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Educating Children in Times of Globalisation: Class-specific Child-rearing Practices and the Acquisition of Transnational Cultural Capital

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Abstract: Due to globalisation processes, foreign language skills and familiarity with foreign cultures and institutions, along with similar skills and dispositions which we call ‘transnational cultural capital’ have gained in importance, affecting the positional competition between classes. Drawing on Bourdieu and based on semi-structured interviews with parents of adolescents, some of whom spent a school year abroad, we reconstruct class-specific differences in the acquisition of transnational cultural capital via a school year abroad. We show how, for upper middle class families, this acquisition is embedded in specific child-rearing practices and facilitated by their endowment with different forms of capital. For the same reasons, lower middle class families tend to find the acquisition of transnational cultural capital much more difficult. However, we also identify ways and conditions under which these families can enable their children to embark on a school year abroad.

Keywords: education, globalisation, social class, social inequality, transnational cultural capital, year abroad

Introduction

Influenced particularly by the work of Bourdieu (1984, 1986), research has repeatedly shown how, with regard to education, class-based family practices contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities (e.g. Devine, 2004; Vincent and Ball, 2007). However, due to globalisation processes, the nature of the competition for social positions has changed profoundly (Brown, 2000). The scale, density, and speed of exchange between nations and world regions have increased dramatically (Held et al., 1999), opening up and transforming hitherto closed national labour markets and societies. Consequently, skills and dispositions needed to act in social fields that transcend the nation state – e.g. foreign language skills, openness towards other cultures – have increased in importance. We refer to these skills and dispositions as ‘transnational cultural

capital'. The increasing relevance of this type of capital becomes apparent, for example, when looking at demands for foreign language skills in the labour market. Survey data from the 2012 Eurobarometer (EB) show that the share of European citizens regularly using a foreign language at work increased from about one quarter, among those born in the 1940s and 1950s, to more than 40 % among those born in the 1980s. A similar trend can be observed in the United Kingdom (UK), albeit to a lesser extent, i.e. from 4 % to 31 % (EB 77.1, own calculations). The growing significance of transnational cultural capital has also surfaced in recent discussions about cosmopolitanism. Here, transnational cultural capital is seen as a specific, class-related attitude or disposition, e.g. an openness towards others or an appreciation of cultural diversity (Priour and Savage, 2013; Weenink, 2008).

Transnational cultural capital can be acquired in different ways; for example, via bilingual instruction at school, media exposure, language courses, or study periods abroad. We focus on one specific way of obtaining such capital, namely spending a school year abroad. This practice is arguably one of the most effective ways to acquire transnational cultural capital. First, psychological research shows that younger children incorporate new language skills more easily than older ones and adults; psychologists therefore speak of a 'critical period' for second language acquisition (Meisel, 2011). Second, a stay abroad means a constant 'immersion' of the child in a new linguistic and cultural environment (cf. Baker, 1993). As a result, language skills as well as more general cultural codes and schemas are incorporated twenty-four hours a day – something quite difficult to achieve at home. Third, life course research has shown that decisions early in life determine future life paths considerably and are hard to revise later on (Breen and Jonsson, 2005). Thus, one can expect that transnational cultural capital acquired as a school pupil impacts substantially on the further educational and occupational trajectory. Research on student mobility has shown, for example, that mobility experiences during school raise the probability of going abroad as a university student, and that students who do so are more likely to pursue an international career afterwards (paper X in edited volume by the authors; Wiers-Jenssen, 2008). Other research indicates that transnational cultural capital in the form of foreign language skills leads to positive returns with regard to income and one's socio-economic position (paper Z in edited volume by the authors; Stöhr, 2015).

However, opportunities for transnational mobility – either as a university student or as a pupil – are largely determined by a person's social class background (Brooks and Waters, 2009; Author A and B; King et al., 2011; paper Y in edited volume by the authors). Yet, little is known about the class-specific *mechanisms* leading to the acquisition of transnational cultural capital. The aim of our study, therefore, is to uncover class-specific practices that lead to its acquisition

– both habitual practices which convey, often unconsciously, a certain attitude towards international mobility, and calculated practices which explicitly aim at preparing children for a school year abroad. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital and Lareau's (2003) insights into class-specific child-rearing practices, we analyse whether and how families differ along class lines in the ways in which they empower or discourage their children to spend a school year abroad.

