Polish Immigrant Children in the UK: Catholic Education and Other Aspects of "Migration Luck"

Alicja R. Sadownik[1,*], Piotr Mikiewicz[2]

[1]Centre for Educational Research, Bergen University College, Norway
[2]Poland Lower Silesian Centre for Educational Innovations, Institute of Education, Department of Sociology of Education and Educational Policy, University of Lower Silesia, Poland

Abstract　After 2005, approximately two million Poles emigrated, choosing mostly Britain as their destination. Quantitative reports [1] paint a picture of the typical Polish immigrant as a person between the ages of 31–39, who, with a vocational (or equivalent) education, is active on the labor market. This paper reports on a qualitative study of six typical Polish families in Nottingham and of the staff from two Catholic schools that the Polish children attend. The study aimed to reconstruct the typical, long-term adaption and integration strategies as seen from the perspective of the children's participation in education. The data comprise 12 overt interviews with Polish mothers/fathers/workers (six interviews) in Nottingham and with school staff (head teacher, special needs coordinator, teacher assistants) in two Catholic primary and secondary schools in Nottingham in the period of 2009-2013. Our results reveal the unusual "luck" experienced by the Polish children. This "luck" refers to the Catholic educational trajectories that are accidentally accessed thanks to the children having Catholic baptismal certificates in a non-Catholic country. These educational trajectories, in consideration of the parents' social status, would never have been experienced by these children in Poland. We call it luck, because, again, in consideration of the parents' cultural capital, it was not part of the wider immigration plan.

Keywords　Integration through Education, Immigrant Education, Social Mobility

1. Introduction

Randall Collins refers to modern societies as "education-based stratification systems" [2]; this is particularly interesting in the context of migration. Education, as the universal institution of socialization, selection, and allocation [3-9 and others], is a tool new community members use to adapt to social structures. This applies both to native and non-native members of the community, but it is especially important for immigrant adaptability to the new realities of a new society.

As strangers in a new sociocultural environment, immigrants are looking for adaptation mechanisms. Simultaneously, as non-native residents, they are in a difficult situation, because they do not have the cultural capital of language, values, and habits [3] that are adaptation resources in both school and society. The reality of school is usually incompatible with the everyday life of immigrant families, especially those with relatively low levels of cultural capital. This leads to the placement of immigrant children on inferior school paths and the allocation of social positions of lower status [10 - 13].

The educational and, therefore, social careers, of Polish immigrants in the UK began to interest us after approximately two million people left Poland in 2005 choosing primarily Britain as their destination. According to the British Office for National Statistics [14], the number of Polish-born residents in the UK grew from around 150 000 to over half a million between 2005 and 2011. Our research began in 2010 when the Polish population already exceeded 500 000 residents. The research was completed in 2014.

According to the Polish Main Office for National Statistics [1], "the typical Pole" who emigrates to Britain is between 31–39 years old and has two children. His/her vocational or equivalent education permits him/her to participate in the British labor market in employment that is similar to that he/she had in Poland. The typical Polish immigrant is also Catholic.

In this paper, we report on qualitative research that was begun in Nottingham in 2010 in a Catholic primary school with a reputation in the city as a "good one for Poles." Through the school, we made contacts with "typical Polish families," six of which agreed to participate in the research project. The stories we heard in the homes and at the school led us to a Catholic secondary school in the same city, which we studied in 2014.

First, we discuss briefly immigration and the ways it might be explored, and the theoretical toolkit we used to analyze the phenomenon of immigration and integration through educational participation. Second, we present our research question and the methodology required to explore our phenomena of interest. Then, after the data analysis, we argue that a Catholic baptismal certificate in a non-Catholic country, like the UK, functions as an educational voucher that provides Polish Catholic children with opportunities for social mobility that, considering their parents' social status, would simply be unavailable to them in Poland.

1.1. Migration as a Social and Research Phenomenon

Migration is a most interesting social phenomenon that is becoming increasingly common. Stimulated by contemporary socio-political and economic factors, it is an expected, natural occurrence in the modern, global, mobile society [15]. Different academic disciplines are challenging migration with different research questions. Our study is positioned on the borderline between sociological and educational studies since we examine integration processes from the perspective of educational participation. Integration is currently described as complex processes that is ongoing on different levels of social structure involving both the host society and the immigrants [16 - 18]. Wolfgang Bosswick and Friedrich Heckmann [17] describe it as follows: "Social integration can be defined as the inclusion and acceptance of immigrants into the core institutions, relationships and positions of a host society. Integration is an interactive process between immigrants and the host society. For the immigrants, integration means the process of learning a new culture, acquiring rights and obligations, gaining access to positions and social status, building personal relationships with members of the host society and forming a feeling of belonging to, and identification with, that society. For the host society, integration means opening up institutions and granting equal opportunities to immigrants. In this interaction, however, the host society has more power and more prestige" [17].

