

Deconstructing Privilege: The Everyday Lives of Expatriate Children in Finland

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**Career
expatriates**

**Temporary
migrants**

**Transnational
corporate elites**

**Highly skilled
experts**

- Highly skilled professionals move abroad for career reasons
 - Voluntary mobility
 - Relatively well-off
 - Often temporary stays



The privileged global elite?

- expatriates: white and privileged
- well educated, well-off, rich social networks and cultural capital
- the children are the future global elite
- Third Culture Kids
- Finland: welfare state, success in Pisa- testing



Expatriate childhood: Children's experiences of temporary migration (2019-2024, Academy of Finland)



8-15-year-old expatriate children in Finland

- position in Finland and on the global arena
- belonging
- everyday lives in Finland
- participant observation
- children's interviews
- photo & film projects with children



We arrived in Finland three months ago. My son is fifteen years old but there was no space for him in the international school. He has been at home all this time. We do not know what to do.

(a mother in an online meeting for international families)



Immigrants in Finland

Schools are important agents in immigrant integration

**Preparatory classes,
intensive language studies**

Finnish international schools

- are free municipal schools
- follow the Finnish curriculums
- but no space for everyone



Temporary stays and children's education

Keep up with the school in one's passport country?

S: The things that we learn here I've already learned...Like I'm revising things more and more times.

M: If you went back to India now, what would happen?

S: I would be sad. I would be behind all my friends in India. And I don't want to go back. (Sonu, 9)



Temporary expatriates and long-term integration goals

Children do not integrate to Finland when they do not learn Finnish. (Finnish teacher)

*Why do I need to learn these Finnish words?
It's boring. I'm not going to need them. I'm
going to move to a more interesting place. (Amir, 9)*



The grading of Finnish lessons

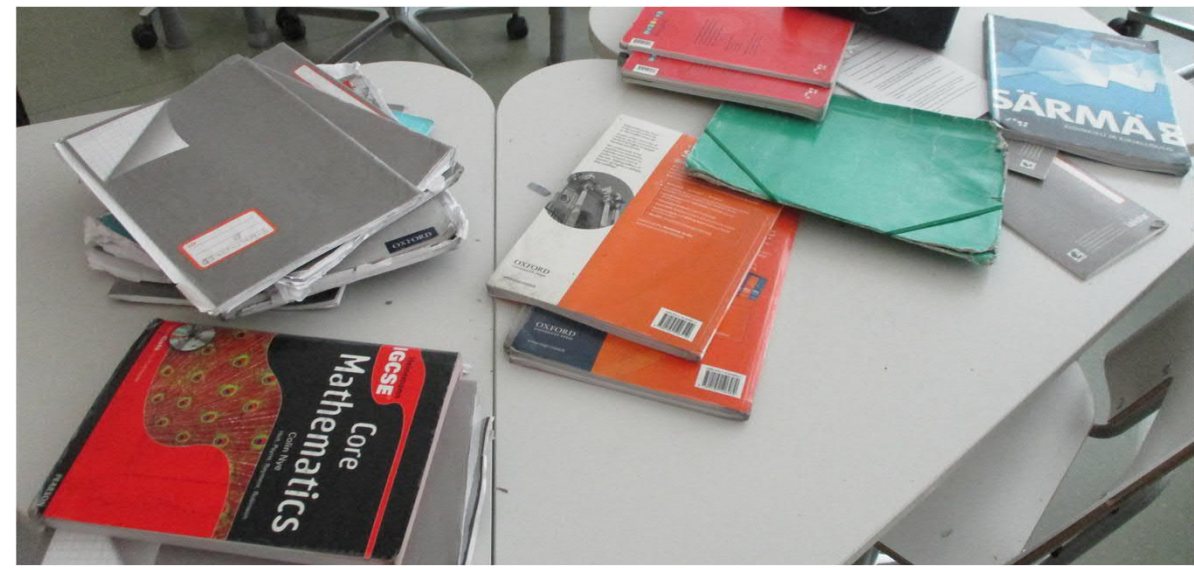
One thing that I have always found weird is the Finnish as a second language grading. They judge you on like normal Finnish skill. ...It's not really fair... when we have French, Spanish and German, you don't judge those on the level of a fluent German, French or Spanish speaker. So, then why are S2 learners being judged on like fluent native Finnish speaker level... Which of course then, most S2 people are immigrants, when you have lower grades, that means that you have less changes for employment. Which means that you're more likely to be poor,which means that immigrants are associated with poverty. (Matthew, 14)



Secondary education

I am very stressed about school. I must study very hard. I must get good grades so that I can get into the IB school. (Linda, 15)

If one does not know Finnish well at the time of upper secondary education, one has limited educational options and is thus at the risk of marginalization.