To answer this question, we conducted semi-structured interviews with German parents from different class backgrounds, some of whose adolescent children spent a school year abroad. This form of mobility is rather popular in Germany (Weichbrodt, 2014) and quite common in many other countries as well. According to a 2011 Eurobarometer survey, the share of Europeans 35 years or younger who had spent at least three months abroad for educational purposes during school varies between 0.8 % in Greece and 11 % in Luxembourg (Flash EB 319, own calculations). Today, a considerable number of young Europeans acquire transnational cultural capital by going abroad, boosting an evolving international education market in which the UK, especially, has positioned itself strategically (cf. Brooks and Waters, 2015).

In the following section, we briefly outline the theoretical background of our study. Then we describe our research design before presenting three distinct ways in which families of different class backgrounds handle the possibility of going abroad in school as a means of acquiring transnational cultural capital.

Theoretical Framework

In speaking of 'transnational cultural capital', we obviously refer to Bourdieu's theory of capital (1984, 1986). As is well known, he distinguishes between 'economic capital' in the form of income and wealth, 'cultural capital' in the form of incorporated skills and dispositions, cultural artefacts, and educational certificates (hence 'embodied', 'objectified', or 'institutionalised'), and 'social capital' in the form of social networks. If a specific form of capital is highly valued, this leads to 'symbolic capital', i.e. social appreciation and prestige. All these forms of capital determine the position of social classes and class fractions in the social space. However, Bourdieu's theory of capital and social class argues essentially within a nation-state frame, neglecting the fact that globalisation has significantly altered the basic parameters of social reproduction – a perspective Beck (2004) has generally criticised for its inherent methodological nationalism.

Hence, a number of conceptual adjustments of Bourdieu's terminological apparatus have emerged. One can find the terms 'mobility capital' (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002) and 'transnational linguistic capital' (Author A) alongside other phrases such as 'intercultural capital' (Pöllmann, 2013) or 'cosmopolitan capital' (Weenink, 2008). All of these focus on very specific aspects of cultural capital, however (i.e. an inclination to be mobile again, linguistic and intercultural competencies, or a specific outlook on the world). In contrast to this, we prefer the more encompassing term 'transnational cultural capital'. In its embodied form, it refers to foreign language skills, intercultural competence, knowledge of other cultures and countries, but also to specific attitudes and dispositions, e.g. an interest in or 'taste' for going abroad, an openness towards others, and an appreciation of other cultures. It can have a cosmopolitan flavour, with 'the world' as a frame of reference, or refer only to another country or regional area different from one's national origin. Transnational cultural capital may also exist in objectified or institutionalised forms, one example for the latter being an educational certificate obtained at a university abroad. Also, its acquisition can be accompanied by accumulating transnational social capital, e.g. by making friends while attending school abroad.

Bourdieu's theory (1986) is based on the premise that social reproduction occurs via the intergenerational transmission of economic, cultural, and social capital from parents to children. These transmission processes happen primarily in a habitual manner. Beyond this, Bourdieu does not really elaborate on how such transmission processes actually occur (Lahire, 2003: 334). For this reason, we draw on Lareau's (2003) concept of class-based child-rearing practices. Based on American middle and working class families, she distinguishes two types of parenting styles. Middle class families usually practice a 'concerted cultivation' of their children, constantly stimulating their child's cognitive and social development through organised leisure activities and a communication style based on reasoning. Working class parents, in contrast, are oriented towards the 'accomplishment of natural growth'. They allow children to grow independently from parental guidance, while their style of communication is more oriented toward directives. In this way, Lareau argues, child-rearing practices contribute to the intergenerational transmission of (cultural) capital and, thus, to the reproduction of class positions.

Based on this conceptual foundation, we expect that the acquisition of transnational cultural capital depends on the endowment of families with different forms of capital and their class-specific child-rearing practices. First, a school year abroad is expensive, particularly for low-income families. Second, for parents with international experiences of their own, the idea of spending a year abroad forms part of their habitus. Moreover, they possess the necessary

(linguistic) competences to actively intervene in its organisation and realisation. Thus, in terms of embodied cultural capital, not only does a high amount of capital matter, but also whether parents dispose of such capital in a transnationalised form. Third, parents' social capital influences whether a child's stay abroad is discussed among friends and acquaintances and how it is framed. Fourth, regarding child-rearing practices, the acquisition of transnational cultural capital can be understood as part of the child's cognitive and social development. Parents may encourage a stay abroad in the sense of a 'concerted cultivation'. If the parenting style follows the 'accomplishment of natural growth' instead, the child has to play a far more active role in convincing his or her parents of such an endeavour.