According to this conceptualization, integration is a process that takes place on the level of: a) socio-cultural institutions and positions; b) formal and informal interactions and relationships between migrants and "hosts"; c) migrants' identity that develops "a feeling of belonging to and identification" [17] with the new society.

The institution of school is present at all these levels, but in a particular way. It is an institution that itself introduces students to the culture, allocates students in the social structure, develops (more or less) a sense of belonging in the students, and provides almost unlimited possibilities for formal, semi-formal, and informal interactions among students. School life is social life itself, which constitutes the sphere of socialization, creates possibilities to build social relations, and, through the complex mechanism of allocation, introduces the individual into the social world. Therefore, adaptation to school life becomes the main way people adapt to society. The formal and informal selection and allocation patterns set at school shape further possibilities, open or close opportunities, and allocate people to different social strata. This is done based on both the formal evaluation of school performance, by the creation of informal connections, and the "natural" patterns of perceiving social reality and possibilities that are set. Going to school is not only about learning, but also about creating individual ways of living based on socialization in peer groups and confronting the home culture with the formal school culture and the informal social world of each school.

The connection between migrant integration and the institution of school is emphasized in research that indicates that migrant children generally perform at a lower level at school [10 - 13, 19]. Usually, disadvantageous factors are identified as follows: a) structural features of education systems such as school choice, tracking, selection; b) mechanisms and resource inequalities can contribute to segregation and have disproportionately negative impacts on migrant students; c) features of each individual school such as teacher expectations, classroom environments, and school organization contribute to shaping migrant students' learning experiences; d) individual student characteristics including socio-cultural background and language proficiency are also important determinants of migrant students' educational success [19].

In the end, the main reasons that migrant children underperform are usually associated with the cultural incompatibility of migrants families with the structure and logic of the educational system of the host country. The level of cultural competence of migrants seems to be insufficient to recognize and internalize the rules of the school field, which leads to inappropriate performance both in formal terms of learning and in informal patterns of behavior.

Our intention, and, thereby the contribution we hope to make to the field, is to explore the educational strategy of Polish migrants in the UK as their migration/integration strategy. In education-based stratification systems, which is what modern, western societies are, it is the school and the way the family understands and cares about it, which can/should be considered to be the center of the integration processes.

1.2. Our Theoretical Toolkit

To examine the connection between school and social structure, and, thus, the strategies of adapting to the host country, we use the Bourdieuian concepts of cultural capital, *habitus*, and *doxa*, as well as the category of social capital [22, 23].

The cultural capital that allows newcomers to recognize cultural meanings is essential. However, relationships

between immigrants and the new social community and its structures, or social capital, are also of great importance. In this respect, the adaptive processes appear to be conditioned by cultural competence, which is conditioned by cultural capital, which allows them to build the social networks in which they live.

In Nan Lin's [23] understanding of social capital, individuals use their social networks, among other things, to gain access to valuable resources held by other people. Thus, social capital resources available to individuals can provide a multidimensional effect to the configuration of access to a wide variety of positions. The higher the positions we are linked to, the richer the resources they provide. However, sometimes gaining access to lower status positions might be more valuable. It can be postulated that each volume of social capital is assigned to the individual who possesses many contacts on different levels of the social strata.

In Lin's theory there is the assumption that access to valuable resources, including information, is associated with rather weak connections among positions in the network. This is derived from the argument regarding the homophilous character of social relations, which refers to the tendency of individuals to create relations with others who share their sentiments and are similar to these individuals in social terms or are of a like status. Thus, gaining access to new resources requires engaging in relations with individuals from other groups, which means that the new relations will be weaker. The phenomenon of benefiting from new, weaker relationships is called the strength of weak ties [23 -25].

"The sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" [20] is referred to by Bourdieu as social capital.

In Bourdieu's approach, which he himself refers to as "a general science of the economy of practices," the key role is given to the three forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social [20].

Economic capital comprises the volume of financial resources possessed by individuals and refers to positions in the structure of the labor market which are related to salary, the characters of work, the degrees of control exercised upon others, and the dependencies on the power of others [26]. Much more important, however, is cultural capital, which exists in three forms or states: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized [22].

"Most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment. The accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, *Bildung*…" [22] are competencies embodied in the person—knowledge, skills, taste, etc. It is an effect of socialization and an inseparable element of the *habitus*.

