



FACULTY OF HEALTH AND OCCUPATIONAL STUDIES  
Department of Social Work and Criminology

---

# Parent and Child Dynamics within Immigrant Families: Challenges and Opportunities for Integration

Joakim Appelgren & Lisa Watters

2022

Student thesis, Bachelor level, 15 HE credits

Social Work

Bachelor of Science in Social Work, Specialization in International Social Work

**Supervisor:** Mark Holter

**Examiner:** Mattias Bengtsson

Email:  
joakim89appelgren@gmail.com  
ltwatters@gmail.com



## FACULTY OF HEALTH AND OCCUPATIONAL STUDIES

### Department of Social Work and Criminology

---

#### **Abstract**

Immigrating into a new country can be a stressful, emotional and traumatic experience. Many immigrants have entered Sweden in recent years and have found the family dynamics have altered and that the children have taken on a more dominant role. Children have learned the language quicker and have therefore integrated into society more easily than their parents which has increased the children's ability to use their knowledge regarding Swedish society to manipulate the parents. This study aims to investigate how family dynamics alter following immigration and also the challenges and opportunities faced by families with regards integration within Swedish society. A qualitative method was used with semi structured questions to professionals working within this field. The results were analysed using a flexible approach and common themes were abstracted and discussed using systems theory, social learning theory and also previous research. From the findings it could be identified that there were gaps in the system in supporting the parents on integrating into Swedish society. It was also evident that the power dynamics changed following immigration and the children had a more dominant role within the family.

#### ***Keywords:***

Immigration, language brokers, integration, family dynamics

***Word count: 13 847***

## **Acknowledgment**

### **Joakim's acknowledgments**

First of all, I would like to thank my friend and thesis partner Lisa for her hard work and willingness to work around us both having families. Furthermore, I would like to show appreciation to our supervisor Mark who has helped and supported us with his knowledge and skills in research and been patient with us when we have not understood what to do. To the participants of this study, to take time from their work and give of their time and share their knowledge during their interview and for the fantastic work they are doing with families and young people. Of course I would like to thank my teachers and classmates for your friendship and feedback on our work.

Lastly I would like to thank my family, my wife Hanna and my three children, Amina, Nadine and Eli for bearing with me during this project, to give me space in our house to get away and study in a time like this with the pandemic COVID 19. This has not been easy, but this would not have been possible if you Hanna didn't take care of the children so much.

### **Lisa's acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my thesis partner and friend Joakim for his hard work and dedication whilst working together. I would also like to thank and show my appreciation to Mark, our supervisor who has supported us and given lots of advice and guidance throughout this journey.

My appreciation and thanks also goes to the professionals who took part in the study and for all the work they do for the families. Their knowledge provided us with fantastic evidence to help us create our thesis. My thanks also go to our supervisory group for your feedback on our work.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, my husband Alan and my two children Henrik and Lilly. Without your support and showing your understanding to my studies none of this would have been possible. I would also like to thank my mum, Margareta Cattermole who has spent hours discussing my work with me and offering her knowledge to develop my learning.

# **Table of contents**

<b>CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2 MOTIVATION .....	2
1.3 AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	3
1.4 ESSAY DISPOSITION .....	3
1.5 EXPLANATIONS OF CONCEPTS AND WORD .....	4
<b>CHAPTER 2 - EARLIER RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 CHILDREN AS LANGUAGE BROKERS .....	5
2.2 WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT FAMILIES .....	6
2.3 POWER DYNAMICS IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES .....	7
2.4 TRUST IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM .....	8
<b>CHAPTER 3 -THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	10
<b>CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN .....	13
4.2 DATA COLLECTION .....	14
4.2.1 <i>Sampling: Selection of participants</i> .....	14
4.2.2 <i>Designing interview guide and interview questions</i> .....	15
4.2.3 <i>Conducting interviews</i> .....	15
4.2.4 <i>The choice of previous research</i> .....	16
4.3 DATA TRANSCRIPTION.....	17
4.4 TOOLS OF ANALYSIS.....	17
4.5 ESSAY TRUSTWORTHINESS .....	18
4.5.1 <i>Validity and Reliability</i> .....	18
4.5.2 <i>Generalization</i> .....	20
4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	21
4.7 ANTICIPATED DIFFICULTIES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	22
<b>CHAPTER 5 – RESULTS &amp; ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>23</b>
5.1 TABLE .....	24
5.2 THE PARTICIPANTS .....	24
5.3 CHILDREN AS LANGUAGE BROKERS .....	25
5.4 IMMIGRANT CHILDREN.....	27
5.5 COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY .....	29
5.6 PARENTS .....	32
<b>CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>36</b>
6.1 DISCUSSION .....	36
6.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS IN RELATION TO THE AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	36
6.3 COMPARISON TO EARLIER RESEARCH .....	37
6.4 DISCUSSION OF THEORY.....	39
6.5 DISCUSSION OF METHODOLOGY .....	40
6.6 IMPLICATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK.....	41
6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	41
<b>REFERENCE LIST.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>46</b>
APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF CONSENT .....	46
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	48

# **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Previous research suggests that falsehoods are spreading within the immigrant community regarding social services in Sweden. One suggestion is that social services are removing children from their parents for reasons which do not occur to be true. However, it could be argued that immigrants are not getting the right information on how Swedish social services work. Parents are therefore being manipulated by their children who have after time in school gained more knowledge regarding some issues such as spanking which is not acceptable in Sweden and is in other countries in the world (Carlsson, 2022; Stang, 2018; Vassenden & Vedøy 2019).

Immigrant parents arriving to Sweden with school age children between the ages of 6 and 18 years often have limited language skills and are therefore restricted to the understanding of laws, rules, education, healthcare systems and culture (Bauer, 2016). It can be commonplace for children to learn a new language more quickly than their parents and are therefore often used as translators. This can often lead to children translating within sensitive situations such as economy and health, meaning that the child could take over control and the responsibility of the translation due to the parents lack of language skills. It could be suggested that the adult would be more in control during more normal circumstances, however, in cases with lack of language from parents the child takes control which could cause some amount of stress and anxiety for all parties (Antonini, 2010). Antonini (2010) explains further that it not only can cause negativity through stress and anxiety but it can also be an enjoyable experience and increase knowledge and self esteem for the child. Antonini (2010) suggests that families and friends are used often within social work and family settings when there are limited professional translators available.

Earlier research suggests that the trust in the child welfare system in the Nordic countries is less than 50 % which is under critique. However, it can also be suggested that people with lower education and socioeconomic class have less trust than the people of a higher social class, since it is more often the lower class that has contact with the child welfare

services (Juhasz & Skivenes, 2017). It is more common for first generation immigrants to be of lower class and could therefore show little trust in the child welfare system (Juhasz & Skivenes, 2017). It is suggested further in earlier research that children are often used as language brokers within social work and educational settings where the parent lacks language skills (Bauer, 2016). Vassenden and Vedøy (2019) argues further that the media are playing a huge role in the spread of information regarding the lack of trust between social services and immigrant groups and further suggests that the lack of trust is creating unease within these groups and social services.

## **1.2 Motivation**

The intention of this research was to explore the dynamics in immigrant families where the parents have restricted language skills in Swedish and English and are therefore not able to communicate without a translator. The children can often learn the language quicker than their parents and it could therefore be suggested that the children have power over their parents since they are obtaining information and learning about their new society (Orellana, 2009). However, due to the fact that the authors of this paper are students at a University, ethical restrictions have limited the possibilities for the authors to interview children. There are also limitations in the form of finances to hire a translator to interview the parents. The authors chose to look at these phenomena in the perspective of the professional workers working with this group of people targeted in this study.

Studies similar to this have been made in other countries, for example, in the United States. However, this topic has not been explored in a Swedish context. The topic was first raised by the authors during the time when they were working at their practical placement. One author was working in the prevention unit at social services and the other author in a school. The authors saw how it appeared that children could show control over their parents and also how children were more exposed in being recruited into, for example gang criminality and the use of drugs and alcohol. Following on from this the authors discussed further and decided to explore how the dynamics are between the parents and children in immigrant families and the challenges and also opportunities which they face.

### **1.3 Aim and research questions**

The aim of this study is to explore what happens to the family dynamics when the child's language skills are superior to their parents. The study will examine if this changes the relationship between the parent and child and influences family dynamics.

1. How does the professional see the dynamics change between the parent and child when the child learns about children's rights in school (For example, to discipline your child in the form of spanking which is illegal in Sweden?)
2. Has the professional seen any advantages or disadvantages to the dynamics within the family when the child learns the language quicker than their parents?