However, applying Bourdieu's theoretical lens to analyse class differences in the acquisition of transnational cultural capital comes at some cost. His theory focuses almost exclusively on social reproduction and can be criticised for its 'determinism' (Jenkins, 1982). It tends to underestimate the fact that individuals are not fully determined by existing structures, but can also to some extent shape them. Following this line of argument, parents might be able to make a stay abroad possible for their children against the odds of their class position by way of specific compensatory strategies. This does not mean that all families have equal opportunities for this kind of individual agency, which is contingent on specific social and familial conditions. In our analysis, we will not only focus on how different capital endowments and parenting styles influence familial practices regarding a school year abroad, but we will also attempt to identify conditions that enable lower class families to exert some agency and thereby overcome the initial limitations set by their class.

Context, Data, and Methods

Since our study focuses on a specific way of acquiring transnational cultural capital and relates to the German context, we first provide some background information before outlining our methodological approach. An important characteristic of the German secondary education system is its traditionally three-tiered structure. The two lower tiers, *Hauptschule* and *Realschule*, essentially prepare for vocational training and conclude with the 10th grade. The upper tier, the *Gymnasium* (i.e. grammar school), continues through to the 12th or 13th grade (depending on the federal state) and offers a school-leaving certificate – the *Abitur* (comparable to the British A levels) – that qualifies for tertiary education. In the school year of 2012/13, only 34.4 % of all secondary school pupils were enrolled in a *Gymnasium* (Malecki et al., 2014: 13). There are also comprehensive schools, *Gesamtschulen*, which combine all three tiers.

School stays abroad are almost exclusively undertaken by grammar school pupils (Author A and B). Today, around 19,000 German children annually embark on a school stay abroad (Terbeck, 2014). Most of them choose an English-speaking country – the United States (US), Canada, Australia, the UK – but France, Spain, and some South American countries are also in demand. These stays are predominantly organised by non-profit or commercial organisations, and are most often directed at 15 to 18 year-olds who usually spend the 10th or 11th school year abroad (Weichbrodt, 2014). Depending on the destination country, costs for visiting a state school abroad vary between € 5,800 and € 18,400 (approximately £ 4,300 to £ 13,630 at an exchange rate of 1:1.35), plus an allowance. For a private or boarding school abroad, costs vary between € 10,100 and € 52,700 (approx. £ 7,480 to £ 39,040) (Terbeck, 2014).

In order to examine how social inequalities play out in the acquisition of transnational cultural capital, we conducted semi-structured interviews with parents whose adolescent children attended grammar or comprehensive schools and some of whom spent a school year abroad. We contacted them via schools in socially different neighbourhoods of a major German city, maximising the diversity of interviewees' class background as much as possible. Due to the social selectivity of this specific practice, it almost never occurs among families from the lower social classes. Our sample is therefore limited to lower and upper middle class families. We interviewed 26 families in total, of which 19 had sent their children abroad. Additionally, we took notes on the families' living environment and collected socio-demographic data with a questionnaire. All information relating to the families' real identities has been anonymised; the names used below to designate exemplary families are pseudonyms.

We conducted a qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2014) of our interviews, using categories derived from the aforementioned concepts or generated inductively. Families were classified along four central dimensions. The first is their endowment with different forms of capital (1). As an indicator of families' *economic capital*, we used their monthly net equivalent income (which corrects for household size) relative to the general population (cf. Federal Statistical Office, 2012: 24). The designation 'low economic capital' pertains to families with a monthly net equivalent income of less than about € 1,230 (approx. £ 910). A 'medium' position means up to about € 2,040 per month (approx. £ 1,510), 'high' economic capital is equivalent to more than € 2,040. Parents' *institutionalised cultural capital* is considered 'high' if at least one parent graduated from university, 'medium' if at least one of them completed vocational training, and 'low' otherwise. Furthermore, we assessed their *embodied transnational cultural capital* by interpreting the interviewees' remarks about their own foreign language skills and experiences abroad. It is regarded as 'high' if they themselves have spent

time abroad, if they refer to these experiences in a positive manner, and speak at least one foreign language fluently. If these characteristics apply only partially or hardly at all, we considered it to be ‘medium’ or ‘low’. Finally, we classified parents’ *social capital* as either ‘high’, ‘medium’, or ‘low’, depending on the degree to which they entertain transnational relations (via family, friends, or for professional reasons) and how prevalent the practice of a school year abroad is within the parents’ social network. The other key dimensions are (2) the families’ child-rearing approach – following Lareau, we interpreted how parents shape their child’s recreational and educational experiences and the way they communicate –, (3) whether the acquisition of transnational cultural capital represents a specific educational aim and whether parents embed the idea of a school year abroad in their general educational practice, and (4) the significance of the child’s motivation in determining whether a school year abroad is realised (cf. table 1).¹