"In turn, objectified cultural capital has a number of properties which are defined only in the relationship with cultural capital in its embodied form. The cultural capital objectified in material objects and media, such as writings, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc., is transmissible in its materiality" [22].

Institutionalized cultural capital is cultural competence certified by an eligible institution, such as academic ones.

All forms of cultural capital can be regarded as tools or resources in the process of allocation within social structure, or, in the case of immigrants, as a source of adaptation. All of these forms of capital allow immigrants to recognize different fields within the new social structure.

This field is defined by Bourdieu as a network or configuration of objective relations among positions. The way in which particular groups take the appropriate position is based on *illusio*—a stake they recognize in the field and the one they prefer. "Taking a position" seems to be a natural act of free will, and it refers to "the 'choices' made by the social agents in the most diverse domains of practice, in food or sport, music or politics, and so forth" [21]. People with different levels of cultural capital will be attracted to different types of *illusio* or stakes. This means that even though the field is objective, the actors or agents play on it based on their *habitus*.

Habitus, defined as "a subjective but non-individual system of internalized structures, common schemes of perception, conception and action, which are the precondition of an objectification and apperception" [19], is pre-shaped or predetermined by the levels of the three capitals individuals gain access to during their socialization process. *Habitus*, in other words, as "a system of dispositions common to all products of the same conditioning" [19] enables and reproduces a set of practices, perceived as normal, obvious, and natural among members of particular social groups. This set of practices is not only the precondition but also the product of each functioning field, and it shapes and organizes the field's everyday rhythm as well as reproduces and naturalizes divisions among the particular fields. This dialectical process of naturalization, which underlies the natural logic of everyday practices and sets of obviously demanded human dispositions, refers to *doxa*, a kit of tacitly shared knowledge and beliefs.

Doxa is defined by Bourdieu as "the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field which is attuned, the pre-verbal taking for granted of the world that flows from practical sense" [21]. What is crucial about *doxa*, however, is how it refers to the phenomenon of misrecognition rather than to simply "undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field" [21]. In other words, the misrecognition of the real rules is a vital and necessary condition of the performance of everyday fields and actors. "The countless acts of recognition which are the small change of the compliance inseparable from belonging to the field, and in which collective misrecognition is ceaselessly generated, are both the precondition and the product of the functioning of the field"

[21].

Thus, location in the social structure is an effect of the interaction of a number of features. *Habitus* as an effect of socialization, level of capitals on the disposal, logics of the field, and *doxa* of the activity in a particular field constitute the conceptual framework that fosters an understanding of the determinants of certain educational trajectories and, consequently, location within the social structure. The social trajectory of the individual is determined by his/her initial social position; people from higher social strata perform better at school, as their *habitus* and the capital they possess   enable easier adaptation to the logic of the school field.

The concept of social capital by Lin also stresses the hierarchical determinants of social network usage. The higher the position within the structure, the more effective ties that person has, and these lead to better social resources [23]. Network theory supplemented with elements of Bourideu's theory forms a good conceptual basis for interpreting immigrant adaptation to new social structures and underscores the two dimensions of this process: 1) competence in recognizing the logic of functioning of particular fields in the host society, including in the educational field, and 2) the use of social networks in the process of allocation.

2. Methodology

To answer our primary research question of how Poles establish themselves in the UK through the educational participation of their children, we decided to use qualitative methodology, which helped us reconstruct how the immigrants think about their own and their children's immigration and integration and how the schools institutionalize this process.

Therefore, our research began at a school, the place where integration happens, and where immigrant students are "equipped" with cultural and social capital in order to succeed in the new society (despite research showing that this is not readily achieved). We chose a school that is considered by the locals as "a good one for Polish children."

After the initial phase of exploring life in Nottingham from the Polish perspective through investigating the local Polish world (church, shops, beautician, hairdresser, non-governmental organizations, employment agencies), we discovered that Poles send their children to Catholic schools in the city. Our university contacts referred us directly to a Catholic primary school that is known to be "good for Poles."

The school is a Catholic primary school on the boarder of an infamous district. We contacted the school, they agreed to cooperate with us, and the school became a bridge between us and the parents. We found families who agreed to participate in the research project, and who fulfilled the criteria of being typical Polish immigrants to the UK. Six

biographical interviews with four mothers, one set of parents together, and one mother and grandfather were conducted.

The biographical interview was chosen as the research tool, because of the time perspective it would introduce. The life story about immigration and settling down in the new country and the category of school for the children and their educational participation appear in the way our informants see and understand these experiences in time. We invited our informants to tell their stories on immigration and their life and school experiences in the UK.