### **1.4 Essay disposition**

The study is presented and divided into seven (7) chapters, Chapter 1 is an introduction, where the problem is presented, motivation for this study, aim and research question and explanation of concepts and words. Chapter 2 is presenting the earlier literature in four categories. Children as language brokers, working with immigrant families, power dynamics in immigrant families and trust in the child welfare system. Chapter 3 discusses the relevance of theoretical framework, i.e., systems theory and social learning theory which is used as a guide throughout the study. Chapter 4 presents the research design and methods applied in the study, data collection, essays trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Chapter 5 presents the time frame for the study. Chapter 6 presents the results and analysis. Chapter 7 defines the discussion of the results, comparison to earlier research, discussion of theory, discussion of methodology, implications to international social work and suggestions for further research. The essay ends with a list of references used in this study and appendices used during the process. Both authors were equally engaged in the work with this research and involved in all the writing parts of the essay writing.

### **1.5 Explanations of concepts and word**

Immigrant families = Families where both parents have immigrated to Sweden

Children language brokering = Children as translators for their parents

Children = Children included in this study are from 6-18 years' old



## **Chapter 2 - Earlier research**

### **2.1 Children as language brokers**

Language brokering is the term used when a child's language skills are used to interpret and translate for their parents who have immigrated into a country and not yet learned the language of their new country (Bauer, 2016). Recent research suggests that immigrant children can often play a huge role in language and culture brokers which in turn creates large contributions to their parents' non Swedish speaking world (Antonini, 2010; Orellana, 2009). Orellana (2009) goes on further to suggest that children have a lead role in what their parents hear, read and say following on from immigration which can in turn have an impact on sociocultural learning.

Bauer (2016) explains that recent studies show the impact of language brokering, where a child is used for interpreting for their migrant parents, can have both a positive and negative impact. Bauer (2016) goes on further to suggest that child language and culture brokering has a huge influence on the settlement of an immigrant family and also that the benefits outweigh the negatives. Säävälä, Turjanmaa & Alitolppa-Niitamo (2017) argue that children tend to hide information from their parents and that the school, leading the children into a power situation over school and parents. This is due to the information which the children choose to pass on between family and school. Vassenden & Vedøy (2019), argues that the relationship between child welfare services and immigrant groups are particularly tense and that media shows that lack of correct information spreading across immigrant groups has caused fear towards child welfare services due to rumours of children being taken away from parents.

Orellana (2009) suggests that there can be a variety of ways a child can benefit and be hindered by interpreting for parents and family members. Orellana (2009) suggests further that the benefits, such as cognitive, social and linguistic development can have on the children outweigh the hindrances associated with it. There are also benefits such as the contribution to society and the community as well as benefits such as future opportunities, self esteem and confidence (Orellana, 2009). However, Orellana (2009) goes on to argue that language brokering for children can hinder in ways such as stress

and pressure on the child because of the extra support parents need with language and the stresses for the child associated with this.

Bauer (2016) argues that although language brokering can be an enjoyable experience for some, for others it can provide stress and anxiety. It can also be argued that for sensitive topics such as medical, financial and legal matters then this type of translating could be inappropriate. These matters should be considered before using a child for interpretation purposes as there could easily be misinterpretations and other negative consequences such as sensitive information being listened to by the child which can have an impact (Bauer, 2016).

## **2.2 Working with immigrant families**

According to Zaggelbaum and Carlson (2011) a large proportion of people migrate from their own country due to extreme poverty, war, lack of opportunities in education and also political or religious persecution. Zaggelbaum and Carlson (2011) goes on further to explain that men and women have different levels of stress when immigrating to another country. For example, within some cultures it is important that the male in the family has the feeling of looking after his family and providing for them financially. Commonly an educated man will find any type of work to start with to provide. In some cases, this can be difficult due to, for example language problems, stress regarding living situations and also discrimination they can face from natives (Zaggelbaum & Carlson, 2011).

Lindsay et al (2014) states that providing culturally sensitive care and acknowledgement within social work towards immigrant families is paramount in creating a foundation for the correct amount of support to be provided. Lindsay et al (2014) goes on further to explain that providing empathy regarding culture, values and beliefs is essential in forming and creating a trust between client and social worker. It is acknowledged however that due to language barriers and also mental and physical health beliefs due to culture, forming this trust can be very challenging (Lindsay et al, 2014).

### **2.3 Power dynamics in immigrant families**

There can be certain influences and changes of moving from a country with a different culture and values concerning parenting and parenting styles. This is more certain when coming from a culture with a more collective view where one thinks of the collective like the family and extended family compared to the west where it is more an individualistic view (Renzaho et al., 2011). Families with an African background tend to have an authoritarian parenting style which is putting the power on the parent and reflects the power dynamics in the family towards the parent being in power over the children (Bowie et al., 2017; Renzaho et al., 2011).

A study suggests that immigrant families from an African background who have moved to Australia show that the parenting style is an authoritarian parenting style compared to the Australian one that is more of an authoritative parenting style (Renzaho et al., 2011). For example, an authoritative parenting style are more nurturing, responsive and supportive but with firm limitations for the child compared to an authoritarian which is stricter where you focus more on discipline, control, obedience rather than nurturing your child. Research shows that African parents continue with their parenting style when moving to a new country to keep the control of the children and in their perspective raise the children to be adults. However, the children tend to adapt more to new society with a more individualistic approach which can cause conflict in the home and with the Convention on the rights of the child (1989). The authoritarian parenting style where the parent is in charge and can punish the child in a different form for example, withdrawing a meal from the child, spanking, or having sitting on a chair for a long time until the parent tells them otherwise, or they can take care of the money an older teenager has earned even though it is the teenager that has worked and earned the money (Renzaho et al., 2011).

According to Bowie et al (2017) in a study that has been made from Somalia first generation immigrants to the United States there were some similarities. For example, fear of losing children, conflicts with the child welfare system, keeping the culture and religion and value the traditional way of parenting which is an authoritarian parenting style. However, the fear of losing a child is not only to lose the child to child welfare but also that they might lose the child to the American culture of using drugs and alcohol.

The children and teenagers learn about children's rights and use the system to change the power dynamics in the family. For example, the teenager can threaten the parent that they will contact the child welfare if they do not get what they demand or might reveal information that they are getting controlled or spanked by their parent (Bowie et al., 2017). It can therefore be suggested that the teenagers are using the child welfare system to get control over their parents. However, it could be argued further that the children are doing the right thing since they are currently being raised in a way that goes against the Convention on the rights of the child (1989). The Somali parents however are raising their children in a cultural way like they have always done and been taught to by their own parents which they firmly believe is the right way and raises well behaved children who respect older people (Bowie et al., 2017).

## **2.4 Trust in the child welfare system**

The Nordic child welfare system has a more family oriented system and leans towards a child-centred approach and focuses on the Convention on the rights of the child (1989). However, these could also be seen from the perspective that the rights of the parents are taken away and more pressure is being put on parenting skills and the government to set the standard of what good parenting is (Stang, 2018).

Research shows that the trust in the social welfare system in the Nordic and Anglo-American countries is very low and less than 50% say that they have trust in the social welfare system (Juhasz & Skivenes, 2017). The similarities between the Nordic and Anglo-Americans countries are much alike even though they have two different welfare systems. However, the people with a left wing political opinion show more trust in the child welfare system than the ones with a right wing political opinion (Juhasz & Skivenes, 2017).

Younger people tend to show more trust in the child welfare system than the older generation, maybe because the younger generation are more educated regarding children's rights (Juhasz & Skivenes, 2017). A Norwegian study shows that false information regarding social services has been spread across social media where cases have been recorded and information about “this is what the social services do, they take the kids away from the families”. The information suggests that the children are almost all the

time taken away from their families, which is not the case (Carlsson, 2022; Vassenden & Vedøy 2019). Juhasz & Skivenes (2017) argues that media can have an important role to play in this information since they can show critique towards social services and its workers.

The Norwegian child welfare services has received much criticism in the media and social media. There are groups on social media Facebook and Twitter who are questioning the authorities. Much of the critique shown in media and social media are cases where the child welfare services have gone into immigrant families and taken the children. In these groups there is information about individual cases where children are removed from their families by government authorities. Child welfare workers are also targets for threats towards themselves and their family members, and in some cases photos of the child welfare workers are shown in Facebook groups (Stang, 2018). Other posts that could be found in these groups are for example, warnings to pregnant women that their unborn child could be taken away by the Norwegian government because of the women's history. Another example where a news article was shared about spanked children are more successful later in life and how this way of discipline of a child is the best way of raising children and has a huge support for spanking by the members of the group (Stang, 2018).

## **Chapter 3 -Theoretical framework**

### **3.1 Theoretical framework**

The authors used systems theory as well as social learning theory to analyse the data collected.