By allocating the families to these four dimensions, we detected three distinct types: the ‘transnationally accomplished’, the ‘excluded’, and the ‘ambitious’. Each type represents a specific constellation of how families typically enable, or restrain, their children’s opportunities to spend a school year abroad. In the following section, these three types will be illustrated via a ‘representative case interpretation’ (Kuckartz, 2014: 116), i.e. through the description of an exemplary case. Of all interviewed families, 11 belong to the transnationally accomplished (of which eight have children who attended school abroad), three to the excluded (of which all children stayed at home), and eight to the ambitious (all of which have children who attended school abroad). Four families could not be clearly assigned to any type for case-specific reasons, though without forming a type of their own.²

Results

In the following, we present the three types resulting from the analysis of our interviews. Table 1 summarises their characteristics according to the four comparative dimensions. For the first type, the transnationally accomplished, the acquisition of transnational cultural capital is a self-evident part of their educational efforts and actively pursued beyond the learning of foreign languages at school. Owing to these families’ privileged capital endowment, spending a school year abroad is a likely option. Even if these families only have a ‘medium’ income at their disposal, they do not necessarily question the idea of a school year abroad so much since they have a habitual affinity to it given their high transnational cultural capital. Thus, the child’s acquisition of transnational cultural capital is part of a comprehensive parental strategy to reproduce one’s social status in tune with the new parameters set by globalisation. For the other

two types, the excluded and the ambitious, a school stay abroad is not a likely option due to their rather low capital endowment and their habitual distance towards international experiences. Although some of them may have a medium amount of economic capital at their disposal, other class-related factors usually keep them from pursuing a school year abroad for their child. However, these two types differ in how they handle the issue of a school year abroad when it does present itself. While the excluded generally do not follow up on it, the ambitious seize the school year abroad as an additional opportunity to provide their children with a chance for upward social mobility.

[Table 1 here]

The Transnationally Accomplished: A School Year Abroad as a ‘Natural’ Consequence of the Family’s Class Background

The Arndt family is typical for the transnationally accomplished, who are usually part of the upper middle classes. The interview with Mrs Arndt takes place in a café in a wealthy neighbourhood, where Mr and Mrs Arndt live with their two children in a freehold flat. Mrs Arndt has a confident and vibrant personality. After obtaining her *Abitur* and completing vocational training, she worked in the service sector for several years. She then decided to ‘give priority to the family’ for a little over a decade.³ As part of this commitment, she also hosted international colleagues of her husband. Mr Arndt graduated from university and now works in the management of the local branch of an international company. This requires frequent international travel. Apart from the family’s high institutionalised cultural capital, the Arndts also belong to the higher income segments, given a monthly net equivalent income of between € 2,200 and € 2,600 (approx. £ 1,630 to £ 1,925).

Both children attend grammar school. Their son is currently spending a school year in the US. He will return to finish his *Abitur* and continue with university education, as Mrs Arndt assumes. The younger daughter will go abroad, too. In his leisure time, the son sings in a choir, plays basketball, and likes to read. He and his sister were encouraged to participate in choir practice by their mother, who has herself done so for many years. In view of these cultural practices, Mrs Arndt laughingly characterises her family as ‘typically *Bildungsbürgertum*’ (educated bourgeoisie). The Arndts’ child-rearing approach can thus clearly be characterised as a ‘concerted cultivation’. They continuously stimulate their children’s development through educational activities and practice a style of communication that favours dialogue over strict command.

Mr and Mrs Arndt both possess high transnational cultural capital. During her childhood, Mrs Arndt often paid visits to her parents' French friends in Paris. Mr Arndt has travelled abroad extensively because of his occupation. They have excellent foreign language skills (both speak English and French fluently), considerable international experience, and a habitual cosmopolitan orientation.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that it has been Mr and Mrs Arndt's concern to provide their children with transnational cultural capital from an early age. They exhibit a host of habitual practices and calculated strategies that aim at equipping their children with a positive stance and an interest in seeking experience abroad. This process of transmission of incorporated transnational cultural capital happens quite casually, as the following quote illustrates:

'[...] as long as they can think they have always experienced, for example, how English or French or both were spoken at table, because we had friends or colleagues over. And for us, for my husband and myself, it is just very important to have such an international idea, well, from all over the world.'

A further step in making their son acquainted with transnational experiences was a one-week stay with a host family in England, organised by his school. Mrs Arndt calls this a sheltered 'initiation', since it was the first time her son had to manage alone in a new environment. Then, when it became clear that he would go abroad for a longer period, his parents tried to prepare him more explicitly:

'[...] when my husband travelled to the US time and again and he brought something along or when we were in the US with the kids in Florida or something – we would say: "Alright, now you look around and so on, so you already know where you'll be later on". So, in a way it grew with the kids. Our daughter knows, too, that "it's her turn next year", so to speak.'