The data analysis involved many discussions between us and with the researchers who helped us conduct the interviews. We met in person, Skyped, telephoned, and wrote to each other in order to understand what typical Polish immigration and education is about. We reconstructed something that we refer to as "luck," which is the Catholic educational path in a non-Catholic country. As the educational trajectory does not conclude at the primary level, we decided to investigate the secondary level as well. Parents' stories and local statistics showed that the majority of students from the primary school we investigated continued their secondary education at a Catholic school, which prompted us to visit it also.

Our main interest was how Polish students from the Catholic primary school preformed in terms of achievements, language skills, aspirations, and informal interactions. In order to collect data, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the head teacher and deputy head teacher, four teachers, two teacher assistants, the EAL coordinator, four students and one parent, who was employed at the school as a translator.

This set of data led us to another analysis process during which we tried to understand and objectify what is happening at the Catholic school, and how the characteristics of the immigrants' social networks allow them to obtain valuable resources such as information, work, and education for the children, all of which enhanced their integration into the host social structures.

2.1. Understanding the Researched Group

Five of the six families interviewed represent the lower-middle level of the Polish social structure and follow the pattern of the typical Polish immigrant [1]. One participant, who is a single mother, represents a slightly lower status since she completed her education at the vocational level and exemplifies a low social status. Although these two groups came to the UK to work since their economic status in Poland did not allow them to cover the basic material needs of both the parents and children, they represent slightly different patterns of settling down in the new country.

The first typical immigrant group representing the lower-middle status, based their immigration on the strength of weak ties [24] and obtained assistance from incidental

contacts. The second group is represented in our research by just one person with a low social status, who received help from her closest family or from people who belong to her daily interactional repertoire. Her immigration and settling down pattern is based on strong ties and bonding social capital. The first group is categorized in our analysis [31] as the "nothing to lose" group, while the other is the "from welfare to benefit" group.

The "nothing to lose" group represents the experience of the typical, statistical Polish immigrant to the UK [1]. Their reasons for migration are strongly connected with their economic situation. "Well, the economic reasons, like in the majority of cases, I guess. My husband and I were thinking that it would be good if he got a work abroad. We thought about it for a while…so he could earn better money, you know. At the time I had my own company in Poland, and some months it went really great, but there were also months when my husband was paying the insurance for me" [Helena_41y_5y in the UK_3 children]. In other cases, the economic situation changed rapidly from a relatively good one into a bad one. "So we had this company, I was designing wooden souvenirs, and my husband was responsible for the production, but suddenly the pattern was stolen by another company and the production was moved to China, where production was much cheaper, so we couldn't compete any longer with them on the market. We got some compensation for the theft, but it wasn't enough to get by. And then my husband took over the responsibility for supporting us and went to the UK" [Ola_38_7y in the UK_2 children].

Even though some of the families could have migrated from villages to larger cities in Poland in order to improve their situation, they chose the UK because they had greater trust in the British labor market, where employee rights are better established and respected than in Poland. "Here you have a minimum wage, so you have to get it. In Poland, you only have the average wage, and sometimes you only get half of it…(…) or you work the whole day, 10 hours and sometimes never get paid, because the company has no money, so we wanted to come here. With a contract. With no worries" [Aniela_24y_4y in the UK_1child].

This group uses the strength of weak ties in order to find work and settle down in the UK. They know someone, who knows someone, who knows someone who can provide them the resources their need to improve their lives. "So it was like that that the mother of our son's best friend, had a friend who was already here, and she said that there is a lot work in Nottingham" [Helena_41y_5y in the UK_3 children]. Ola's [38_7y in the UK_2 children] husband first accommodation was with a friend of a friend, who knew a property owner who had a room for rent.

This pattern of migration does not appear in the second group of "from welfare to benefit" that is represented in our research by just one single mother named Marta. Marta completed her education at the vocational level, but she could not begin working regularly because of her family situation. A single mother with four children, one of whom has Down's syndrome, she was living on the verge of poverty and homelessness. Although she received some welfare assistance from the Polish state, they did not cover the basic needs of her family.

"Yeah, they assigned me social housing—36 m^2 for all of us. And after a year they just took it back" [Marta, 43y_4y in the UK_4children]. On the way to improving her quality of life and that of her family, she does not go outside of her daily horizon of relationships, and her sister is helping her to establish a new life in Britain.

