International Highly Skilled Migration: The Case of Finland

Guest Editors
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Cover: The unofficial coat of arms of Kurkijoki. Published with permission from Kurkijoki-Säätiö and Tapani Talari (heraldic designer). Heraldic description: Gules three cranes volant Argent beaked and legged Or in pile issuant from the sinister, in chief an ancient crown Or.

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Acknowledgments

We, the guest co-editors of this special issue, Driss Habti and Saara Koikkalainen, would like to thank all the contributing authors to this special issue on highly skilled migration and Finland. We would also like to express our gratitude for all the comments and improvements suggested by the journal’s editors, Helena Halmari and Hanna Snellman. Thank you also to Scott Kaukonen for editing the language of the final versions of the articles. We would also like to thank all this issue’s referees for their insightful comments and time. Our grateful acknowledgement goes also to David Hoffman for his initial vision and encouragement in producing this publication.
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This double issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies*, guest-edited by Driss Habti (University of Eastern Finland) and Saara Koikkalainen (University of Lapland), continues our journal’s tradition of addressing issues relating to migration. Entitled *International Highly Skilled Migration: The Case of Finland*, the issue consists of a collection of ten in-depth chapters both on inbound migration (immigration to Finland) and outbound migration (emigration from Finland). The authors of the chapters throw light on the related issues from various perspectives, but with a focus on the new migrants of the twenty-first century: middle- or upper-class women or men with academic degrees, often combined with plenty of experience. The circumstances of these new migrants are different from those of the late 1800s and early and mid 1900s. The outbound migration from Finland to the United States, Canada, Australia, and Sweden was often dictated by depressed economic conditions in Finland. Most of these migrants came from rural or working-class backgrounds, and when they emigrated from Finland, they left permanently. Today’s emigrants often return, and even if they do not, the severing of the connections to their native land is not as total as it used to be: modern technology makes global connections possible, and the often relatively high socio-economic status of the new migrants enables them to continue to be in touch with Finland through visits. Thus, these twenty-first-century “global careerists” stand in stark contrast to the earlier migrants—the focus of earlier special issues of our journal: *Melting into Great Waters: Papers from Finnforum V* (1997, Volume 1, Number 3), where the focus is on Finnish emigration to North America, and *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era* (2004, Volume 8, Number 1) and *Victims and Survivors of Karelia* (2011, Volume 15, Number 1/2), which both deal with emigration of Finns to Stalin’s Soviet Union.\(^1\) Yet, the concrete and emotional issues that uprooted people must face are universal: to adapt to a new environment, to face the challenges of work in a new context, and to encounter the development of a double identity.

The cover of the present issue is the unofficial crest of the parish of Kurkijoki, designed by heraldist Tapani Talari for Kurkijoki-Säätiö (Kurkijoki Foundation). When we were looking for possible crests for the cover of this issue, the Kurkijoki crest, with its three flying cranes, stood out as a most suitable one. Kurkijoki, (“Crane River” in English), is located on the northwestern shores of Lake Ladoga; it is one of the areas that Finland lost to the Soviet Union in World War II. The crest depicts three cranes—migratory birds, flying westward. The heraldic description reads, “Gules three cranes volant Argent beaked and legged Or in pile issuant from the

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1 If interested in these volumes (or any of our back issues), please contact the editorial office. For the contents of earlier issues, see the following web-page and click on the covers to browse the tables of content: [http://www.shsu.edu/~eng_www/finnishstudies/JoFS_Covers.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~eng_www/finnishstudies/JoFS_Covers.html)
sinister, in chief an ancient crown Or,” and the symbolism is obvious: cranes from the name of the parish, their position in a wedge with reference to the population’s move from the area, and the crown above the cranes from the name Kronoborg (Swedish, referring to the fortification of the Swedish crown), located in the same place as Kurkijoki.

With gratitude, we acknowledge the Kurkijoki-Säätiö and the heraldist Tapani Talari for the permission to use the cranes of Kurkijoki on our cover. In these migrating cranes, we saw the essence of the protagonists of this special issue: Finns migrating to India, Silicon Valley, and Europe in the pursuit of professional advancement and experience; educated women from Latvia, North America, and the Middle East moving to Finland for personal and professional reasons; students of the twenty-first century leaving their home countries to acquire knowledge in places full of opportunities but also of challenges. Voluntarily, yet driven like the migratory cranes, the people whose stories emerge from the articles in this issue have followed their calling to explore, to experience, to dare.

Yet, the Kurkijoki cranes remind us also of a different kind of migration: the involuntary migration of the ten thousand inhabitants of the Kurkijoki parish, their evacuation westward from the shores of Lake Ladoga, toward what was left of Finland after the two bitter losses to the Soviet Union in World War II. Not only once, but twice, were the people of Kurkijoki forced to leave their homes: first after the Winter War in 1940 and the second time in the fall of 1944, after the Continuation War had also been lost. Kurkijoki’s ten thousand inhabitants joined over 400,000 other Karelian evacuees on their journey toward the unknown.²

With a positive attitude, perseverance, and hard work, the highly skilled voluntary migrants of the twenty-first century, as well as the involuntary Karelian migrants of the 1940s, have carved out a place for themselves in lands that were foreign but which, with years, have become familiar—different but oddly dear. Anyone who has ever moved, be it within one’s own country or across the seas, knows that having the heart in two different places allows the mind to interpret the world surrounding us with a double dose of wisdom.

It was in September 2013—while we were busily preparing this theme issue—that my father died, at the age of eighty-eight. He, too, was born in Kurkijoki. His long evacuation journey was finally over, and a tired crane flew home. Here, I want to thank him for his understanding and acceptance of my choice when, as a young woman, I heard the call, left my small home village, and flew off to learn from the world.

Helena Halmari

² For more information on Kurkijoki, see http://www.kurkijoki.fi/historia/kj_hist0.html (in Finnish) or http://www.kurkijoki.fi/nykyisin/Kurkijoki%20Parish.html (in English).
The mobility and migration of highly skilled persons—defined as tertiary-degree holders and those with rare labor market expertise—has shot to the top of policy agendas around the globe, as the transfer of knowledge and talent has become recognized as crucial for growth and competitiveness. So is the case also in Finland, where the objective of the national Future Migration 2020 Strategy is “to create an immigration policy which supports the building of an unprejudiced, safe and pluralistic Finland, and enhances Finland’s international competitiveness” (Ministry of the Interior 2013a; see also Komulainen 2013, 119). This special issue of the Journal of Finnish Studies examines highly skilled migration that originates from or is directed towards this country at the Northern European periphery, outside of the more numerous global flows of highly skilled migrants.

The twenty-first century Finland is a net receiver of migrants: the number of those entering the country each year is higher than the number of those leaving. Finland became a net receiver of immigrants as late as in the 1990s, and the share of foreign citizens living in Finland is still only 3.4 percent. The share of the foreign-born is 4.8 percent of the population. In Sweden, for example, the share of foreign citizens is 6.8 percent and of the foreign-born 15 percent of the population (Eurostats Statistics Explained 2012). In the year 2012, a total of 31,280 migrants moved to Finland—the highest number since the country’s independence in 1917. More than half of those moving to Finland originate from other European Union member states (Statistics Finland 2013a). The largest groups of foreign citizens living in Finland are from the neighboring countries Estonia, Russia, and Sweden, followed by those originating from Somalia, China, and Iraq (Komulainen 2013, 113).

In addition to the 183,133 foreign citizens living in Finland in 2011, there were

1 We are grateful to our colleague David Hoffman, University of Jyväskylä, for his contribution to an earlier version of this text.
also 60,000 individuals with dual citizenship. Among this group, the most common combination was to be both a citizen of Finland and of Russia, Sweden, or the United States (Ministry of the Interior 2013b, 4). The most common reasons stated in residence permit applications for moving to the country are family ties to Finland. According to Komulainen (2013), in 2011, 44 percent indicated that the reason for immigration to Finland was family; this reason was followed by employment (27 percent) and studies (25 percent). It is good to note that those who move from other European Union or European Economic Area countries, such as Sweden, Norway, or Estonia, for example, do not need to apply for residence permits.

Statistics Finland data on the education levels of incoming migrants are unfortunately incomplete, as they do not include information on all degrees completed abroad. Therefore, estimations of the numbers of highly skilled migrants living in Finland have to be taken with a grain of salt. Based on the data available, however, it can be noted that in 2010 24,682 foreign citizens living in Finland had completed a university or other tertiary level degree (18.2 percent). The share of those with a tertiary education was highest among those originating from China (33 percent), Germany (30 percent), and France (30.9 percent), and lowest among those originating from Somalia (1.5 percent), Afghanistan (5.6 percent), and Vietnam (7.3 percent) (Statistics Finland 2012a, 48–49). Research into migrant labor market integration has revealed that even a high education level does not guarantee employment in Finland (e.g., Kyhää 2011). In fact most migrants living in Finland are employed in occupations classified into the low- or medium-skilled sector, such as agriculture, gardening, and catering (Komulainen 2013). The unemployment rate of foreign citizens has generally been twice as high as that of the overall population: in 2011, 24 percent of foreign citizens living in Finland were unemployed, compared with 9 percent of the general population (Ministry of the Interior 2013b, 12; see also Heikkilä 2005).

It has been estimated that during the past one hundred and fifty years over 1.3 million Finns have emigrated abroad (Martikainen, Saukkonen, and Säävälä 2013, 26). The two largest waves of Finnish emigrants have headed to North America, mainly during 1880–1915, and to Sweden after World War II, especially during 1961–1970. Prior to the mass migration to the Americas at the turn of the twentieth century, and the migration of Finns to other distant countries such as Australia, various short-term and seasonal migration routes operated between Finland and its neighboring countries—Sweden, Russia, Estonia, and Northern Norway—for several centuries (Korkiasaari and Söderling 2007, 255–56). Current migration from Finland is much more diverse than it was before, as those leaving today make individual choices based on their own motivations for moving abroad either temporarily or permanently (see, e.g., Heikkilä and Koikkalainen 2011). For some, the motivation is grounded in career aspirations, while for others it is linked to love, family, or a personal lifestyle
choice—for instance, wanting to experience life in a global city such as London or New York or retirement in the sunny Spain or exotic Thailand. The importance of Sweden as the main destination of Finns moving abroad has been decreasing since the 1980s: in 1980, 79 percent of Finnish citizens who left Finland headed for Sweden, while in 2006 their share had fallen to 28 percent (Korkiasaari 2008, 16–17).

The countries attracting most migrants from Finland in 2011 were Sweden (2,754), the United Kingdom (1,066), the United States (991), Germany (938), and Estonia (751) (Statistics Finland 2013b). This number, however, includes also foreign citizens who have been resident in Finland. If the migration of only Finnish citizens is taken into account, Estonia drops to the ninth position (269 Finnish citizens) while Spain (576 Finnish citizens) takes its place as the fifth most popular destination country (Statistics Finland 2012b). However, these figures include only those who leave Finland for a period longer than a year. Many short-term forms of international mobility, such as student exchange, summer jobs, traineeships, and short company secondments abroad, are missing from these figures. The share of tertiary-educated migrants of all Finnish citizens moving abroad has varied between 21 to 36 percent within the past twenty years. In terms of numbers, this has meant that 1,115 (in 1991) to 3,802 (in 2001) highly educated Finns have moved abroad each year (Statistics Finland 2012b). The share of educated migrants has been the highest among those moving to China (57.0 percent), Luxembourg (54.5 percent), and Belgium (54.4 percent) and the lowest among those moving to Greece (21.2 percent) and Sweden (22.4 percent).

In the following sections of this introduction, we first describe some key global trends in highly skilled migration, define the key concepts used in this special issue, and highlight the reasons why it makes sense to examine this type of migration in the Finnish context. After noting the common themes that bind the articles chosen for this special issue together, the introduction ends with a short description of each of the articles: five of them focus on incoming migration to Finland, and four examine Finns who have moved abroad.

**GLOBAL TRENDS IN HIGHLY SKILLED MIGRATION**

Highly qualified migrants with tertiary education accounted for thirty percent of all adult emigrants in the world in 1990; however, by 2000, this group had increased to thirty-five percent of the worldwide migrant stock (Lowell 2007). Thus, it has been argued that this increase in the numbers of highly skilled migrants was one of the “central migration stories of the 1990s” (Lowell 2007, 14). UNESCO further indicates that the number of international students, often seen as future highly skilled migrants, increased by more than seventy-five percent between 2000 and 2009 (Dervin 2011, 1). Highly skilled migration has undeniable impacts on both ends of the migration trajectory, but the effects on the countries vary. This type of
mobility has been referred to also as “the flight of the creative class” (Florida 2005) or “the mobility of knowledge workers” (Ackers and Gill 2008); highly skilled migrants themselves have been characterized as “the only truly accepted migrants of today” (Raghuram 2004). While crossing borders, these mobile professionals accumulate and develop academic traditions, savoir faire, and social networks, and they gain different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986). The production and dissemination of knowledge generated by their activities has scientific and socio-economic impacts on countries and—increasingly—also on regions.

The numbers of highly skilled migrants crossing borders vary between different countries and regions. At the beginning of this decade about twenty million tertiary-educated immigrants resided in the OECD area, representing about eleven percent of the total highly skilled population living there. About 40 percent of the highly skilled migrants residing in the OECD originate from other OECD countries, and, thus, follow a pattern of brain circulation rather than being part of the brain drain of educated workers moving from less to more developed countries (Boeri et al. 2012; Habti 2012b). Many policy measures have been initiated in the departure countries to attract these expatriates “back home” so as to benefit from their competencies, management experience, and entrepreneurial skills. There are important benefits connected to this type of mobility: the financial remittances sent from abroad are an important source of income for many developing countries (e.g., Skeldon 2005). Understanding this mobility as a simple loss of talent for the sending country also ignores the fact that return migration can stimulate the transfer of knowledge, skills, innovations, and technological expertise to the countries of origin (Bertoli et al. 2012). Highly skilled migrants do not always intend to stay in their countries of destination permanently: circular mobility, return migration, and global careers built on a series of company secondments to various countries are important features of this particular type of migration.

Understanding highly skilled migration as a one-way flow of educated workers from developing to developed countries is an oversimplification that may obscure the fact that developed countries—such as Finland in our case—both receive and send highly skilled migrants. Most Western European countries are net senders of highly skilled labor to other OECD countries when the stocks of tertiary-educated incoming and outgoing migrants are compared. The following figures testify to the fact that international highly skilled mobility is a globally significant phenomenon, with clear policy implications: only in the United States (+3.4 million), Australia (+708,000), Canada (+643,000), Switzerland (+97,000), Belgium (+60,000), Sweden (+20,000), and Luxembourg (+8,000) were the estimated stocks of highly skilled migrants positive in 2001. Countries such as the United Kingdom (-970,000), Germany (-370,000), and Italy (-340,000) are experiencing significant outflows that are not being replaced by matching numbers of incoming skilled workers. So is the
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case also for Finland, which according to the 2001 data had sent 72,500 tertiary-educated migrants to the other OECD countries, while it had received only 8,300 equally highly educated individuals in return. (Bertoli et al. 2012, 26–27)

With this collection of articles, published as a special issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies*, we wish to diversify the current understanding of highly skilled migration and to give “a human face” (Favell, Feldblum, and Smith 2006) to highly skilled migrants who either originate from or choose to move to Finland. The real-life contexts where such migrants live and work play a crucial part in the structuring of their social life, as well as their social and career mobility (Habti 2012a) because their social relations build upon the intersection of three major fields: the workplace, family, and community. Their international mobility experiences and social relations are also formed by the relational nature of places (Urry 2007; Williams, Chaban, and Holland 2011). We are happy to note that in recent years the theoretical and empirical focus in the interdisciplinary field of highly skilled migration research has moved from the macro-level perspectives to include also research targeting the micro-level and including relational approaches (Ackers 2005; Williams and Baláž 2008; Habti 2012a; Koikkalainen 2011).

It is important to specify the difference between two key concepts used in this field, namely migration and mobility. In some current literature these terms are used interchangeably, while in other texts their meanings differ. The term migration usually entails movement from one country or location to another for necessity or with enforcement, while the term mobility infers a free and self-initiated move (e.g., Al Ariss 2010; Tharenou 2010). Migration is often also perceived to be somewhat longer in duration, while mobility refers to a shorter stay abroad (e.g., Carr, Inkson, and Thorn 2005; Agullo and Egawa 2009). Al Ariss (2010) refers to the difference in the terms “migrant” and “self-initiated expatriate” based on four features: geographical origin and destination of international mobility, the forced/chosen nature of this move, duration of stay abroad, and the symbolic status of a “migrant” as compared to a “self-initiated expatriate” in the country of destination.

In this special issue, both terms, mobility and migration, are used interchangeably as we have noted that circumstances and opportunities matter for the migration/mobility decision-making of a highly skilled migrant: an IT-engineer who intends to stay abroad only for the duration of her two-year assignment may decide to stay for good while a doctor who said farewell to his home country permanently may choose to return because of family, career, or lifestyle reasons. We prefer not to use the terms emigration and immigration in this context, because highly skilled migrants rarely see themselves as migrants, or the move abroad as final (e.g., Koikkalainen 2012; Tharenou 2010). As the articles of this collection testify, mobility of highly skilled individuals to and from Finland has many forms, and the paths leading to the country
of destination are diverse depending on the migration motivation, age, career, and life situation of each individual migrant.

Another important concept that needs to be defined is that of a highly skilled migrant. Migrants’ skill levels are often determined by the number of years they have spent in formal education, professional training, or working in an occupation. The most basic definition, according to Lowell (2008, 52) is “restricted to persons with tertiary education, typically adults who have completed a formal two-year college education or more.” However, Lowell also concludes that “[m]ost frequently, governments define highly skilled migrants not in terms of either/or, but in terms of both education and occupation” (Lowell 2008, 53). Mahroum (2001, 29; see also Iredale 2001) identifies five different groups of highly skilled migrants: 1) senior managers and executives, 2) engineers and technicians, 3) scientists, 4) entrepreneurs, and 5) students. We have adopted a rather broad definition to emphasize the diversity within this migrant type: all migrants with a tertiary level degree, regardless of their occupation or migration motivation, are here seen as highly skilled. The individuals who feature in the articles of this special issue, and to whom we are grateful for sharing their life stories and experiences, include students, expatriates on global careers, seconded employees, i.e. persons who temporarily transfer to another post within their employer organization, women migrating for love and family reasons, young adults taking advantage of free movement in Europe, as well as those moving from the Global South to the Global North.

This special issue attempts to deconstruct the complex phenomenon of global highly skilled mobility from a new individual and relational perspective by providing new lessons and evidence from Finland. Because of the varied disciplinary backgrounds of our authors, a number of theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding, explaining, and interpreting the various dimensions of this migration phenomenon are represented. Moreover, the articles try to tune between different disciplines and theories, agents and organizations, politics and policies, the local and the global, the individual and the contextual, and the structures that affect transnational highly skilled migration. Yet, what all the articles of this special issue have in common is an in-depth, empirically driven examination of highly skilled migration in the Finnish context.

Lessons from Finland

Finland is interesting in several respects with regard to mobility and migration. From the outside, looking in, the country enjoys a media valorization that many might envy. *Newsweek* magazine has repeatedly singled out Finland as one of ”The world’s best countries,” placing this small Nordic nation of slightly over 5.4 million

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2 Tertiary education generally refers to degrees completed at universities and other institutions providing post-secondary education, such as colleges, technical training institutes, and nursing schools, for example.
persons in a leading position on the list in terms of education, quality of life, economic dynamism, and political environment (Newsweek 2010). In addition, educators from around the world travel to Finland in attempts to understand how this tiny country consistently tops the tables in the OECD’s comparative research on learning outcomes for middle-school students, better known as the PISA survey (see, e.g., Ravitch 2012). “For Moms in Finland, every day is Mother’s Day,” declared the TIME magazine in its recent article, which noted that according to a study by the non-governmental organization Save the Children, Finland is the world’s best country to be a mother (Subramanian 2013). Not only is Finland praised for its welfare state services and peaceful quality of life; the country is also on the third place on the World Economic Forum’s ranking of competitive economies (Schwab 2013, 15), and Nokia, one of the success stories of the mobile phone industry, originates from and is headquartered in Finland. The birthplace of Rovio’s Angry Birds game and the open-source LINUX operating system are in Finland’s innovative information and communications technology sector. Finland has a booming game industry exemplified by the recent sale of a 51 percent share of the Finnish mobile game startup Supercell to the Japanese telecom and Internet giant Softbank and its subsidiary Gungho Online Entertainment for 1.53 billion dollars (Griffiths 2013). In addition to these entrepreneurial markers, Finland also belongs to the shrinking list of countries that offer its population tuition-free access to its small but competitive tertiary education system. Viewed in this light, why would a highly skilled migrant not move to Finland? It is also natural to assume that highly skilled Finns are keen to move abroad, in search of new horizons, ripe for Finnish innovation.

The answers are closely associated with the geographical, cultural, and linguistic isolation of the Northern European periphery and a historically rooted perception of control by distant powers. From inside Finland, despite its spot on an international pedestal, Finns invariably characterize their own society with references to a language not spoken anywhere else and the highest suicide rate in Western Europe. According to self-perpetuated myths, Finns are a grim, silent people, living in an environment too harsh—in terms of climate and taxation—for most and whose disdain for small talk is only matched by the difficulty of their language (see Hoffman 2007). At around three percent of the population, the number of foreign nationals living in Finland is among the lowest in the European Union, and the labor market integration of the immigrant population has proven exceptionally difficult (e.g., Koikkalainen et al. 2011; Komulainen 2013, 115–16; Kyhä 2011). Furthermore, an anti-European populist backlash surfaced in the 2011 parliamentary elections, giving voice to an isolationist undercurrent reluctant to see Finnish taxes used to assist some struggling economies of the EU. Moreover, the populist party called Perussuomalaiset—boldly translating their name as The Finns Party in English—from its inception taps into the uneasiness many natives have regarding migration.
It is specifically the tension between these paradoxical images of Finland, characterized at one moment as a non-hierarchical, high-tech wunderkind, surfing the ICT boom of twenty-first century Networked Knowledge Societies and, the next moment, a small and continually frustrated population, geographically, culturally, and linguistically relegated to the periphery of the far North, alternatively subjugated to the Swedish Crown, the Russian Empire, and, now, the Brussels Bureaucrats. The unforgiving math of demographics now forces a choice on this small population. The number of people in the workforce needed to support those outside the workforce—the dependency ratio—will weaken from the current level of 52.9 children and pensioners per one hundred persons of working age to 60 dependents in 2017 and 70 dependents by 2028 (Statistics Finland 2013c). Yet, Finland currently has little experience of replacement migration, and the country has few convincing policy approaches to immigration, or ideas on how to attract highly skilled migrants from abroad.

In this special issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* a fresh, in-depth look at the phenomenon of global highly skilled migration brings Finland into a unique focus: in these articles, Finnish researchers and international scholars shed light on what are often overly simplified highly skilled mobility/migration discussions and debates. Our approach calls into question lay beliefs concerning the way in which countries like Finland could—or should—compete in the global battle for brains. So far too little has been known about why highly skilled migrants leave Finland: do they move abroad for higher salaries, global careers, or purely for the adventure of living abroad? Do they find highly skilled jobs, or end up working below their skill levels? And what about highly skilled migrants entering Finland? What are their expectations and career prospects? Does Finland live up to the valorized media image of the early twenty-first century—or does the country turn its back on those who are trying to integrate and find work at the level of their skills and qualifications?

**The Articles of This Special Issue**

Studies on highly skilled mobility and migration often tackle topics associated with national policies and immigration status. There is still much to discover about the relationship between highly skilled mobility, economic growth, the process of transferring human capital across borders, and how this mobility affects the countries of origin and destination. The contributions in this special issue focus on less discussed, but more nuanced and problematized issues related to the topic at hand. The articles primarily look at questions pertaining to group and individual experiences of highly skilled migrants in Finland and of Finns abroad, with an emphasis on the importance of factors ranging from the transferability of education and different forms of capital (cultural, social, intellectual, symbolic), as well as career progress, and questions related to family and the quality of life. Each of the featured articles makes a unique
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contribution to migration research and to understanding Finland’s position in the global migration networks.

The articles share certain interesting themes. The articles by Nicol Foulkes and Liisa Mäkelä, Vesa Suutari, and Chris Brewster focus on highly skilled professionals on expatriate assignments and company secondments abroad, noting how such career-motivated mobility has its impact on the highly skilled employees themselves, but also on their spouses and children. The articles by Kris Clarke, Driss Habti, and Aija Lulle and Marta Balode highlight an important feature of highly skilled migration, namely the role of female migrants. Not all highly skilled migrants are men on company secondments, as this migrant category also includes highly educated women who have migrated for marriage or love (see also Leinonen 2012). Saara Koikkalainen and Lulle and Balode discuss the process of transferring cultural capital, that is, education and previous expertise, across national borders. All the articles focusing on the experiences of highly skilled migrants in Finland (Koskela, Clarke, Lulle and Balode, Korhonen, Habti) note the difficulties these professionals face in finding highly skilled employment and integrating into the Finnish labor market. The articles by Koikkalainen and Carol Kiriakos, on the other hand, examine the kinds of lives Finns working abroad have had and note the importance of migrant’s active labor market agency (Koikkalainen) and the challenges of distance when one is expected to work with colleagues in Finland while living in Silicon Valley, California (Kiriakos). In terms of geography there are links between the articles as well: Clarke examines the experiences of Americans in Finland, and Kiriakos of Finns in America. The article by Koikkalainen looks at Finns living in other European Union countries, while Lulle and Balode focus on intra-European migrants who move from Latvia to Finland. Foulkes on the other hand examines Finns and Danes who move outside the European Union borders to India, and Habti investigates the Arab women arriving from outside the EU, namely from Middle East and North Africa, to Finland.