Additionally, the Arndts' social capital facilitated the realisation of the school year abroad. There were numerous children in their social circle – both their son's classmates and children of their friends and acquaintances – that had gone abroad or were planning to do so. Thus, they could rely on information and experience provided by their social contacts. In turn, the son's reaction to his parents' suggestion to go abroad seems to have been quite positive. However, Mrs Arndt does not further delve into her son's own motives to go abroad.

Accordingly, the objective that the Arndts pursue with a school year abroad is not only the improvement of foreign language skills, but also the development of the child's personality and interaction with other cultures. The year abroad should help 'to gain life experience [...] and not only school experience', as Mrs Arndt comments. A school year abroad is thus also a way to gain attitudes and dispositions which conform to the parents' own cosmopolitan orientation. The parents consider positive consequences for their child's future school performance and career as possible, but this point clearly plays a subordinate role.

When it came to the organisation of the school year abroad, Mr and Mrs Arndt further benefitted from their advantageous capital endowment. Mr Arndt's social contacts allowed him to find a host family in the US, and Mrs Arndt could take care of the selection of a local high school thanks to her English language skills. The exchange organisation officially in charge merely provided administrative assistance. This way, Mr and Mrs Arndt were largely able to organise their son's stay as they saw fit. By choosing a host family, they were sure to have their child in a social environment not too different from their own:

'[...] I looked at reviews of the high school before, because you hear horror stories of arms control and so on. And that is just like everywhere, the catchment area of the high school of course recruits from people that live there. Accordingly, where he lives now – that was very important to us – that is a really well-to-do neighbourhood. I'd say: comparable to [our neighbourhood], so that you can expect people to be reasonable.'

The Arndts' pursuit of a 'social fit' illustrates that the whole undertaking is not about offering their son *entirely* different cultural experiences. Rather, it has the function of reassuring him on his anticipated life trajectory; overly profound experiences of otherness would be more of a disturbance. Thus, the school year abroad is embedded in the parents' general educational efforts, and occurs, given the familial background and social environment, almost naturally. The family's advantageous capital endowment, the particular communicative control of the child, and the invisible transmission of cultural capital are crucial in this regard. Going to school abroad can thus be understood as part and parcel of the efforts of the upper middle classes at social reproduction.⁴

The Excluded: A School Year Abroad as an Unfamiliar Option

The Krause family is characteristic of the second type, the excluded, who usually belong to the lower middle classes. The interview with Mrs Krause takes place in a four-storey tenement house in a petty bourgeois neighbourhood. Mrs Krause lives there with her husband and two children, a son and a daughter. Their small living room contains a sofa, a big modern flat screen TV, and shelves displaying DVDs, CDs, some bestsellers and guidebooks, a couple of photos, and bric-a-brac.

After completing the *Realschule* and vocational training, Mrs Krause worked as a clerk before she retired early for health reasons a couple of years ago. Mr Krause finished the *Hauptschule* and completed vocational training as well. He works as a police officer. The family's institutionalised cultural capital is thus of a medium level. Together, they have a relatively low net equivalent income of between € 800 and € 1,200 per month (approx. £ 590 to £ 890). Their international experience is restricted to a few holiday trips abroad, and they do not have friends or family abroad. None of their children's acquaintances has been abroad for an extended period, nor is there anyone planning a school year abroad. Thus, the Krauses' transnational cultural capital and the degree of transnationality of their social capital are comparatively low. The Krauses' son left comprehensive school after 10th grade and now works in the retail sector. Their younger daughter – about the right age to go abroad – is currently finishing the 10th grade at a comprehensive school. She wants to become an office clerk. Mrs Krause did not intervene in her daughter's decision, although, originally, she had different occupational ambitions for her. Instead, she is happy her daughter has found a training position, because 'everyone must have vocational training nowadays – no matter what job'.

Her daughter spends her leisure time listening to music, chatting, or meeting up with friends to 'hang out', as Mrs Krause says. She used to play sports, but, as Mrs Krause comments ironically, 'that does not suit puberty'. Though Mrs Krause tried to encourage her children to partake in different activities, they did not develop a longstanding interest. Her child-rearing approach thus resembles a combination of 'concerted cultivation' and 'natural growth'. Parents of this type endeavour to stimulate their child's development by making suggestions, but the subtle and insistent persuasion that would make it difficult for the child to simply refuse is lacking. Instead, parents accept more easily their child's expressions of disinterestedness or sheer refusal, and the child does not have to extensively justify him or herself argumentatively. The acquisition of transnational cultural capital beyond foreign language education at school does not play any role. Nor do the Krauses encourage their children to engage with other countries and cultures. In contrast to the transnationally accomplished, they do not exhibit the