Having a child with a disability gives her right to social benefits and social housing in the UK, but since this information is inaccessible for her and her closest circle, they concentrate on work. "Well, my Mom told me that, yeah, they were hiring at Soccer and I got in. But only for three months, because then they were firing employees. Afterward, I worked for a while in a print shop and in the potato fields" [Marta, 43y_4y in the UK_4children].

Through the Polish staff at the school, Marta learned that having a child with a disability qualifies her for social housing and benefits, but in order to keep them, she cannot work. "So it was Danka [the Polish assistant at the school] who fixed all it all up for me. She knows the language, so, you know…So, thanks to her we got this house and the benefits, and they pay everything for me, the house, the tax, so there's no deal for me in going to work, because then they will take everything away…So, that was the end of me working in the UK" [Marta, 43y_4y in the UK_4children].

3. Results

3.1. Finding School as Obviousness in the Settling Down Process

School is an institution that functions in the members of modern societies as a tacit obviousness. Neither the "nothing to lose" group nor Marta questions sending children to school. It is a part of their lifeworlds. Finding work for the adults and schools for the children is the foundation of establishing a new life in the new country, and this is where differences between the power of weak and strong ties are played out. The "nothing to lose" group represents a slightly higher level in the social strata, and, thus with a higher level of social capital, that experiences incidental access to extra resources that are outside of the closest social network: "When I came over here, the person who my husband rented a room from, knew a retired teacher, who turned out to be a Pole who had been born here. Thus, an expert [laughter]. And he was kind enough to help us with finding schools for our children. A good one for Polish children, he said. He was the one who took the forms from school and helped us to fill them out. He took the forms back to school and said that my daughter is a nice girl from Poland who has good marks and behaves very well. So he helped us…" [Helena_41y_5y in the UK_3 children].

Marta talks about closed relationships. "My sister came over one year before me and her children were already going there. One tells the other…" [Marta, 43y_ 4y in the UK_4children]. For Marta and her family, the Polish-speaking staff at school was very important. It is possible that when "one tells the other" about a good school for Polish children, some parents (like Marta) associate it at first with the possibility of speaking Polish.

"The language was a big problem for all of us…, but there was Kasia at school, and Agnieszka, so we could communicate" [Marta, 43y_ 4y in the UK_4children]. For Marta, the school field and its criteria for being good or bad seem to be completely irrelevant, "I can't see any differences actually, *kids romp in absolutely every school.*"

The "nothing to lose" group associates the quality of the school with the Catholic values that ensure the children's safety. "I've heard stories about English schools. Oh, my God, I thought! They will rape and kill him there! Nothing more than narcotics in these schools here in England. So, I was very afraid. But now I can see it's not true. At least, when it comes to the Catholic schools. (…) so when it comes to basic safety—nobody will beat him up or steal anything from him—I'm cool. I leave him at school with a good conscience. He's just a little boy" [Helena_41y_5y in the UK_3 children].

It is important to mention that getting places for their children in Catholic schools was not their plan. "I didn't know they have Catholic schools in England. I knew they had private and public, but I hadn't heard about Catholic ones before I came here (…)." [Ola_38_7y in the UK_2 children]. "And then the neighbor told me that there is a Catholic school in the neighborhood, and it was such a relief. I think that the Christian values the children are around make it safer and friendlier, you know, less bullying, less violence…more attention" [Anna_42_6y in the UK_2 children].

Although it was not their plan, these parents are incidentally providing their children with a really good education in Nottingham, at least with a better one than British people of the same social background have (Willis 1977). Moreover, they misrecognize the logic of the school field: Marta just sees it as an opportunity for children to come together and "romp." Because of the level of her cultural capital, she is not able to see any distinctions in the school field.

The other group misrecognizes the school field and that what makes it "good" as well. They focus on safety at school, which, in their eyes, is based on Catholic values. Below we try to reconstruct the logic of the primary school and its work with Polish children.

3.2. The primary school

In the "nothing to lose" group, the primary school functions as a good school, in terms of good results. The school staff explained to us that the school is good for

Polish children and those from other language minorities, but, objectively, it does not score high in school rankings.

Many students did not get the minimal expected result on the Key Stage 1 test, and in past years 20 to 40 % of students did not achieve the minimum result on Key Stage 2. Simultaneously, 98 to 100 % did demonstrate the expected progress in English reading and writing, which means that the school is working on their progress and on their language skills.

This school has had much experience with teaching children from different minorities. "We are not a good school. We are a relatively good school. We are a school that does a huge amount of work when it comes to developing the language skills of the children" [School staff – interview 1].

This work seems to pay off at the secondary level of education. The Catholic secondary school in the city, which is attended by the majority of the students from the primary school we studied, scores high in national rankings with 73% of students earning A–C grades on their final exams.