Ludwig von Bertalanffy was the founder of systems theory and he suggested that systems approaches were a more applicable use than more casual models which had been used for dealing with more structured and detailed interactions (Healy, 2014). Healy (2014) goes on further to explain that Ludwig von Bertalanffy criticized views that suggested that humans are 'reactive automatons' and alternatively suggested recognition for 'active personality systems'. Ludwig von Bertalanffy wanted recognition between transitions between the person as an individual and the society that they live in (Healy, 2014).

According to Healy (2014), the term systems theory was first introduced into social work in the 1930s by an American sociologist called Frank Hankins. Healy (2014) goes on further to explain however, that even before these social workers had started using a perspective called 'person in environment' which balanced personal and social directions together enhancing the fact that they can be combined and work together for progress in social work. Even though systems theory has been used within social work since the 1930s, it was not until the 1960s that social workers really began to ensure a more methodical approach using systems theory in practice (Healy, 2014).

Payne (2021) argues that systems theory applies social interventions with help for the individual. Systems theory strives to enhance change for both social and psychological models of practice and also to encourage strength of relationship and solidarity between members of the community (Payne, 2021). Systems theory can be complex in its practicality and therefore it can be difficult to create clear guidelines, especially when choosing an intervention level (Payne, 2021).

Garcia (2015) suggests that systems theory within a family recognises the individual aspect and diversity to traditional cultures and values. Furthermore, this encourages research and understanding into the meaning of family behaviours on a cultural level and

therefore goes on to use family systems theory to develop rationale within the family setting (Garcia, 2015). Family systems theory draws attention to issues experienced by multigenerational family patterns and themes and the way these interact with each other to create family experiences and responses to situations (Garcia, 2015).

Garcia (2015) goes on further to explain that applying a culturally competent response to family systems theory creates knowledge of cultures and values on a traditional level.

Payne (2021) explains that systems theory suggests that everything is connected and that interaction within the system in different ways can achieve different results. Payne (2021) explains further that an advantage of systems theory is that it creates a clear understanding of how turbulent and complicated social situations can be and it can therefore increase our understanding of analysis compared to other theories such as psychology which can suggest more action and intervention methods. Payne (2021) argues that a problem with systems theory is that it gives the practitioner no idea of the level of which to handle the problems and this elements that should be worked on. However, it could be suggested that a practitioner could focus on family life and the community instead of focusing on ethnicity and gender (Payne, 2021).

Albert Bandura was born in 1925 in Alberta, Canada and was a leading psychologist. He was born to Polish and Ukrainian parents and studied psychology at the University of British Columbia in 1949 (Allan, 2017). Albert Bandura studied behaviours through imitation, observation and modelling and together called this social learning theory. Bandura suggested that everyone learns through imitating and modeling, for example when a child learns to speak a parent or carer will lean towards the child so the child can see how the mouth will shape the word (Allan, 2017). It is suggested that social learning theory is the learning of behaviour within society where a person sees and learns what is going on around them within a social situation (Payne, 2021). Payne (2021) goes on further to explain that a person will inevitably mirror what someone else is doing around them and is then classed as the term modelling. Payne (2021) explains that modelling is a process of social learning where a person mimics what they have seen. For example, a person watches another person's actions, they watch the behaviour and rehearse these in their mind, the person can relate to circumstances in which the behaviour could be carried out and then when the circumstance arises the person can carry out the behaviour they

have witnessed. Understanding that a behavior carried out by someone they trust will encourage many people to believe that there will be no adverse consequences to this and therefore within social learning the person learning will attempt to mirror and model a new skill from someone they can rely on and trust (Payne, 2021). Payne (2021) goes on further to explain that being able to experiment with these skills within a supportive environment and at the same time receive comments and criticism is a major part of this learning process and can develop support networks such as anger management classes and training programmes for people who need extra support with this.

It could be argued that systems along with social learning theory are connected to the research topic. It could be argued that systems theory is linked to the research project due to the fact that all people belong to a system, for example, immigrant families who come to Sweden come into a system and following on from that the children will also belong to new systems such as school and friends. It could also be argued that systems change when people change (Payne, 2021). In relation to the research topic, immigrants could find that their systems such as school and the community change when they change following immigration. Payne (2021) goes on further to suggest that one of the main suggested inputs from system ideas into social work is the alliance and acknowledgement to the response of uncertainty. There has been a historical aim to use interpersonal interventions in order to engage and involve families within communities and social agencies (Payne, 2021). Payne (2021) goes on further to suggest that in more recent times there have been developments which have focused on awareness between interactions and responses into how people react in the social world. Social learning theory is behaviour learned through observing and reflecting others within society (Payne, 2021). It could be suggested that social learning theory is connected to the research topic due to the fact that behaviours learned through society can be mirrored and repeated which suggests further that information the youth have claimed to learn from their new society through social media and school are then forwarded onto their families.



## **Chapter 4 - Methodology**

### **4.1 Research design**

There are two different research design models which are the most commonly used within social research, these are fixed and flexible designs (Robson, 2014). Robson (2014) goes on further to explain that these two types of models are also referred to as quantitative and qualitative designs. Within a flexible design approach, the focus of the research, ideas and planning are explored and then data collection is started which is done at an earlier time than with a fixed design approach (Robson, 2014). With a flexible approach design, decisions regarding where to proceed next will be determined early on following what has been discovered early on in the research. The authors could decide to change the path of their work following on from this and explore another dimension or alternatively the authors could find they have come across something of a sensitive nature which also means another path needs to be explored (Robson, 2014).

According to Grinnell and Unrau (2018) exploratory research methods are used in research where there is limited information regarding the chosen subject. Grinnell and Unrau (2018) argues that exploratory research methods can also be known as non-experimental as only the specific problem area is being explored. The meaning of the exploratory research method is also not to yield statistics but to create a base of general ideas and theories with the opportunity for further exploration (Grinnell & Unrau, 2018). This type of research method is ideal for a thesis such as this one where there is minimal research in Sweden and a relatively new problem which could eventually be developed further. Previous research has suggested that falsehoods are being spread in immigrant communities regarding Swedish social services and that children are being removed from homes for reasons which are not true (Carlsson, 2022). Carlsson (2022) argues further that the correct information about support from social services is not being appropriately passed on to parents and this is causing the children of these parents to create falsehoods therefore manipulating the situation to their advantage.

## **4.2 Data collection**

A study on the dynamics between parents and their child where first-hand information on the dynamics in the family from the families themselves could have been most beneficial. However, according to Vetenskapsrådet (2017) it is essential to consider the risk for the participants when conducting a study and interviewing people about their personal life. Due to this the authors decided to look at this subject from a professional worker's perspective.

To gather the data, semi-structured face to face interviews with open ended questions have been done (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interviews have been held with different professionals who work within social work and first generation immigrant families who have children between the ages of 6-18 years. The professionals included are social workers and school professionals, such as school principals, school counsellors and youth club staff who currently work with children and families where there are many first generation immigrant children attending. The data has been collected from people who work in the same area.

### **4.2.1 Sampling: Selection of participants**

A non probability sampling method selects participants with certain characteristics. These characteristics could be knowledge, experience and influence and are chosen by the researcher in order to help to aid in the research (Robson, 2014). Robson (2014) goes on further to explain that where it is difficult to find participants a snowball sampling method could be used which involves an interviewee knowing someone who could also be interviewed about the research. This can then be repeated, hence the word snowball as the method snowballs as more interviewees are found.

A non-probability purposeful sampling method has been used to find participants who have information about the phenomena for this study (Frankfort-Nachmias, et al, 2015; Robson, 2007). Participants have been chosen due to their knowledge and experience in this topic of study and who are professionals within this chosen research. The authors have chosen participants from 3 different working professionals working with the same group of people in the same area, these professionals come from social services, school

and youth clubs. Six participants were selected for this study, three from social services, one from a school environment and two from a youth club.

#### **4.2.2 Designing interview guide and interview questions**

There can be advantages and disadvantages of doing interviews, however if delivered with skill, interviews are a high source of information and deepens knowledge of the research being gathered (Robson, 2014)

This study explores the research topic through semi structured interviews with open ended questions (See appendix 2) which in turn allows the interviewee to elaborate and give full depth to the answers. The interview questions were created by the authors and included introductory questions, main questions and also follow up questions. All three types of questions have an important role to play in the gathering of data. The introductory questions were questions related to the interviewees job role and any previous experience, the main questions were related to the research topic and previous research and the follow up questions were questions which stemmed from the main questions answers. Since this study was qualitative, this provided flexibility to the questions and also enabled the authors to add, remove and adjust the questions during the interview process when needed to do so. Robson (2014) suggests that research questions will likely change and develop during interviews and this then provides a deeper and more structured interview method, which the author who conducted the interviews experienced and developed the follow up questions after each interview in line with the new information the author gathered during the earlier interviews. Robson (2014) goes on further to argue that it must be taken into consideration that some interviewers could find it difficult to be so flexible with their research and that others could find it highly beneficial to have this flexibility. However, in this study the authors felt that flexibility was very valuable and added new information to the authors in the subject studied.