The first five articles of this special issue examine incoming highly skilled migration to Finland. In the first article Kaisu Koskela introduces a concept of a “migrant hierarchy,” a framework based on Finnish society’s views on different types of immigrants. The hierarchy divides migrants living in Finland into differently valued categories that affect also the everyday lives and self-defined group identities of highly skilled migrants. Her analysis reveals boundaries that imply underlying problems in regard to the social integration and feelings of belonging by highly skilled migrants in Finland. In the next article Kris Clarke discusses how American women narrate their cultural adjustment to Finnish society as long-term residents, with an emphasis on how they construct their changing personal and social identities in relation to their perceptions of the cultural and structural differences between Finnish and American societies. Clarke notes that even though these American women have
higher education degrees, most of them are not employed and do not feel that they have a place in Finnish society except via their Finnish husbands.

The third article by Aija Lulle and Marta Balode also examines female migrants living in Finland, namely highly skilled Latvians married to Finnish men. The article concludes that highly skilled migration is complexly embedded in multiple decision-making processes and in individual and national/regional biographies and histories. The friction and problems in finding employment and integrating into the Finnish society is made visible, for example, in these women’s views in the importance of learning the Finnish language and in selecting which surname to adopt after marriage. The article by Driss Habti on the other hand focuses on female migrants originating from Middle Eastern and North African countries. The article touches upon their highly skilled migration experiences from Arab countries to Finland in the context of dual career and highlights their constructed spatialities of family and home, labor market, and paid work in Finland. The last of the articles on Finland by Vesa Korhonen tackles an important part of highly skilled migration: the experiences of integration of international degree students. According to the students who took part in Korhonen’s study, there is a general satisfaction with Finnish Higher Education and its quality, but, on the other hand, the reserved social culture, as well as the lack of language skills and social networks were considered as obstacles for cultural or social integration.

The first of the articles examining highly skilled Finnish migrants is by Saara Koikkalainen. Koikkalainen looks at Finns who have moved abroad to work within the European Union area. She addresses the issue of how highly skilled migrants manage to renegotiate the value of their cultural capital in their destination country’s labor market. The article identifies three strategies through which highly skilled migrants can minimize the loss of cultural capital: distinction, adaptation, and re-orientation. Also the article by Carol Kiriakos examines Finns working abroad, but her focus is on Silicon Valley. In this age of globalization it has been suggested that the meaning of distance has been erased, especially for elite migrants, because of their freedom to move geographically and access the latest information and communication technologies. Yet despite the ease of virtual communication, these Finns still experience distance in their work and everyday life that spans across borders.

The third article, examining outgoing migration by Nicol Foulkes, focuses on India, where the IT-boom has generated job opportunities for seconded employees from Nordic countries, as well as from other countries. Her article compares the situation of Finns seconded to India to that of Danes—both Nordic welfare states, which when seen from the outside may appear rather similar. The article considers how Finland and Denmark protect the social rights of these rather privileged migrants when they are working abroad. Foulkes concludes that these temporary migrants incur new social risks, such as losing the right to social security benefits, depending on
the country of origin, their labor market activity, and the conditions of the contract of employment with the sending company. The last article of the special issue by Liisa Mäkelä, Vesa Suutari, and Chris Brewster investigates the issues involved in balancing work with other aspects of life while on the expatriate assignment. The authors note that, besides facing conflicts, global careerists also experience enrichment of their work and non-work life interface. Several work-domain, non-work domain, and individual antecedents for the balance are also identified, and the writers argue that more emphasis needs to be placed on the enrichment perspective.

We hope this thematic issue will be of interest to all those engaged in contemporary Finnish Studies, as well as to a range of researchers, academics, and students in a wide variety of disciplines, and to policy-makers and agencies whose focus is laid on global highly skilled mobility and migration.

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PART I: INBOUND MIGRATION
BOUNDARIES OF BELONGING: HIGHLY SKILLED MIGRANTS AND THE MIGRANT HIERARCHY IN FINLAND

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ABSTRACT
This article introduces a concept of a “migrant hierarchy,” a framework that is formed from Finnish society’s perceptions of different types of immigrants. The hierarchy places value on immigrants in Finland based on their ethnicity, socio-economic status, and various other interlinking factors, dividing them into differently valued categories. Against this framework, the relevance of such a hierarchy to the everyday lives of highly skilled migrants in Finland is explored, using data from ethnographic fieldwork and interviews. The data are used to describe these migrants’ experiences of being categorized and perceived as particular types of immigrants, and the relevance of these experiences to their social lives and their self-defined group identities. The data show, firstly, that highly skilled migrants in Finland are aware of the migrant hierarchy, and that it has an impact on their lives. Secondly, although they object to its homogenizing and hierarchizing aspects, the categorizations of the hierarchy are still internalized to a certain extent, affecting identity constructions. Exploring these issues reveals boundaries that imply underlying problems in regards to the social integration and feelings of belonging by highly skilled migrants in Finland.

Keywords: ethnicity, socio-economic status, social identity, migrant hierarchies, ethnic hierarchies, categorization, group boundaries, alterity, belonging
Any migration experience, whether permanent or temporary, forced or voluntary, results in an abrupt change of one’s surroundings. When migrants, as individuals, arrive in a new country, they are greeted with a whole new social world, in which they must find a place for themselves. This is no easy task: “The experience of migration inevitably redefines frames of reference and calls upon people to reposition themselves within them. [. . .] Thus, in the new environment that defines them as the ‘Other’, migrants need to redefine and evaluate themselves” (Chryssochoou 2004, 6–7).

What Chryssochoou here refers to as “frames of reference” are categorizations that are imposed on immigrants by their host societies. These are categories such as “refugees” versus “labor migrants” (Huttunen 2004), or “asylum seekers” or “return migrants” (Juhila 2004), but can also refer to more abstract classifications such as “Western” or “ethnic” migrants. Value judgments are always present in such categories, making them inherently hierarchical. They represent the host society’s attitudes towards different types of migrants, and as such can be said to contribute to levels of well-being, the perceived possibility for integration, and the sense of belonging. They also play a part in defining social identities by imposing models of identification: “External, or categorical, dimensions of identification are not only vitally important, but they have been underplayed in most theorizations of social identity. Self-identification is only part of the story (and not necessarily the most important part)” (Jenkins 2000, 10).

This article first looks at existing literature on Finns’ views of different types of immigrants in Finland in order to define what these categories are. I suggest an overarching “migrant hierarchy” that is formed from these categories and in the intersection of several value judgments. Against this background, I then explore what my own ethnographic and interview data (see footnote 3) on highly skilled migrants in Finland show about the relevance of these value judgments and categorizations to the everyday life of these migrants, as well as to their own definitions of their social identities. It is my belief that highly skilled migrants’ perceptions of how they are viewed in Finland do correspond largely with the typology of Finns’ migrant hierarchy. However, even though they are at the top of the hierarchy and seen in a more positive light than other migrants, they still object to both the homogenizing and the hierarchizing aspects of the perceived categorizations. They object to being seen as part of the migrant hierarchy, whose categories inflict upon them a definition that does not match their self-defined identity. Furthermore, as well as defining who highly skilled migrants are, the migrant hierarchy is felt to demonstrate who they are not: they are not “unwanted” humanitarian migrants, but also not Finns. This has consequences for their feelings of belonging to Finnish society.
THE MIGRANT HIERARCHY IN FINLAND

The suggested migrant hierarchy is a situational and relative concept, formed within a dominant “referent culture” (Lewellen 2002, 106) represented by the group that holds the (symbolic or otherwise) power within a given society. In the context of my research, members of Finnish mainstream society represent this referent culture and are, therefore, in a position to impose categorizations on others. These categorizations are based on several intersecting standards related to ethnic background and socio-economic position, as well as cultural, historical, and political factors. Together, they form the overall migrant hierarchy. At the top of this hierarchy is the category of “wanted,” highly skilled, and preferably Western, migrants while at the bottom end of the hierarchy are “unwanted” humanitarian migrants from less familiar cultures.

Constructing the Hierarchy

A large part of how migrants are viewed is based on their country of origin and/or their ethnicity. When asked to name those they think of as immigrants, the Finns habitually refer to a person’s nationality or ethnic group first (Säävälä 2009). People have strong (cultural) stereotypes based on individuals’ countries of origin. Jaakkola’s studies of “ethnic hierarchies” in Finland have shown that the higher a country’s economic standing is perceived to be and the more culturally and visibly similar the Finns feel towards another group, the less prejudiced they are against migrants from that particular country (2005, 2009). However, Suurpää has pointed out that for some groups of migrants a culturally distant ethnicity can be a positive denominator, provided that they do not try to challenge their appointed role in society: “Regardless of the real strangeness of immigrants, they are conceptually familiar to us as ethno-musicians, or as humorous media personalities in sitcom series” (2002, 117). Furthermore, “Their probable differences do not count; rather, the diversity which they bring with them is seen as an enriching element of social interaction” (118). These “harmless fellows” (Suurpää’s term, ibid.) in Finland include migrants from Western nations, but also, for example, many South American immigrant groups thanks to the positive view of their particular cultural differences, and appreciation for, for example, salsa dancing or Mexican food. As another example, despite vast cultural and visible differences, the Japanese are regarded as notably high on the Finns’ ethnic hierarchy, even above many European nationalities, perhaps because of an appreciation for Japanese culture, design, and cuisine in Finland.

All in all, according to Jaakkola’s studies, the most accepted immigrant (ethnic) groups in Finland are the British, Scandinavians, and (white) Americans, and the least accepted the Moroccans, Russians, Arabs, and Somalis (Jaakkola 2005, 72).1 The eth-

1 The full list of results of twenty-five different nationalities between 1989 and 2003 can be found in Jaakkola 2005. Unfortunately, Jaakkola’s 2009 study includes only five nationalities (Estonian, Polish, Chinese, Russian, Somali). However, she states, “Attitudes have turned more favourable
nic hierarchy has a direct link to immigrants’ experiences in Finland: it correlates with levels of reported ethnic discrimination, which is most often felt by those lower in the hierarchy. Almost half of Russian immigrants and the majority of Somalis and Arabs reported having experienced racism in public (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, and Vesala 2002; Honkatukia 2005). Newer reports state that racist crimes are most often reported by Turkish immigrants, followed by Iranian, Iraqi, and Somali immigrants—all groups at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy, all of whom appear visibly different (Peutere 2009).

Levels of acceptance towards different types of immigrants are also tied strongly to socio-economic factors, i.e., the level of educational attainment and the role of the immigrant in the Finnish economy and labor market; Finns are most accepting of immigrants who hold jobs and qualifications (Salonen and Villa 2006). In Jaakkola’s data from 2007, Finns showed more openness towards foreign workforce members than ever before: 74 percent agreed that Finland should accept more or at least the same number of foreign workers into the country as currently (Jaakkola 2009, 22). However, since then, a biannual Gallup poll commissioned by Finland’s leading newspaper has reported rising opposition to immigration in general (Elonen 2010), and other studies have also shown that, presently, only 43 percent of Finns see increased immigration as a solution to the possible economic and demographic threat that the aging of the population may bring (Haavisto 2012, 2). Despite this opposition, there are big differences of perception regarding what are seen as highly skilled versus low-skilled immigrants: the most welcome migrants are scientists and experts (51 percent would accept more of them), whereas immigrant restauranteurs would be welcomed by only 14 percent (Jaakkola 2005, 18).

However, high educational and employment status alone is not enough to gain acceptance; socio-economic standing and the standards of the ethnic hierarchy are interlinked: “People recognize that Finland needs foreign labor, but not from just any country” (Jaakkola 2009, 88). Heikkilä (2005) has also found that perceived cultural proximity is a factor in the employability of immigrants in the Finnish labor market: “Those immigrants who were labelled as most distant faced the greatest difficulties in finding a job, and thus they were more vulnerable than those with cultural proximity. [. . .] [T]here seems thus to be a hierarchisation in occupational integration on the basis of immigrants’ nationalities” (494–95). Furthermore, the presence of “selective racism” has been noted by Raunio (2002, 154) even in his subject-group of skilled labor migrants, who in Raunio’s study in general come across racism “very little or only on occasion” (153). Attitudes are divided towards even this otherwise appreciated type of migrant depending on how visibly unlike Finns they look.
Although these interlinking scales of ethnicity and socio-economic status are the most prominent factors in how migrants are valued, there are other additional factors that intersect with these value judgments. Political and historical reasons, such as Finland’s past as part of the Russian Empire as well as the Kingdom of Sweden, may have contributed to the low placement of Russians at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy, as well as to the placement of Swedes lower than other Nordic nations. Religion is also a factor in that negative sentiments are directed toward Muslims in general, regardless of nationality (Salonen and Villa 2006). Being a Muslim has become comparable to a cultural trait that is connected to appearance, and it functions, therefore, more or less like a racial category (Huttunen 2004). Gender, on the other hand, is not such a direct denominator in placing migrants on the hierarchy, but rather takes the form of gender stereotypes connected to different nationalities and religions. Examples of this in Finland are the idea of passive and subservient Filipino and Thai wives (Huttunen 2004; Sirkkilä 2006), and the caricature of Russian women as prostitutes (Reuter and Kyntäjä 2006), thereby constructing an image of a “sexualized ethnicity” that is not equally applied to Russian male immigrants (Davydova 2012). Similarly, polarized images of repressed Muslim women, as opposed to Muslim men as the repressors, lead to different views of male and female migrants from the same countries. Furthermore, male migrants in general are seen more easily as threatening and criminal (Honkatukia and Suurpää 2012), or violent (Keskinen 2012).

Issues such as language ability and familial relationships may also have a bearing, although in more complex ways. In the question of language, while knowing Finnish is seen as an important skill in the job market (Heikkilä 2005; Jaakkola 2000), in social life speaking Finnish (with an accent) is not always appreciated: using English, rather than Finnish, in public has been found to result in better service for immigrants (Leinonen 2011), even to the extent that “speaking Finnish with an accent brought about negative responses” (Laurén and Wrede 2008, 21). There is another double standard at play here, too: migrants from Western nations are not expected to learn Finnish to the extent that those lower in the hierarchy are (Latomaa 1998). Therefore, the level of Finnish language skills is not a denominator in the hierarchy in a direct way, but again depends also on the immigrant’s nationality, visibility, and even the reason for being in Finland in very complex ways. There is some evidence that having a Finnish partner also bestows a more positive image on a migrant: those with a Finnish partner are employed more easily (Saartenoja et al. 2009), and Finnish employers trust their skill-level and perseverance in the job more, as compared to those immigrants who have no family ties with Finns (Pehkonen 2006). Yet, at the same time, Finns are even more opposed to immigrants marrying Finns than immigrants coming into the country in the first place (Jaakkola 2005). The linkage to
better employability of immigrants with Finnish partners could in fact have to do with either better Finnish language skills or with social networks (Jaakkola 2000).

Apart from the views of laypersons, it should be noted that social policy and official classifications by the state also lend apparent legitimacy to a hierarchy of valued migrants. Regulations about immigration status, work permits, residency, and social benefit allocations “may emphasize the entitlement of those in question to receive resources. Equally, however, [these regulations] may identify them as socially deficient, or lacking in some fashion, labeling them further as ‘undeserving’ or ‘troublesome’” (Jenkins 2000, 19). In a comparison of twenty-one European states’ citizenship and civic inclusion policies, Bail (2008) rates Finland relatively high on all measurements of immigrant inclusiveness at the policy domain. Still, state policies and laws, however fair or lenient they may be, place different types of migrants on a scale from illegal migrants or those with refugee status to temporary residency and work-permit holders, and all the way to those EU citizens who are free to enter Finland and its labor market at the same level as native citizens.

Media also play a significant role in how different types of migrants are placed on the migrant hierarchy. For their part, they contribute to the visibility of specific immigrant groups through discourse (as opposed to physical visibility) (Leinonen 2011). This is especially true, in the Finnish context, in regards to Somalis and Russians (Raittila and Kutilainen 2000). Russians should place relatively high in the hierarchy as a result of ethnic and cultural similarity, but because of their large numbers, they have come to be seen as threatening (Suurpää 2002); levels of acceptance seem to coincide with the media reporting on, for example, “millions of Russians” planning to move to Finland (Jaakkola 2005, 69). As well as these accounts of “floods” of migrants, the media’s readiness to report on crimes committed by immigrants has had a negative effect, among others, on Somalis in Finland. Especially during the 1990s, refugees from Somalia have also been customarily referred to as “welfare migrants”2 (Horsti 2005). As Finns are by far the least accepting towards immigrants coming to Finland “to improve their economic standing” (only 7 percent compared to a 40 percent acceptance of refugees running from war, Jaakkola 2005, 18), it is no coincidence that migrant groups reported on in such ways are at the lower end of the ethnic hierarchy as well. Value-laden categorizations mirrored by changing immigration ideologies are also created, as well as passed down, in the media. The tendency of both journalists and policy makers nowadays to talk about either “good” (working) or “unwanted” (refugee) migrants then trickles down to the level of ordinary citizens, as can be seen from, for example, Internet discussion forums (Simola 2008).

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2 The term is elintasopakolainen in Finnish. The use of this word implies that the reason why these refugees come to Finland is to take advantage of the services of the welfare state, rather than to escape an actual life-threatening situation in the country of origin.
In sum, following these intersecting standards of ethnicity and nationality, socio-economic factors related to education and employment, religion and gender, and so on, a “migrant hierarchy” is formed. In its complexity, it is a fluid and elusive scale that hides within it a multitude of differing attitudes by different Finns. Young people, people living in larger cities, and Green Party supporters have been found to be more receptive to immigration in general (Jaakkola 2009; Saartenoja et al. 2009); personal circumstances, such as being unhappy with one’s own life and economic situation, seem to correlate with stricter views (Säävälä 2009); people with a higher educational level and socio-economic status are more positive about the economic as well as cultural benefits of immigration (Haavisto 2012); Finnish women, although otherwise more positive about immigration, have more negative views towards female immigrants than Finnish men (Jaakkola 2009; Säävälä 2009).

However, put simply, at the top of the Finns’ migrant hierarchy is a category of “wanted,” highly skilled, and preferably Western migrants while at the bottom end of the hierarchy are the “unwanted” humanitarian migrants from less familiar cultures with visible ethnicities. The “wanted” skilled migrants do not face the same discrimination that the “unwanted” migrants lower on the ethnic hierarchy do. They are migrants who are mostly welcomed into the country because they are seen as well-educated, professional people representing the positive side of globalization and multiculturalism, rather than the negative view of immigration flows as a threat to national culture and economy induced by the same globalization.

**HIGHLY SKILLED MIGRANTS AND THE MIGRANT HIERARCHY**

Previous studies of highly skilled migrants in Finland have concentrated largely on the working environment and on economic concerns, ignoring the social sphere and issues related to integration (more on this in Koskela 2010). Even though skilled migrants often arrive in Finland specifically for work, professional life is not enough to provide a basis for a life in a new country. Therefore, a focus on the social life outside of the workplace is important for a more thorough analysis of skilled migrants’ lives in Finland. Researching the subject from the perspective of everyday experiences, as these experiences relate to skilled migrants’ finding a place for themselves within their new environment, allows for more personally felt narratives to come through. Looking past general issues of Finland as a country of choice for skilled migrants in the “global field of choices” (Forsander and Raunio 2009), there are more specific, covert issues at stake when it comes to adapting to and integrating into Finnish society; apart from what the highly skilled migrants think about living in Finland and the Finnish people, a big part in the adaptation process is also played by what the Finns think about the migrants and how the migrants themselves perceive these attitudes. I will, therefore, describe the various ways that feeling categorized and evaluated on a hierarchy (i.e., against other migrants) is discussed in my ethnographic and interview
data collected among skilled migrants living in Helsinki. I will discuss recurring, and therefore central, themes that relate to the Finns’ views of immigrants and the described migrant hierarchy. I believe that this will point to many subtleties and the elusive, yet very real, ways in which the categorizations also affect the everyday life of skilled migrants, even though they are placed at the top of the migrant hierarchy and are viewed in a more positive light than other types of migrants.

**Awareness of the Migrant Hierarchy**

Categorizations are not abstract concepts; they are *actions* that become concrete in social interaction, in spoken communication, and even in looks on the street (Juhila 2004). My data show that highly skilled migrants in Finland can easily sense what Finns think about them, including in relation to other immigrants, through social interaction both in the professional world and their free time. However, there is a minority of skilled migrants who say that they have not felt categorized in any way in Finland, nor do they see a hierarchy of immigrants. The reasons for their unawareness are quite clear even to themselves (e.g., “sheltered” workplace, career or family focus, being new to Finland) and simultaneously point to some of the reasons why a migrant could be separated from Finnish society. By “sheltered” workplace I mean transnational companies that are almost societies in themselves to the extent that they offer such a ready-made social world that their employees may state, for example, that they “live in ECHA” (Greece), rather than in Finland. For others, the experience of working abroad can be approached purely as a career move, diluting the desire to socialize with or understand the locals. This type of career orientation may also mean that one does not have the time to invest in a social life:

> I used to work my ass off, starting six o’clock in the morning till six p.m. [. . .] then work again from nine o’clock to one o’clock. I mean I already have a very tight schedule for my work that consumes most of my time during the week. When I say most of my time, on an average week it’s

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3 This article is based on data from two years of ethnographic fieldwork by participant observation of the activities of several different multicultural social associations in Helsinki frequented by skilled migrants. These ethnographic data have been expanded upon with informal interviews during fieldwork, and subsequent in-depth, one-on-one interviews. These in-depth interviews included fifteen chosen informants between the ages of twenty-three and forty-two from fourteen different nationalities (several of them dual-nationalities and/or of minority ethnic heritage, e.g., French Pakistani), thirteen different occupations, and a gender ratio of f6/m9. The variation and number of informants encountered during fieldwork is naturally greater. Quotations and examples in the article are from both informal conversations and interviews. When referring to informants, only the person’s nationality is mentioned, unless other information is seen necessary in the context.

4 Apart from ECHA (European Chemicals Agency), in the Finnish context such “societies in themselves” could be international/transnational companies such as Nokia(-Siemens) (also referred to as “Nokia-world” by my informants), Wärtsilä, Kone, and perhaps universities to a certain extent.
around eighty hours. So that means that I don’t have much time left on a daily basis. (India)

The same could be said about those skilled migrants who come to Finland with family and dedicate their free time to their home life.

The ways in which migrants become aware of being categorized are subtle. Therefore it takes time and interaction with Finns to get to the level of value judgments. Newer migrants say that they find Finnish people very hard to read:

I cannot even come to a minimum point to say that I could even guess what they’re thinking. I cannot even guess because . . . the funny thing is that her [a colleague’s] appearance sometimes doesn’t match what she says, so to my perception I cannot make a link. With the Finnish guy [another colleague], he doesn’t even talk, he’s not even using expressions when he . . . so you know I cannot even understand from the expressions what he’s thinking. (Greece)

Raunio (2002) has also remarked on the difficulty of understanding Finns, noting that the skilled migrants associate Finnish modes of interaction with poor communication skills and limited conversation.

However, the vast majority of skilled migrants have a relatively clear understanding of what is considered a “wanted” migrant versus an “unwanted” migrant in the Finnish context. Interestingly, those skilled migrants who have a visible ethnicity or a nationality otherwise lower in the ethnic hierarchy seem to have a very good idea of what the overall migrant hierarchy looks like, some even giving specific typologies that connect not only ethnicity/nationality to specific occupations (e.g., “Indian IT workers,” “African cleaners,” “working or studying EU-migrants,” “Somalian refugees”) but also take into account reasons for coming to Finland [“Those that came by love-boat, came for education, came to work, came as refugees” (Kenya)]. It may be that those with visible ethnicities have had to come face-to-face with feeling categorized more than those skilled migrants who blend into the Finnish streetscape because of their similar appearance.