3.2.1. The primary school's work

The school staff was interviewed to reconstruct the work the school does with the Polish children. The special educational needs coordinator was the staff member who was most concerned about the educational needs of children from language minorities. Her story revealed the comprehensive work performed by the school with children who come to school, and to the UK, at different ages.

In the 2010/2011 school year when our research was conducted, 78 % of the students were children from ethnic minorities, but the school had faced this challenge previously. The school had already developed different strategies for working with these children depending on the age group.

With the youngest children at the nursery level, the role of the school is to facilitate the greatest amount of interaction between English and non-English-speaking students so the "new" students can acquire language in the most natural way.

"Mrs. G. picks up the children here, who are beginners, mostly at the bottom end of the school; they are left to pick up English by themselves really. The whole curriculum is based around children, interrupting children, children working together, playing together. (…) They learn the language far more quickly in this environment than when they sit down for a strict English lesson. It works incredibly well for such nursery children and for three and four year olds" [EAL coordinator, primary].

For children aged eight to nine, who were already introduced to writing and school culture in Poland, the school offers extra classes in English as a second language. The language aspects that they developed in their own language are the basis for learning to speak English and to practice listening, reading, and writing skills.

"When the older children come, and they are literate in

another language, then it's a case of learning another language, but for those who are seven years old…" [EAL coordinator, primary].

The seven-year-old group constitutes the greatest challenge for school. These are children who did not start school in their home country (when our research was conducted Polish school began at age seven), while their English peers had been becoming familiar with the institution since they were three or four years old. Despite this, the primary schools show an enormous degree of understanding of the situation the children are experiencing. A key role is played by the Polish-speaking staff, who translate language matters, but also explain the field of school, which is a sphere in which they have never been before and which they start in a completely different language.

Additionally a re-education reading and writing group for children of approximately six years old is also offered. This is for children who have already gained proficiency in the spoken language, but still have some difficulties in the fields of reading and writing.

"Yes, there is a special project for children who are around six years old, and who are in the bottom part five percent in attainment. The idea is that we identify them at an early stage and get them reading, so they are not behind all the way through their schooling. I've had some of the Polish children, and I've got two at the moment. Most of the time they are involved, but because they have less experience of the English language, this places them in the bottom five percent. But I only take them if they have certain level of spoken English, so it's not really appropriate for beginners. If they've been at school for a couple of years and have some spoken English, then it is appropriate for them to access this intervention. Those who do not have enough spoken English have classes with Mrs. G…" [EAL coordinator, primary].

The school offers a fairly well-integrated system of re-educational help, so that no child is left behind. In addition, the school is sensitive to immigration stress, and the possibility of negative emotions connected with moving to a foreign country manifesting within families.

"So the Polish children, they've just been uprooted effectively against their will, you know, and I think some of them, you know the parents, they work so hard and such long hours, that they do not have a lot of time to pay attention to the children and support them with their schooling. You know, often mom comes in, dad goes out, the children stay with grandmother, and we have children going home at 8pm (…) all because of the economic pressure on the families. When you ask parents to do homework with their children, to read with them, they simply do not have time for it, and some of them are in quite cramped accommodations (…)" [EAL coordinator, primary].

"Considering all the trauma and possible strains of bringing a family over here, it is not the learning process

that must be prioritized just after coming to a new country. For school, the most important at the beginning is to develop a sense of safety, and our Polish-speaking staff play a crucial role in this process. So we are fortunate to have many Polish speakers on our staff. It makes things easier" [EAL coordinator, primary].

The work the primary Catholic school is doing with the children is real; it is not a sham. It is real re-education implemented "so they are not behind all the way through their schooling" [EAL coordinator, primary]. We, who know the Polish educational patterns of children from families of this social status, can see that thanks to the real work of the school and teachers, the children are not only "not behind all the way through their schooling," but they are achieving more than would be possible in the reality of Polish education.

3.3. The Secondary School

In recent decades, the secondary school was one of the best in the city, and it scored high in regional rankings both before and after the "invasion" of Polish students. According the head teacher, 72–78 % of the students take the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A-level), every year. "And yes, Y [name of school] is the only one that has zero NEET. (…) This means we have no students without any future plans. NEET means Not in Employment, Educational Training, and it is a very important figure" [Head Secondary, April 2014].

This led us to conclude that while the level the students achieve in primary school might not be high, it is sufficient to allow them to benefit from the secondary level of education. The other thing is that not every school in the city would allow them to benefit from being there, because of the secondary education situation in the city:

"You see, you have to understand that X [name of the city] is unusual. The rest of the secondary schools are very bad. Oh, terrible! OfSTED[1] came here in November and inspected eight schools, and seven of them were put into special measures. The worst possible category…" [Head Secondary, April 2014].