#### **4.2.3 Conducting interviews**

In accordance with Kvale & Birnkmann (2009), the interviews, in conformity with the interviewees, were conducted in person face to face at their workplace for the convenience of the participants. The interview dates and times were set by phone call and email by one of the authors. Since the authors both speak Swedish and English, choices

were left for the participant to choose in which language they wanted to have the interview. Since the participants all use Swedish in their workplace they all chose to conduct the interviews in Swedish.

The interview duration was about an hour for each participant, one of the authors was present during the interviews. The author lead the interview and asked the questions as well as taking notes, observed the interview and added follow up questions when the author felt the need to do so. The author used two phones to record the interviews and the recordings were checked after the interview to confirm that the recording had worked well. The authors asked all interviewees if they would be willing to answer more questions afterwards if needed.

According to Kvale & Birnkmann (2009), it is very important to make the participants feel comfortable with the interview. The authors explained orally before the interview the purpose of the study and why it is important. Additionally, the participants had in advance received information about the study in the form of a consent letter with information that explained the ethical consideration. For example, that their identities are kept anonymous and that their work unit will not be revealed, their rights to withdraw at any moment from the study and that all data would be destroyed right away. Another example mentioned above to make the participants feel comfortable was to let them choose a language between Swedish or English and to meet at their workplace which they were familiar with. This information was also given at the time of the interview.

#### **4.2.4 The choice of previous research**

The previous research was selected in regards to research which had been studied earlier. The idea came up during one of the authors practical placements during November 2021. The authors searched for previous research and information about the topic to gain knowledge that had already been studied. This enabled the authors to understand information that was missing and therefore how to direct the research so that new knowledge on the topic could be studied further (D'Cruz & Jones, 2014).

The authors have been reading many articles as suggested by D'Cruz & Jones (2014). To find the articles and previous research the authors used electronic resources and books that have been accessed through the University of Gävle. The electronic resources that

were used are Discovery, SocIndex, Google Scholar and Ebsco. The authors got helpful information from a lecture with a staff member at the library as well as from a lecture at the Bachelor Program in Social Work with Specialization International Social Work at the University of Gävle about how to search for keywords and phrases to get the best possible literature available on the topic that has been studied. Some of the keywords in the literature search have been, immigrant families, Sweden, dynamics, parent child relationship, child brokering, social services, child welfare and children's rights. The results from the search gave articles from many places in the world. However, the articles chosen by the authors were from Nordic countries, Anglo- American countries and Australia. The authors also found literature from the articles that were found in the search to see what the references used in these articles. Considering the time limitation of this study not all relevant literature that was found was applied.

#### **4.3 Data transcription**

All the interviews have been recorded on two mobile phones. The same two phones have been used on each interview to make sure the interview has been recorded and with good quality. However, transcribing an interview is time consuming work (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and when a couple of interviews have been made the hours of transcription adds up quickly. In regards to the time limitation of this study, the authors of this study were thinking of using a research software called ATLAS.ti (Access provided by the University of Gävle) where they listened to the recorded interview multiple times and wrote down in the software quotes and important themes and words that came up. However, after conducting the interview the authors choose to transcribe all the interviews in a document to get a better picture of the interviews and important things the participants said.

#### **4.4 Tools of analysis**

In this study a commonly used analysis method for qualitative research has been used which is thematic analysis. There are different approaches to thematic analysis and in this study the authors have used an inductive approach which is the process of finding themes without using already existing themes or themes found from previous literature, but instead were found in the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2022).The authors were

thinking of using a computer software called ATLAS.ti for the analysis part as suggested from a teacher at the university, however, the authors had problems in accessing the program through the university of Gävle, so instead they chose to use sticky notes and highlighter pens to find the themes. In regards to this approach the authors went through all the transcripts from the six interviews and highlighted important information that has answered the aim and research questions, they wrote down all the important words and quotes on sticky notes and had three categories which were, positive, negative and neutral, for positive they used blue pencil and green sticky notes, for negative they used pink sticky notes and pink pencil and for neutral they used yellow sticky notes and yellow pencil. The authors used a big board where they put down codes that they found from the categories, what they came up with they put into a mind map with words starting with the result in the middle and went from there to society, parental ship, father (men), mother, (women), society, translation, child and lastly, wanting to fit in. After this was done the authors found four themes which were, *Children as language brokers, children, community and society, and lastly parents.*

#### **4.5 Essay trustworthiness**

##### **4.5.1 Validity and Reliability**

Robson (2014) explains that validity is when something which is being measured, claims to measure what it is actually being measured. Robson (2014) goes on further to explain that a measure can be reliable but not necessarily valid and argues further that if a test is not reliable then it is not valid at all. In regards to validity of the research, the report has been written with quotes from the participants, with transparency and explanations of why and how things have been done (Patton, 2015). Grinnell and Unrau (2018) explains that validity is the measurement of what it is supposed to measure. Grinnell and Unrau (2018) explains further that to gain validity and reliability within research then questions should be clear. It is therefore paramount to establish questions which are clear, precise and direct in this research project.

Triangulation of a qualitative source is analysing the dependability of different types of data sources within the same type of method (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) goes on further to explain that triangulation of qualitative source means that it is possible to compare and

furthermore review the dependability of information which has been sourced at different times and by different methods e.g. interviews and observations. When comparing interviews, it could be suggested that there could be a difference in what people say in public to what they say in private (Patton, 2015). There could also be comparisons into what people say over a period of time and if there is any dependability into the consistency of what is being said.

Triangulation of a qualitative source is analysing the dependability of different types of data sources within the same type of method. The authors collected data from three different work environments that work in the same vicinity. These included, social services, school staff and youth club staff. A theory triangulation analysis of the data was also developed through the two different theories, systems theory and social learning theory (Patton, 2015).

Patton (2015) explains further that triangulation of data sources within qualitative methods may not point to an exact picture in itself, and the main reason behind this type of triangulation is to understand why and how the differences appear.

Triangulation with multiple analysts is the use of many and not just one singular analyst (Patton, 2015). Advantages of using this type of data collection is by using many interviewees and not just one reduces the amount of possible bias which could potentially occur with one person being interviewed (Patton, 2015). Within this research, the authors have interviewed six different professionals with a variety of professional backgrounds and experience. This was to gain results with a variety of perspectives, knowledge and experience. Using triangulation within this research project provided the opportunity to compare and review the dependability of the results as well as gain insight into why and how the differences arose. Grinnell and Unrau (2018) suggests that bias could easily affect the interpretation of the data and there can easily be a tendency to shape data with what is already believed. Grinnell and Unrau (2018) goes on further to suggest that conclusions could be drawn even before the data and also data could be dismissed as irrelevant. With all these discussions in mind it is even more important that triangulation with multiple analysts is used whenever possible.

Robson (2014) explains that data collection is reliable if the data which is being measured is duplicated under the same conditions. Robson (2014) goes on to argue further however that it is practically impossible to get the exact same measurements when working with people even if the method of measuring is the same, such as using the same questions or a questionnaire. It could also be presumed that even asking the same question again, the respondent could have a different answer as the situation could have changed or the respondent answers differently due to boredom (Robson, 2014). Using a method of data collection such as standardized would usually achieve some type of reliability with the results. Structured observations could be classed as standardized data collection, especially when two observers are observing the same situation (Robson, 2014). Robson (2014) explains further that the test is to see if the same results will be produced for observing the same situation. When research is using questionnaires and quantitative data, then using two different types of questions and still producing similar answers then this indicates reliability.

It can be argued that using flexible designs and data collection methods for qualitative data could be somewhat unreliable due to dealing with complex real life situations. However, it is suggested that using triangulation and different methods and interviewees can make a difference and help to a larger extent (Robson, 2014).

The authors in this research, chose triangulation methods and to conduct the interviews with different professionals from different organisations. This provided different views from different professionals and organisations and therefore increased the reliability of the research.

#### **4.5.2 Generalization**

Generalization is about whether a study can be used to generalize other people or context than the study itself or to what extent it could be generalized or applied (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2015). Generalization is more assumed in quantitative research rather than qualitative research. Generalization in qualitative research is quite difficult since the sampling size is small and the type of methods used in sampling. Alternatively, it could be used in other similar research if the researchers are being transparent with their



work and explain in detail the process. Furthermore, there could create a possibility to use the results in another similar study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2015).