Reactions to the Categorizations
In general, highly skilled migrants see themselves being placed at the top part of the hierarchy, above, for example, humanitarian migrants. They feel that the Finns’ perception of them is mostly positive. However, they also report that they are seen in a homogenizing and one-dimensional way as a group, rather than as individuals. The Finnish imagination is seen as assuming only one obvious way of being a highly skilled migrant. In its most basic form, this assumption is that a “good” migrant should work for Nokia and/or be married to a Finn:
What is a good migrant in Finland? Well educated, and probably here for a Finnish spouse. They have a more of a right to be here than someone who’s just, like me, like everyone is just like “Why are you here?” [Laughter.] “You don’t have a husband, you don’t work for Nokia, so why are you here?” (USA, works in education)

This “Nokia Question” is the inevitable question (“So you work for Nokia?”) that most skilled migrants in Finland will encounter at some point. It is an example of a homogenizing assumption that is not meant, nor understood, in a negative way, but it is not always appreciated: in as far as there is no conceptual problem in admitting to being one of those skilled migrants who does indeed work for Nokia, it is often done nonchalantly. It is not something that is seen as a unique or the most positive identification, and certainly not the most central part of one’s identity. Therefore, for many, there is a need to specify, for example by repeatedly stating that one is not yet another Chinese IT-engineer, but rather works in another type of position in the company that makes him different from the “typical” Nokia worker. The question can also prove to be just plain annoying, especially to those who do not work in anything remotely to do with IT, and in something that they perhaps consider more interesting and requiring (more) specialized skills, as in the case of an Indian wind-turbine engineer, who also added that Finnish people are “disappointed” when they find out that an Indian skilled migrant does not work for Nokia, or even in the field of information technology.

Sometimes the answers to the question may not actually correspond to reality; a self-employed Italian migrant says that he does not mind being assumed to be working for Nokia, “like everyone else,” because it makes social interaction simpler (rather than having to explain what he actually does, and also because he is uncomfortable about the fact that he does not pay taxes to Finland). Outside my primary interest group, I have also met a low-skilled British migrant, who was particularly grateful for people assuming that all Western immigrants in Finland work for Nokia, and was happy to let them believe this about himself as well (rather than finding out that he works as a line-cook). He felt that people responded to him more positively if they were allowed to just keep thinking that he worked for Nokia.

National stereotyping is another homogenizing action, and a cause of much frustration. Being seen as a “religious, Bible-thumping, Bush-loving, gun-owning jerk” is made worse only by the apparent unwillingness of Finns to want to look past this particular American stereotype. An Italian informant remarked that Finnish people seem to think that all foreigners that have come to the country are “fair game,” that no matter how irrelevant or negative the national stereotype, it may be reiterated at first meet: “I would not, I would not tell you when I meet you for the first time, you know after a few minutes, you know: ‘Ok, your country is a country where your
prime minister was texting a stripper.” Especially skilled migrants from Western nationalities feel that Finns do not have a desire to get to know them as individuals. The discussions that they have with immigrants are superficial, with the focus on typical foods and the weather and references to having traveled to that country:

I think about the weather, in the beginning it’s always about the weather, and then maybe how is the partying in Spain, and . . . then, maybe, about the work, what am I doing here or something, but not much. (Spain)

This shallowness of interaction with Finns also comes out in stories of feeling like the “token immigrant,” for example, at a party:

I felt like an animal in the zoo, a bit, like you know, everyone’s kind of asking all the same: “Why, why are you here?” and “What are you doing here?” “How do you find Finnish people?” And that’s it! That’s what defines me as a person; it’s like they don’t ask me any normal questions, they don’t want to get to know me better, they don’t want to be friends with me. They might want to practice their English, but other than that it’s like, “Very nice to meet you,” and then it’s like, “I’ve met a foreigner, from America!” (USA)

This superficiality of interaction between members of the host society and immigrants is unlikely to be unique to Finland. However, for the purposes of my argument, these quotes highlight that the issue that highly skilled migrants struggle with is not about feeling that one is not seen in positive terms; instead, the objection here is to homogenizing and stereotyping, to not being seen as individuals. There is a tendency to see immigrants as “faceless characters,” as abstract representations of a category, rather than individuals with their own personal histories and characteristics (Huttunen 2004, 134). Therefore, even when there is nothing negative attached to the generalization, just the homogenizing quality of stereotyping in general can be frustrating. Resistance to categorization is a common reaction, but: “Striving for autonomy of self-identification, is, however, every bit an effect of categorization” (Jenkins 2000, 21).

If highly skilled migrants in general feel categorized one-dimensionally and, therefore, object to the homogenizing aspect of categorization, they still recognize that this homogenizing action is mostly done in positive terms. However, especially those highly skilled migrants who look visibly different from the native Finnish population oppose also the hierarchizing aspect of these categories, as they are negatively affected by the standards of the ethnic part of the hierarchy (rather than seen in a positive light based on their socio-economic status). Although Finns have become more and more favorable towards immigrant workers, especially those viewed as skilled (Jaakkola 2009), being a highly skilled, educated, and employed migrant is
not something that shows on the outside. Those skilled migrants who have a visible ethnicity enter the realm of ethnic hierarchies as soon as they step out of their workplace. A Togolese skilled migrant commented on her meeting new Finnish people: “They just imagine that I’m not working I think, that’s what I feel.” Black skilled migrants may feel that they are automatically assumed to be Somali refugees, but an Indian migrant cannot escape being “dragged down” in the ethnic hierarchy, either:

It is very rare that I have come across that they recognize me as an Indian.

[. . .] Finnish people cannot differentiate between Indians and Iraqis and Arabs and Pakistanis [. . .] or even Moroccans.5

Those highly skilled migrants with an ethnicity lower in the hierarchy, therefore, suffer both from the homogenizing aspect of being categorized, as well as the hierarchizing aspect of these categorizations.6

**Pointing the Finger**

Finnish people are seen as unaccustomed to immigration. This is one explanation for the stereotyping and categorizations:

I look forward to that Finland has a lot more exposure to various cultures.

[. . .] That’s only going to change to a better positive thing, so these people want to go from person to person, so they are going to interact before they make any perception. (India)

The existence of even negative categorizations is not, however, always blamed on the Finns; many of one’s “co-immigrants/-ethnics” are seen to act in such ways so as to justify Finnish perceptions and attitudes. This can be as small as the shock of discovering that another immigrant from China, after five years of residence in the country, still does not recycle his household waste (and is therefore disrespectful of Finnish customs and shows no sign of trying to adapt), or about more newly arrived members of one’s ethnic group complaining about the weather in Finland [as one should “just get used to it” (India)]. There is a sense of “collective responsibility” (also noted by Pehkonen 2006), whereby any wrongdoing by an immigrant of any kind is seen as possibly affecting all immigrants negatively. However, highly skilled migrants do not necessarily feel actual empathy towards other immigrants, and may demonstrate even anti-immigration sentiments, especially towards refugees. An Indian skilled migrant told me that having received the right to vote at the municipal elections, he had voted for the anti-immigrationist “True Finns” Party, because he

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5 These are all groups at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy.

6 There is no denying that ethnicity is a central social marker even for the highly skilled migrants. The intersectionality of ethnicity and socio-economic status is a subject that deserves further research.
agreed that immigrants should not be overindulged (as he himself had “never gotten anything from the Finnish government,” and had still managed to make a successful life in Finland). I have also been told that allowing family-reunifications of immigrant families is just “completely wrong” and an unfair burden on Finnish society. Some of the opinions are very similar to Finnish public discussion. For example, a Russian migrant reiterated these views by saying that the Somalis “do not work, they just stick together and live on social benefits.” However, when another East African skilled migrant refers to Somalis as “not the shiniest coins in the pond,” I assume that we are also dealing with separation from an undesired imposed categorization. Indeed, many of the issues around categorizations concern identities and a need for a self-definition.

**Relevance for Identities**

Following a Barthian transactionalist approach (e.g., Barth 1969), Richard Jenkins (2003) makes a distinction between “groups” and “categories,” according to which a group is our own internal definition whereas a category is an external definition imposed on us by others outside our group. The migrant hierarchy in the Finnish context consists of these categorizations. However, the effects of being categorized by a dominant group should not be underestimated: “The effective categorization of a group of people by a more powerful Other is thus never ‘just’ a matter of classification (if there is such a thing as ‘just classification’). As an intervention in that group’s social world it will, to an extent and in ways that are context-specific, change that world and the experience of living in it; in other words, it has consequences” (Jenkins 2000, 22). By “consequences” Jenkins is referring to the effects that categorizations inevitably have on identities; when migrants are subjected to new categorizations (external definitions) by the dominant group, they need to renegotiate their own group identity (internal definition) in this new environment, as it is inevitably shaped also by the experience of being categorized. Furthermore, a new group identity may also be needed when one’s previous social group no longer exists within the new “frames of reference” (Chryssochoou 2004). This is certainly the case in Finland, where the national clusters of many of the highly skilled migrants are very small in numbers and, therefore, no longer offer a ready-made social group with whom to share one’s free time.

**Highly Skilled Migrants as a Social Group**

Previous studies show that highly skilled migrants actually do organize themselves as a social group on the lines of the migrant hierarchy. They seldom organize communally according to nationality; instead, they are more likely to attend multicultural/-national associations founded on a “culture of global economy” (Raunio 2002, 56). This is in direct opposition to other types of immigrants; most
immigrant associations in Finland are single-nation or -ethnic associations, most notably in the case of Somalis or Russians (Sagne, Saksela, and Wilhemsson 2005). This difference may be related to both the larger size of the groups, as well as their position in the ethnic hierarchy, as “unwanted” immigrants at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy seem to have a stronger ethnic identification (Jasinskaja-Lahti and Liebkind 1997). This can be seen as both the reason for and the result of their organizing themselves in their own (national) communities, and as a reason why the skilled migrants lack such associations. Skilled migrants are more likely to take part in activities of “friendship associations” (promoting cultural relationship between Finns and foreigners) and “multicultural associations” (organizing cultural/social activities open for everyone) (Sagne, Saksela, and Wilhemsson 2005). Such social organizations in Helsinki are many. Some are based on a “theme” (e.g., immigrant mothers, business networking, church groups), but most are open to anyone wanting to meet people in a social setting. There is a strong network character to these social circles, and many people know each other through a link to a few people.

This is not to say that all skilled migrants automatically spend all their free time with other skilled migrants. Those with a family with children, for example, may dedicate their free time to family life. Those migrants who have arrived in the country “on a love boat” (i.e., because of a Finnish partner they have met abroad), have a ready-made access to a group of possible Finnish friends and, therefore, already a potentially wider social circle. Some struggle to make any real friends and admit to feeling lonely in Finland. In any case, my data show that skilled migrants actively seek company where they feel equal and un-judged. Only once have I come across a highly skilled migrant for whom this company meant immigrants lower in the migrant hierarchy, in this case visibly ethnic employees of a kebab place, who are “in a similar situation and they have survived here, so why can’t I, and that gives me hope” (India). More typically, what is meant by this company is some form of multinational social groups that includes “educated, internationally minded Finns” (Holland), and/or, in a number of cases, Swedish-speaking Finns.7 Another related group consists of international students. In this group, it is felt that no unnecessary questions are asked, as one is assumed to be another international student in Finland and the relevance of ethnicity therefore diminishes:

I fit in pretty well, because when I go there [parties organized for/by international students], those people don’t look at me as a Somali or like

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7 The Swedish-speaking Finns are seen as a somewhat separate group, who are more international and open and speak better English than the Finnish-speaking Finns. I have not delved into this interesting issue of having Swedish-speaking Finns as one’s chosen social circle more, but, e.g., Latomaa’s American informants have also remarked that the “[Finnish-]Swedish is a comfortable subculture” (1998, 60).
that, or a Kenyan guy. They say: “Oh, he must be an exchange student,” and I could be from France, who knows, or Belgian. (Kenya)

In anthropological and sociological literature, these types of international social circles are often referred to as “expatriate bubbles.” Fechter (2007) writes about the description of living in a bubble by expatriates in Indonesia as self-segregation into a somewhat artificial, closed world with colonialist undercurrents; the (native) ethnic Other are left outside the symbolic bubble, but it also represents a physical separation from the streets and people of Jakarta (in housing patterns, modes of transport, and choice of venues for socializing). Even though any such “expatriate bubble” in Finland would refer to more elusive and abstract boundaries, there is no denying that, for some, these multinational social circles are the cornerstones of their whole social life in Finland (i.e., their chosen social group). However, others feel that they are “forced” into it because of the homogenizing aspect of the categorizations (i.e., they are categorized as such, and this affects their social options):

The only thing we have in common is that we all speak English and that we’re all here. That’s it! We don’t have anything else in common, but that’s how we’re grouped together. And I often feel like we’re spending time together not out of choice, but like you’re brothers and sisters in a way, you’re stuck together. (USA)

I don’t think there are any other reasons, so . . . people get together just mainly because they are foreigners. (Russia)

There is also a certain sense of escapism involved with attending activities of the multinational social circle, and socializing in these groups is not always seen as a permanent solution to having a social life, but rather just a “breather” from trying to establish a life as part of the Finnish society:

So there were times when I’ve kind of immersed myself in Finnish culture and avoided English speakers just because I wanted the language, and I wanted to feel a part of everything. It feels like kind of diving under water a little bit, but then I have to come up for air and retreat to the expat group, who kind of grudgingly take me back for a couple of months. (USA)

If we return to Jenkins’ distinction between “category” and “group,” the Finnish migrant hierarchy supposes that the highly skilled migrants form a rather homogenic

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8 The word “grudgingly” refers here to an aspect of resentment if one chooses to actively disassociate from the “expat group” and socialize only with Finns, often referred to by North Americans as “going native” or as being a “Euro-whore.”
category: they are assumedly white and from a Western country. Although the international social circles consist of a mix of skilled migrants from a variety of countries and ethnicities, similar ethnic specification can also be seen from skilled migrants’ own self-definitions as a group: those from Western countries often refer to themselves with terms emphasizing their cultural proximity (“skilled Europeans,” “Europeans,” “Western migrants,” “central and western Europeans”), while those with unfavorable ethnicities use wider, ethnically more inclusive economic and ideological terms (“young professionals,” “global citizens,” “internationals,” “expats,” “cosmopolitans,” or just “working migrants”).

Despite these differences in emphasis, the skilled migrants also habitually refer to themselves collectively as “foreigners.” Haikkola (2010; 2011) has also remarked on the use of the term “foreigner” by young second-generation immigrants in Finland as a more positive reinterpretation of an imposed categorization as “immigrants.” However, the issue with highly skilled migrants is not about reinterpreting the category of “immigrants” in more positive terms; it is about separating oneself from a negatively seen categorization while still upholding its existence so that it can serve as a comparison. Therefore, the term “immigrant” is also used, but mostly to refer to something that the skilled migrants themselves are not (e.g., refugees or low-skilled labor migrants) and in definition as their Other.

In this way, both in the skilled migrants’ group definition and the Finns’ categorizations, a distinction is made between those immigrants at the lower end of the hierarchy and those at the top. However, the division between “immigrants” and “foreigners” is not the only boundary that exists for the skilled migrants in Finland; Finns as another group of Others are also very present in the skilled migrants’ discussions about belonging, social identity, and living in Finland in general. Although Finns are not a category in the migrant hierarchy, it is as if implied that Finns as a group are somewhere above (or at least beside) the hierarchy, and therefore inaccessible. “The Finns” in this sense are seen as a closed, homogeneous group that value security, tradition, and the status quo. Their rules are unwavering and indisputable; there is only one correct way of doing things (even as menial as the apparently illogical Finnish custom of always having the kitchen trashcan in the cupboard under the sink, a discussion that I hear over and over again), and by default, only one way of being a Finn. This makes it impossible for a foreigner to be fully accepted as part of the Finnish society. Therefore, even an Indian skilled migrant who is now actually a Finnish citizen does not think anyone accepts him as a Finn. He also believes that even his children will still be seen as immigrants. Talking about a hypothetical situation that he would get into trouble abroad, he laughs:

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9 For an applicable review of Finnishness as a (particularly) homogenous and inaccessible entity, and the inflexibility of the category of “a Finn,” see Leinonen 2011, 222–31.
Strange, I have to call the Finnish embassy and say, “I’m a Finn!” “Oh yeah, give me break,” they would say!

However, even Western, white, culturally familiar skilled migrants say that they do not see themselves as a part of the Finnish society, or even see a possibility for this level of integration:

I don’t think it has to do with racism, I think it has to do with being a foreigner, white or black. (Holland)

I think that even if I was whatever [nationality], it would be the same. It would be different if I was Finnish. So everything else except Finnish nationality is . . . different. (Greece)

Leinonen (2011) has also written about the impossibility of becoming to be considered a Finn for Americans migrating to Finland for reasons of marriage. She suggests that migrants coming from Western countries are part of the discourse of (positive) internationalization in Finland, rather than that of (negative) immigration. However, “their privileged status as ‘nonimmigrants’ who are not expected to assimilate or, as in the case of Americans in Finland, even learn the language of their country of residence may in fact amplify feelings of being an outsider” (264). Whereas, for example, refugees are expected to learn the Finnish language and act according to dominant cultural rules (Latomaa 1998), and therefore as if “become more Finnish,” highly skilled migrants are expected to do the opposite. What skilled (Western) migrants have to offer is exactly the wanted cultural diversity that they bring, as this is seen as an enriching element to the Finnish society. They are not expected to integrate; the “valued Otherness” attached to them creates an expectation to conform to, rather than fight, the stereotypes.

However, one can also feel at home even without feeling part of the Finnish society:

I can say I feel at home here. But I wouldn’t consider myself a Finn. (Germany)

Although I don’t feel part of the society, I’ve started to feel quite at home somehow. (China)

In a way I feel part of the Finnish society, but on a . . . but as a foreigner. (UK)

In this way, at least adaptation to a new social world (rather than a two-way process of integration into the Finnish society) is happening despite the host society’s lack of encouragement for it. Belonging is sought from “the Finnish international society” (Holland) that includes both skilled migrants and “internationally minded Finns,”
and that is seen as parallel to (but separate from) Finnish mainstream society. This, of course, is not the ideal situation; according to Yijälä et al., “increased contacts with the host population and greater exposure to the host culture can promote good intergroup relations and positive attitudes towards the host culture, preventing the ‘expatriate bubble’ that can separate international professionals from the wider societal context” (2009, 98). As long as the categorizations maintain their strength, this “expatriate bubble” is unlikely to burst.

**Conclusion**

All societies have views of the immigrants living in their countries. Because of culturally, economically, and historically specific reasons, some migrants are more willingly accepted and more valued than others. Based on previous research on Finns’ views of immigrants in Finland, I have suggested how prevalent value judgments intersect to form an overall “migrant hierarchy” that places “wanted,” highly skilled, and preferably Western migrants at the top, and “unwanted” humanitarian migrants from less familiar cultures with visible ethnicities at the bottom. Against this migrant hierarchy, I have then described the experiences of my interest group of highly skilled migrants about being categorized and perceived as particular type of immigrants, and the relevance of these experiences to their lives in Finland.

Highly skilled migrants are for the most part aware of the Finns’ migrant hierarchy and its categorizations. Although they recognize that they are seen in a more positive light as migrants who contribute to the Finnish economy through employment and to the Finnish society through their “positive” cultures, the skilled migrants still object to the homogenizing and stereotyping character of the hierarchy. In addition, especially those skilled migrants whose ethnicity is visible also feel the hierarchizing aspects and value judgments of the hierarchy negatively, as the hierarchy places them at the lower end by appearance alone without taking into account their contributions to the socio-economic aspects of the hierarchy.

However, despite the felt unfairness of the migrant hierarchy, its categorizations are still to a certain extent internalized. Even though the assumption of all skilled migrants, or all Western migrants, as a homogenous entity is misleading and objected to, highly skilled migrants do feel some sense of unity as a group. This self-defined group identity is constructed, firstly, against an elusive “unwanted immigrants” category and, secondly, against the Finns as their Others. Therefore, the imposed categories in themselves become strategies that are used in identity negotiations, creating boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. They are also used to represent value judgments: in redrawing their group boundaries, the skilled migrants are

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10 Similarly to Fechter’s (2007) description of the “expatriate bubble” before, Yijälä et al. are here referring to the use of the term by Colleen Ward et al. (1998).
defining and redefining their identities not only as who they are, but also as who they are not: not “unwanted” humanitarian migrants, but also not Finns.

Therefore, although the highly skilled migrants feel that they are perceived by the Finns primarily in positive terms, they also feel that there is a boundary between them and the Finns that is impossible to cross. The “valued Otherness” attached to them means that while other immigrants are expected to integrate by “becoming more Finnish,” the skilled migrants often feel that they cannot integrate into the Finnish society even if they want to; instead of adopting Finnish customs, they are expected to forever act as ambassadors of their native culture, representing wanted cultural diversity as parts of an international, multicultural community. This will further hinder their chances of true integration and belonging to Finnish society.

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Boundaries of Belonging


“And Then All of the Sudden, You’re Still Here with Bad Finnish”:
American Women’s Narratives of Cultural Adjustment in Finland

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Abstract
The enormous growth in the number of international female migrants reflects a tectonic shift in women’s diverse positions in family structures and as wage earners. This qualitative study examines how sixteen American women narrate their cultural adjustment to Finnish society as long-term residents. It focuses on how individual women have dealt with the complexity of gendered and privileged migrant identities in an increasingly globalized Finland. Though arriving as citizens with higher-education degrees, most of the married women were not employed and did not feel that they had a place in Finnish society except via their husbands. Single women had short-term contracts and few plans to stay in Finland. The study suggests that married female immigrants from the United States tend to be gendered in Finland, despite an official policy of gender equality, because they have few prospects to step outside of the role of wife through employment or participation in the community.

Keywords: American female immigrants, Finland, cultural adjustment
INTRODUCTION
In recent years, the feminization of migration has emerged as a major theme in studies of population, labor, diversity, and gender (Sinke 2006). It is currently estimated that almost half of the 214 million international migrants are women (UN DESA 2009). The rising number of female migrants reflects a tectonic shift in women’s diverse positions in family structures and as wage earners. Zygmunt Bauman once wrote that we are all on the move as space and time has collapsed all “natural borders” through the process of globalization (Bauman 1998, 77). Bauman notes, however, that we do not all move in the same conditions, but instead move in rather distinct circumstances, which reflect the histories of our homelands as well as positions within the global consumer economy. Further, the reception that migrants face in new host countries often mirrors the complexity of societal relations of power and privilege as embodied by race, class, and gender, and managed through entrance criteria, residence permit categories, and identity classifications. Gender has thus come to the center of migration studies as an intersectional point as significant as poverty and ethnicity (Piper 2006).

Finnish society has long been considered “women-friendly” with its generous social welfare benefits, universal services, and policies of gender equality (Anttonen 2002). Through a comprehensive day-care service, maternity leave, and other benefits, social policy in Finland strives to enhance women’s opportunities to work. The Act on Equality between Women and Men (1987) and the Non-Discrimination Act (2004) promote equal treatment. Though women in Finland rank very high internationally in terms of equal rights, they continue to earn less than men and are not equally represented in leadership positions (Anttonen 1997, Saari 2013).

This qualitative study focuses on a group that tends to experience some privilege in relation to other immigrants in Finnish society. It examines how sixteen American women narrate their experiences of cultural adjustment to Finnish society as long-term residents. Focusing on how they construct their changing personal and social identities in relation to their experiences in Finnish society, the article explores how these women tell of negotiating the complexity of gendered and privileged migrant identities in twenty-first-century Finland. Though arriving with higher-education degrees, most of these women were not employed and did not feel that they had a place in Finnish society except via their husbands. Living as self-identified foreigners in a Nordic society that prides itself on its policies and practices of gender equality, these highly educated, professional women felt sometimes unwillingly cast in the gendered role of housewives, which evoked ambivalent feelings in them, including a sense of loss of an independent self-identity. This article proceeds by first outlining the Finnish context of immigration and migration research. It then moves to examine concepts of gender equality and migration before outlining the method of the study. The data are presented next, followed by the concluding discussion.
The Finnish Context of Immigration

Immigration came relatively late to Finnish society in comparison to many industrialized Western European counties. Traditionally a nation of emigrants and rural poverty, by the 1990s Finland had emerged from its peripheral position on the northeast corner of Europe to become a member of the European Union and a global business crossroads, particularly with the rise of the Nokia Corporation. Despite these changes, the immigrant population in Finland has remained relatively small, approximately 3 percent of the total population (Statistics Finland 2012). In 1980, there were nearly 13,000 registered foreign residents in Finland, and by 2010, there were 183,000 (Statistics Finland 2012). Currently, the largest groups of immigrants are from neighboring countries (Estonia, Russia, Sweden), followed by people from Somalia, China, and Iraq.

Early studies on migration in Finland focused on emigrants, particularly in Sweden (Virtanen 1979). As immigration began to rise for the first time in the late 1980s, studies emerged in Finland focusing largely on the social psychological reactions of the majority to new minorities (e.g., Jaakkola 1993, Liebkind 1988), and refugees arriving in Finland (Alitolppa-Niitamo 1994). Later studies further developed analyses of immigration law (Lepola 2000), transnational definitions of home (Huttunen 2002), perceptions of discrimination (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, and Perhoniemi 2006), new immigrant groups (Mannila and Reuter 2009), and experiences with social welfare authorities (Clarke 2011), among other topics. The plurality and transdisciplinarity of these migration studies have opened up new perspectives on the complexity of the local Finnish context of belonging, integration, and otherness.