This means this school is also very popular among British parents who take an interest in their children's education. In the year the research was conducted, the school had five candidates per place. However, the admission criteria are more readily met by the groups Poles belong to.

"Well, the admission criteria are wholly based on faith. That is why so many Polish children have got in here, because they are Catholics and we do not discriminate because of where they are from or how long they've been here or how clever they are. Even their English can

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1 Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

be—you know—very bad indeed. (…) The most important document is the baptismal certificate" [Head Secondary April 2014].

In addition to the Catholic baptismal certificate, residential distance from school matters. The Polish community reside in relatively inexpensive districts that are not very popular, and while this isolates them from prosperous families, it does permit their children access to one of the best secondary schools in the city.

"So then, it goes to residential distance from the school. And this is a very good question with regards to the Polish people, because they live in the city. So they are all close to the school in the Polish areas. And the Catholics who are wealthier and more middle class, they live further out in a nicer areas and they lose out. So here, the local authority coordinates this for us, because they use GPS which gives the distance from the school door to their front door" [Head Secondary, paraphrased, April 2014].

3.3.1. Polish Students at the Secondary School

On the level of behavior, Polish students do not stand out from other students. They are perceived by the teachers just as anybody else, and eventual troubles do not stem from their being Polish, and they are treated as individual cases, just as with other students.

"I wouldn't look at this as being because of where they come from (…) There are some Polish children that have never been in trouble, and there some that have been. But I don't think that this is a culture thing. No." [EAL coordinator secondary, April 2014].

Similarities are noted with regards to achievements, and again the Polish students are much like all the others. They are spread among different sets in different classes. "Again, I think it comes down to the individuals and generally, they seem to do quite well" [EAL coordinator secondary, April 2014]. The foreign language teachers do see a distinction among the Polish students. They do experience a kind of habitual matching with the Polish students who are seen as a group that is much more motivated to learn foreign languages, because they have already experienced that it is useful.

"So if we really, really, you know, if we had a class of all Polish children, we would love it! We would. You know, that enthusiasm that, you know you just get on with them, it is not a big deal" [French secondary, April 2014].

For the students, these non-English speaking lessons are their moment to shine. "Because they don't have to do everything through the medium of English, they are confident, because they know that they can shine, they can contribute, they won't feel disadvantaged because their English may not be as good as that of the other children" [French secondary, April 2014].

Phenomena like a "moment to shine" or the habitual matching with at least one teacher, are the foundation for good school careers [3, 7, 27]. The habitual matching of children from this social status with teachers in Poland

would be impossible [6, 28]. Although these children do well in the formal culture of school, they seem to stay outside or avoid joining the informal culture. The secondary school offers a rich variety of extra-curricular activities, but Polish students do not participate in them.

"R: Do they get involved in school council and so on?

A: No, they don't really. That may be a…language thing, but maybe they also feel it is something…I do not know. I also think that not as many Polish children as English children become involved in extra-curricular stuff. Is that a cultural thing? You know, the sport clubs, the music. Polish children don't do music. Because we have lots of bands. You know, Jarek plays football, but as a general rule, you know, Polish children don't really get involved in the after-school clubs" [French secondary, April 2014].

This weakens their social capital in the new cultural context. On the other hand, it binds them with the Polish community and Polish culture outside England. When not at school, they spend their free time at home with their Polish families and Polish TV.

3.4. Transnational Homes

All of the families that participated in our research have Polish television at home. What is more, they spend a lot of time telephoning and Skyping with their relatives in Poland. After work, they watch Polish television to keep up with the news and TV-series so as to have something to talk about with the family. "And when my mom Skypes me and tells me about this and that happening on a series, I can just say, "Mom! I know already, I watch it here." Isn't that great?" [Anna_42_6y in the UK_2 children].

Growing up in a transnational home brings the extra resource of another language and culture, but it also weakens the integration process, especially that of the children, within the new sociocultural context. The homes are neither conscious of the extra resources they are giving to their children, nor the unusual integration and educational luck the children have.

4. Discussion: What is Integration Luck about?

In the discussion, what we refer to as "integration luck" is based on the misrecognition of the educational system in the UK. Typical Polish parents, because of their cultural capital level, do not distinguish between good or bad schools. Marta is not motivated by providing her children with good educations; she sends them to school because everybody does, and in her eyes school is an opportunity for young people to come together and romp. The parents from the "nothing to lose" group care about a good education, but they equate it with safety.