habits and practices that would familiarise their children with the idea of going abroad. However, the possibility of attending school abroad is not completely unknown. Mrs Krause heard of it through acquaintances, and she even talked to her daughter about it, though she had concerns about how to finance such a trip. Her daughter, however, refused in such a way that the issue was not discussed any further: ‘No, she does not want that at all. And then: no friends and... no’. Faced with such a reaction, the transnationally accomplished would probably still try to convince their child, whereas Mrs Krause simply dropped the topic. Nonetheless, Mrs Krause acknowledges that international experience is a relevant asset in today’s labour market:

Mrs Krause: ‘Unfortunately, yes. It is indeed important. And it is increasingly required. And for some time I have been reading the [local newspaper] and there are indeed some positions that require it. And, yes, I think it is actually good, it’s not wrong. Why not? Nowadays, when one has the possibility, one should take every chance.’

Interviewer: ‘You just said “unfortunately”, maybe you could explain this...’

Mrs Krause: ‘Yes, because my ki[-ds] – well, there are also people who do not like to go abroad as much, and for them it is of course a handicap to compete... it’s not possible at all, I’d think, because the other one, who brings in more experience, will be preferred anyway. Then... I do think that such a year abroad offers a lot and that you can learn a lot from it.’

This quote illustrates that international experience is less connected to an idea of developing one’s personality than to a perspective that views it instrumentally as an enhancement of one’s job prospects. Because her children lack such experience, Mrs Krause fears they could be disadvantaged.

Compared to the transnationally accomplished, it is not only the disadvantaged capital endowment of the excluded that makes the realisation of a school year abroad so difficult. Likewise, they lack a parenting style that would prepare their children step by step for such an experience and a style of communication that would allow the parents to follow up on the idea in spite of the children’s initial negative reaction. In addition, the realisation of a school year abroad is in no way connected to the parents’ general educational efforts. Therefore, even

though the idea might come up at some point by coincidence, these children generally remain excluded from going to school abroad.

The Ambitious: A School Year Abroad as an Extraordinary Opportunity

Families of the third type, the ‘ambitious’, are similar to the excluded in terms of capital endowment and child-rearing approach. They are also predominantly found among the lower middle classes. Nevertheless, they succeed in realising a school year abroad in one of two different ways, which we illustrate by drawing on two exemplary families: either through the parents’ special commitment or due to the children’s insistence.

The first way is represented by the Köhler family. Mrs Köhler lives with her son and daughter in a four-room maisonette in an apartment building in a residential neighbourhood. The interview takes place in the living room, which appears a bit cramped, but lively. Mrs Köhler speaks a slight local dialect and has an energetic and outspoken manner. After finishing the *Realschule*, she began as a dentist’s assistant, but then started to work in the accounting sector of a commercial company where she has now been for many years. Thus, her institutional cultural capital lies on a medium level. The family’s economic capital – Mrs Köhler has been a single mother and earner for around 10 years – can be regarded as low given a monthly net equivalent income of around € 500 to € 1,000 (approx. £ 370 to £ 740). The children’s father, with whom both still have good contact, also finished the *Realschule* and vocational training. Mrs Köhler’s daughter is enrolled in a comprehensive school, her younger son in a grammar school. When her daughter finished primary school, Mrs Köhler received the recommendation to enrol her in a *Realschule*, but she decided for the comprehensive school instead: ‘[...] because I always had the hope: maybe the penny does drop and so on, and then she is not stuck, but has the possibility to go on’. This example points out Mrs Köhler’s general efforts to offer her children further educational options even though these seem unattainable given the children’s past educational achievements. However, Mrs Köhler does not put a special emphasis on the acquisition of transnational cultural capital beyond the school context.

In their leisure time, the children like to meet up with friends or go to the cinema, ‘just the usual’, as Mrs Köhler notes. She also tries to encourage her children to follow a regular hobby, for example sports: ‘I’d say, “do some sport”, [and they would say] “No, I don’t know anybody there and I just don’t know what”’. Thus, Mrs Köhler practices a child-rearing approach between ‘natural growth’ and ‘concerted cultivation’, much like the excluded.

The Köhlers’ transnational cultural capital and the transnational references in their social capital are low. Mrs Köhler calls her own English skills ‘a catastrophe’. Apart from holiday trips, she

did not acquire any international experience. Among her friends and acquaintances, only one was abroad for an extended period; nor do her children know anyone who has been abroad in school.