Kathleen Valtonen’s classic article “Cracking Monopoly: Immigrants and Employment in Finland” (2001) was among the first to address the invisible barriers immigrants faced entering the labor market. Based on qualitative surveys, Valtonen found that while officials recognized the need to integrate immigrants into the labor market, there was little awareness of the monopolistic mechanisms that were blocking immigrants from getting further than first inquiries for jobs. Ten years later, Ahmad (2011) studied immigrants’ reliance on ethnic networks to find work, and Wahlbeck explored specifically ethnicized occupations (Wahlbeck 2007). Bartram (2007) examined the seemingly paradoxical example of Finland with low immigrant participation in the labor force (one percent), unlike other wealthy Western nations with nearly 10 percent participation. He concluded that Finland has been able to achieve economic success without reliance on low-wage immigrant labor. Lillie and Greer’s (2007) comparative study of construction work in European countries, however, indicates that there is a growing use of undocumented labor in Finland at building sites by subcontractors (though it remains small by European standards). They found that while the powerful unions protest this growing phenomenon, they
put few resources into mobilizing migrant workers. Hoffman’s study of academic immigrants (2007) brought out the complexity and contradictions of being of foreign origin in an internationalizing, yet often exclusionary, higher-education system. Koikkalainen, et. al. (2011) discuss the dilemma that immigrants often face in being either accused of stealing jobs from Finns or dismissed as malingerers on welfare benefits. These studies construct the Finnish labor market as generally homogenous and rather closed to outsiders through a myriad of invisible barriers, defying the general model of industrialized nations’ development.

The Intersectional Complexity of Gender and Migration

It is increasingly recognized that gender, like race and class, is a significant factor in understanding the complexity of the migration experience (e.g., McDowell 2008, Piper 2006). Gender is thus understood as more than biological sex, but rather as socially organized practices and discourses that function similarly to the intersectional and stratifying forces of race and class, which place some in more privileged positions than others in the global labor market (Mahler and Pessar 2006). As Mahler and Pessar (2006) have documented in their review of migration literature, a nuanced and rigorous discussion of the role of gender in migration has been largely marginalized until recently. Migration studies in the past have tended to view the gendered organization of the world as largely separate from the microcosm of individual and family immigration decisions and circumstances (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999). The feminist critique of the absence of gender has brought rich new perspectives on migration, particularly through qualitative ethnographic work that has traced the complexity and fluidity of the role of gender and male privilege in everyday migrant life (e.g., Arnado 2010; Hilsdon and Giridharan 2008).

A key concept in discussions of gender and migration is intersectionality (Brah 1996). The notion of intersectionality emerged through American black women’s critique of the way the feminist movement in the 1970s constructed women’s issues by ignoring the significant role that race and class simultaneously played in women’s lives (Collins 1998, 2000). Intersectionality thus represents a socially situated junction in which the confluence of race, gender, class, sexuality, and even immigration status meet. This intersection of marginalized identities results in multiple levels of oppression. The emergence of the notion of intersectionality thus represents a movement away from essentialized identities towards the recognition of diverse socially situated identities that connect in mutually constitutive ways to construct relations of power and oppression (Egeland and Gressgård 2007).

Immigration has a great influence on the demographics, culture, and economy of receiving countries. Yet, immigration is not a random force that happens to a country; rather it is actively shaped by the policies of states, which regulate the populations and types of immigrants allowed legal entry (Sassen 1999). Regulations
that privilege a certain status, such a heterosexual marriage with a native citizen, ethnic origin, or a guaranteed professional work offer, seek to manage immigrant populations and their roles in the host country. As Yoshino (2006) has documented, members of certain groups, such as queer people, may find it necessary to “cover” their oppressed identities to gain permission to immigrate. The immigrant experience is thus shaped by local relations of power and privilege that are often embedded in intersectional global frameworks of neocolonialism, racialization, gender, and class (Loomba 1998). As Lundström has noted, the non-Western migration of marginalized people of color raises different questions than the Western migration of privileged “white” people (2010). Having the opportunity to cross borders with minimal obstacles as professionals, with a reasonable standard of living, places such immigrants in very distinct positions from those without papers or with unwelcome passports, bearing stigmatized racial-cultural identities, and with minimal education and skills.

As more people with white and class privilege from industrialized nations have begun to migrate internationally, scholars have struggled to find a conceptual framework that adequately encapsulates the phenomenon. Research concepts have included leisure, lifestyle, amenity-seeking, second-home-ownership, and retirement migration (O’Reilly and Benson 2009). There have also been studies of expatriate wives, who occupy a very different hierarchical position in host societies than that of guest-workers or migrant labor (e.g., Yeoh, Huang, and Willis 2000). However, literature on highly skilled migration often neglects how mobility has an impact on gender roles and families, which presents a partial picture of the complexity of women’s lives in foreign locations (Raghuram 2004). Lundström’s (2010) intersectional analysis of Swedish women who moved to the United States, however, is an interesting study of transforming class positions and white privilege. Kofman and Raghuram (2005) have been among the first to explore how skilled migrants are gendered through occupation, professional identity, and familial responsibilities.

Migration studies has used the concept of tied migration, which refers to couples “tied” together by emotional and legal bonds, and whose move is a mutual decision (Smits, Mulder, and Hooimeijer 2003). A tied migrant is a person who would have stayed in his/her country of residence had his/her partner or family not wanted to move (Cooke 2013). Tied migration usually refers to heterosexual couples, whose decision to migrate is based on work or career considerations. Though seen as a gender-neutral notion, tied migration often occurs as a result of economic opportunities for the husband rather than the wife. Research has indicated that tied migration is less likely when spouses are equal earners, which indicates that tied migration must indeed be considered within the international gendered division of labor (Smits et al. 2003). As Halfacree (2004) has shown, single women tend to benefit from migration while married women often sacrifice earnings and status. Further, a recent
study indicated that married women who migrate face substantially diminished career opportunities and earnings, especially if the wives were not equal earners with husbands before departing from their home countries (Geist and McManus 2012). Heterosexual marriage with a native citizen thus often makes the migration process smoother in terms of obtaining residence permits; however, tied migration can cause wives to occupy a lesser economic role than they enjoyed before moving.

The Finnish context of “mixed” marriage (between a Finn and foreigner) has some specific features. There have been a growing number of marriages between Finns and foreigners since the 1990s. Although immigrants married to Finns enjoy privilege in terms of residence permits, they also face specific challenges in their process of adjustment (Górnı and Kępińska 2004). The number of mixed marriages doubled between 1994 (25,600) and 2007 (53,800) (Statistics Finland 2012). Finnish women tend to have Western partners, while Finnish men often have partners from Asia or the former Soviet Union. Finnish women with Western spouses tend to be more highly educated. Divorce rates in mixed marriages are clearly higher than in marriages between two Finnish spouses, with mixed marriages experiencing divorce at three times the rate as Finnish marriages (Statistics Finland 2012). Heikkilä’s (2004) study of multicultural marriages shows that cultural adaptation stress, dependence on the Finnish spouse, poor Finnish language skills, loneliness, and a lack of job opportunities are all factors that place great stress on marriages. Johanna Leinonen’s (2011) dissertation on international marriage between Finns and Americans showed that the main reason for Americans to move to Finland was marriage, though three-quarters of the marriages were between Finnish women and American men. Leinonen found that the study of marriages between Finns and Americans tended to be rendered invisible in scholarly literature. She also noted the specific difficulties of adjusting to Finnish society and finding commensurate work opportunities.

The role of gender in migration is therefore complex, intersectional, and connected with women’s position as wives. The American women interviewed for this study chose to immigrate to Finland and, with one exception, identified themselves as white. They faced few barriers to entering the country because they arrived in Finland with Finnish husbands or as single women with job contracts. These participants embodied many aspects of privilege upon entering Finnish society, and therefore how they frame their expectations in Finnish society may be different than those of women of color, non-Western immigrants, or people without class privilege.

**Contextualizing the Participants**

There has been a small American community in Finland since the Second World War. Until the 1980s, most American residents were associated with the U.S. Embassy. However, the American population changed as Finnish markets became increasingly
globalized and the country joined the European Union. A greater number of younger international business people and students circulated in and out of Finland. The steady increase in American spouses and employees of Finnish firms is, therefore, a phenomenon of recent decades. According to Statistics Finland, in 2009 there were slightly under 2,400 U.S. citizens resident in Finland, of whom 900 were women (Statistics Finland 2012). U.S. citizens thus make up a very small percentage of the over 150,000 permanently resident foreign citizens in Finland. This study utilized a snowball recruitment method to find informants. The Helsinki-based American Women’s Club was contacted, and the Club disseminated information about the study to all of its members. Some of the American Women’s Club members distributed the information about the study to fellow American friends. Many of the participants reported that they did not belong to the Club; hence, membership did not represent a significant factor uniting the informants. Rather, the Club can be seen as a staging point from which the study was snowballed to the wider female American community. After participating in the interview, many women encouraged friends to participate, which further increased the informant pool. The snowball method has the strength of connecting with hard-to-reach populations, such as the enormously diverse yet small migrant population in Finland, through word-of-mouth. This recruitment method nonetheless has the shortcoming of potential bias because it may be that the only people interested in participating have particular issues that they want raised. This study therefore does not claim to be representative of all female American immigrants in Finland. Instead, it presents an analysis of thick qualitative data from a slice of the female American women population in Finland.

The researcher is a U.S. citizen who has resided in Finland for over twenty years. As such, many of the participants perceived her as an insider with issues similar to their own. Though the researcher had had little contact with fellow Americans during her time in Finland, lived in a different city from the majority, and had immigrated from five to ten years earlier than most of the participants, interviews were often prefaced by a detailed discussion of place of origin, colleges attended, and family location in the United States. Such an exchange of information served to establish the sense of a common identity that appeared to relax the participants and make interviews flow naturally. The interviews took place between 2002 and 2007 in various locations including hotel rooms, homes, cafes, and offices. Sixteen women participated, and fifteen were self-described “white” women, while one described herself as a “visible minority.” All had higher education degrees. Twelve lived in the Helsinki metropolitan area and four lived elsewhere in southern Finland. Thirteen were married (three to non-Finnish men), two were single, and one was widowed. Seven were employed (three in fields in which they were qualified), five were home with children, three were unemployed, and one was retired. Their ages ranged from
20 to 45 years, with one elderly woman. Three were educated human service professionals. Four informants had young children, and one had adult children.

None of the American interviewees reported or appeared to be in financial need. All seemed to have a reasonably secure middle-class existence in Finland, and, therefore, none mentioned utilizing income support services. While it is possible that no lower-income American women responded to the call for participation, social class certainly appeared to be a significant commonality among the informants. This perhaps reflects their level of education as well as the fact that their Finnish husbands had enough access to resources to study abroad at a U.S. university and were in relatively well-paid professional positions. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy of the participants. Work status has also been kept somewhat vague to further maintain confidentiality in this relatively small community.

**Method**

The interview protocol had a chronological framework and raised questions about informants’ lives and experiences before Finland, on coming to Finland, and upon residing in Finland. Interviews took between one to two hours. All interviews were transcribed and read many times. A grounded theory approach was taken to the interview data, which means that the theory of the phenomenon was generated from the data (Charmaz 2006). Major themes were coded and grouped according to the three main time periods covered in the interviews. The researcher used memos to elaborate on the categories and draw comparisons between informants’ narratives and time periods. The analytical categories thus emerged from the data and were not derived from hypotheses. This allowed the voices of the U.S. women, and how they constructed their experiences, to surface without being shaped into pre-conceived notions of immigrant experience in Finland.

**Findings**

The women’s stories are structured in this analysis into three main themes that continually reemerged during the interviews:

- Arriving, adjusting, and the reasons for immigrating [expectations and experiences]
- Perceptions of themselves as foreigners, women, and Americans
- Reflecting on life in Finland and the future

The interviews started with the women narrating their own stories of their backgrounds and how they had come to Finland. Similar to other researchers’ experiences, the author found that the interviewees “were not just simply sharing their perspectives of race and ethnicity, they are crafting interpretations in and reaction to through interaction with researchers” (de Andrade 2000, 286–87). Hence many interviewees contradicted earlier answers, trying to place more positive emphasis
or revealing the cracks behind previously positive answers which often displayed the ambivalence that many felt about their current situations.

**ADJUSTING TO FINNISH SOCIETY**

All of the married women were wed before coming to Finland, and none expressed the expectation that they would immigrate after marrying. American wives generally reported meeting their Finnish husbands as students at U.S. colleges. None of these women said that they had been interested in moving to Finland; rather the move was considered a job opportunity for their husbands. The two single women were recruited for contracted work in Finland related to their language skills. None of the interviewees came to Finland simply as an immigrant in search of a new life. Immigration as such is not possible in Finland where a declared reason (e.g., employment, marriage, and education) must be accepted by the authorities with evidence (e.g., a job contract or a marriage license) (Finnish Immigration Service 2012). As all of the women came as spouses or to take up a contracted job, they were the immigrants most favored by Finnish law and faced few barriers to obtaining residence permits, though the process of obtaining permits can be lengthy.

**Social Networks and Community**

The women reported that the barriers they faced in adjusting to Finnish society were more social rather than structural:

Finland is not particularly an open kind of place. It is not open to foreigners. And there are times that I get really tired of that. People have friends that they’ve had since high school and no one ever really broadens their circles. They are very closed in some ways to new people and experiences. It’s fine if you are coming to visit, but if you are coming to live it’s a different question altogether. People are really open and friendly to visitors but to really open to people staying here is really rare. [. . .] We don’t have friends and we’ve always had friends. And it’s so odd not to have friends. We have acquaintances, but the friendship that Finns talk about, we don’t have. [. . .] It’s a big deal to be asked to someone’s house. No one wants to make that commitment. (Elaine, professional)

Finnish society was thus constructed by the women as insular and difficult to penetrate. Social circles were not “broadened” and newcomers were seen as isolated. Many women noted that they were rarely invited to people’s homes and emphasized their perception of the closed nature of Finnish social networks.

Finding social happiness was the biggest thing. I became close to some Americans because it was so hard to make a social connection. [. . .] I’ve gone through all of the stages [. . .]. You start to accept the things that you
cannot change. Now I look for the subtle signs that people might want to be your friend. I invite people for dinner, but it is rarely the other way around. They are very private. They do not have large social networks like in the States. (Harriet, housewife)

The women, thus, constructed themselves as outside of closed social networks. Many said that they would like to volunteer but found few opportunities to get involved with “the community.” Other women said that they sought out community through church but found that most Finns maintained boundaries between spiritual and personal life (“they separate everything so separately.” — Terry). Several women said that they belonged to churches that specifically catered to foreigners and offered important emotional support during periods of loneliness and homesickness. At the same time, many women discussed their perceptions of the different sense of connection as a society in Finland:

In the U.S., there’s a sense that everyone has a right to achieve their dreams whereas here the focus seems to be more on the right to being treated fairly. (Meredith, professional)

Fairness and equality were seen as fundamental principles of Finnish society by most of the women, who mentioned the generous social benefits for families and children and free college education as examples. At the same time, some informants noted that official equality could create a sense that one need not be personally responsible for others:

The main difference is socialism or welfare state, whatever you call it. They’ve grown up like in the U.S. it takes a village, and they don’t have that mentality. People are very much on their own. Like when I first came, I was horrified there’s like somebody who fell on the street and just laying there and I’m like freaking out, call 911 and do something and everyone is just walking around. . . . (Katharine, teacher)

I knew I had really arrived in Finland when I was walking down the street and there was this big fat guy lying in the street and I stepped over him. And I never would have done this in the U.S., I would have asked if I could help or called 911. (Elaine, professional)

Several interviewees described these types of examples of failing to call for help when seeing a person in distress or walking around an individual lying unconscious on the sidewalk as emblematic of adjusting to Finnish cultural rules of community. They strongly emphasized the difference between their own cultural reactions at home and those expected in Finland. The interviewees described their own cultural perceptions of belonging to a community of mutual responsibility and of having a
social support network regardless of location of origin. They contrasted this to their view of Finnish cultural perceptions as focused on membership in the welfare state, which the interviewees saw as impersonal. The American women thought that their Finnish counterparts restricted their social networks to those from childhood, which did not expand. Many American women spoke of the sense that this impenetrable gate barring newcomers into social networks prevented them from feeling included in Finnish society. However, these perceptions also revealed American cultural tendencies to value individual or community rights and ties over the structural and collective rights and responsibilities of the welfare state.

The Finnish Language

Finland is a bilingual country (Finnish and Swedish), though English is widely spoken by most Finns under the age of fifty. English is not, however, used commonly as a language at work except in certain situations with customer service or in some large corporations. Therefore, competency in Finnish is essential to integrate into the Finnish job market. Finnish language education for immigrants has expanded rapidly in recent years but, during the time of these interviews, it was not extensively available to immigrants. To be enrolled in language training, an immigrant must have a referral from the labor office or else pay for the training out of pocket, possibly with assistance from study grants from the Social Insurance Institution, depending on family income. Learning how to navigate the system required knowledge of Finnish:

> When I went to the job center and asked for information, the immigrant link worker handed me a huge stack of papers in Finnish and I had only been here three months. If I didn’t have a Finnish husband, I wouldn’t have known what to do. (Ellen, unemployed)

> Many of these women had never had the experience of being socially excluded because of language or ethnicity as they were from the dominant population in the United States. Almost every informant underlined the importance of learning the Finnish language, though few reported having learned Finnish very well. Susan studied Finnish diligently during her first year in Finland at university and describes her experience as follows:

> [. . .] at that point, I felt this is enough for a short term, so I quit. And then all of the sudden you’re still here with bad Finnish. When I came, I had temporary expectations. (Susan, teacher)

Motivation to learn Finnish thus seemed highly dependent on the women’s individual sense of belonging and their anticipation of a future in Finland. Only one of the women claimed to speak fluent Finnish, which she had learned by taking intensive
courses and participating in all-Finnish sports teams, while the others reported feeling overwhelmed by the experience of cultural adjustment.

**Career Challenges**

All of the women had varying levels of higher-education degrees and had fully expected to have flourishing careers by this stage in their lives. The difficulty of getting into the Finnish labor market came as a great shock to most of the women:

I was in cultural shock the first year. I kept a diary then, and then there was “What the hell am I doing here?” I had the shock and then the depression of: what am I going to do? What kind of career can I have here? And then you fall into the trap of how many foreigners end up teaching English because [. . .]. So, I started teaching English. So that was really beneficial for my Finnish skills (laughs). (Susan, teacher)

Susan shows the dilemma that many highly educated Western foreigners fall into: unable to get a foothold in their own fields, they fall into native-language teaching which can further hinder adjustment to Finnish society because of the lack of language skills.

Job-wise it was really challenging in the beginning, and I think that was the hardest part. I faced a really tough time in the beginning. I would call it one of the most humbling experiences of my entire life. I came in thinking that I have a fancy degree and I thought I’d had a lot of experience because I’ve done internships, I was ready to consider the offers and choose the best ones. I was expecting a fairly high salary and, of course, it didn’t happen. When I first came permanently, I had been job hunting meticulously. I had assembled files. I had been speaking with companies for about a year. Then I came and spent ten months of hard, hard work: eight hours every day, very intense follow up with companies and was really getting nowhere. So, that was tough. That was hard. I’ve heard a lot of stories of similar experiences among foreigners in Finland in general and that was tough. (Barbara, professional)

American women, thus, found the culture of getting a foothold in the Finnish labor market daunting. While in the United States aggressively sending out resumés and calling firms might be a useful strategy, some of the women realized that Finnish firms found this off-putting. The lack of local social networks, as discussed earlier, also served as a barrier:

It’s not about the published ads, it’s about who knows who. In that sense, I think Finland is really closed. I used to think it was closed and that it is really a bad thing. Now, I’ve shifted and think that it’s closed and works
in that kind of way. So, it means that it’s hard to get in, but once you’re in and have a good reputation, then you are set. It seems like Finnish business really works on trust and reputation. (Barbara, professional)

Barbara, who was the single woman who claimed to speak fluent Finnish, showed great resilience in overcoming many obstacles to enter the Finnish labor market as a business consultant. She was also able to appreciate different ways of viewing the closed nature of many Finnish social networks. However, her viewpoint was rather exceptional amongst the informants. Most participants echoed Terry, a single woman, who was recruited to come to Finland as a language teacher. When questioned about whether her job was equal to her qualifications, Terry replied, “Absolutely not.” Thus, many of the informants felt that there were significant cultural and linguistic barriers to entering the labor market. Most were not able to follow Barbara’s path of completely immersing herself in Finnish language and culture to remake herself as a Finnish worker, and most of the women resisted completely assimilating, partly out of a fear of losing their sense of identity and finding themselves without any social network. Some of the comments reflected these women’s sense of structural barriers to entering the job market that extended beyond cultural and linguistic competency:

But it’s hard this idea of working with immigrants because everything is so protected. I mean they are not so receptive to having foreigners working with immigrants. (Irene, housewife)

Here we can see an interesting construction of distinct foreign and immigrant identities, which will be discussed further below, revealing that many of the American women saw themselves as foreigners rather than immigrants, which may explain their reluctance towards cultural and linguistic integration. The phrase “everything is so protected,” however, alludes to structural barriers in the labor market that may exclude outsiders and resist enhancing alliances amongst outsiders.

**Perceptions of Self-Identity in Finnish Society**

The informants were asked to discuss their thoughts and experiences as residents of Finland through the lens of their identities as foreigners, women, and Americans. In the interviews, each narrated identity added a layer of distinct, ambivalent, and sometimes contradictory meanings. As discussed above, most of the women found it challenging to develop social networks, integrate culturally and linguistically, and enter the labor market. The majority of the interviewees came as married women to support their husbands’ job opportunities and often did not expect to stay in Finland permanently. At the same time, most of the women did expect to pursue their own careers when they arrived in Finland, even if they imagined the stay to be temporary.
"And Then All of the Sudden, You’re Still Here With Bad Finnish"

Being Housewives and Mothers

All of the interviewees had higher-education degrees and reported growing up with the assumption that they would one day have their own careers. As noted above, all of the informants (except those explicitly brought to Finland on job contracts) found it very difficult to enter the job market. As a result, eight of the thirteen married women (out of a total of sixteen informants) were either unemployed or at home with children. Many of the women staying at home with children expressed the feeling of being forced into the role of housewife as a result of the linguistic, cultural, and structural barriers of the Finnish labor market.

Having the role of housewife evoked deep ambivalence in many of the women. Even though they appreciated having the time to spend with children during their formative years, many felt that the stress of not feeling at home, not being able to fulfill their own hopes for a career, and having difficulty communicating these fears and worries to their Finnish spouses put excessive pressures on their marriages. Many stated that they felt their husbands did not understand the stress experienced by their wives:

My husband is very good, but what I came to realize is that he doesn’t understand. He loves me and wants me to do well and wants to be there for me, but he has no clue. (Patsy, unemployed)

These narratives of estrangement in relationships with regard to the everyday lived experience of the wives’ cultural adjustment to Finland often led the women to speculate about the possibility of divorce. Interestingly, the interviewees framed divorce solely in terms of the potential loss of their children, rather than their husbands. Many of the interviewees had already thought about how custody arrangements might play out in court in the case of divorce:

When I add it up, it’s scary. And with the custody thing, where your child lives the majority of their life that’s where the court would get them to live. I have no intention of divorcing my husband! We get along, but I have so many friends have gone through it so these things go through my head. I think: should we go over there for a few years to even it out? You assume that your spouse would be reasonable, but I’ve seen that people are not. (Katharine, teacher)

For these women living as self-defined foreigners (rather than immigrants) in a country in which they found their aspirations for careers frustrated, children became a central focus of identity and connection. All of the interviewees who had children identified themselves primarily as mothers and then secondly as wives. The specter of divorce was thus strongly associated with the fear of losing their children. In the 1990s, there were a handful of high-profile custody disputes between
Finnish-American couples prominently featured in tabloids. The perception that cross-cultural child custody disputes are problematic is backed up by research conducted by the Finnish National Research Institute of Legal Policy, which indicated that supervised visitation rights are more common when parents of different nationalities divorce (Pystynen 2009). These fears of losing children in a divorce seemed to reinforce the women’s sense of contingency in Finnish society as well as fragile self-identity because at any moment they felt that their primary identification as mothers could be nullified by a court.

Living as a married immigrant in Finland, thus, pushed many of the women into the role of housewife, which most had not contemplated as a career option having spent many years studying for higher degrees. Struggling with cultural, linguistic, and social adjustment, many felt that their husbands could not truly understand what they were going through, especially the sense of loneliness resulting from the lack of friends. This gap in understanding was often narrated as opening rifts in the relationship, where wives expected more support from their husbands. Lacking job status and social networks in Finnish society, many of the married women considered their role as mothers to be central to their own sense of identity. However, their status as mothers seemed contingent upon their relationships to their husbands, as many spoke of reflecting on the potential consequences of divorce.

