?

Background of the child

1. Discuss how many children the interviewee has and their ages and grade in school.

All interviewees should have a child or children in 4. – 7. grade. The next questions are specifically for that child. If more than one child of that age, choose one randomly.

2. How long has the child been at the current school?
3. Was the child in preschool?
 - a. What preschool?
 - b. How did the child like the preschool?
 - c. *If not stated then keep asking.* Any issues, social connections, well-being, relationship with the teachers?
 - d. How was your relationship with the teachers?
4. Describe your child's personality.
5. How is your child doing academically in school?
6. Socially?

Tell me about your child's school-

7. Are you satisfied with your child's school? Met needs/ Unmet needs
8. Have you ever had an opportunity to change schools?
9. *If not stated then ask:* Does your child have a diagnosis of some sort?
 - a. As a parent, what was your involvement with the process of diagnosis?
 - b. How did you feel about this process?
 - c. Is there something you would have changed in the diagnosis process?
 - d. How were the specialists with you during the diagnosis process?
 - e. If you were unsatisfied, what was the reason?
 - f. What were your reactions (both parents) when learning of the diagnosis?
 - g. Were your reactions different? If yes, in what way?
 - h. How has your life changed after learning about your child's diagnosis/disability/disorder?

Parent involvement with schoolwork

1. Does the school require anything from the parents such as something for homework, attending events, or something similar where you must dedicate time to attend?
 - a. Can you describe these demands?
 - b. How do you feel about these demands?
2. Do you have to coordinate attending these events with your work?
 - a. What is your supervisor's response?
3. What do you think is your role as a parent of your child at the school?
 - a. How is your relationship with the teachers and staff that work with your child? (*include teachers, support staff, headmaster, administration*)
 - b. How do you communicate your opinions with the school in regards to your child's learning or school environment?
 - i. Is it difficult? In what way?
 - ii. Is it good? Describe the interaction.
4. Have you participated with the parent association or been a class representative?
5. Do you feel there is a difference in the obligations of the parents in your child's school and what your parents had to do when you were in school?
6. How do you feel when you come to the school to participate in general schoolwork / activities for your child?
 - a. Is it easy or difficult for you?
7. What are the school's requirements for homework?
 - a. Who manages the homework (Which parent helps)? (*Look for gender divisions*)
 - b. How much time do you expect to spend on homework in a day? Per week?

- c. How do the parents divide the responsibilities for communicating with the school regarding your child's schooling?
- d. Do the parents participate equally in meetings and in your child's schooling?
 - i. If not, who does it?
 - ii. What are the reasons for this parent to be more involved?
- 8. Do you use any materials or apps, or attend any courses or programs, related to schooling, but not directly related to the school? (*if you need to give an example: for example, educational websites*)
 - a. *For immigrants:* Does your child attend any special classes related to their heritage? (*For example, Polish school*)
- 9. How would you describe the group of parents of your child's class?
 - a. What are the parents like?
 - b. What ages?
 - c. Would you say that the parents in the group are similar to each other, or is the group made up of different backgrounds?
 - d. How are the genders divided in parent participation at school-related events?
 - e. How do you think you and your family fit in with this group?
 - f. Do you meet the parents, or do you feel you are different? Do you feel you are treated differently by the teacher?
- 10. Compare your own school experience with your child's school experience.
 - a. What do you think is different?
 - b. What is similar?

Friendships and recreation activities of the child

1. Describe a typical day for your child or for both of you together when school finishes. *If not stated, ask:* Is it some kind of recreational activity? If so, what?
 - a. If your child participates in recreation activities:
 - i. Is the parent required to participate in some kind of way?
 - ii. If yes, Have you participated as a parent in this way?
 - iii. Where do you get information about the recreation activities that are available to your child?
 - iv. What do you think about the cost of the children's recreation activities? *If needed, ask about the leisure subsidy support. [fristundastyrk=leisure subsidy support]*
 - b. If the child does not participate in recreational activities:
 - i. Was your child involved in a recreational activity and stopped? Why did he/she stop?
 - ii. Has the child talked about or been interested in some kind of recreational activity?
2. Who does the child play with after school?
 - a. *If needed, ask:* Are they mainly children from their school or children from the neighborhood?
 - b. Or mainly with relatives or extended family?
3. How are the child's relationships with his/her friends?
 - a. Does he/she have any best friends?
 - b. Does the child have friends who come from different backgrounds, such as different values and upbringing? (*for example, of foreign origin or with parents very different from you*)
4. How well or how much do you know about the parents of your child's friends?
5. How do you spend your free time, on the weekends or in the summer?
6. How do you feel when you are together during your free time? (*If needed, ask: Is it a difficult / easy / fun time?*)