Despite this adverse starting position, Mrs Köhler's daughter went to school in the US for one year. Her son will probably go abroad as well. The idea emerged when reading a free local newspaper. Ever since, the idea was 'at the back of the mind', says Mrs Köhler. Talking to her children, the question arose of 'whether they would like to do it themselves, and actually both were in favour'. Without their acquiescence and long-lasting interest, however, she would not have followed up on this plan:

'[...] well, maybe you try to do some convincing, but if they do not themselves say: "Yes, I want to do this", then... then the risk, that they break off would be too high. And it's too expensive for that. If after two months they'd say: "Ok, I'm coming back now", and you have, I don't know, tossed to the wind € 10,000 [approx. £7,400] – no. So the conviction has to be there, and I think it does not make much sense otherwise.'

The difference from the excluded is that Mrs Köhler pushed forward the project with great commitment, once she was convinced that her children were really interested in going abroad. She attended the Q&A meetings offered by the exchange organisation which are important for the ambitious, because they allow for an exchange of information these families cannot obtain among their own social circles. This further strengthened Mrs Köhler's dedication to send her children abroad. She also attempted to acquire additional financial means, such as government grants and scholarships, and limited her private consumption.

Mrs Köhler is so committed because she has clear expectations regarding possible benefits. Much like Mrs Arndt, she expects her daughter to grow as a person by becoming more self-reliant and improving her language skills. But this expectation is far more instrumental, mirroring that of the excluded. For Mrs Köhler, a school year abroad is a good 'starter kit', as she repeatedly says in the interview, for her children's professional future:

'And actually my personal incentive is to give the kids, well, a better start in their professional career. Because, nobody can tell me this kind of stay abroad has no positive effect on your CV. Because, I don't want to have kids that end up, I don't know, in the retail sector, sitting at a cash register somewhere [...] and being unhappy all their lives, never earning decent money and forever having to struggle to make ends meet. [...]

They should stand on their own two feet and live a full life as much as possible, and somehow do professionally what they want, and not just what came by [...] because of lacking qualifications ...’

This assessment results from experiences during Mrs Köhler’s own professional career. She is witnessing how her employer increasingly requires English skills in mid-level positions as well. Thus, it will be far more difficult for her children to attain occupational positions similar to her own by following the same educational and professional path. In light of these changes, the school year abroad becomes part of the parents’ general efforts to provide their children with educational and professional opportunities in order to avoid downward social mobility.

The second way to overcome class-specific obstacles for the realisation of a school year abroad is illustrated by the Becker family, whose son also went to school in the US. In contrast to the Köhlers, where a parent was the driving force, the child plays the decisive role here. While the Beckers, whose monthly income falls into the ‘medium’ category, are better off economically than the Köhlers, they are very similar with regard to the other forms of capital. Both families also resemble each other in terms of their child-rearing approach and in limiting the acquisition of transnational cultural capital to the school context.

Accordingly, the Becker family came across the idea of a school year abroad only due to an external impulse. In their case, it was their son’s teacher who mentioned the issue in class. When the son raised the idea at home, the Beckers just could not imagine sending their son abroad. Their attitude only changed because he persisted despite their initial reaction. He made inquiries and contacted former exchange pupils via the internet because, personally, he did not know anyone who had been abroad. Eventually, his parents acquiesced, as Mrs Becker recounts:

‘Well, because he really took the initiative to look up organisations [...], he requested catalogues, to which we then said: “But look, they offer language trips abroad as well; just do a language trip now, and then again and here again”, but he was then like: “But look, mummy, if I take three language study trips, how much money that costs! Just let me go once and then everything is done and I’ll come back for sure”. His efforts at persuasion, trying to convince me, how important it was for him and how beautiful and... [...] He really put his shoulder to the wheel. You just have to give in at some point.’

There are two reasons why the Beckers were finally convinced by their son, apart from his insistence: First, they judge their child's personality as very 'cosmopolitan' and 'without reservation' towards strangers. This matches their perception of such traits being a *prerequisite* for going abroad and enables them to perceive the whole undertaking as sensible, despite their own habitual distance. Second, like Mrs Köhler, they had the impression at their jobs that 'without language skills, good language skills, you almost have no professional opportunities'. Thus, they see a school year abroad as crucial for their son's professional future, as something 'no one can take away from him'. Transnational cultural capital is hence perceived as an additional credential and a suitable means of ensuring the child's social position.