**Constructing Self-Identity**

Participants found it difficult to put down roots in a society that had few outreach services to this particular population. Further, the perception that Finnish social networks were closed added to the sense of isolation amongst the participants. Many of the American women, thus, reflected the sense that they were being forced into social and gender roles that they did not want. Many had to change their perception of self-identity:

My husband is wonderful, but I missed girlfriends that I could say, “Hey, we need to do something in a very bright place.” That and getting used to not being employed. I mean, you lose part of your identity and I had a hard time getting used to not being employed. And just being disappointed that I couldn’t get employed here. That was very frustrating. At times, I had the feeling that everything I had done in the States was absolutely worthless here, and they don’t appreciate it. I’m highly employable at home, but here it’s just a different outlook. (Patsy, unemployed)

Of the seven interviewees who were employed, four saw themselves as working commensurate to their qualifications, though not in their fields of education. Several of the unemployed women noted that they had highly valued university degrees up to the postgraduate level, but had found few job opportunities in Finland.
Many reflected a sense of regret about the careers that they could have had, as Irene and Sandy discussed:

I guess I had this idea that I was going to have a career. And I think that times are much different. You don’t start and end with the same thing. I thought that by the age of thirty-five, I could say that I was a such-and-such. I can’t really even say that I’m a social worker because I haven’t done it in years. I think had I stayed in the U.S., I would have been running an agency by now. I would probably be heavily enmeshed in the community I was living in. I mean if I had stayed in the States, I would never have stayed home with the kids. (Irene, housewife)

I wouldn’t have either. You can’t do it financially. (Sandy, housewife)

With the passage of time and years at home with children, some women began to doubt whether they could ever go back to the hopes and dreams they had after graduating college:

I don’t speak Finnish 100 percent and I don’t know if I really want to. I don’t know what kind of job I want to get as a real job, I’m so old now (voice trails off). (Katharine, teacher)

For women raised to see their professional status as an essential part of their identities, not having a job removed a significant element of self-identity.

**Outsiders in Finnish Society**

All of the women clearly identified themselves by their nationality first and as foreigners second:

I have to say that all my time here, I’m not an immigrant, I’m not a guest worker. I’m very comfortable with the term “foreigner.” (Alexis, teacher)

None viewed themselves as immigrants to Finland nor had a clear vision of themselves as staying in Finland in the future. The women commonly described themselves as outsiders, which was generally felt as exclusionary and negative amongst informants, reflecting social isolation and alienation. The single respondent who identified herself as a person of color said:

To be honest, I don’t think of my status within Finnish society as I don’t think I am part of it nor do I think I necessarily need to be. I guess what I am saying is that I don’t really try to fit into Finnish society. I know I will always be an outsider in many respects, and I am ok with that. (Meredith, professional)
Meredith reflects a different approach to inclusion and status in mainstream society from those women who self-defined themselves as white. Where the white informants expected to be included and reported deep disappointment and frustration at the perception of not being accepted into Finnish society, the one woman of color is “ok” with her outsider status. Indeed, Meredith links her experience as an Asian American with her status as a foreigner in Finland:

As an Asian American in the U.S., I was often seen as a foreigner (Asian) first. Here, ironically enough, most Finns, upon hearing my English, assume I’m from the U.S. first and Asian second. And, despite the rhetoric, there is still a certain amount of respect that Finns seem to have about the U.S. and Americans in general. (Meredith, professional)

Complex relations of race and “foreignness” can be seen as linked to implicit identification with normative white privilege in the United States and expectations about status in society, even when abroad. Many of the women noted that they embodied a position of privilege because of their whiteness especially in relation to other immigrants, despite the fact that they felt that there were significant barriers to feeling included in Finnish society. As one informant noted:

As a foreigner, I have been told from the beginning that I am acceptable because I’m not taking a job from a Finn, but married to one and look like them. (laughter) As a foreigner, I think I rate pretty high. (Katharine, teacher)

The importance of “being part of the family” was underlined by many participants as both a racialized and gendered position. Some noted that foreign men were in a different position and often seen as taking Finnish women from Finnish men. Many also pointed out that having an American nationality was generally viewed positively in Finland. Whiteness in Finland thus appeared to be a positive and inclusive category to the American informants, unless associated with a stigmatized nationality, such as Russian.

**Newcomers and Old-timers: Reflecting on the Future**

Informants were asked to reflect on their time in Finland and how they saw the future. For many newcomers, the present time in Finland was narrated as frozen or timeless: between a future hard to imagine and a past that was rapidly receding. When asked how she found the strength to cope with this sense of being in a holding pattern, after a long pause, Harriet said:
And Then All of the Sudden, You’re Still Here With Bad Finnish

I can’t answer that. Just keeping busy, I guess that’s the first thing that comes to mind. Just keeping busy so that I don’t have to think about it. And it’s easy now because I have these kiddies. (Harriet, housewife)

The stress revealed in Harriet’s reply might express normal stages of cultural shock through long-term adjustment. It also reflects the fact that lacking professional or personal status in their new society, many of these women focused on children.

Future in Finland?
Most of the interviewees were relatively young, in the twenties to early forties. They had been married only for a few years, they had young children, or they had just taken up employment in Finland. Their vision about “settling down” or retirement naturally seemed rather distant. Many expressed fears about staying in Finland for long:

The older you get, the harder it is to leave the security. I can’t yet see living my whole life here. We’ve never said that we are staying here.
(Susan, teacher)

For the newcomers, fears about staying permanently seemed to be tied to the lack of a sense of belonging and identity in society as well as the loss of professional status. Old-timers, those who had been in Finland for over a decade, had found a way to make a life in Finland. Alexis, a single woman who came to Finland as a contracted language teacher and had lived there for more than thirty years, stated:

I know a lot about culture shock and these things, but I think after a long time people get exhausted with these difficulties. I don’t think that I can do much about it. [. . .] All this extra stress of living abroad does really weigh on people unless you are somehow totally content with your life. [. . .] I just live my own life here. Here I am quite content. I don’t lead a Finnish life because I don’t have to be a Finn [. . .]. I feel sorry for immigrants because it’s a completely different experience to come here for a better life. I came here for work and a different kind of [. . .] and maybe to me at that time it was a better experience. But I wouldn’t say that overall life here is better than where I came from. I could have made a good life there. (Alexis, teacher)

This shows the experience of a long period of time in Finland, including employment commensurate to her experience, and an individual who is able to distinguish the travails of everyday life from the experience of being a foreigner. However, only four of the sixteen participants could be categorized as old-timers. For newcomers, developing a work identity was far more difficult as many felt gendered into the role of mothers. An American old-timer mother, who had raised two adult children in Finland, reflected:
This interview came at a really good time in my life. I worked for so many years to become Finnish and fit in here and to be happy here, that I’ve left the U.S. identity really far behind. I notice that with my older children because they don’t relate anymore. They don’t relate to . . . they don’t feel any affinity to the U.S. We don’t go often enough, and I don’t talk about it often enough. I suppose that’s a natural process, but that’s also me working so hard on being Finnish. I left the rest of that behind. So, now I’m trying to slow . . . America is a huge part of who I am, but it was my childhood, not my adulthood. (Harriet, professional)

Some of the women who had lived in Finland for some length of time had managed to find a balance within their identities.

I think that if you really want to make it work, you can. You live in your own little bubble here. It’s hard being on the outside here . . . but I like it here. (Stella, housewife)

Thus, the American women interviewed for this study reflected ambivalent feelings about the sense of being at home in Finland. Those women who seemed to have adjusted best appeared to have accepted or found the strength to live a life more detached from community.

**DISCUSSION**

This study explores the narratives of self-identity and cultural adjustment by American women permanently resident in Finland. The sixteen women, who were, with one exception, ethnically self-defined as white, represented largely young, career-oriented females with a high level of education. Almost all of the participants told of disappointed expectations of gaining access to status and a sense of belonging in their new country. Married women felt that they had limited or no job opportunities in Finland, despite holding postgraduate degrees. Single women felt that their jobs were often not commensurate with their qualifications. The expectations of status and access narrated by these women can be seen as reflecting an orientation towards privilege that reflects many of the assumptions of a middle class, white, and Western nationality. On the other hand, the insular nature of Finnish social networks often militated against entrance and access in the job market (Valtonen 2001). The participants did not consider that gender would be a barrier, particularly in a society that is widely viewed as gender equal. Hence, married American women in Finland seem to follow the model of women in tied migration in general; they have lower earnings and less status abroad than they would at home (Halfacree 2004). Perhaps because of necessity (i.e., with no husbands to support them), single women appeared to fare better in the job market. However, they were often on short-term
contracts in professions linked to their English-language skills and did not plan to stay in Finland permanently.

Many of the married American female immigrants reported inhabiting a highly gendered and disempowered social position in Finland because they had few employment prospects to step outside of the role of wife and mother. As foreign women in Finland, they felt limited in their opportunities to realize a professional identity, and thus they were forced by circumstance into greater dependence on their husbands than they felt would have occurred at home. The female participants also discussed fears of losing their children, if they were to divorce in Finland. These fears were based on the general international legal principle that custodial arrangements must take into account the preference that children should remain living in their country of habitual residence for reasons of stability. The women also felt that the Finnish court system would favor Finnish husbands. Fears of divorce should not be seen as unreasonable in Finnish society, where international or multicultural marriages fail at three times the rate of Finnish marriages (Statistics Finland 2012). Lacking a professional identity, many of the women constructed their identities as wives and mothers. Yet, this gendered identity was often narrated with a sense of ambivalence as the vacuum of professional identity weighed heavily on many participants. This ambivalence could reflect the contradictions that professional women often face as females socialized to place family first, yet who held career ambitions for professional advancement (Usdansky 2011).

Following the findings of the tied migration studies, married American women appeared to inhabit a disadvantaged gendered position unlike their single counterparts (Halfacree 2004). Though almost all of the women identified themselves as white, they felt frustrated by the barriers to obtaining insider status in Finnish society. At the same time, coming from a more privileged background, many were not compelled to learn Finnish or local ways of assimilating into the community because of their class position and lack of contact with social welfare authorities. Similar to Leinonen’s (2011) findings, the women also saw themselves as “foreigners” rather than “immigrants,” which could contribute to the sense of not belonging in Finnish society. It may be that conceptions of “immigrants” are racialized in a largely homogenous society that has only seen a rise in the multicultural population in recent years.

American women with race and class privilege can distance themselves from many of the struggles their fellow female immigrants face with discrimination and the requirements of various social welfare authorities to participate in Finnish language classes or job training courses. However, they still face many barriers to integrating into Finnish society, which is reflected in their tales of alienation and struggle in finding a social network. Finland is home to a greater diversity of immigrants and foreign citizens than ever before. There is a wide variety of experiences and
expectations of cultural and social adjustment within and between these multifarious
groups that has yet to be fully documented. Immigrant women in Finland are often
constructed as subject to patriarchal husbands and fathers or then rendered invisible
(Keskinen 2011). Gender inequality has thus largely been discussed more as an attrib-
ute of immigrant women’s position in the family, rather than as an issue of their po-
sition in Finnish society. There are growing numbers of studies on “mixed marriages”
between Finns and non-Finns (e.g., Thomas and Guličová-Grethe 2004). There is a
gap in the literature regarding the role that heterosexual marital status plays in the
lives of privileged women immigrants. Apart from Leinonen (2011), there are few
studies that have focused on women with some degree of privilege and their experi-
ences of settling into Finland. Expansion of the representation of the multiplicity of
immigrant experiences is important to broaden the discourse on the complexity of
gender, integration, and belonging in Finnish society. This study presents an opening
into a small community of privileged immigrant women and identifies some of the
major challenges that they face adjusting culturally to Finland. In examining this
small community, this small qualitative study provides some information about the
nuances and complexities that exist within the broad category of “immigrant.”

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Marriage Migration and Skills: Narratives of Latvian Women in Finland

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Abstract
In this article, we look at “skills” and “enfolded mobilities” as intrinsically intertwined processes. By applying interdisciplinary approaches from social anthropology and human geography, we ask how migrating cultural capital is recognized and negotiated during marriage migration. Data draw on thirteen in-depth interviews collected in 2011 with highly skilled Latvian women married to Finnish men in Finland. Gender, ethnicity, migrant status, and professional skills form the inter-categorical axes of analysis. We argue that highly skilled migration is complexly embedded in multiple decision-making processes and in individual and national/regional biographies and histories. We interpret our findings through interlinked themes: the decision to move to Finland, the opportunities for work, the feelings and emotions associated with the integration process, the importance of language skills, names as ethnic signifiers, and prospects for future mobilities.

Keywords: highly skilled migrants, gender, cultural capital, Finland, Latvia
INTRODUCTION
Highly skilled migration cannot be studied as an isolated phenomenon, separate from the complexities of human life. The migrants of this study are not only highly skilled workers, but also individuals with spouses and children, and they have dreams and ambitions that fall outside the parameters of the labor market.

Narratives of daily life, interwoven with emotional reflections upon one’s own life, of one’s projections of one’s children’s future, of changes in cultural capital, and of personal decisions made by a couple are the center of our geographical and anthropological foci. Our guiding research question is how migrating cultural capital is recognized, negotiated, and interpreted during the migration process of women who migrate because of marriage. We argue here that skilled migration needs to be examined in the context of human life. Migration, professional skills, and the ability to participate in a labor market for highly skilled workers are also intrinsically gendered, and categorized geographically and socio-historically. This article approaches such issues in the context of Latvian women who migrate to Finland because of personal relationships with Finnish men or marriages to Finnish spouses. After almost half a century under Soviet rule, Latvia regained its independence in 1991. Seeking to return to Europe, Latvia’s political leaders opened the country’s economy for foreign investment. Opened borders after the collapse of the Soviet Union meant new opportunities for Latvia’s inhabitants to travel to Western countries. Latvians were attracted to Western culture, and the opportunity to live, study, and work there, and out-migration especially increased after the country joined the European Union in 2004. Over the past decade, more than 213,000 individuals have emigrated from a nation that, in 2012, had a population of barely 2 million people (CSB 2012).

The United Kingdom and Ireland are the most popular destination countries for skilled, non-skilled, and student migration. Migration flows to Germany, Norway, and Sweden are also rapidly increasing. Despite the relative geographical proximity between Latvia and Finland, migration from Latvia to Finland has been rather limited: fewer than one thousand Latvian citizens have moved to Finland during the two decades since Latvia regained its independence. However, the numbers do continue to grow, even if incrementally, each year. In 2011 there were 1,173 registered Latvian citizens in Finland (Statistics Finland 2012).

This article is based on interviews with highly skilled Latvian women who moved to Finland over the course of the past two decades, most of them after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. As the stories of our research participants reveal, these Finnish entrepreneurs and academics have maintained lively contacts in the region since Latvia embarked on its road toward joining the European Union. These Latvian women and Finnish men crossed paths during men’s business trips to Latvia, and soon the choice of place of residence became not an individual’s decision, but a matter for the couple to decide. The article begins with theoretical
considerations, after which we briefly present our methodology and then provide an analysis of recognition and negotiation of cultural capital, where gender and family, migrant status and professional skills unfold intersectionally.

**Theorizing Identity, Family, and Skills Across the Borders**

The decision to move to Finland requires that a couple negotiate dual-career prospects, a negotiation that depends in part upon gender, ethnicity, and migrant status. It is not enough to be highly educated in order to be perceived and categorized as skilled and desirable in the labor market; it involves mobilizing one’s social and cultural capital in geographically and historically specific ways. By a situated analysis of the case of Latvian women in Finland, we aim to expand both theoretical and empirically based interpretations of gendered migration processes as embedded in the complex course of a life (Anthias 2007). As Mai and King (2009) argue, a variety of emotional, affective, and sexual liaisons, attachments, and expectations are powerful and necessary motivations for mobility—moving away can often be motivated by love and care for a partner, family, or children. There is a growing wealth of studies that discuss career developments for highly skilled migrants in Europe (e.g., Al Ariss, Koall, Özbilgin, and Suutari 2012; van den Bergh and du Plessis 2012). Studies of partner choices indicate that a person tends to form long-term partnerships with someone who has similar levels of education and cultural capital (e.g., Giddens 1992; Blackwell and Lichter 2000; 2004; Schwartz and Mare 2005; Saarela and Finnäs 2013) and, more specifically, with someone who holds similar perspectives regarding family migration and gender (Willis, Yeoh, and Fakhri 2002; Willis and Yeoh 2000a, 2000b; Iredale 2005; Richardson 2006; González-Ferrer 2006; Al Ariss 2010). This is the case with our Latvian participants, who were married mostly to men who also worked in highly skilled occupations.

In this article, we propose to look at professional skills as cultural capital, and at migration as “enfolded mobilities” (Williams 2006, 2009). By “highly skilled migrants,” we mean those who hold a university degree, their “skills” representing a complexity of forms of cultural capital and the ways in which formal higher education is interlinked with professional and cultural skills such as language knowledge. We also understand mobilities to be both geographical and social. For example, married individuals are usually not free in their decisions about where to move geographically and which jobs to undertake since their mobilities are enfolded and related to plans of their spouses and ideas about where and how a couple can enable a better future for their children. By applying interdisciplinary approaches from social anthropology and human geography, we ask how migrating cultural capital is formed, recognized, and negotiated during the so-called marriage migration. Our theoretical vantage point is grounded in Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital (1986, 1996) and in its various applications in studies of highly skilled migrants, especially,
in critique of the “rucksack approaches” (Erel 2010). Gender, ethnicity, migrant status, and higher education as a basis for formally recognizing a person as “highly skilled” form the inter-categorical axes by which to analyze the dynamics of mobilization of migrating cultural capital, or its contrary process, when cultural capital is immobilized because it is not valued locally, or becomes temporarily inactive due to family obligations or other such reasons. Accordingly, we give voice to these narratives and follow the changing feelings that counter the preconceived notions of high self-esteem and stoicism associated with highly skilled professionals across the borders. Our informants appear as full human beings—migrating and integrating, categorized and categorizing, stereotyped and stereotyping, loving and caring, accomplished professionally, and yet narrating pain.

Several studies have applied Bourdieu’s theories of cultural capital to an analysis of highly skilled migration (see Weiss 2005, al Ariss and Syed 2011, Habti 2012, Koikkalainen, this volume). We agree with Umut Erel’s (2010) critique of approaches in migration studies that treat cultural capital—language skills, education, and professional experience—as something that fits or does not fit into a new country. Drawing on the analysis of skilled Turkish women in Germany and Britain, Erel argues that migration results in new ways of both producing and reproducing cultural capital that builds on power relations in countries of origin or destination. Furthermore, migrants create mechanisms of validation for their cultural capital through various strategies, for example, intra-migrant differentiations of gender, ethnicity, and class.

The convertibility of resources is an important aspect of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital. For example, formal education as an institutionalized resource can be converted across a border if a person’s qualifications are recognized, and the resource of embodied cultural capital in the form of language skills can be converted into economic capital. However, despite the fact that language skills can lead to jobs that are transnational or can serve to facilitate links between two countries, these jobs are not necessarily better paid or more prestigious in the labor market or more desirable to an individual. Erel (2010) also stresses the importance of ethnic and national identity as an organizing category in mobilizing cultural capital. This is important not only in intra-migrant differentiations; as in Latvia’s case, ethnic and national identity might be between “Latvian” and “Russian” as complex socio-historical constructions. But in practice national identity is also a tacit strategy in a receiving country to keep highly skilled jobs. Ethnic Latvians in Finland in some cases particularly can emphasize their “Latvianness” to distinguish themselves from Russians or other migrants from post-Soviet countries, while in other cases a Latvian citizen but an ethnic Russian from Latvia can realize that he or she has a better chance in Finland because of his or her native Russian language skills.

In our approach, we highlight the importance of mobilities enfolded in family and the course of one’s life, both as reasons to migrate to Finland and as continuous
processes through which one’s careers—and those of others—are negotiated and validated (Liversage 2009, Williams 2009). In interpretations of the mobilization and negotiation of cultural capital, we use a concept “doing family” as a process in which family should be created, practiced, and maintained (Finch 2008; Nelson 2006). Since family practices are often taken from the dominant understanding of a society about how family roles are to be distributed, many things can be seen as natural. But when an individual encounters a new situation—for example, she moves to another country—uncertainty can arise, and these accepted practices can be questioned more acutely. Our approach elucidates the intergenerational processes of cultural capital because all of our informants have raised the children in their mixed families in Finland.

In our analysis of cultural capital, we also consider identity as both individual and collective: an individual identity is strongly related to and even dependent upon the collective identity (Barnard and Spencer 1998;Refsing 1998). Identity, thus, is a process during which belonging expresses itself as an interaction between the individual and the collective: in individual identity, there are elements that are compared to and aligned with aims and values that link particular individuals (a skilled person, an intellectual, those who are valued in that society) to their collective identity (Stråth 2008). Thus, identities can be problematized through the very process of trying to create and maintain bi-ethnic and bi-cultural belonging, which is particularly important for families in transition (Leake 2007, 136). In our case study, these are ethnically mixed families, where both parents are highly skilled and who are trying to invest not only in their own but also in their children’s cultural capital. According to Barth (1969, 15), the most important aspect of ethnicity is not cultural traits and differences but how boundaries are drawn between various ethnic groups. Because we focus on migrating cultural capital, ethnic signifiers are an important aspect of our attention. Moreover, all these aspects are linked in a circle of interpretation which understands that people from different cultures can have much in common, especially in terms of class, education, and professional experience (Breger and Hill 1998).

Therefore, in our analysis of these women’s narratives, gender, family, border crossings, national migration policies, and the individual’s own will and professional ambitions are treated as a whole. All these intersecting elements influence how cultural capital can be mobilized (Anthias 2007). We develop our analysis in the following thematic blocks: (1) entry into Finland and how the skills of and opportunities for highly skilled work played (or did not play) a role in this process; (2) national understandings of one’s chances in and desirability for the Finnish labor market as socially translated and perceived by our informants (for example, based on their experiences, informants perceive that a Finnish person would be preferred by local employers to a non-Finn); (3) transnationally desired skills such as intercultural
competence, social networks across the borders, and language skills; and (4) individual and intergenerational projections and practices of investing in children’s cultural capital, as well as reflections regarding future choices for work and dwelling. All these axes are relationally embedded in individual and national/regional biographies and histories.

**A Note on Methodology**

The analytical strategy takes a qualitative approach in order to understand how informants make sense of their experiences as highly skilled migrants, women, and family members. Our qualitative study is based on thirteen in-depth interviews with highly skilled Latvian women married to Finnish citizens in Finland. All of them have tertiary education and have completed degrees up to the highest, doctoral level. They are professionals in various fields, ranging from international development and law, to the financial sectors and the arts and humanities. The data were collected in 2011 from Finland’s capital city, Helsinki, and from a region one hundred kilometers around it. All interviews were tape-recorded, providing nineteen recorded hours, and were transcribed word for word by Marta Balode. In the transcripts we paid attention to periods of silence, noted particularly emotional expressions, laughter, and sighs; if certain words were emphasized, we use capital letters. The quotations presented in this article are translated from Latvian as all interviews were conducted in Latvian, with a few occasions where Finnish partners added their opinions in Finnish. We mark silences with three dots inside parentheses ( . . . ), whereas in cases when some parts of a quotation have been omitted, we mark the omission with brackets [. . . ]. Most informants had worked in Latvia as highly skilled professionals (except one, who moved to Finland at the age of seven and obtained a full education there). The informants’ ages range from thirty to sixty-three, while the time spent in Finland ranges from five to twenty-three years at the time of the interviews in February and March 2011. While formally classified as highly skilled because of their education and work experience, most of the women came to Finland as a result of personal relationships. Thus, they cannot be said to have entered Finland primarily as privileged highly skilled migrants (see also Clarke, this volume).

A semi-structured interview method (Corbetta 2003; Bernard 2006) was used to allow free interpretation and, at the same time, to cover certain pre-determined topics, such as migration experiences, family, and the choice of surname after the marriage. Narratives of their migration experience allow us to see the shifting gendered identities particularly well. Additionally, the narratives of the self in different times and spaces hold together fragmented feelings in a unified story (Elliot 2005, 125). Since our research touches upon sensitive and personal issues, recruitment of research participants was achieved through snowball sampling (Corbetta 2003, 268) where the recommendation of a research participant served also as a source of trust.
Our informants created a rather homogeneous group: they perceive of themselves as Latvians; they are married to people who perceive of themselves as Finns or Swedish Finns; and all have children. The fact that they have children allows us to overcome the individualistic reductionism of highly skilled people’s lives. This also opens up an arena for projections regarding the future choice of the country of residence for the family, the couple’s careers, and prospects for their children. Informants were busy professionals, mothers, and wives, who had to coordinate work schedules, to meet obligations to pick up children after school, and to cater to the children’s after-school activities. Because of these women’s busy calendars, some of our scheduled interviews, for instance, had to be rescheduled as many as five times.

All interviews have been conducted under explicit informed consent. Names are fictional, and some other professional and personal details have been changed in this article to protect anonymity.