Likewise, to this study the authors have created opportunities for other researchers to determine the transferability of this study. Even though this study has a low number of participants six using a non-probability purposeful sampling method has been used. The authors have been as transparent as possible with all the steps they have taken during the research process and suggest that this research could be used for educational purposes, practice in social work with immigrants or for further research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2015).

#### **4.6 Ethical considerations**

The research process followed ethical considerations, where the participants in the study have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. This could have been done orally, written and signed by the participant and researchers. The ethical considerations also included confidentiality: Which gave information to who had access to the data, how it will be stored and that the anonymity of the participant's identity will be kept (Robson, 2007; Vetenskapsrådet, 2017).

In regards to the ethical considerations, in advance to the interview the participants received written information about the purpose of the study, information that their participation is voluntary and that they could at any moment withdraw from the participation without any explanation or reason why they do not want to participate anymore, which is stated in the consent letter (See appendix 1). At the beginning of the interview the participants received an oral presentation of the consent letter. To enable security for the participants, the data collected was destroyed after the study was done and the researchers ensured that the anonymity of the participants was kept and that their real names or any private information were not used in the study. The participants together with the researchers signed a letter of consent.

#### **4.7 Anticipated difficulties and limitations of the study**

The authors took into consideration when interviewing the social workers that they might be apprehensive to tell the whole truth since this is a subject of debate currently in Sweden. Another suggestion could be that the professionals are unaware what is going on in the family and between the family dynamics.

Bauer (2016) suggests that some children have been used for translating in sometimes very sensitive and intense situations which in turn can cause challenges. When arriving in Sweden from other countries, many migrants have limited language skills both in English and Swedish. This in turn has an effect and restricts their interpretation and understanding of laws, rules, healthcare systems and culture. It is likely that the immigrant children will learn the Swedish language quicker than their parents and in some cases the children will be used as an interpreter within different situations. This in turn can encourage the children to become very manipulative towards their parents and create rules, laws and regulations which are not true (Bowie et al., 2017) and this can have an effect on the results since the professionals might not get the right information about the situation.

## **Chapter 5 – Results & Analysis**

Within this section the results are formulated using themes and presented firstly by displaying the chart below. Quotes from the transcripts were identified in light of the social learning theory and systems theory, Concepts from the two theories were utilized when the authors went through the data collected and selected quotes, for example, *“if I don’t get this then the school will do a referral to social services” (Participant 3)*. Here the child is in a position where the family system changes and the child gets a new role with more power over the parent. Then the authors put in to three categories, positive, negative and neutral which explained the context of the quote, for example, *“....we cant start with integration we have to start with inclusion...” (Participant 5)*. This is put in the category as positive due to the statement referring to inclusion in a positive manner. A code system was used to identify the themes from the different participants' answers to the questions. These were then put into four different themes which are presented within this section (see Table 1 below to get an example of the process).

## 5.1 Table

Table 1, an example of the process to identify the themes

Quotes from the interviews	Categories	Codes	Themes
<i>"we should never expect a child to translate for their parents" (participant 1)</i>	Neutral	Translation, Child, Society	Children as language brokers
<i>"if I don't get this then the school will do a referral to social services...." (participant 3)</i>	Negative	Wanting to fit in, Child	Immigrant children
<i>"The father tries to keep control, by controlling the freedom of his children and by taking his wife to work...." (Participant 2)</i>	Negative	Fathers	Parents
<i>"....we cant start with integration we have to start with inclusion..." (Participant 5)</i>	Positive	Society	Parents
<i>"....The father lives in the past, the mother lives in the present and the children in the future...." (Participant 1)</i>	Neutral	Society, child, mother, father	Immigrant children, Community and Society
<i>"...The Swedish way of raising children might not be better, but that is how we do it here..." (Participant 1)</i>	Neutral	Society	Community and Society

## 5.2 The participants

To protect the identity of the participants and to keep anonymity as discussed at the interview, the following codes are used to describe each participant "*participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6*".

*Participant 1* works as a Youth Worker and currently works within social services. *Participant 1* has worked within social services since 2001.

*Participant 2* is a High School Teacher in history and physical education and is currently working within social sustainability within the social services in Sweden. *Participant 2s* main role is working with young males regarding honour related violence and also change of attitude within society.

*Participant 3* is a High School Teacher in social studies and currently works for social services. *Participant 3* has been working for social services for 8 months and prior to this has worked within criminal care for 15 years.

*Participant 4* is an Assistant Principal and currently works for a middle age school in Sweden. *Participant 4* started off her career working as a youth worker and then studied further and has now worked within school settings for over 40 years.

*Participants 5 & 6* both work at a youth centre. They have youth worker qualifications and one also holds a qualification as a communicator. *Participant 5* has 26 years' experience in this field and *participant 6* has 9 years.

### **5.3 Children as language brokers**

The first theme which was recognised was the use of children as language brokers. According to the results it was evident that children are being used as language brokers for their parents to a large extent which is in turn altering the dynamics within the family setting.

*"....I have witnessed this many times in meetings since 2008 [...] I don't know if power is the right word but there is somehow a shift in power within the family. An example for this is when children are being used as translators for parents...."* (*Participant 3*).

Some participants explained that professional translators are being used within formal meetings but not within informal.

*" ...For example a meeting where I can see that the parents aren't picking up everything I say and then the child intervenes as they are quicker than the parents. Then the children begin to fill in to help their parents. Another example is a meeting in a corridor when a meeting has not been arranged or seeing them in the town centre...."* (*Participant 3*).

*"...I think when I started working for social services it wasn't really thought about so much. Today however, we should never expect a child to translate for their parents so*

*one should arrange a translator or another adult in the meeting to support....”*  
(Participant 1).

Participant 1 comments on occasions when he recalls a child translating and this was not a positive experience. Participant 1 goes on further to comment on the positive change within his work setting in recent times.

*“...I have been to meetings where there has been a young person there to translate and it was not good [...] so there are some positive changes about how we think regarding information sharing. If an adult doesn't understand then one learns to find another way than using the children...”* (Participant 1).

In relation to using children as language brokers it is not just in a setting of a meeting with professionals it can also be within everyday life that a child is used for these purposes. An example of this could be going to the grocery store and the parents can find this humiliating due to the fact that they rely on their child for support and help with this.

*“...the need to ask my 7,8,9 years old daughter for help because I need to go to the grocery store. One word that comes up is humiliating, maybe that is not the right word but it has to be very hard...”* (Participant 1).

According to the participants, immigrants arriving in another country can often find themselves in a community surrounded by other immigrants from their home country. This can then lead to a lack of effort to learn the new language as it is deemed not necessary.

*“but some communities are so big that one doesn't need to learn the language, because there's always someone else that can point the way for you...”* (Participant 5).

In the light of systems theory and social learning theory it could be argued that when a person does not learn the language and the children are used as translators it could be harder for a person to learn about the new society and the relationship between the parent and child changes, which can cause the family system to change.

## 5.4 Immigrant children

According to participants 1 and 3, children are exploiting the system and taking a lead to fit into Swedish society. An example of this could be children demanding the latest mobile phone model and if they don't get it the children will threaten their parents and say they will call social services. By doing this, the participants explain that the children are using their position as having more awareness of the community and Swedish culture to manipulate.

*“.....the children use the system so they don't find themselves as outsiders in society and say for example, if I can't have that mobile phone I will call social services and say that you hit me. They want to be part of Swedish society [.....] they do not want to hurt their parents but it is important to them that they are part of society....” Participant 1.*

Participant added further to this:

*“...Often it can be that if the children say; if I don't get label clothes then I will be teased in school or I will be left out from my friends, if I don't get the most expensive jacket, or if I don't get an iPhone then I won't be able to hang out with the football team. Then I have also heard that the children will say; if I don't get this then the school will do a referral to social services ....” (Participant 3).*

Participant 1 explains that responsibility can be a big issue that is felt by immigrant children. The children can feel the sense of having to support their family as they have acclimatised in the country earlier than their parents.

*“...No child should be in the position to support their family because they have acclimatised quicker than their parents and feel like they have the responsibility to provide for the family...” (Participant 1)*

However, participant 1 goes on further to explain that it is positive for children to have some responsibility just not the responsibility of an adult and that responsibility at an age appropriate level is good and positive for development.

*“...it is good if children have responsibility, but they should not have the responsibility of an adult...[...] If I help my child to take responsibility, show them what to do and how and keep it on an age appropriate level then responsibility is good.” (Participant 1).*

As well as responsibility it was discussed in the interviews that children need time. It was suggested by participant 4 that time is the key. Participant 4 goes on further to explain that every minute is precious to these children and not a minute should be wasted.