Conclusion

Globalisation has transformed labour markets and societies and increased the importance of transnational cultural capital. In our study, we looked at one specific way of acquiring such capital: by spending a school year abroad. Based on semi-structured interviews, we analysed how families differ along class lines in the ways in which they enable or discourage their children to embark on a school year abroad. Three distinct types of families can be distinguished – the 'transnationally accomplished', the 'excluded', and the 'ambitious'. They differ in their capital endowment, class-specific parenting styles, and the importance they generally grant to the acquisition of transnational cultural capital. While families with a high endowment of economic, cultural, and social capital – in their general and transnationalised forms – and corresponding educational practices and parenting styles can easily enable their children to go abroad, this is much harder for families in less advantaged positions. Some lower class families, however, adopt strategies to circumvent the limitations set by their class status, showing that families are not fully determined by social class structures, but can overcome such limitations under specific conditions.

Our results have important implications. On the whole, members of the upper middle classes are more likely than the lower and lower middle classes to seize the new opportunities offered by globalisation. Thus, the possession of transnational cultural capital constitutes a new dimension of social inequality and has become a crucial factor in the reproduction of social classes in a globalising world. Our results therefore point to a shortcoming of previous research on social inequality along the lines of Bourdieu in that it has generally been restricted to a nation-state frame and neglected transnational skills and dispositions. In addition to this, our study contributes new insights to the literature in two ways: First, by pointing out intra-familial practices, we could further our understanding of the specific *mechanisms* involved in the class-

related acquisition of transnational cultural capital. The second point is related to an additional shortcoming of research based on Bourdieu's theory, which tends to underestimate opportunities for individual agency even under disadvantaged social conditions. We were able to show that under specific circumstances, some lower middle class families are able to pursue the idea of a school year abroad and to develop strategies that compensate for their unfavourable capital endowment. Thereby, they can overcome their disadvantaged class position and their initial habitual distance towards the educational practice of a school year abroad and prepare their children for a globalising world.

Endnotes

1. Besides these four dimensions, our cases also differ with regard to gender roles surfacing within the families when dealing with the idea of a school year abroad. In some cases, the mother's (transnational) cultural capital appeared as decisive for starting and persisting with the whole undertaking; in others, both parents were involved and drew on their cultural and social resources to make a school year abroad possible. This calls into question conventional accounts which either only focus on mothers as 'transmitters' of cultural capital or simply define a family's class position as deriving from the father's (cf. Silva, 2005). However, since there is no systematic difference between our three types in the way gender roles are implicated in the acquisition of transnational cultural capital, this issue is not pursued here any further.
2. In one case, the interview did not yield enough information to allow classification (due to personal circumstances of the interviewee). Another case could belong to the 'transnationally accomplished' when looking at the family's capital endowment; but it does not show the habitual inculcation, so characteristic for this type, which prepares such children for experiences abroad. The remaining two cases oscillate between the 'transnationally accomplished' and the 'ambitious'. In one case, the parenting style does not conform to the family's general capital endowment; in the other case, the child's motivation played a far greater role for convincing the parents of a school year abroad than one should expect given their cultural capital.
3. All quotes are translated from German to English; omissions and alterations are denoted by square brackets, three dots signal a short pause.
4. Even though, for this type, a school year abroad is an obvious educational strategy, it does not mean that it inevitably happens. If, for example, the child can give convincing

reasons for not going abroad, these families make sure that transnational cultural capital is acquired in other ways, e.g. by going abroad as a university student.

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Table 1: The typology's comparative dimensions

	The Transnationally Accomplished	The Excluded	The Ambitious
1. Parental forms of capital			
Economic capital	High to medium	Medium to low	Medium to low
Institutionalised cultural capital	High	Medium	Medium
Transnational cultural capital	High	Low	Low
Social capital (degree of transnationalisation)	High	Low	Low
2. Child-rearing approach			
Child-rearing approach	'Concerted cultivation'	Mix between 'concerted cultivation' and 'natural growth'	Mix between 'concerted cultivation' and 'natural growth'
3. Acquisition of transnational cultural capital as part of the general educational strategy			
Acquisition of transnational cultural capital as a distinct educational goal	Yes, the acquisition of transnational cultural capital is encouraged beyond school.	No. The acquisition of transnational cultural capital is covered by school education.	No. The acquisition of transnational cultural capital is covered by school education.
Embeddedness of the school year abroad within the general educational strategy	Yes, as part of the efforts of social reproduction.	No.	Yes, as part of the efforts to avoid downward social mobility/achieve upward mobility.
4. Initiator			
Significance of the child's motivation for the realisation of a school year abroad	The child's motivation is secondary (due to familial transmission processes and as it is seen by parents as 'producible'); parents are the driving force.	The child's motivation would be a necessary requirement, but is lacking; parents are not a driving force.	The child's motivation is a necessary requirement; either parents or children can be the driving force.