A ROAD TO FINLAND

As indicated in the introduction, it is romantic relationships that often lead people to embark on a journey that they otherwise might not have considered. It is often the beginning of a long process where partnership, “doing family,” education and professional skills, negotiation of self-worth, and possible directions of future migration are all intertwined. In the following quotation, a highly educated and talented woman, the mother of an eight-year-old child, explains why she moved to Finland and discusses her daily life there:

I was so much in love, you know; I had pink glasses on my eyes, but reality came back. Arrival here [in Finland] was a shock to me; I had a very good job position in Latvia, I had income. But here suddenly I was a migrant, unemployed and without a language. It was very difficult, the fact that I could not speak, and could not express myself. I still have very strange relationships with that language. I have Finnish people with whom I can speak Finnish but I hate mistakes and I make mistakes all the time. [Now] I am all the time, all the time busy, preparing projects for Latvia, writing, studying here. [. . .] It is so that when I go to Latvia or I work on my projects, Finnish words flow in. I work in German, English, Finnish, and Latvian on everyday basis, and I forget to pay attention to how [purely] I speak Latvian to my daughter. I have a secret dream that she could go to Latvia for an exchange study program one day. (Mara)

Our interviews reveal that the motivation to move to Finland also grew out of previous contacts—both professional and personal. Research participants either first had an interest in Finland through their work in Latvia or had been keen to learn
the Finnish language and culture, and therefore took advantage of the greater opportunities to see the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union:

I was in high school during 1990s. Under the Soviet Union there were minimal chances to establish contacts abroad [. . .] well, what’s the reason to know the English language if you have nobody to speak to in that language? So, I thought I could be different and add some other language and study a Nordic language (. . .). Finnish was proposed, and through this activity I got a chance to come here. It was initially thought just for three years. (Ilze)

In some cases, both partners came to Finland from another country where both had been either working or studying. For example, as one informant explained, she and her partner first decided that they would not stay in a country where they had together pursued their education. Then they had tried to live and work in Latvia, but it was difficult for the Finnish partner to find decent employment there, and, therefore, “for a change,” they chose Finland since the Latvian woman already spoke Finnish. In another case, the decision to move to Finland was made because of a professional interest in Finnish culture and a wish to escape from Latvia, which was not perceived by young professionals as a desirable place to live and work. The decision to go to Finland can be even more influenced not by pull-factors in Finland but by the urge to leave Latvia. One of our informants emphasized that she felt as a stranger in Latvia; this was her reason to leave the country. She had completed her secondary education abroad and had returned to Latvia to pursue higher education there.

Education level at the university was awful, but the attitude was, “Oh, what do you think of yourself? Do you think that you are superior to others just because you have completed school abroad?” I have encountered this so often in Latvia; it all ended so that I run away from Latvia to yet another country to complete my university degree and then it was quite clear that I would not go back to Latvia. It is easier for me to be a stranger in a strange country. [. . .] I came to Finland through my studies; I already had studied Finnish in Latvia. I met a Finnish man through my studies, and he was a reason why I moved to Finland. I think if I had stayed in my profession as a Finnish language specialist, sooner or later I would have come to Finland. (Laura)

In most of the cases, the decision to go to Finland was related to the partner’s work or his job prospects in Finland. In addition, Finland’s migration policy influenced the decision of when a Latvian spouse could join the Finnish partner. As in the narrative excerpt below, marriage migration of highly skilled partners not only
Marriage Migration and Skills

requires familial planning (and possibly a serious change in one partner’s career path) but sometimes also requires physical separation and/or waiting for an appropriate professional job offer:

After university, I was invited to work for a Finnish company [in Latvia in the early 1990s]. I spoke English because I had worked abroad one summer. Not many people knew English at that time in Latvia. So I was offered a job in a Finnish company, and I stayed there. Then, Finnish entrepreneurs started coming to Latvia, Finnish business expanded in the region. He came from Finland, we met, and we got married. We considered options to live in Latvia or Finland. We decided that I would have more opportunities to find work in Finland as compared to his little chances in Latvia. I knew English but his Latvian language was nonexistent. We also thought about having children in the future, and on this matter we were also taking into account economic security. But after our wedding, I still lived for one year in Latvia because I did not have a job in Finland. That was particularly difficult; we were just married, but we had to live separately. (Anda)

By paying attention to motivation and the ways the women came to Finland, we want to emphasize that skilled migration should be contextually understood through historical transformations and links between countries, businesses, and personal contacts. Moreover, as the experiences of our research participants reveal, a move to Finland was enfolded in mobilities (including the prospects of upward social mobility) of their partners and future children.

Work Opportunities in Finland: Moral and Familial Strategies
The decisions made by couples to leave Latvia and move to Finland are deeply intertwined with politics and are interpreted and perceived as such by our research participants:

I had a deep resentment towards the state of Latvia. [. . .] It is a country, where I was born, do you understand? [. . .] All that beauty there, Latvia is . . . so important to me! But do you know why I left? Do you know how little I was earning, I was a docent at a university [. . .] and I had a child, and I had to pay a rent and to eat [. . .]. I was working in two places, fighting from morning until late but nothing came out of that, I barely could make ends meet. [. . .] You know, bitterness was brewing inside me against all that system. I was alone with a small child and I literally could not survive. [. . .] And then I met my future husband in a conference [. . .]. Step by step, we started thinking that I could look for a job in
Finland. So, we wrote a project proposal and secured funding so I could come to Finland for a year. (Gunita)

Being highly skilled, well-paid, and recognized in society often also implies specific emancipation and gender equality. Thus, migration policies and migration stages that frame a non-working spouse as “a dependent migrant” stir a conflict between how a woman perceives herself and the connotations implied by her status as a migrant. To be labelled a dependent migrant, as a migration regime usually categorizes a foreign partner, was perceived as creating unequal power relations within the marriage, and thus to be avoided in relationships where both professionals desired to see themselves and each other as equals, especially in terms of their ability to earn and pursue their respective careers.

I had a very good life in Latvia, I had everything: influential parents, I was studying at a school for national elite. I had a good job and studies. From time to time I was browsing for work opportunities [in Finland]. How can one come and live, relying only on the partner’s income? If you have a job, it’s fine, so I thought about how to find a job. Then we [company in Latvia] organized courses for Finnish entrepreneurs, and I found a job in one of the Finnish enterprises [through this activity] ( . . . ) that all went very well, as Finns say, a red thread, punainen lanka [in Finnish] was running through all this. I knew the culture already, it was an environment I knew already, places, customs, traditions, how they do things, and language was an extremely important factor. I did not have any problems. I spoke Finnish fluently. (Katrina)

However, not all were fluent speakers of Finnish when they arrived in Finland or perceived of themselves as fluent speakers of Finnish. The lack of language skills was painful during the first years. For some couples, the Latvian spouse first found a job and only then moved to Finland, but this did not remove the more complex requirements for integrating into a new place, the building of new social networks in order to feel accepted and to belong in Finland:

I was in a state of shock; I did not understand anything. [. . .] It was a [. . .] painful time. The beginning was difficult. Besides, I was alone. My husband’s work involved frequent travel, he was away a lot. That’s why he said at the beginning: “What will you do here [in Finland] when you arrive?” What could I have done? Stayed at home? My husband said: “You would have gone crazy.” (Anda)

However, highly educated migrants cannot always get the jobs they aspire to, especially in the early stages of migration, and the same applies for their Finnish
spouses. In some cases, finding suitable employment takes time; a highly skilled person often must accept a devaluation of his or her skills in order to enter the Finnish labor market and then prove that he or she is able to climb up to more desirable and suitable work:

It was difficult for my husband to find work [when the couple arrived in Finland after their studies abroad]. Somehow, I immediately found different work, very simple jobs. And we stayed here. In the summer, I was working a sort of a summer job, but in autumn I got an office job in an international culture center, related to links between Finland and the Baltics. (Agnija)

Knowledge of both the Latvian and Finnish languages and an additional proficiency in English and Russian do not necessarily lead to highly paid and highly valued jobs. Several informants, as in the instance of Agnija, said that they have obtained jobs where their cultural capital could be used. However, the situation was not always satisfying for the employee. For instance, Elina found a job with a small enterprise, helping an entrepreneur expand his business into Latvia. But the company’s products were not of high quality. Elina explains: “Latvians were sending back those products [...]. I felt caught between a rock and a hard place” (Elina).

Transnational activities, even when they are carried out on a voluntary basis without pay, provide personal satisfaction as mentally enriching and fulfilling. Therefore, the transnational cultural capital is used somewhat like a hobby, rather than as an exchange for economic capital and a higher income:

Now I am fully immersed, I finally feel that I am in my niche when I am asked to develop cooperation between Finland and Latvia. I think this is what I wanted [to do]. (Laura)

Moreover, highly skilled people tend to follow opportunities in their profession and overcome the boundedness of certain places and nationally defined labor markets. However, in these cases the decision to move somewhere else is also constrained by family obligations, as in Liga’s case:

He found a job in Helsinki and we are living here with the mutual agreement that if I get a job and we can manage our family incomes, then we all will move there. But I do not have such a job. It does not matter what kind of job it is. And actually our attitude is that we are open. Yes, we bought a flat here but it does not mean that one day we could not move somewhere else. Now, when I have a small child, I look differently: it is easier to live in Finland with small children than in Latvia. But on the other hand, children grow up fast. (Liga)
To sum up, there were several strategies for negotiating professional skills and family togetherness, influenced by migration policy, and experienced by our research participants. In addition, friendships are more difficult to create as an adult when people lack contacts from school. Creating new relationships requires more effort and openness. We want to emphasize that the challenges of integration into Finnish culture are not necessarily absent for highly skilled people simply because they have advanced academic degrees. This leads us to the discussion of the importance of language skills as a form of cultural capital for highly skilled migrants.

**Language and Historical Sensitivities**

Most research participants underlined the paramount importance of acquiring Finnish language skills and an understanding of Finnish culture in order to expand or improve the chances for their employment and to further their careers. The process of learning a language and a culture takes years, and, in some cases, is perceived to be never fully completed. However, it is not impossible to reach a level that is compatible with a skilled career. The migrants’ cultural capital, thus, is fundamentally a process, not a “thing” that can be brought along in a cultural “rucksack” (Erel 2010). The necessity of learning the language is narrated in normative terms, most often using the second-person point of view in order to explain that something “ought” and “should be done” if this immigrant wishes to integrate into Finnish society. One participant referred to six years of her life in Finland as the “beginning years.”

> It is extremely important to learn the language. I was speaking English at the beginning. That [Finnish] language is so, so important! It is possible to survive without the language, but then you live in a sort of a parallel world. You do not understand what is going on around you. You do not live in their world. If you don’t learn the language, you will always remain an outsider. Besides, I wanted to stay in Finland, so it was my confirmation of respect; I felt it self-evident that I should learn the language. It took some six years. When I started speaking more [in Finnish], I felt more secure. It turned out that I have nice neighbors, acquaintances to have coffee with, to go somewhere together. (Anda)

Self-esteem and self-value are often highlighted in relation to the perception of the self as highly skilled and valued for these skills and for the ability to learn new skills. “Those things are closely related to your own feelings, and I think I have never had problems with self-esteem; I have never felt less worthy than Finnish people,” Katrina, one informant, stressed during the course of her interview. The ability to integrate into Finnish society and to negotiate one’s cultural capital and gender roles is a matter of self-esteem for highly skilled migrants.
However, self-esteem works also in the opposite direction: the inability to speak the Finnish language was often narrated as a psychological barrier and a cause of ontological insecurity. It is further highlighted by our informants’ preconception that a highly educated person should be able to learn a foreign language. It comes together with self-blame for the inability to be precise and fluent in grammar and vocabulary. One of the common attitudes that helps to mobilize the acquired capital of language skills is “you just have to do it.” Our informants frequently stressed this as a self-encouragement to speak Finnish.

I doubt I will ever be able to learn to speak better. Maybe I do not have a gift for languages. I make mistakes and they immediately know that I am not a Finn, but it does not hurt me any more. I do not have a psychological barrier any more. I just speak out what I need to say, and they understand. (Gunita)

However, knowledge of the Finnish language is clearly not something that a highly skilled migrant can purchase, put in her “rucksack” of cultural capital, and display to potential employers or use as a tool to integrate better into Finnish society. Learning the Finnish language is contextualized differently over the time: as either instrumental, as we demonstrated in the quote above when Gunita uses the language to communicate, no matter how “impure” her Finnish is, or as a nuanced cultural tool, as we demonstrate in the excerpt below. The latter involves the ability and desire to account for the diversity of accents and expressions that one can find in Finland and the sophistication of nuances in personal style and language as a cultural marker, and this can take many years to master. The interpretation of one’s language skills as a form of cultural capital interestingly unfolds in narratives, when the Finnish language is discussed as a complex, overlapping process of individual and collective identities:

They [local people] see that I might look a bit different, my gestures and my overall personality are not typically Finnish. When I write in Finnish now, I pay more attention to the fact that I lack Finnish words to express myself. Through this I understand that I am at a different stage now. If I tried to cut myself into Finnishness in the beginning, now I am at a stage that I am more MYSELF. With Finnishness, I complement myself, and now I have the best of both worlds. I do not think any more if I am Latvian or have become a Finn or somebody else. I am more myself, and I have all these elements at my disposal. (Katrina)

Despite the fact that several of our research participants work for international companies and that their working language is English, all of them stressed...
the importance of Finnish language skills. Speaking Finnish is a way to avoid living in a parallel world. It is a way of being accepted, as well as a way of accepting one’s own identity in Finland. However, language and “Finnishness” as a way of life and appearance, while simultaneously felt and expressed as “otherness” due to Latvian origins, are mobilized in interesting ways through the ethnic “otherness” in both Latvia’s and Finland’s historical formations. Among Latvian highly skilled migrants mobilizing and contesting the “other” cultural capital play out through narratives of “Russianness” and “Swedishness”—many Russians are “other” in Latvian context and the “Swedish” are “other” in the Finnish context. Like in the quote below, Katrina emphasized that being recognized as a non-Finn but very closely related to Finnish culture is rather an additional value. Some Latvians have German- or Swedish-origin surnames. However, one’s cultural capital and ethnicity are historically intertwined and relationally interpreted, and our informants are aware of that: some strategically resist being perceived as “Russians” (because of Latvia’s Soviet past). They may also play out the difference as, for instance, being “Swedish” or deliberately “other” among the Finns:

Most often people think that I am a Swedish-speaking Finn, and this is a very lovely feature. My work colleague is a Swedish-speaking Finn, and I might have acquired some accent from her. I speak a little bit of Swedish, I understand all, but speak little. [. . .] In some sense I feel that Swedish culture could be a bit closer to Latvian culture, I mean Swedish culture in Finland. I feel somehow closer to it than to the Finnish culture, probably due to some Germanic nuances. (Katrina).

In this case, Katrina, a professional woman, plays out her difference in a way that empowers her, and she calls it “a very lovely feature.” However, in most cases, when Latvian women have been labelled as “Russian,” this is perceived as negative:

I don’t like to be mistaken for a Russian, even more so because I am not Russian! The beginning was quite difficult because I felt that everybody thinks that I am a Russian. Especially on the streets and in shops. In an office, where I was working, there were foreigners visiting from time to time [. . .]. They did not have objections to foreigners. [. . .] I did not speak Finnish at all in the beginning. It was a big problem to overcome that. [. . .] I felt so down here in the beginning. But then all became settled gradually only through the language learning. Language is the most important instrument of integration [stresses each syllable]. Maybe there was none of that negative attitude by others, maybe I just imagined that?! [. . .] By learning the language I started feeling better. But maybe
it was only the length of time that I have stayed here; it’s very difficult to say. (Gunita)

Seeing our data contextually, “Russianness” here is not a pure ethnic category; it is an intersectional social construction that is sensitively translated by our informants who come from an ethnically mixed country, where the division between Latvians and Russians is still very pronounced for historical reasons and non-shared social and historical memories about the Soviet past. Being perceived or labelled as “Russian” in Finland is seen as unjust and as a misunderstanding. It is quite common that people from post-Soviet countries are stereotyped, often in denigrating ways, and those who are stereotyped try to resist and stress their ethno-nationalistic feelings. Moreover, “Russianness”—as our informants have interpreted it—is perceived as the embodiment of the material and socio-cultural manifestations of the socialist era. We also want to emphasize that highly skilled people are not protected from possible discrimination just because they are educated or professionally successful. If somebody highlights the “other” because of a person’s country of origin or non-Finnish citizenship, despite their fluency in the language and the customs, or their contributions to Finland’s economy, our research participants narrated these experiences as examples of discrimination. Here, the “othering” of national capital becomes contested:

There was this real estate agent. It was when I rented a new flat. He knew that I had been living in Finland for a long time, I had a business here and all money matters were all right, and he [. . .]. Well, I was also studying at that time. We were not wealthy—just ordinary students, busy all the time, at the age of twenty-five, we had a private business, some other work to do. It was about the date when the rent should be paid. It was the first day of the month, and we asked if it could be moved a day later. And he said something like: “I do not know how you in those countries. . . .” He spat this out through his teeth, while my friend [a Finn] was outside the room. The feeling was so repulsive. When I complained about this experience to somebody, I got a reply that now I know what racism means. Me? Here? But I am here. I speak as they do! Nobody can tell that I am different from them! That feeling was so paralyzing. You see, that other person does not know you, he doesn’t know anything about you, but he has stamped your forehead just because you were not born here. (Laura)

One more important dimension should be taken into account in this: a highly skilled woman is not always integrating into the receiving society alone; a mother can encounter integration difficulties more intensively through her children. Our
research participant Kristine, who obtained a highly skilled research job in Finland and took her child with her, shared her feelings about the time her son started school in a class for immigrant children:

He was crying there and at home and said he does not want to go to school. [. . .] “Children say that I am trash and I smell like a [denigrating word erased]” [. . .] and then, when you feel this through your own child [. . .]. It was terrible. So we tortured ourselves through that first grade and then he went to a normal school and all was fine [. . .]. He was one among many others [who were not treated differently]. All were the same. But that first year was –oh, my god! (Kristine)

Thus, strategies of integration into the society of the country of destination are most strongly related to a need to acquire the language so as to mobilize one’s cultural capital. Yet as the examples from the lives of our research participants reveal, being a highly skilled migrant is no guarantee against difficulties in this process.

“MY NAME” AND TRANationally Desired Skills

The modalities of mobilizing and negotiating cultural capital unfold specifically through women’s narratives of decision-making regarding whether or not to change their maiden surnames to their husbands’ Finnish ones. One’s name is an important social marker of belonging and individuality. Our research participants were aware in various ways of the social consequences of their signified ethnicity: “Finnishness” or “foreignness” in surnames can be strategically played out to signify a difference as an added value on the one hand or to avoid discrimination in recruitment processes from the other (Boxer and Gritsenko 2005). A person’s name is also charged with emotion, and, thus, besides their practical function, names have a strong socio-cultural function (Ainiala, Saarelma, and Sjöblom 2008). In many societies, the change of name is institutionalized; both in Latvia and Finland it is more common that a woman takes her husband’s name and not vice versa. Changing one’s name indicates an important transition in an individual’s life, and, therefore, it both coincides with and enforces expected changes in identity and might also signify changes in one’s status (Alford 1988, 81–82). Psychologically, the change of name divides life into different segments (Alford 1988, 86, 95).

Due to the name, one can see that you are not a local and cannot get high positions professionally even if you are qualified. [. . .] I have always been on my own. I always ought to adapt. If I still had a Latvian surname [. . .] it would have been much more difficult. Finns are very reserved towards the fact that I am a Latvian professional with a Finnish surname, whereas Latvians do not accept me fully anymore because I am abroad. (Velta)
For most of our research participants, the choice of surname, after marriage, was related to kinship and feelings of ethnic identity and signification. However, in some cases, choices were related to a surname—as if it were a known brand-name in Finnish or Latvian society—or related to career prospects. Changing one’s surname was also a result of a perception that professional life might be better pursued with a Finnish surname.

The name is important; it is difficult to find highly qualified work; a qualified Finnish person will be given the first choice. When I was applying for work, it was very important not to have a Latvian name, but to have a Finnish one; otherwise you will not have a chance, it has a lot of impact. Many locals have stereotypes against foreigners. [...] You might not be invited to the interview to prove yourself, to show that you know the Finnish language fluently! Maybe, therefore, I mainly get work that is related to Latvia or the Baltic region, and then my name suits well. (Agnija, who kept her Latvian surname after marriage)

Agnija reflected on her friend’s opportunities in Finland’s labor market because of her international name, one often given in ethnic Finnish families as well, and her Finnish surname through marriage. “Elina has a very good situation now; she has a real strong surname, nobody could say that she is not a local, she is Elina this and that.” Concerns about being possibly discriminated against during the recruitment process because of a foreign name were mentioned by several research participants. However, for example, Elina is a popular name in both Finland and Latvia, and the name can be found in other languages as well; similarly, popular names such as Eva, Paula, or Laura do not signify belonging to a particular ethnicity. Besides, there are regional forenames that may be interpreted as ethnic in different languages: Latvians would immediately recognise the name “Aija” as a Latvian one, while Finns would assume that this is a Finnish name.

A name is closely linked to cultural capital (Aldrin 2011) as a part of a wider cultural market where certain elements of language allow the association of a person with that capital. Thus, cultural capital, signified by name, can raise one’s status and then be converted into economic capital. The first name signals to other persons that, most likely, the holder of that particular first name has access to other language resources (Aldrin 2011, 263):

I like the fact that it is possible to recognize that I am not a Finn by my surname. When I speak, nobody can tell that I am not a Finn but as soon as I tell them what my name is, that it is immediately [expresses surprise reaction]. But at some point you don’t even want it [a Finnish name]. Maybe I even don’t want, don’t want to be perceived as a Finn
because maybe there are some things which I can afford now but might not afford if I was expected to be truly Finnish. Then I would have been asked to explain my behavior, for example, if I allow myself to be rougher. (Kristine)

Karina, another research participant stressed the individual, personal, and subjectively aesthetic aspects of her name:

My name is MYSELF. It means ME. I was thinking about the double-surname because I couldn’t [silence, give up the maiden name]. I think that double-surname signifies that I am married. [. . .] I am a member of a new family but I have kept also my own identity, that I come from a different country, from a different family. My surname is beautiful. (Karina)

To sum up, the decision of which surname to adopt after marriage signifies not only a multi-layered phenomenon on individual, family, and national levels but also may influence one’s chances in the Finnish national labor market.

MIGRATING CULTURAL CAPITAL AND CHILDREN’S FUTURE

As our focus in this article is on the lives of families on the move, the parents’ ideas about their children’s futures cannot be neglected in understanding prospective choices for work and for country of residence. Our research participants highlight the advantages the children will have when they are brought up in transnational families:

My daughter understands the privileges of being bilingual very well. There have been times when she proudly starts speaking Latvian, and there are times when she hides her skills. She is playful; she can also suddenly start speaking Latvian in the presence of Finns if she does not want others to understand her. (Mara)

Moreover, these parents desire cosmopolitan futures for their children. This wish is also linked to their own efforts to integrate into another culture, to maintain ties with the country of origin, and to work in a highly internationalized environment. Several of our research participants stressed that they desire to perceive of themselves not as Latvians or Finns but as citizens of the world. This is a defining feature of highly skilled migrants globally (see also Koikkalainen 2013 on highly skilled Finnish migrants in Europe). These cosmopolitan ways—how parents invest in their children’s futures—appear in class-signified choices, such as the types of sporting and cultural activities that are added to the already busy educational schedules of their children:
I want them to grow up as world citizens, not pure Latvians or pure Finns. And all the processes [in the world] move towards the disappearance of boundaries between ethnicities. [. . . ] A child plays tennis, studies music. These children are much richer. They have that very rich life of Finnish kids in terms of development opportunities. And as an extra perk, they also have their Latvianness. (Katrina)

Thus, the hope for a better future for their children is an area where the migrant parents’ projections of the family’s cultural capital play out in specific ways.