*“....The one thing that is key is time. Time for each child is every minute. It is not right to waste time so I have created a timetable for them....” (Participant 4).*

According to participant 2, there are also mental health issues that can play a part in boundaries and cultural differences. Participant 2 discusses further that some children can find that they don't have any security anywhere and that there is a culture clash and loss of identity due to the fact that the child feels unstable and vulnerable in Swedish society, their home and also their homeland.

*“....When a child comes home after being in the Swedish society the values from the society clash with the values within the home, and when the child comes out to the Swedish society the values from the home clash with the Swedish society and that is creating loss of identity[...] When they travel to their homeland, they are suddenly classed as being European who are coming to their homeland and when they arrive back in Sweden they are suddenly immigrants again....” (Participant 2).*

The results show there is an importance of immigrant children having the need to feel Swedish in order to fit in. Participant 5 suggests that it is paramount for the children to fit into Swedish society and one of the activities they use to encourage this is trips away, for example to Swedish ski resorts.

*“...We work a lot with trips away to different places, and their big wish is to go to places which are typically Swedish [...] we had a group of male youths who wanted to go skiing in Åre. Their biggest wish was to feel Swedish....” (Participant 5).*



Another theme which came through in the results within the children was the increased risk of committing crimes and also falling into gang environments. Participant 1 explains that many children are falling into environments which are gang related and also due to this the parents in turn feel like they are losing power.

*“....Many children are falling into a destructive environment, for example, a gang [...] One can see that there is a correlation between the parents losing power and the children committing mild crimes....” (Participant 1).*

Participant 2 argues that many children go looking for gangs and destructive environments here in Sweden and further argues that this is nothing new in Sweden and it is often connected to identity due to the fact that identity and acceptance can be held within a gang.

*“....There are many gangs here in Sweden and many go looking for gangs. If one looks here in Sweden, you can argue that someone searches to be part of a gang to gain acceptance and identity. I believe this plays a huge role....” (Participant 2)*

Systems theory is connected to the family and within this category fits the concept of family systems theory. Participant 1 discusses family systems and explains that when a parent loses control over the child the child could seek acceptance within a gang to aid identity. It could be therefore argued that social learning theory is also connected as the child will learn new social behaviours from the gang (Payne, 2021).

## **5.5 Community and Society**

This theme describes how integration and inclusion are a huge part of being part of a community and society. Participants in the interviews expressed their views and experience that if Swedish society put more demands on immigrants and created links and societal awareness then this could potentially bridge gaps and increase cultural awareness.

*“....we can't start with integration we have to start with inclusion...” (Participant 5)*

Participant 2 argues further:

*“...The society has to put a demand on the parents to make them come out in the society, for example, in a soccer club make sure the parents get the information and understand what they will do and put a demand on them to take the responsibility...”*

It was clear from the interviews that participants felt there was a lack of effort from the parents in learning the Swedish language which reduced their involvement in Swedish society. The children then become the parents' language link between the home and society. This in turn encourages the children to show the parents how they believe Swedish society runs and this then increases the manipulation from the child.

*“.....What is so sad about the families is that the parents don't learn the Swedish language, so they are not therefore involved in the Swedish society. The children are their language link. They come home and tell their parents how society works and for example say that all Swedish children have a mobile phone. The parents rely too much on their children....” (Participant 4)*

From the interviews it was evident that there were differences between welfare systems between homelands and Sweden. This also affects immigrants' sense of security and feeling of integration as they will have to learn an entirely new system.

*“...social services are then contacted and it is not because they do not know how things are structured, it is because the Swedish welfare system could be very different....” (Participant 1)*

Another difference which was evident within the interviews was the difference and opinion in the societies regarding raising children. Participant 1 argues that there can be a lack of understanding and tolerance for different views regarding raising children.

*“...The Swedish way of raising children might not be better, but that is how we do it here...” (Participant 1).*

Participant 1 argues further that there is a large gap between the immigrant parents who live off the benefit system and middle class families in Sweden. Participant 1 goes on further to argue that this gap can be too great and therefore have a negative effect on the children.

*“....It can be the case where two parents are forced to go to receive benefits from the welfare system as they do not have a job. There are then different situations one finds oneself in for example class in school or sports club and there are other children there from other families which we call Swedish middle class. For example, this will show the difference in a big way and can have a negative impact on the children....” (Participant 1).*

Participant 6 argues however, that children who are born in Sweden can still feel left out of society and this can therefore have an impact on their sense of belonging and identity within society.

*“....There are many children who are born here but are still put in the same box as those who are immigrants and I think that is wrong....” (Participant 6).*

It could be argued that when the authors looked at the community and society in the lens of social learning theory and systems theory, one of the key elements in social learning theory is motivation (Payne, 2021). It could be that there is a lack of motivation for some communities to take part in Swedish society since some communities are so vast. However, one participant discusses imitating Norway where people need to learn the language to be able to become Norwegian citizens which could be a great motivation.

Systems are evident in every society and within this section of the research it is evident that many systems are discussed and specifically welfare systems and community clubs such as sport clubs. Immigrants need to adjust and recognize these new systems when settling in a new society. Healy (2014), suggests that there should be recognition between transitions of the person as an individual and the society as they live in.

## 5.6 Parents

There were many aspects of the theme of parents which showed a variety of ways in which parents are affected by immigration. Mothers and fathers were equally affected in different ways and also had to adjust to different aspects of their lives.

Women have a new role of going to work and also gaining more confidence than they potentially did in their home lands due to the change in laws and culture.

*“....Women are more likely to go out to work....” (Participant 2)*

Participant 1 explains that women have increased confidence to get a divorce than they would have done in their homeland.

*“....Women have the courage to get a divorce which is nearly impossible in their homeland....” (Participant 1)*

It was evident that fathers had a large change in their lives and could feel powerless and out of control. Participant 1 argues that the father has difficulties moving on and tends to live in the past whereas the mother lives in the present and the children in the future.

*“....The father lives in the past, the mother lives in the present and the children in the future....” (Participant 1)*

Participant 2 argues however, that when the father finds the roles of the family changing he tries to hold the hierarchy within the family the same as in his homeland.

*“....The father holds the hierarchy from his homeland within the family system in Sweden [...]The father tries to keep control, by controlling the freedom of his children and by taking his wife to work....” (Participant 2).*

The father also struggles to accept that the move is permanent and shows this by leaving bags still packed for his inevitable journey home.

*“....We have not unpacked our bags yet, we are only here until it calms down in our homeland, then we will go back....” (Participant 1)*

Participant 5 explains that there can be a difference between parents with different academic backgrounds and this can have an effect in their integration.

*“....There is a difference between the parents with an academic background and those without....” (Participant 5).*

During the interviews there emerged a common theme into fathers and their emotions, feelings and vulnerabilities. Fathers tended to stay at home and experienced a sense of powerlessness and weakness which previously had not been felt in their homeland.

*“....The father has a lot of emotion, and has the feeling of not being enough, the child is not listening and the father doesn't know what to do and a feeling of hopelessness arises [...] For the father it is not as usual to talk about feelings and show vulnerabilities and this could be a cultural clash....” (Participant 1)*

Participant 2 discussed the need for change and goes on to discuss that in order for change to take place there needs to be time and understanding for this to happen. Participant 2 also discussed within the context of change that those parents who encouraged their children to learn about subjects such as honour related violence and oppression, then these children were more likely to see a change in their own culture regarding this.

*“....Time and understanding is needed regarding the culture and society before change can take place [...]Parents who encourage their children to learn about honour related violence and oppression are more likely to change their own culture....” (Participant 2)*

Parental contribution to society was discussed during the interviews and it was explained by participant 1 that parents who learn the language can be more present in their children's activities and lives. This can have positive influences on both children and parents.

*“....Parents who have cultural awareness and can speak the language are more present and interested in their children's lives....” (Participant 1).*

*During the interviews, an example of Norway was discussed. It was explained that immigrants coming to Norway need to be competent in the Norwegian language before they can apply for Norwegian citizenship. Participant 2 explains how he believes there should be some demands met by immigrants coming into Sweden as this will provide them with the tools to bring them out into society.*

*“....You can help parents with their language through interpreters but also I think you need to set demands also. I can take an example of Norway. To become a Norwegian citizen one needs to be able to be competent in the language. One has to be competent in certain aspects to be able to manage the language and then become a citizen. So, one needs the language to become a citizen. Something like this I feel would be a good idea in Sweden. One needs to create demands which need to be fulfilled which will encourage people to come out into the community....” (Participant 2).*

Participant 3 goes on to argue however, that there can be pressure on parents due to the fact that parents are expected to support their children with their activities as well as having their own business to take care of such as communicating with social services.

*“....The parents have not only to organise their children's school and activities but they also have to own personal things like contact with the social service, and other business to attend to....” (Participant 3).*

Furthermore, some of the participants suggested that it was the integration into society where they felt the immigrants were being let down. This could be due to factors such as immigrants staying at home more within their family setting and not going out. It was a common theme that the participants felt that the older generation had somehow been let down by Swedish society.