Hobbies

K: I used to play the piano.

M: Why did you quit?

K: Well because we moved and did not look for a new teacher. (Kostas 14)



Housing and materiality

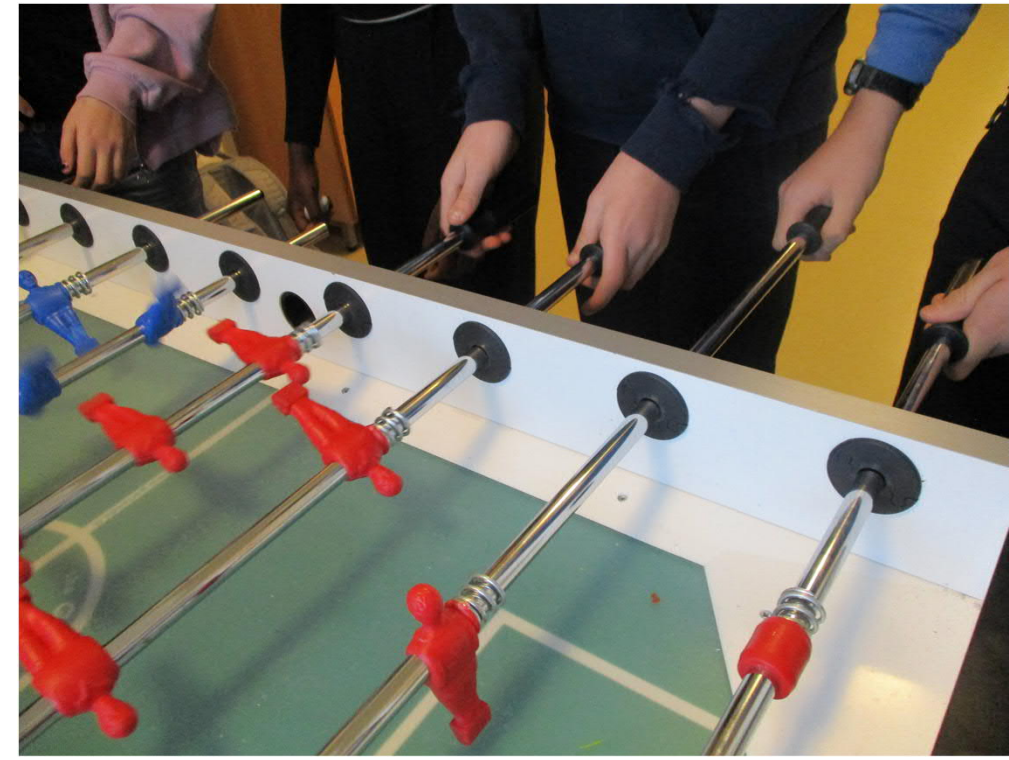
Not everyone
has generous
expatriate
packages



Emotional unprivilege

Moving to different countries really messes up you emotionally and mentally. Every person that you meet, you're not... even if you get attached, you know at the back of your head that you're not gonna, stay there forever. You're gonna say goodbye. (Oscar, 15)

Losing friends consistently, like every five years, is not fun. Cause I have now lost friends four separate times....I get sad. (Tom, 15)



Privileged or not? Immigrants or elite?

We have a summer house on an island in Italy where we have a great view of the island and the beach (Mauricio, 14)

During the winter break, I had a downhill skiing tutor. We stayed in a hotel. My parents were walking in nature and I was learning to ski. (Gillian, 14)

- limited Finnish skills
- limited local networks
- Structural racism



Deconstructing privilege

- Internationally mobile people can be both privileged and unprivileged
 - Relative (un)privilege
- Heterogeneity amongst the mobile people
- Children's age is crucial