Prospects for Mobility

In this final part of the article, we analyze the women’s narratives contextually as projections of the places where they want to live and work, and of the cultural capital that they want to pass on to their children in order to provide for their future careers. The interviewed women actively resist the inelastic idea of belonging to only one particular country or culture; they prefer to relate their identities to more complex transnational ideas about dwelling and work:

I am very well accustomed to living here. I am adapted to local culture, I speak as Finns speak, but it does not mean that I have somehow changed significantly. I don’t like the world to be perceived as very simplistic; my family is not so simplistic [. . . ]. I have rights to have a home here, I have a family here, and Latvians can also live outside Latvia! (Laura)

The nationalistic framing of migrant lives in both the countries of origin and the country of settlement implies the idea of the possible return to the country of origin. This is particularly relevant in today’s Latvia, where politicians realize that out-migration, especially by young and highly skilled people, seriously depletes “national” human resources and can endanger the country’s future prospects for economic growth and prosperity. Our informants follow and evaluate as well macro-level developments in Latvia, as well as in Finland; during the economic boom after Latvia joined the EU, several informants thought about returning. However, when the country fell into a deep economic crisis in 2009, these ideas were soon abandoned. As Gunita explains:

I was thinking a bit [about returning back to Latvia] during those fat years. At that time, I thought: “Why am I here?! It is going so well in Latvia!” But then these lean years came and I thought: “Oh, how good that we are here!” But I have not thought seriously [about returning], those were probably just spontaneous ideas. (Gunita)

It should be reiterated that future mobilities of highly skilled people are often not individual decisions (see Ackers and Gill 2008, Harvey 2011, Habti 2012). When
an individual considers the possibility of returning to Latvia or even moving to yet another country where professional skills could be further accumulated, the spouse’s preferences must be taken into account:

Theoretically, I had such a thought, but then he said that there should be work [. . .]. He was working for a [world-wide company] in the Baltic region. At the practical level, he would have had opportunities to work abroad, for example, in the U.S. But the children were small at that time, and I was thinking, oh, how good it would be to see the world. But he is more a home person. (Ilze)

The professional skills, economic wealth, and “otherness” are also mobilized and contested during the physical transnational mobility between Latvia and Finland. In some cases, return visits to Latvia can prove alienating and can reaffirm the will and the decision to stay in Finland not only because of the work available there, but also because of the whole socio-cultural environment to which a person has become accustomed and to which he or she has come to feel a sense of belonging:

When I go to Latvia, I feel totally poor. That showing-off there is disgusting! What cars are there! I was told that they do not have money for petrol but what cars they have! This irritates me terribly. If I get immersed in conversations, I get interrupted—“Ah, you, there in Finland!” Listen, we drive with our old car because it functions and works well! Relatives tell me that we earn a lot in Finland and we can afford everything! Yes, maybe we can afford, but we do not need! [. . .] What kind of thinking is this?! (Anda)

Yet returning to Latvia after an active working life is never fully ruled out, especially if a person does not feel that she fully belongs to the Finnish society. As Māra explains:

In retirement I could move back to Latvia, yes, I have such strange thoughts, they depress me. The thoughts that I don’t want to stay here. Maybe this is just a momentary thought during the darkness of the season. (Māra)

Laura, another research participant, also expresses a desire to find a way to return to Latvia:

All the time I am searching for some solution where I could work for Latvia here, that I could [. . .]. Well, I want to have a place in Latvia I could call mine, but with all that crisis [. . .] I cannot really get out [of Finland]
and jump into a very well-paid job there. Now it is so that I have to accept and endure, and then hopefully something could change. (Laura)

As illustrated above, the imagined futures for the highly skilled research participants reveal a complex and diverse interplay of individual and familial reasons in the context of national and international developments in Finland, Latvia, or elsewhere, where the career prospects of both partners and opportunities for the children must all be taken into account.

**Concluding Remarks**

In this article we wanted to underscore that highly skilled migration is complexly embedded in multiple decision-making processes. We used marriage migration, still rather an invisible process in highly skilled migration debates, and gave voice to those who live their lives across the borders. We explained how migrating cultural capital is recognized and negotiated through modalities of enfolded mobilities in six themes. We demonstrated that the decision to move to Finland is contextually embedded and negotiated within the family; it is influenced by emotions, migration policies, and prospects for work in complex ways.

Migrating cultural capital and the convertibility of cultural resources in order to find work opportunities can be negotiated prior to the decision to move to Finland, during the migration process between two or more countries, or after arrival in Finland. The ability to secure employment also influences the family, for example, through the possible geographical separation of the couple. We gave voice to women to express their emotions, aspirations, and struggles during the time when they were going through the stages of integration into Finland. The “felt dimension” allows us to see in greater depth how “doing family” and the migration of the skilled individuals are ingrained with feelings about the self, as well as continuities and discontinuities in one’s career path.

Our informants emphasized the significance of language skills as embodied and evolving migrating cultural capital. This draws our attention to the obvious but perhaps therefore less considered fundamental importance of national and local environments in the era of global migration flows of the highly skilled. Therefore, we demonstrated how names as ethnic signifiers reveal more about enfolded mobilities and migrating cultural capital and carry possible opportunities and constraints in individual career paths.

Individualistic approaches are often highlighted in studies of highly skilled migrants and ingrained in subjective judgments of a person’s strategies to succeed in a foreign country. However, we aimed here to demonstrate that, in case of family migration, it is problematic, if not impossible, to discuss being a highly skilled person and being perceived as a highly skilled worker without detailed contextualization.
Finally, we closed the interpretation cycle with our research participants’ projections of their own and their children’s futures, which highlight that migrating cultural capital is evolving beyond the individual level and that the imaginations and negotiations of future migration directions for the family are multiply interlinked.

Marriage migration as such does not facilitate opportunities either to build a career as a highly skilled professional or to integrate into a society. Our informants typically went through an adaptation period in the early stages of their migration to Finland and were able to employ their skills and add new ones either immediately (in cases when they had previously secured social contacts or labor contracts in Finland before the actual move across the border), or they found their place in the labor market gradually by learning the Finnish language, studying, and engaging in transnational activities where their presence in Finland and their “Latvianness” can create a synergy.

Migrating cultural capital is a process that complexly involves global, national, and locally and individually understood meanings, recognitions, and sensitivities. This includes as well the often overlooked sensitive and deeply personal meanings of one’s forename, as a cultural signifier, and surname, as both familial and cultural signifier. A non-Finnish name or surname in Finland still can act as a barrier to enter into a labor market for highly skilled positions, whereas when a person feels more secure of his or her own professional and cultural competence, a non-Finnish name can be used as capital to signify that a carrier of the name is not only representing a monoculture but at least two cultures.

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References


ABSTRACT
This study develops an understanding of the spatialities of the household and workplace by focusing on the post-mobility experiences of highly skilled Arab women living in Finland. These women belong to an ethnic minority and have a dual career, i.e., they have both a professional career at work and a career in taking care of family responsibilities at home. The study calls attention to the importance of family and work as the essential spaces where both opportunities for and barriers against social inclusion exist side by side as these migrant women live in a culturally different society and take part in the competitive labor market. While many studies have dealt with questions of dual-career families from feminist and gender perspectives, this study adopts a relational approach and focuses on the significance of the social spaces of home and work, the importance of micro-individual agency, the meso-structural factors, and the macro-contextual events that affect their dual career between family and work. The study uses a qualitative case study design and these women’s narrated life-stories. The research data

1 This article is based on parts of my doctoral dissertation, “Highly Skilled Mobility and Migration from MENA Region to Finland: A Socio-analytical Approach,” University of Eastern Finland, 2012.
2 A highly skilled person has been defined in different ways in migration literature, but it generally denotes an individual with at least tertiary education qualification or its equivalent (Millar and Salt 2008), with at least three years of training or work experience.
3 Space here refers to the abstract product of social forces beside the physical place that is imbued with social, geographical, cultural, and historical meaning, with social agents’ spatial embeddedness and locality dependence (see Massey 1999).
4 The concept of home here denotes the space of household and family life relations. Work here means the workplace and social relations within the space, and also paid or unpaid work such as volunteering or associative activities.
are collected from semi-structured interviews. The spatiality5 of work and family life are discussed through an exploratory and interpretive approach. The results of the study underline the necessity of further research on highly skilled ethnic minorities in Finland, as a deeper understanding of their presence in Finnish society and the labor market is required.

**INTRODUCTION**

The marked increase in women’s participation in the labor market has signified an increase in the number of women who have a dual career: they are actively employed as breadwinners, but are also still home-care providers (Clark 2001). This increase in labor-market participation has been hailed in many studies since the 1980s as the twentieth-century leap of gender equality (Davis 1984, 397; Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2001, 430; Kofman 2013). Yet, immigrant women with such dual careers may encounter different challenges in accessing the labor market and retaining their jobs. These challenges result from the complex intersection between gender and aspects of identity such as culture, ethnicity, and nationality, and they have effects on the women’s employment and family life (Essers and Benschop 2009). The research literature indicates that the workplace experiences of women from ethnic minorities in developed countries are different from those of mainstream “white” women (Blair-Loy 2001). In the post-9/11 world, the ethnic minority group of Arab migrants, who have moved to various developed countries, live in a particular socio-political context. Based on their ethnic-religious identity, these migrants suffer from negative stereotyping and bias (Dreher 2006). The general media and mainstream society image of Muslim and Arab women in Finland also tends to depict them as passive, submissive, and dominated by the patriarchal society of the Arab world (Martikainen 2000). This image generally results from the symbolic value placed on women’s Islamic dress, the Hijab (literally the veil). This symbol is seen to depict the traditional family construct based on reproduction, motherhood, and domestic duties, as well as Islam’s alleged oppression of women (Martikainen 2000, Koskenuimi-Sivonen, Koivula, and Maijala 2004). It seems that many in Finnish society do not differentiate between the precepts of religion and the traditional practices of individuals or communities that imbue gender inequity.

Highly skilled Arab women living in Finland are few in number: their number is lower than that of highly skilled Arab men, and still lower than low-skilled women. In fact, their presence in Finland has hardly been investigated in research (Habti 2012). These migrants are heterogeneous in terms of age, level of education, occupation, forms of entry to Finland, family situation, and religious affiliation (Habti

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5 Spatiality means here the way social life is organized in a social space. Spatiality is the effect space has on actions, interactions, and entities, e.g., spatiality of home and career mobility: spatial barriers of home to employment (see Bania, Leete, and Coulton 2008). The empirical data aim to measure spatiality of home and work in developing these women’s careers from a multi-level perspective, i.e., micro-, macro-, and meso-level, of their family and work-life.
A combination of career mobility and social mobility is the main reason for their move to Finland, which is not a traditional immigration country for highly skilled Arab migrants. The findings in my earlier research (Habti 2012) show that different reasons explain their presence, including family ties, humanitarian migration, work contracts, and university studies. This article focuses on a group of highly skilled Arab women who, in their post-migration experiences in Finland, construct new social spaces of home and work. The study adds to an understanding of this migrant category in the context of dual careers and the spatialization of home and work in their migration experiences.

This study uses a relational, multilevel approach to explore and analyze the constructed spatialities, the Arab women’s social practices in these spatialities, and how these spatialities influence the women’s experiences of labor-market integration and family well-being. A case study with in-depth semi-structured interviews was undertaken in 2009 as part of the fieldwork for my doctoral research. The sample of this article consists of nine out of twenty-six interviewed women. Their life-stories epitomize new facets of international female highly skilled migration and mobility and the women’s embeddedness in new localities as ethnic migrants. Women typically focus on having compatible family and work responsibilities. The traditional perspective in an Arab family emphasizes the division of work, and both the family and traditional gender roles often address the question of how dual-career families divide work the way they do. Yet, this issue also involves the subjective understanding of how these dual-career women define work and family responsibilities and the ways individual agency and family negotiations affect the social spaces of household and work.

In the context of current theoretical developments regarding highly skilled migration and dual-career work, these women’s life-stories highlight the complex connectedness of career goals and personal relationships. These qualitative interview data also describe how the spatialities of their new localities are constructed in the household and workplace. The study broadens our understanding of the women’s embeddedness within local social spaces that are involved in career and spatial

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6 Space has become important in critical social theory (Soja 1989) as it has a role in structuring social life, which can enable or restrain development of the individual at various levels (Löw 2006). Space and geography have become constitutive of social practice, something that social agents such as highly skilled people are effectively engaged in.

7 “Migration” and “mobility” as terms in the current literature of highly skilled migration are used in different ways. In some works, they are used interchangeably, and in others they have different meanings. The former usually entails movement from one country or location to another out of necessity or with enforcement. On the other hand, “mobility” infers a free and self-initiated move for reasons other than a forced move or necessities in pursuit of an international career experience.
mobility, and provides an opportunity to research an under-theorized and under-researched question in an interdisciplinary field. The focus is not on an analysis of gender relations in the dual-career situation, because the central aim is to explore the developments of the spatialities of the two basic spaces, including the challenges, opportunities, and vulnerabilities the interviewed women experience between work and household. The indicators of employability in their migration experiences are occupation status, qualifications, field of work, duration of stay, and residence status.

The interview questions address the balance between work and home; the content of these women’s daily activities and social relations at work; family responsibilities, family relations and activities, and the family circle; and spousal life. This article suggests that a socio-cultural perspective is needed to emphasize the interacting forces of family relations and the socio-cultural and institutional structures within society that affect these dual-career women. Securing work and strengthening family stability are not only affected by their qualifications and skills but also by the value placed on full social integration, despite the challenges and barriers met in daily life. The article is divided into three major parts. The first section presents the background of the study; the second section consists of the research design and method; and the third and major section of the article focuses on data analysis and the central findings. In the following section, the background and context of the study are presented, with specific reference to a subgroup of Arab immigrants in Finland: highly skilled Arab women.

**BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

For a long time, Finland was a fairly closed country for foreigners who wanted to settle there. Finland was mainly an emigration country, and the rate of immigration was very low (Martikainen, Saukkonen, and Säävälä 2013). Yet, the number of immigrants has rapidly risen since the 1980s and even more so in the 1990s as a result of a more open immigration policy, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and Finland’s membership (since 1995) in the European Union (EU). Following the economic boom and the strengthening of the social democratic regime, Finland has become a magnet for skilled migrants, mainly from neighboring countries and other EU

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8 Career mobility refers to career upward progression of individuals in their career trajectory. It is based on transitions and the sequence of occupation-related roles. The forces of structures, either societal or organizational (e.g., the changing labor markets or organizational restructuring), influence such transitions, or the individual as an agent might plan and enact them as part of his or her career advancement (see Inkson and Thorn 2010). Spatial mobility as a concept is used to designate geographical mobility but with an extended meaning of space as a socially constructed structure, forming and reforming social relationships and positions, and emphasizing the relational constitution of space (Massey 2005). Spatial mobility can be a barrier to social mobility because it segregates and divides individuals and groups into segments causing what Bauman calls a “fragmented” society (1998) and Bourdieu socially “stratified society” (1990b).
The trend of highly skilled mobility and migration towards Finland has developed in the last two decades with inflows from various countries and through various entry channels. Highly skilled migrants enter Finland because they wish to reunite with their families, because they have acquired work contracts, or because they will start university studies (Habti 2012, Komulainen 2013). The recent official statistics of Finland (Statistics Finland 2013) indicate that more than half of the immigrants moving to Finland originate from other EU member states. The remaining largest groups are ethnic minorities coming from China, Somalia, and Iraq (Kyhä 2011, Komulainen 2013).

Among this new wave of immigrants are Arabs originating from the Middle East and North Africa, refugees or asylum seekers from Iraq, Syria, and the Palestinian Territories. It has been estimated that the first Arab immigrants entered Finland in the late 1960s, and their numbers slowly increased in the following decades (Martikainen 2000; Habti 2012). In 1998 there were about four thousand Arabic-speaking immigrants in Finland. The most important group was the Shia Arabs from Iraq, who came as humanitarian immigrants (Martikainen 2000, 332). The number of these migrants grew to twelve thousand in 2012 (Statistics Finland 2013). Because of the globalized media coverage of Islam, the religious-ethnic Arab minority has perhaps a larger effect on the local religious field in Finland than on the social or cultural fields (Martikainen 2000, 2009). However, it should be emphasized that not all Arabs are Muslims, even though they commonly share their heritage of Arabic culture and language. In Finland, Arabs consist primarily of Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims, but also of a few Christians. Arabs constitute a small ethnic minority as compared to the more numerous immigrant communities of Russians, Asians, and Estonians (Kyhä 2011, Habti 2012, Komulainen 2013).

Despite their small number in comparison with European or Asian migrants living in Finland, the category of highly skilled Arab immigrants is slowly increasing (Habti 2012). Within this category is the tiny group of Arab women who so far have a low level of labor-market participation. It is relevant to ask why such a weak presence in Finland, a country at the top of gender-equality outcomes and access to the labor market. The European Institute for Gender Equality (2013) has recently released the new gender-equality index, which ranks Finland third in terms of gender equality in the EU, after Sweden and Denmark. Could this be an impetus for female Arab immigrants in Finland to increase their labor and social participation? The literature on the gender specificities in the Arab world indicate that the rate of women’s education and access to labor markets has not yet reached the expected government goals, and societies are still characterized by patriarchy and the role of the man as the family breadwinner (Yasmeen 2004; Foroutan 2009a, 2009b). In Finland, women’s conditions are different because the Finnish system is highly egalitarian in gender relations, especially in the labor market. Is the low labor-market presence and
recruitment level of highly skilled Arab women caused by their failure to access the labor market or their maintenance of traditional gender and family roles? Women’s family roles are still highly regarded in Arab societies and many women cherish these family roles, even after migrating to countries that have different gender-role characteristics.

Skilled women migrate as students, labor migrants, or as spouses (Docquier, Lowell, and Marfouk 2007, Dumont, Martin, and Spielvogel 2007). Yet, men are generally thought to be unencumbered by family duties and ties, unlike women (Kofman 2013, 580). The current literature on international female skilled migration tries to link the migration process and its outcomes to social dynamics located within households, communities, and workplaces (Suto 2009), with a focus on highly feminized domains where there is a “high-skills” shortage, such as healthcare and education (Ho 2006, Kraler et al. 2011). Besides, Liversage (2009, 139) indicates that the challenges highly skilled foreign women meet “spring from the intersections of the spheres of family and work.” Hugo (2000, 297–300) mentions that it should also be taken into account that “migration of women does not necessarily initiate a change in their role and status,” though qualified women often move abroad from origin countries to free themselves from traditional patriarchal controls and to achieve social and career mobility.

Kofman (2013, 581) notes that in the lives of highly skilled migrants, the social level, including familial and social relations and life-cycle events that do not necessarily affect the life course, is under-researched. Starting from this point, the study has significance in dealing with an under-researched and under-theorized field: the dual-career context of highly skilled Arab women as ethnic minority in an economically developed, demographically small, and homogeneous country. The study provides evidence for and an understanding of the relation between international skilled migration and the women’s roles in the context of Finland, as well as the spatialities these dual-career women developed through the process of social integration. It aims to generate knowledge regarding the significance of individual agency and macro-contextual factors in shaping the meaning and significance of home and work as social spaces. I attempt to widen sociological understanding of their social practices as skilled ethnic minority women and as social agents within that specific social emplacement. The narrative life-stories of these women are important insofar as they highlight their dual-career experiences, which are not necessarily of a short-term duration but, in most cases, lead to a permanent stay in Finland (see Habti 2012). Their permanent stay might also lead to an engaged individual agency as their lives

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9 Tatli and Özbilgin (2009) define agency as an individual’s power and influence to affect changes in his or her life and work, as permitted and legitimated by his or her position in webs of social and economic relations. Hence, the agency of ethnic minorities implies their ability to shape their career choices and outcomes.
are linked with others in social integration, labor participation, cultural adaptation, identity negotiations, and subversion to any form of social inequality in the various social spaces (see Kou, Bailey, and van Wissen 2009).

This is a case study of Arab women, Muslim and Christian, who are engaged in various forms of paid work and have family roles as mothers and/or spouses. What is typical about the target group is that they have been exposed to two different patterns of gender roles: one in their origin countries, and the other in Finland as their host country. A possible framework for the analysis of such categories as family and work is one in which “structure, culture and agency are conceptualized as inextricably linked, mutually inscribing formations” (Brah 1994, 152). For example, the particular labor-market situation in Finland might be simultaneously constructed and reconstructed through the perspectives and actions of migrant workers, processes of economic restructuring, socio-political policies concerning immigration, patterns of labor-market segmentation, and the integration of immigrants into the labor market (Evans and Bowlby, 2000). Some studies stress the implications of personal and social identities for individual careers and workplace experiences (Kou, Bailey, and van Wissen 2009; Meares 2010). From a relational perspective, it is important to understand the interrelation of migration, gender, ethnicity, and culture, which may expose immigrant women to multiple and multilevel processes of advantages and vulnerabilities in the host country.

This study focuses on the narrated life-stories of Arab women, particularly regarding their experiences with and perceptions of the significance of the social spaces of home and work. The major argument is grounded in the fact that relational factors are predominant in identifying, untangling, and transforming processes and effects in social practices within specific social spaces. The approach highlights the multi-layered features of ethnic minorities’ skilled migration and the complex relations that affect these dual-career women. A relational analysis is used for understanding how they construct the spatiality of their dual-career work by means of their agency and how their agency is shaped by the macro-context of Finland. This contextualization is important in understanding the dynamic agency of these women and their chances for enhancing their career and social mobility.

Taken from Bourdieu’s sociological theory (1990a, 1999), some concepts, such as capital and social space, structure and agency, are used as conceptual instruments and determinants, presuming respondents are in constant negotiation and assessment of their career experiences as migrants (see Kou, Bailey, and van Wissen 2009; Habti 2012; Al Ariss et al. 2013). These determinants influence their actions and reactions to conditions and events in their dual-career work as immigrant women. It must be emphasized that this study does not take Bourdieu’s (1990b) theory of practice as major theoretical ground. It rather uses concepts as tools in analyzing the main questions. Using social space as a concept, Bourdieu (1990a) fosters a relational mode of
Spatialities of Work and Home in a Dual-Career Context

reasoning which illuminates both the particular and the general in the “social world” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The perceived “social world,” beside the lived reality itself, seems a critical part in a research endeavor within social scientific research (Bourdieu 1999). The method can explicate the repercussions of changing family structures and women’s employment’s conditions. To explore the social practices of Arab women in their constructed spatiality of household and work, a relational framework would be to give objective and generalizable accounts of individual subjective actions, perceptions, and reality (Bourdieu 1999). Given the empirical focus of this study, there is a deep investigation into these women’s perceptions and the underlying meaning of family, home, workplace, and paid work.

The article recognizes that different social markers, such as gender, ethnicity, culture, and identity, form contingent relationships with multiple objectives and implications. Thus, the strategies employed by these women in the social spaces of home and work need to be situated and analyzed within the context of Finland as a non-immigration country with an essentially homogeneous society and a restricted labor market and closed society (Koikkalainen et al. 2011). The study aims to provide empirical evidence to advance the research literature on highly skilled ethnic minorities in Finland. Especially, questions are addressed as to whether members of this group experience social mobility and career mobility as highly skilled Arab migrants; whether they have opportunities to and do, in fact, overcome structural and contextual barriers that they may face in order to succeed in full social integration; whether they manage to balance their professional and family lives; whether their responsibilities are highly gendered in dual-career work; and whether their religion and culture play any role in the process of labor integration and social mobility as reflected in their spatialization of family, home, and work.

The results may inform us of the significance of local spatialities of work and home for Arab immigrant women in shaping and reshaping the meaning of these social spaces through their career experiences in Finland; in fostering social integration and professional self-realization; and in facing any form of eventual social inequalities. This study might open a debate about ways to attract and to retain more highly skilled foreign-born labor, and provide a catalyst leading to the formulation of new approaches and directions for research on the subject.

Research Design and Method

Research Design

Highly skilled women, coming from Arab countries to a Nordic country, are the target of this case study, where I consider their educational, social, professional, socio-economic, and cultural characteristics. A case study design is used with the purpose of gathering qualitative material for analytical generalization. This design provides instruments of analysis that explain these women’s constructed spatialities
of home and work, unveiling the process and strategies employed for social mobility and career mobility through individual agency, and the various contextual conditions they find themselves in. This relational analytical framework is important to reflect upon the lived and experienced realities and to locate the practices and structures of these dual-career women. The article introduces the reader to the recent interest in the importance of relational perspectives in international skilled mobility and migration research. Analyzing agency may show the strengths and the limits of the conditions in which these women are situated in relation to the implemented “soft policies” and the Strategy on the Future of Migration in Finland (Ministry of the Interior 2013).

The study uses inductive, exploratory, and interpretive data analysis, based on grounded theory as a coding approach. The data are collected from qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews. The women’s narrative life-stories, which reflect their thoughts, attitudes, aspirations, and expectations, are the unit of analysis used for understanding and explaining the complexities and dynamics of their dual-career work. The study examines their migration experiences in real-life contexts, conditions, and settings to understand the meanings and significance of “home” and “work” as social spaces. The narratives reflect a form of self-representation and self-examination of their dual-career work between the family and career. The validity of qualitative interview design can be explained by the nature and scope of the case study because it is appropriate for the research purposes and questions. It provides instruments for analyzing the spatiality of home and work, and it locates the practices and structures governing it. The qualitative interview design is also used to provide a certain representativeness and generalizability embedded in the research questions and goals.

Research Method
The qualitative method is appropriate in this study because it allows new insights into the interplay between agency and structure and the complexities of the migration experiences of a highly skilled ethnic minority (Van Laer and Janssens 2011). The interview questions are generative, factual, and structural, and the structure of the interview is designed to collect inductive (generated) themes that pertain to the main questions. The grounds used for replicating cases are the following: actors (spouse, children, and employer); settings (home, family, well-being, workplace, and occupation); events (relocation, employment, tenure, graduation, or marriage); processes (for instance, the negotiation of decision-making about work and family issues). The data were collected in five cities that had a high number of individuals of the target group. The respondents had the choice of selecting the language for the interview sessions: Arabic, French, or English (five respondents used Arabic and four English). The author carried out the interviews, translated and transcribed them,
and sent them back to respondents for review and validation. The data coding was done to sort initial categories and units. The interviews were interpreted with respect to the following topics: content of the dual-career women’s work on typical workdays; social relations at work; family life, household activities and marriage; and social activities of family members. Patterns with regard to the three codes of work, family, and their interrelationships were established and compared with one another. To do this, transcripts were reorganized and subsumed under these three codes. The study reports the findings based on these interviews. Interpretation and conclusions drew on empirical inferences and generalizations.