*“....We have not succeeded in integrating the older generation....” (Participant 5).*

*“....Parents don't go out as much...” (Participant 6).*

*From the words of participant 4:*

*“....We need to take care of the parents....”.*

*It can also be argued that parents do not learn the Swedish language.*

*"....They do go to Swedish language classes but they then return to their apartments and speak their home language. They are therefore not engaging in Swedish society...."*  
*(Participant 4)*

According to Payne (2021), systems theory within the family can change which can go on further to challenge pressures and support systems. For example, participant 3 argues that there can be pressure on parents due to the expectation from the children to support with out of school activities as well as the parents having their own issues to deal with. This in turn can create challenges, pressures and stress for the parents.

Within the concept of social learning theory, it could be argued that as discussed previously, some women become more confident in seeking a divorce than in their own homeland. It could be therefore suggested that the women are using social learning theory and learning new social skills from their new country such as confidence in a divorce.

## **Chapter 6 – Discussion**

### **6.1 Discussion**

This study aimed to explore if the dynamics within the family change when the children learn the language quicker than their parents and if, then how has the dynamics changed in the perspective from the professional worker working with families and children who have come to Sweden. This research is done based on two theories, systems theory and social learning theory with a flexible approach. In regards to the theories used, interviews were set up with different professionals working with immigrant families that have over a time period been able to follow children and parents who have come to Sweden. The participants of the study all work in the same areas with the same families but in different sectors to gain as broad a perspective from the professionals as possible. According to the participants, they could all see a change in the dynamics within the family after they have been in Sweden for a while and the children had learned the language and the social codes before their parents. The children take a lead in the new society and that reflects the dynamics within the family of the children having more power than their parents compared to how it was in their home country. Concerning the integration of immigrant families, the participants were united that the integration of the children in Sweden works well, they are flexible and get connected with school and different platforms early on but the integration of the parents is lacking and is in need of more resources.

### **6.2 Discussion of the results in relation to the aim and research questions**

The results are carefully analysed by the authors in regards to finding answers to the three research questions in this study, i.e., *“How does the professional see the dynamics change between the parent and child when the child learns about children's rights in school? Has the professional seen any advantages or disadvantages to the dynamics within the family when the children learn the language quicker than their parents? And, is something missing with the process of integration with immigrant families?”*

According to all the participants of this study they all had in common that they could see a change in the dynamics in the families after the children have learned the language and the social codes in the Swedish society. However, they all saw that the power dynamics



had changed and that the children gained more power over the new home in Sweden compared to what they had from the beginning when they came to Sweden. They could see the change because for example, the kids were the ones bringing the information and were more knowledgeable than their parents about the Swedish culture and society and how things work. The children often were the ones telling the parents this is how they do it in Sweden and could use arguments for how this is and use to their own benefit. This could be for example, if you do not get me that new jacket the other children in school will bully me or they could even go on and say if you do not give me that jacket I will tell social services of how you discipline me and they might take me away from you.

They all saw the shift in the power dynamics as something negative except a few aspects that they could see as positive. For example, participant 3 talked about the children getting integrated easily into Swedish society which is something that is good, as well as some parents with an academic background often were more open minded to the new society and some encouraged their children to explore and learn about things that challenges their home culture as participant 2 mentioned.

After analyzing the result and looking at research questions, all six participants spoke about the integration of the children and how it is working or not working. About half of the participants mentioned how Swedish society has failed to work with integration of the parents. Much of the intergenerational work in Sweden has to do with children and young people and leaving the parents out. Participant 2, 5 and 6 talk about demands, that it could be important to put demands on the parents to learn the language, they all took the example of Norway which has demands on the immigrants that they have to learn Norwegian to get a citizenship in Norway, but they emphasise the importance of giving the parents the right tools and support to succeed with learning the language.

### **6.3 Comparison to earlier research**

This study compared earlier research with the findings in the interviews and compared four topics; *children as language brokers*, *working with immigrant families*, *power dynamics in immigrant families* and *trust in the child welfare system*. In comparison with the results from this study the authors found many similarities but also differences. The earlier research argues that children play a huge role in the integration of the family and

that the positive of using children as translators outweigh the negative for example, cognitive, social and linguistic development (Bauer, 2016; Orellana, 2009). The result from this study could argue that children should not be used as translators and that the negative outcome outweighs the benefits. Considering all participants in this study agreed on that there is nothing positive in using the children as translators. From the words of participant 3:

*“... I have used it myself, taking help from the children to easier solve it so I can give the parents the correct information, because it is quicker and easier, but I am thinking that this puts an extra responsibility on the child that they should not have, and we are disqualifying the parent and contributing to the change of the power relationship that we work to prevent...”*

Bauer (2016), argues that it can be inappropriate to use children as translators in sensitive topics such as medical, financial and legal matters, however, this is something according to the participants is considered all the time in social services nowadays in Sweden when it comes to official and league meetings.

The result from this study confirms what Vassenden and Vedøy (2019) are writing, that there is a tense relationship between immigrant families and social services and that it is a fear of the social services that they only take the children away from the parents. The fear of social services taking the children away are used by the children to their benefit to get their will. They are using their parents' fear to threaten them with, for example, if you do not get me a new phone I will tell social services that you spank me when you discipline me, which this study is confirming that it works the same in Sweden.

The earlier research confirms much of what the results of this study have confirmed. However, something that the participants of this study talked about was the integration of the parents and adults. Much of the intergenerational work in Sweden is focused on the young generation in the segregated areas, but not much is focused on the parents except for Swedish for immigrants (SFI).

*“...we have succeeded with the integration with the younger, but we have totally failed with the older, [...] we have put a lot of money on the young ones, but if we do not have the parents on board we are not going to see any change over time...” (participant 5).*

According to the participants in the study, Sweden has a lot of work to do when it comes to the integration of parents and adults and this is crucial for the integration for all immigrant families. If the children get integrated into Swedish society and the parents are left outside it will be difficult to get a change in the young generation without the parents on board.

## **6.4 Discussion of Theory**

In this study the authors chose two theories, systems theory and social learning theory. The authors chose two theories that have contributed to their understanding of the perspective of the immigrant families and family dynamics. The systems theory and social learning theory has been integrated in every quote in the results and analysis section. For example, as participant one states

*“....Parents who have cultural awareness and can speak the language are more present and interested in their children's lives....” (Participant 1).*

In reference to social learning theory it can be suggested that immigrant parents who adapt socially to society and learn the language continue to have similar dynamics within the family that they did in their homeland.

It supported their understanding of the change in the dynamics in the family when one person in the system changed. In this case the child and how this would affect the whole system.

Systems theory argues that systems change when people change (Payne, 2021). This can be shown in the relationship and dynamics in the family system following immigration due to the fact that all family members change. The mother goes out to work, the child learns the language quicker so has to become more of a lead role in the family due to language brokering and knowledge and the father's role alters in a way that previously he

took a lead role in the family and now he has to take a stand back, learn new skills and adjust to a new society and culture.

Social learning theory is learned through observing, modelling and imitating behaviour and emotions of others (Payne, 2021). Payne (2021) goes on further to explain that social learning theory argues that both cognitive and environmental factors influence both the learning and behaviour. Within the context of this research it can be suggested that social learning is connected due to the children observing, modelling and imitating new behaviours and knowledge within their new society following immigration and then taking this home to their families.

The authors chose to utilize two theories to gain a bigger perspective on the phenomena studied. When the authors started the work and read many books and articles on the subject they could see that both systems theory and social learning theory were used in many of the previous studies. The authors considered first using attachment theory instead of social learning theory but the more they studied it became clearer that social learning theory was more appropriate.

## **6.5 Discussion of methodology**

After the authors had done this study they can say that they are satisfied with the methodology with a flexible design and the process of the work. Since they wanted to explore something and let new things come up in the process it helps them to keep the freedom and go with where the participants were going in the semi-structured interviews. With a small sampling size, the authors managed to finish the study on time set out. To be able to generalize the authors made the best out of the time limitation and the resources they had. They tried to have participants working with the same group of people in the same area to get the possibilities to get different aspects from different professionals on the same group. However, the sample size was still too small to generalize the results. However, it could be used in a similar neighbourhood as a guide and support with the work with immigrant families. Before the authors started their work they made sure to know they had participants that either had connections with the participants that would have knowledge on the subject or had knowledge themselves to avoid the struggle to find participants.