Future of the child

1. What do you hope for your child to be in the future?
2. What do you see for your child's education in the future?
 - a. Have you thought about a particular upper secondary school for your child? [*framhaldsskóli=upper secondary school*]
3. What about working in a job?
4. What do you think is the role of the school (for your child's future)?

Social capital

1. How do you get help or information for your child's learning and upbringing? (*first ask as open-ended question*)
 - a. Do you personally know people in your network where you can seek and ask for advice about your child's learning and upbringing?
 - b. Do you meet or interact with other parents who are in a similar situation as you are?
 - i. Online? In a group?
 - ii. In support groups, parent groups, or something similar?
 - c. If you know any experts, teachers or professionals, do you ask them for advice?
 - d. Do you look to the classroom parents' group for advice?
2. Who are the people that you socialize with most?
 - a. How do you meet people outside of the family? (*try to get details on the background of the friends*)
3. Do you think they are supportive regarding your child's learning and upbringing? In what way?

General views of the compulsory school system and Iceland

1. Do you think that everyone in Iceland generally have equal opportunities?
2. What do you think about "inclusive education" where all children have the right to attend their neighborhood school, regardless of language skills, learning ability, behavior, or disability? (*If the interviewee has not already discussed it, you can ask about the student composition in the neighborhood school or the school that they have chosen. Did that affect their choice in school?*)
3. What do you think about tracking and ability grouping in schools, such as low, middle, or high tracks?
4. What about the tracking that already happens in upper secondary schools (being chosen by the grades)?
5. What do you think about Icelandic schools?
6. What do you think about the increased emphasis on parent involvement in schooling and policy?
7. What do you think about the increased opportunities for parents to choose a school outside of their neighborhood school?
8. What do you think about private schools that collect tuition fees?
9. Do you think all parents have equal opportunity to choose a school for their children?

Additional Questions

1. Is there anything you would like to add?
2. How did you feel about this interview/topic?

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Informed consent

Informed consent statement for the research *Parental practices, choices and responsibilities within the Icelandic education system*.

The principle investigator is Dr. Berglind Rós Magnúsdóttir, associate professor at the School of Education, University of Iceland (brm@hi.is). Please contact in case of questions or concerns.

By providing my signature I agree to participate in the research *Parental practices, choices and responsibilities within the Icelandic education system*. The aim of the research is to investigate parents' experiences of having a child in the Icelandic compulsory school system. The research is funded by the University of Iceland Research Fund and the Icelandic Equality Fund. Findings from the research will be published in an Icelandic book in the year 2020 and in international academic articles. Findings will also be used in a studies undertaken by PhD and MA-students at the School of Education, University of Iceland supervised by Dr. Berglind Rós Magnúsdóttir and Dr. Brynja E Halldórsdóttir Assistant Professor. This part of the study focuses on immigrant parents' practices in relation to schooling and school choice.

Participation in the study includes a member of the research team interviewing the participant once.

Participants will be asked to answer a short background questionnaire after the interview. The interview takes approximately one hour and is recorded digitally. Your anonymity will be ensured and the interview as a whole will be kept private and not shared with anyone outside the research team. No names or other identifiable information (e.g. your name, children names or school names) will be present in the findings. Original data will be destroyed after the research period. Participants have the right to refuse to answer some or all of the questions during the interview. They are also free to withdraw from the research at any time without explanations or consequences.

I agree to participate in this research

I agree to the possibility of being contacted by the principle investigator within a period of 10 years to ask if I would be interested in participating in a follow up research.

Date and time

Participant's signature

I confirm that I have witnessed the accurate reading and understanding of the consent form to the potential participant.

Member of the research team