Both groups use the power of weak ("nothing to lose") and strong ("from welfare to benefit") ties to place their

children in school. It is actually an accident that these connections brought them and their children to a Catholic school. None of the research participants knew about Catholic schools in England before arriving in the UK, and the fact that they learned about the schools is an effect of social capital. In the case of the parents representing slightly higher social status, weak ties with the host society helped them to access resources such as information about schools and assistance with completing the formalities to which they did not have access.

For newcomers, the main problem was the lack of adequate cultural capital and habitual deficits, but also the lack of social relations that provide information about potential possibilities regarding the characteristics of the labor market or the logic of the educational system. "To be successful, one has not only to understand the way the majority society operates but, in addition, one must gain the social skills and personal networks that open doors" [29].

The last network they needed to secure places at the primary school was the Catholic Church. Thanks to their Catholic baptismal certificates, their children began their educations at a Catholic primary school, where the staff really cares and works "to equip" the students with habitual dispositions such as the language skills, cultural capital, and social capital that are necessary to succeed at further educational levels.

In Marta's case, the school also became a part of her social network that helped her to improve her economic standing in the new social structures. Since schools are social institutions, where a helpful staff can become so-called "institutional agents," their support is dependent on individual readiness to initiate contacts and his/her competence to do so. The basic feature here is language competence, but institutional agents must also be ready and willing to provide help and valuable information. In this context, it can be argued that institutional agents are more likely to cooperate with those individuals who possess minimum levels of cultural competence or exhibit minimum conformity to the values of the social majority [29]. In Marta's case, it is the Polish-born teaching assistant Danka who helps to effect change in Marta's life situation. In her case, the luck of having children at this school is reflected not only in the quality of education the children receive, but also in the helpful and willing Polish-speaking staff with whom Marta shares her mother language competence.

At the subsequent educational level, the children of our informants gain access to one of the best secondary schools in the city. There are many candidates, but children from primary Catholic schools with Catholic baptismal certificates are prioritized. The immigrant parents do not plan this; they do not send their children to the Catholic primary school in order to secure places in the best local secondary school. This is an accident. We call it luck.

The secondary school is the only good one in the city, and it scores high in national rankings. The children are coping there like any other student—they manage. The parents still do not know what kind of luck we are talking about, but they have started wondering where they will get money for the higher education of the children. "Yes, my son is very keen on learning and he is in the best set… and I am really scared whether or not I will find a bank that gives me money for his studies" [Anna_42_6y in the UK_2 children]. Even Marta is considering this level of education for her eldest son, while parents with this level of cultural capital in Poland would rather concentrate on placing the child in the labor market as soon as possible, so that he/she could earn his/her own money. In England, the school's influence on the children's *habitus* effects changes in the parents' *habitus* as well.

4.1. What Could Stop the Luck?

If the influence of school on children and children on parents continues in this direction, the children could really experience social mobility in the new country. The only thing that could negatively impact this is the transnational home, where the parent's *habitus* is cultivated and influences how the children plan their futures. In a transnational home with the Polish television and frequent Skype contact with family in Poland, the parent's *habitus* and their low level of school aspirations might be associated with Polish culture. Subsequently, attaining a higher position in the social structure through education could be more difficult for these children since the family could understand this as a rejection of Polish identity.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, we argue that a Catholic baptismal certificate in a non-Catholic country like the UK functions like an educational voucher that provides Catholic Polish children with a chance for social mobility through the educational system which, in light of the parents' social status, would simply not be available for them in Poland.

Although research shows that faith schools perform better in the UK than do public schools, and among them the best are Jewish and Catholic schools, [30] we could not find any data that examine the link between faith school performance and parental ethnic background or cultural capital level. Our study provides some insight into this intersection, and it shows that in the case of the typical Polish immigrant family, Catholic schools are not performing well in order to facilitate reproducing the parents' social status through education, but to provide immigrant children with an opportunity for social mobility.

We have no answer yet regarding the realization of this opportunity, but providing broader access to higher social strata might have consequences for the British class society. The "new educated" will not acquire the economic and symbolic goods that belong to the British upper-middle class, but a new social hybrid of mobility would be interesting to explore.

Our qualitative research based on Polish national statistics indicated there is a whole range of significant categories including cultural capital, social capital, and social status, the power of weak/strong ties, real education, and transnational homes that contribute to successful immigration. These categories can inspire both practical solutions for smoother immigration with advice about housing and education for both parents and children as well as further studies on immigration by people of different social backgrounds who could present radically different patterns of migration luck or bad luck.

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