## **6.6 Implications to international social work**

It could be argued that within International Social Work the social worker needs to have cultural competence with an understanding of cultures, beliefs, ethics and values. Healy (2008) explains that cross-cultural knowledge and respect are paramount within all aspects of social work wherever it is being practised. Having cultural competence and understanding will create a deepened understanding of behaviours and in this way there can be the input by means of support which is needed. In relation to the immigrant families which have been discussed, it could be suggested that social workers having cultural competence could aid in the integration in Swedish society as they will have a broader and more in depth understanding. This would allow the power dynamics to be minimal within immigrant families that occur when the children take a lead in the new country.

Social workers in general have a common ground in the fact that ethics, morals and values are inescapable within social work practice (Banks, 2012). Banks (2012) goes on further to explain that views such as religious and political can form ideas within a personal form. This can therefore have an impact on our ideas and could form bias and also prejudice which can affect a social worker's view and opinion about a client. It is paramount that therefore a deep understanding regarding ethics and the challenges it can cause in social work are met and in this way can create better integration and opportunities for immigrants.

## **6.7 Suggestions for further research**

There has been much research done on this subject with immigrant families and the dynamics within the family, however, in Sweden there are studies done on immigrant children and how to work them. The authors have understood after conducting the interviews with professionals working with immigrant children and families that much work in the future has to focus on the whole family and not only the children and teenagers. How are the adults and parents going to get integrated into Swedish society, what has to change, and does Sweden demand more of the adults and parents that come to Sweden?

Suggestions for further research from the authors are more on the integration of adults/parents into Swedish society. This perspective from the professionals in Sweden is very interesting but the author's initial idea was to interview the parents and the children. This was not possible however, since the authors are students at the University of Gävle and needed to consider the ethical considerations, time and financial limitations. However, doing the same study and instead interviewing the parents and children would give a bigger picture and understanding to the problem of integration. This could therefore give the professionals a better understanding of how to work to improve the integration work with immigrant families in Sweden.

## **Reference list**

- Allan, J. (2017). *An Analysis of Albert Bandura's Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*. Macat International Ltd.
- Antonini, R. (2010). *The Study of Child Language Brokering: Past, Current and Emerging Research*. Online Submission, 10.
- Banks, S. (2012). *Ethics and Values in Social Work*. (4. ed.). Palgrave.
- Bauer, E. (2016). Practising kinship care: *Children as language brokers in migrant families*. *Childhood* 23(1) 22–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568215574917>
- Bowie, B. H., Wojnar, D., & Isaak, A. (2017). Somali Families' Experiences of Parenting in the United States. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 39(2), 273–289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945916656147>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: a practical guide*. SAGE.
- Carlsson, A. (2022). *Sverige Måste Stå Emot Islamismen*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/Or12Jl/kd-sverige-maste-sta-emot-islamismen>
- Convention on the rights of the child (1989). Treaty no. 27531. *United Nations Treaty Series*, 1577, pp. 3-178. Available at: [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1990/09/19900902%2003-14%20AM/Ch\\_IV\\_11p.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1990/09/19900902%2003-14%20AM/Ch_IV_11p.pdf) (Accessed 3 april 2022).
- D'Cruz, H., & Jones, M. (2014). *Social work research in practice: ethical and political contexts* (2. rev. ed.). SAGE
- Frankfort-Nachmias, C., Nachmias, D. & DeWaard, J. (2015). *Research methods in the social sciences*. (8 ed.). Worth Publishers, a Macmillan Education Company.

Garcia, B. (2015). Theory and Social Work Practice With Immigrant Populations. In F. Chang-Muy & E. P. Congress (Eds.), *Social Work with Immigrants and Refugees: Legal Issues, Clinical Skills and Advocacy*. (pp. 87-108). Springer publishing company

Grinnell, R. M., Jr., & Unrau, Y. A. (2018). *Social Work Research and Evaluation: Foundations of Evidence Based Practice*: (11th Ed.) Oxford University Press

Healy, K. (2014). *Social Work Theories in Context: Creating Frameworks for Practice* (2nd Ed.). Palgrave Macmillan

Healy, L., M. (2008). *International Social Work: Professional Action in an Interdependent World*: (2nd Ed.) Oxford University Press

Juhasz, I., & Skivenes, M. (2017). The Population's Confidence in the Child Protection System - A Survey Study of England, Finland, Norway and the United States (California). *Social Policy & Administration*, 51(7), 1330–1347. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12226>

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. (2. ed.). Sage Publications.

Lindsay, S., Tetrault, S., Desmaris, C., King, G. & Pierart, G. (2014). *Social Workers as "Cultural Brokers" in Providing Culturally Sensitive Care to Immigrant Families Raising a Child with Disabilities, Health and Social Work*, 39(2), e10-e20. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hsw/hlu009>

Minna Säävälä, Elina Turjanmaa, & Anne Alitolppa-Niitamo. (2017). Immigrant home-school information flows in Finnish comprehensive schools. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*, 13(1), 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMHSC-10-2015-0040>

Orellana, M., F. (2009). *Translating Childhoods: Immigrant youth, language and culture*. Rutgers University Press.



Patton, M., Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, Sage.

Payne, M. (2021). *Modern Social Work Theory*. (5th ed.) Red Globe Press.

Renzaho, A. M. N., Green, J., Mellor, D., & Swinburn, B. (2011). Parenting, family functioning and lifestyle in a new culture: the case of African migrants in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. *Child & Family Social Work*, 16(2), 228–240. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2010.00736.x>

Robson, C. (2007). *How to do a research project: a guide for undergraduate students*. Malden, Blackwell Pub.

Robson, C. (2014). *How to do a research project: A guide for undergraduate students*. (2.ed.) Wiley

Stang, E. (2018). Resistance and protest against Norwegian Child Welfare Services on Facebook - different perceptions of child-centring. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 8(3), 273–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2018.1427139>

Vassenden, A., & Vedøy, G. (2019). Recurrence, eruptions, and a transnational turn: Three decades of strained relations between migrants to Norway and the Child Welfare Services. *Child & Family Social Work*, 24(4), 582–591. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12639>

Vetenskapsrådet, S. (2017). *Good research practice*. Swedish Research Council <https://www.vr.se/english/analysis/reports/our-reports/2017-08-31-good-research-practice.html>

Zaggelbaum, A. & Carlson, J. (2011) *Working with Immigrant Families A Practical Guide for Counselors*. Routledge

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Letter of consent**

Dear participants,

We, Joakim Appelgren and Lisa Watters, are currently students at University of Gävle and are about to write our thesis in the Bachelor Degree in Social Work Specialization International Social Work. The study focuses on the dynamics between parent-child relationships with immigrant families where the parents do not speak Swedish or English. This study is the exploration of the dynamics from the professional's perspective and how this changes when the children's language improves and they learn about their rights.

This study is going to collect data from interviews with open ended questions for the participant to talk about the subject. The interviews will be conducted from different professionals who work with immigrant children and their parents. The professions who are included are, school staff, youth club staff and social workers from the social services. The interviews will be conducted in Swedish and will be approximately 1 hour. The interview will be recorded on two devices and stored on the researchers' computers during the duration of the course until the researchers (students have passed the course). This will be done by the end of 2022.

Your participation is voluntary and anonymous and it is your decision whether you will participate or not. If you decide to participate, you will be required to fill out the fields below for your consent as confirmation of your participation. If you decide to withdraw during the study, please let us know. You do not need to give any reason for withdrawing during the study. In case you withdraw from this study before completion of the data collection, all information, including the consent will be destroyed.

Name:

City and date:

.....

.....

Signature:

.....

Contact information

Joakim Appelgren:

Phone number: 070-620 00 34

Email: [joakim89appelgren@gmail.com](mailto:joakim89appelgren@gmail.com)

Lisa Watters:

Phone number: 070-331 90 72

Email: [ltwatters@gmail.com](mailto:ltwatters@gmail.com)

Supervisor

Mark Holten

Email: [mark.holten@hig.se](mailto:mark.holten@hig.se)

## **Appendix 2: Interview guide**

### **Introduction questions**

- Which organization do you work for?
- What education do you have?
- How long have you worked in this field?
- How long have you worked with immigrant families?
- Are you getting paid for your work or do you work voluntarily?

### **Main questions**

Have you any family that you have worked with for a period of time that you can think of? if yes then...

- Have you seen the dynamics change in the family?

### **Follow-up questions (on specific topics)**

- Have you observed, for example, when children learn that parents can not discipline their child in forms of spanking? In case yes, could you expand your thoughts and reflections on that?
- How do you think that affects their parenting?
- How do you think this affects the child's attitude towards their parents?
- Can you explain, in what way are the parents trying to keep control?
- Can you give examples of how the children do to get in control over their parents?
- What do you see is the danger of them feeling like they do not have an identity?
- How does Sweden work with the integration of the adults/parents?
- Where are the children used as translators for their parents?
- When are translators used in your work?