The Sample

Yin (2009) stresses that the general applicability of a study relies upon the study’s methodological qualities and the rigor with which it is built. While the methodological values of interviewing are relevant, its redeeming features remain highly valuable in the study of a small sample’s experiences with partial generalizations to the category of the respondents. The selection technique is based on probability sampling by including prominent categories of candidates and increasing the geographical concentration of some major cities. A snowball strategy is also used, through social contacts and specific institutions and employers, to ensure a sample of various categories of respondents. The criteria considered in selecting respondents are the following: fields of activities, qualifications and occupational status, age and career stage, duration of stay, and year of entry. Nine women were interviewed individually. Their names, cities of residence, and country of origin are changed to respect their confidentiality. To this end, an informed consent form was given to them to sign regarding the research goal and the use of the material. The interviewees entered Finland after 1980, which represents the second wave of Arab immigration, following those who migrated in the late 1960s and the 1970s (Habti 2012). This reflects the slow increase in the inflow of Arab women to Finland. The duration of the respondents’ residence at the time of data collection in 2009 varies between eight to thirty years, and their ages between thirty and fifty-two years. Four of them had been single when they initially moved to Finland as students or tourists (Sabah, Warda, Safaa, Amal); they were independent movers, not “trailing spouses.” Five of them moved permanently to Finland as spouses of Finnish nationals or nationals from origin countries. Yet their marital situation has changed through the years and has become heterogeneous. At the time of fieldwork, three were married to Finns (Warda, Malak, Nabila), one was married to a co-ethnic national (Meryem), one was single (Safaa), and four were divorcees—two from Finns (Hanane, Amal) and two from non-Finns (Sabah, Amina). Some respondents were single mothers (Amal, Sabah, Amina). Amina is the only one who wears the Islamic dress Hijab. The following section examines the spatialities of
these dual-career women in relation to their individual agency, structural and contextual factors in their immigration experiences.

**ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

*The Spatialities of “Home” and “Work”*

The sociology of work and family relations deals with the way work affects family life. It is claimed that the dual-career situations place more pressures on women as they try to combine the demands of work with family life (Meares 2010). For dual-career women, deciding where to live can be especially difficult when both spouses’ occupations and the children’s needs are considered. Specifically, child-care systems and social security support are important factors that aid the employment of women in Nordic countries. At the personal level, the supportive social or family networks of married women can also be influential because the practice of traditional family roles can influence women to engage in career mobility following their preferences and opportunities. When asked about their dual-career work, some respondents highlight the significance of the family member support in addition to public social services.

The quality of life here is very good because children get day-care from the public service. This is important, because who’s going to care for your kids if you work? It was, of course, made easier. Second, I have a husband who is supportive, understanding, and good. (Meryem, 35, healthcare)

We [my husband and I] are both sharing responsibilities. Responsibility might be bigger if we have children. [. . .] I usually take care of household as much as possible since women are brought up to take care of their homes in our [Algerian] culture. (Malak, 38, healthcare)

My husband is much helpful. He does almost all the housework. I feel ashamed as a woman to see my husband is taking care of almost everything at home. It is only that he has more free time to do it, and he is very understanding. (Warda, 41, healthcare)

The dual-career situation for highly skilled persons is related to that of their spouses and the perception of what “home” and “work” entail for both spouses. Career mobility usually involves spatial mobility, including the ability to relocate for a new work appointment or a new job. A woman’s career path is often affected by her husband’s job (Raghuram 2009) when the husband is considered to be the primary breadwinner (Kofman 2013, 580). Wives are usually reluctant to relocate for better jobs if it could harm the stability of the family, yet this does not discourage husbands in their own career mobility (Kofman 2013). Thus, the mobility of skilled women along with their husbands’ career may damage their own career paths (Meares 2010,
474). For instance, Yeoh and Willis (2005) state that skilled Singaporean women in China endure unwanted household duties because of their inability to find suitable jobs. Yeoh and Willis name the process “re-domestication” of female “tied-migrants” who support their lead spouses, and conclude that international mobility does not destabilize socio-cultural gender norms and roles. Some married respondents show this tendency as in the case of Meryem, Hanane, and Sabah. They left their careers in order to move to new localities as a result of their husbands’ relocation for new jobs, and then these women limited their work to the household:

I was in an associative work, [. . .] so I tried and it worked somehow. [. . .] Suddenly, my husband moved here [Lahti, to open his business]. Because I’m an Arab woman, I left everything behind and followed him. I moved from Helsinki to here, and I left the municipality of Helsinki after two years of work. (Meryem)

There [in Qatar], I met my ex-husband who is a Finn. We married there in 1992. When we married, we were making [a] market study [there]. He used to have projects, and I did market analysis. Then, we moved to Finland, and we started a business, but personal circumstances precipitated our divorce. [Silence]. (Hanane, 48, currently cultural broker)

Thus, mobile men are more likely than women to profit from the opportunity for career mobility, which pushes women to relocate and to change occupations. The narratives give evidence to the fact that most respondents have less stable jobs than men because they do not find suitable work. This is not because of the priority given to their spouses’ relocation or new job. Some women pursue full-time education in their mid-career life in order to attain higher degrees and to prepare themselves for a professional career. For example, Sabah currently holds a temporary work position that requires frequent national and international travel. Because she is a single mother with a little daughter, she decided to enroll her daughter in an international English school so that she could have an international experience and join her mother every time the mother has to move for work assignments. Sabah expresses the value and significance of upholding a stable family life as her first priority:

I’m taking care of my family by myself, and I am not married anymore. Since the time my daughter was a kid, I am the one who takes care of her education and everything [. . .].[M]y daughter [has been] enrolled in an international school [. . .] since she was two years old; that was a good idea as I was moving from place to place, from country to country. (Sabah, 39, education)
The respondents in middle- or late-career stages mention in their accounts that the time given for childcare and household duties, beside their jobs, is a possible barrier to their upward career mobility; it is difficult to be available for both home and work. Most importantly, the maintenance of a balance between family duties and work obligations might be easy or difficult, depending on the conditions of the employing organization, the society, and the family policies in that country. Cross-national variations in family policies affect women’s labor-market participation (Kofman 2013). Policies related to public support for childcare, parental leave, child entrance to school, flexible working hours, and support for childcare differ from country to country. “Family friendly” policies in the Nordic system may reduce relatedness and absenteeism, and they may raise work satisfaction and productivity among employees. Besides, the availability of good and affordable childcare is an important social and spatial factor for making decisions on matters of family and work outside the home. Family policies constitute a safety net that dual-career women need in order to bring stability and support to their children’s early years. For Hanane and Sabah, the state-supported childcare regulations and the good education system make it easy to be comfortable in their work and to do family duties in the middle- or late-career stage:

Concerning the advantages here, there is security, and as concerns the education of my kids, it is a very high quality. As concerns work life, it is a problem, depending on whether one got a permanent position or not. (Hanane)

The main goal as a mother is that you bring stability to your child. When your child is growing up, she can also have a personal life with friends and the kind of lifestyle. You don’t think anymore about the way you acted at a younger age or decide to go for trips so easily. (Sabah)

Temporal Aspects of Dual-Career Spaces

In this section, I discuss the share of time spent between the household and work, and the factors affecting the balance between the two for women in marital and/or parental situations. The span of time given to the family and the household is one dimension of reconciling professional and personal lives. The data show that the division of time is not highly gendered between the two, as most married partners share their family’s duties and activities according to their weekly work schedules. Work schedules can be flexible, favoring actively employed women so that they can share time between paid work and family responsibilities. For most women, the Finnish family support system has advantageous effects, which have significant implications for work performance and career progression. Hence, women show a commitment to work and aspire to accumulate human capital. Moreover, they show that they are
hardworking and focused on advancing in their careers and securing their job positions regardless of their family duties or daily social pressures. For example, some respondents engaged in long and sometimes anti-social working hours at the workplace, and even at home:

Balancing time requires much effort, and a person who succeeds indoors with family can succeed as well outdoors at her work. She finds herself faced with options to choose from to do these tasks so that everything should go well. So, I have to pressure myself to give all my time for work and give time to my children [. . .]. I gave time to do work at home so I can improve my education level and living standard. (Amina, 41, education)

Our time balance is well organized, and we don’t have any problem. I have never complained about that, for example, about housework or shopping. We [my husband and I] agreed on that from the beginning. [. . .] I have somehow shown him the importance and value of my work and my personality. [. . .] We work and support each other. (Warda)

A few cases show differences in the share of family responsibilities in the case of married and unmarried women. It is also important to mention the role of a partner or spouse who is a native of the host country as a moderator for adding stability and support to the longer-term career track of a woman, as in the cases of Warda, Meryem, and Malak (see Vance, McNulty, and Chauderlot 2011). The use of time might appear highly gendered for some women in terms of balancing between work and home because they spend most of their time in family work. This difference might affect the time and effort that women with children give for their paid work, with a consequent vulnerability in securing and maintaining their jobs. To illustrate, Amina and Hanane experience gender differences in the proportion of time spent on household work, which might limit their chances for securing work or receiving promotions if they have children, as they would possibly devote more time at home to family than to the pursuit of work. This is especially the case for those who have temporary jobs, like Amina and Hanane. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the data show flexibility and willingness to compromise in regards to the division of responsibilities between couples and to the time given by dual-career women to family.

Between 1992 and 2000, I stayed at home taking care of children. Then, I entered university to study teacher education from 2000 to 2002. After graduation, I got a temporary job as multicultural worker in the municipality of Helsinki in one project for two years. [. . .] After I finished that project, I stayed home for two years as I had a newborn daughter; so I gave all my attention to her. (Amina)
Because I have a little daughter and whoever asked me to go and lecture for them somewhere, I say, “Listen, I am a special case; I am an immigrant woman, I have no family here, I’m a single mother. If you want me, you’ll pay for my daughter.” Nobody says no and my two-and-a-half-year-old daughter has been on eleven trips abroad. (Amal, 49, education and cultural counseling)

There is an influence as you are not totally free to dedicate your evenings to advanced studies [. . .] but this will not be forever; it will stop someday when the child is eighteen or a bit older so as to be more independent. But it affects in the way that you have to make your daily timetable according to your child. (Sabah)

The study also aims to assess whether and to what extent these women are considerably involved in activities beyond their household and paid work. In his study of the Muslim community, including Arabs, in Finland, Martikainen (2007) shows how their activities center around building voluntary associations as a means for social integration and empowerment. He further argues that the Finnish state authorities support and encourage Muslim immigrants to organize themselves into voluntary cultural and religious associations because such associations are also authorities’ tools of governance in relation to issues that have been defined as social problems. Some respondents actually follow a strategy of proactive socio-cultural activities in associations intended mainly for family matters and the cultural education of children, introducing Arab-Islamic culture to Finnish society. A couple of respondents appreciate community life and volunteering in such social spaces. This involvement is driven by the impetus to correct cultural misconceptions of Arab-Islamic culture and of Muslim women in Western countries as inactive, subdued, and uncultured (Meryem, Hanane, Amina, and Warda):

I am registered in some cultural association of my origin country.[. . .] This association is well organized, and its chairwoman is Finnish who speaks Arabic and French, and she knows the traditions and culture of the country.[. . .] I am a member in the board. [. . .] Well, I really appreciated that Finns assist my native country [through this association]. [. . .] It has basically cultural activities. (Warda)

There is an Arabic Cultural Association for children and families as well. We do workshops on weekends. We gather all children and family members, and we give Arabic and religious lessons to children, and we have four celebrations a year and some meetings like during Ramadan and group breakfasts and the celebrations. In the beginning and end of [the] school year, we have feasts, and we do some trips and camping. We have
trips for youth so that they know about working life in Finland and some sport activities. (Amina)

It is imperative that we should have an influential part in society. I was told about these cultural activities, and I was the only woman there who can use Finnish fluently. [. . .] I was in a couple of associations concerned with foreigners and especially Arabs. [. . .] I tried it and it worked somehow. (Meryem)

When I retire, I will not stay idle doing nothing, but I will go to Algeria and do something. At sixty years old, God willing, I want to move around practicing my vocational experience of nursing as a volunteer to help people. [. . .] I feel really very disheartened to see the conditions in the south or north peripheral areas of Algeria. (Warda)

The cultural-religious organizations are a form of structural adaptation of the community to the local social context (Martikainen 2009). Despite their small number as a religious-ethnic minority, Arab immigrants have an effect on the local religious field in Finland as a Muslim community more than in social or cultural fields. Generally in Western countries, the globalized media coverage of Islam involves negative stereotypes (Martikainen 2000), and these associations try to correct this image and, at the same time, to educate children of Arab origin who are born in Finland about the values and traditions of Arab culture and religion. The respondents highlight the importance of this part of education in their cultural and social identity.

The Arabic language might also play an important part in shaping the attitude and sense of belongingness (Amina, Safaa, Hanane, Meryem). As parents and spouses, the majority feel satisfied to be in Finland, but they emphasize the hybrid identity of their children as Finns and Arab-Muslims. The role of identity raises some questions for the divorcees (Sabah, Hanane, Amina), though they have differences in parental *habitus* and dispositions (see Bourdieu 1990a) with respect to culture and religion. They seem to place great importance on the education of their children and their future prospects, stressing their cultural identity and their ties to the countries of origin, especially in regards to language and culture. Still, for many women, the sense of collective and social identity is highlighted in their narrative accounts as they see their children as Finns and members of society (Meryem, Sabah, Hanane).

*Spatial Mobility, Career Mobility, and Civil Space*

Apparently, the traditional responsibility for a man as the primary breadwinner influences his career path and occupation, whereas women’s careers seem to be influenced more by their family roles (Kofman 2004, 2013). Flexibility in schedules and benefits (e.g., breaks, paid sick-leave, and vacations) in the Finnish system
makes it more parent-friendly. Yet, often mothers, unlike “non-mothers,” work in female-dominated occupations, and “there is no evidence that women select female jobs because they are more mother-friendly” (Budig and England 2001, 216). Some respondents, however, had managed to penetrate the Finnish local labor market under conditions that suited their individual family situations. Prioritizing access to the labor market and safeguarding family stability and well-being is a dynamic process, which involves active strategies. One of these strategies is learning the Finnish language for its importance in employment (see also Habti 2012).

I had an exam to establish degree equivalence. [. . .] It’s not easy to have an exam in Finnish for something you studied in your mother tongue, but thank God, I succeeded the first time I had it. There was no problem actually as I had the willingness to study further in my specialized field and to finish it. (Meryem)

I came to Finland to do healthcare nursing. It took three and a half years because I had to study Finnish language for one year. So overall, it took me four years. [. . .] Afterwards, I got a temporary job there [hospital] until it became permanent. (Malak)

The second strategy some respondents use is related to the presence of children. Those who already have children prioritize household tasks, while those who do not have children have stable jobs and strive for career mobility (e.g., Safaa, Nabila, Warda, Malak). Delaying marriage or childbearing often eases career mobility. Bushin (2009) finds that the presence of children influences highly skilled women in their career paths in Britain. Yet, some respondents underscore the factor of the unexpectedness of such events as marriage or childbearing, which suggests their readiness to accept these events in their dual career. Safaa has a senior researcher position and wishes to continue her academic career in her field, but she sees the prospect of marriage in the future. Thus, the effect between educational attainment and childbearing seems bi-directional because educational attainments may delay childbearing on the one hand, and parenting may slow down a woman’s career progression on the other. Yet, childbearing was not much emphasized by married women and those without children (Warda, Malak, Nabila). Women of such characteristics give importance, as men do, to the future family, balancing it with their career aspirations:

Now at this moment, I’m single and I don’t know what’s going to happen afterwards. If I’m going to have children, they will have their life as well and I have to stay with them. [. . .] If I have children, definitely they will stay here. (Safaa, 36, senior researcher)
Safaa links her future life along with her academic career. Being single with no household pressures, she has adequate time for building her social and academic network. She thinks her position provides her with the flexibility to focus primarily on her research activities. Thus, there is a close relation between the prospective paths of her career, education, and family in her early and mid-career stages. Yet, the respondents who are married and have family responsibilities normally do not work overtime. The age at which an individual starts to have family roles influences men’s career upward mobility and earnings more than women’s. Studies show some evidence that early family formation may have gender-specific impacts on attaining work for women (see Meares 2010, Kofman 2013). Early parenthood may restrict a woman’s investment in continuing her education or in securing full-time work. Generally, the respondents have specific challenges and opportunities to balance the share of time between their activities in the paid work and at home. In an early-career stage, they seem to bear the pressures of their spatial mobility, mainly adaptation and integration in Finland for those who emigrated from non-EU countries (Meryem, Amina, Hanane, Amal).

Some women see their dual-career experiences as positive and rewarding (Meryem, Safaa, Warda, Malak, Sabah, Nabila), whereas others, with growing family responsibilities during the mid-career stage, have faced structural barriers to the labor market, social security, or educational institutions (Amal, Amina, Hanane). Family roles continue to influence employment across the life course of married couples and single mothers, while the woman’s type of work (short- or long-term) is linked to changes in her family roles (Raghuram 2009, Kofman 2004). To illustrate, after childbearing, some may lose their temporary jobs (Amina and Meryem), and in some cases, a woman’s long absence from the labor market may negatively affect her upward career mobility (Amal and Amina). When employment is temporary and a woman’s exit is related to problems with the husband, this may have enduring emotional and psychological effects on her career work. To illustrate, Hanane experienced an unsuccessful marriage, which had negative outcomes in her career; she was unemployed and had to take care of two small children:

My beginning here was miserable, frankly speaking. [. . .] My ex-husband was already married with a Finn when he married me according to my religion. He didn’t mention to me that he was married in Finland. [. . .] Only after I had stayed here a while I found out about this situation. (Hanane)

I tried [to be a sworn translator] but when a woman has children, it is really difficult to combine between the two, the family and studies. To do studies means I have to move from Turku to another city, since there is no school of translation here. This means I have to move and change the
place and my children’s school. Now, I think of my children more than I think of myself. (Hanane)

Hanane, after her divorce, focused all her attention on the education of her children. She tried to return for work opportunities and to continue her studies. In fact, one’s career path cannot be forecast far in the future because potential unexpected external events may occur (Ackers and Gill 2008). This shows the significant effect of personal life conditions on a successful career. For example, Amina met personal as well as structural barriers in her early years in Finland (divorce, legal regulations), which affected her aspirations and interests for pursuing a professional career after her marriage and move to Finland. Despite periodic unemployment and maternity leaves, she does not regret the opportunities she missed in accessing Higher Education and training in her field of interest. Because of the importance and significance of her family role in educating and caring for her children, she decided to stay at home for the children rather than to continue her studies or pursue a job. Her experience allowed her to acquire childcare skills and the knowledge necessary for the job she aspired for as a school teacher:

When I sacrificed these years of my working life for the home, I found out that, in this experience at home, I acquired knowledge and skills I used in my occupation. I brought up my children and knew how to deal with them. When I was at home, I used to follow what should be done according to the Finnish law and culture, how education should be carried out. [. . .] It’s true I stopped working but if there were a possibility for me to pursue my studies, I would have succeeded. [. . .] I stayed home ten years without speaking English, and [learning] Finnish only weakened my English competence. [. . .] I thought that way is better but I don’t regret those years. (Amina)

It seems that women’s yearning to match their preferred occupations with the availability of the position seems unattainable. It forms a significant part of the respondents’ strife to find work and have family stability. These skilled Arab women have educational and occupational ambitions, and they place great importance upon the pursuit of careers outside the home. A husband who has a permanent job reduces the need for periodic relocations in a woman’s dual-career context; this leads to settling down in a fixed destination, with balanced family and occupation responsibilities (see Meares 2010). Some of the interviewees (Amina, Hanane, Amal) experienced deskilling and occasional underemployment. This is detrimental for their careers as they are unable to benefit from their qualifications or previous work experience. Also, others were obliged to give precedence to family roles in their marital life.
**Self-Initiated and Tied Mobility**

The different experiences of these women, who are both constrained and enabled by forces and relationships operating at different levels, need reconsideration in the particular context of Finland. For instance, Malak’s migration was preceded by her elder sister’s, but it was initiated for social and career mobility. Besides, the spatialities of their dual work between workplace and home were crucially influenced by family network and symbolic capital. It was also shaped by the formal regulations of a legal system that eventually regularized the status of those who meet the requirements of the local labor market. Their permanent job position in Finland is tied not only to their social integration but also to their marriage with Finnish natives. Moreover, Amal and Hanane underline different motivations for their initial migration relating not only to career aspirations but, also, to the desire to liberate themselves from the origin country constraints of social pressure and socio-economics, and to reach self-realization in the ostensibly promising spaces of the destination country (see O’Dowd 2011). Other women refer to their parents’ consent and support regarding their decisions to move abroad for higher education:

> I informed him [my father] that I wanted to go to Belgium to pursue my studies. He consented to my decision. […] They were supportive and my father was very happy when I went to China. (Hanane)

Apparently, social and gender inequality in the country of origin drives some Arab women to opt for migration (Foroutan 2009a), often initially as university students or family reunion migrants. As in the case of Meryem, Amina, and Warda, female mobility is a means of social improvement and empowerment. Sometimes, non-economic factors, such as the desire for personal freedom and intercultural experiences, might also initiate mobility and migration (O’Dowd 2011). Amal is one example of such a woman whose country’s social and political situation pushed her, at a young age, to decide to move to “the West,” as she reports. “I came to an idea and I didn’t come to a certain country, I didn’t come to Finland, I came to freedom and democracy where everybody is equal.” The fact that respondents entered Finland for social and career mobility is recurrent in their narratives. The presence of secure work and social well-being are critical in having a balance between their professional and personal lives, especially for those with children. However, for some women, such as Safaa and Amina, a temporary contract would benefit them in increasing their productivity at work and in securing a permanent position:

> You have to be on high level of productivity to get more contracts. I found this somehow obvious; when you have good personnel in any type of workplace, why exclude them if they are good and productive? (Safaa)
The first thing is that it [a temporary contract] may increase stress and instability and a person may think about other possibilities. There is a positive side of it in that you make efforts to enhance your capacities to continue in that work or to find a better position. This is why I plan to pursue further studies to keep my present job. (Amina)

Despite their temporary positions, a general feature in these women’s forms of mobility is that they do not show frequent moves between sectors, locations, and even countries, while the absence of a permanent job and a defined career path represents an important issue influencing their stay in Finland. Being an academic, Safaa sees her academic career and the working space as very important for her, and of ideal quality for productivity and self-achievement. At the time of the interview, Safaa was not planning to move anywhere, whereas Nabila shifted her field of work from university researcher to private translator because she thinks the academic environment was not an encouraging and convenient space to work in and receive remuneration:

I established a firm three years ago, and I think it is successful because I have established good relationships with some important institutions. I have many clients and much work. I just want to finish my Ph.D., and then I will not continue in the academic field. (Nabila, 32)

After living about nine years in France, two years in the Netherlands, frankly, coming to Finland, since the first month I have just loved this place… The quality of life is very good. Everywhere you go, you have a busy job, but I can’t feel this stress anymore compared to France or other places. I found I’m working efficiently without much pressure. (Safaa)

It is important to recognize that not every move to a new locality leads to career or social mobility (Favell and Recchi 2011) or to the quality of life expected by mobile skilled people. For example, Amina came to Finland through family reunion as a spouse whose husband was a businessman. She came as a tied-mover but sought to integrate professionally and socially into Finnish society. Other cases might appear more drastic, though they speak for more modest outcomes in the career paths of these women. One such case is Amal, who, after her two divorces, feels that her move to Finland and her career path have not been a success. She has, however, managed to get periodic temporary positions during her stay of more than two decades in Finland. Amal expresses the imagined social and spatial leap from her native country to Finland, the expectations of social mobility and better career prospects prior to her move to Finland in the 1980s:
I had worked in many fields, but now there is nothing. So I applied for anything, I was doing odd jobs again. [. . .] I did that for a while, and I had been for years applying for work. (Amal)

You needed to be married to be able to stay in Finland. First, when I arrived, I was “the wife,” but now my identity was that of an “immigrant.” [Later] I was already twice divorced, and I noticed that if I had been in a relationship or family situation, I would have known and mirrored both my strengths and weaknesses. (Amal)

The narratives disclose the individual differences in dual-career experiences of these Arab women, the patterns of their spatial mobility (either tied or free-movers), the processes of their integration into the local labor market, and the degree of success and self-achievement in their professional careers. The women who faced recruitment constraints are Amal, Amina, and Hanane, while the rest did not face any in their career paths (see also below). Respondents who entered Finland as tied-movers (by marriage) experienced vulnerabilities such as an unexpected contingency or the uncertainty of access to specific work. The skills and qualifications that are incompatible with labor market demand may lead to temporary unemployment or underemployment, resulting in a sense of anxiety about their conditions in the mid-career stage, and a feeling of career uncertainty and social insecurity with regard to the lived social spaces of the family, home, and outside work:

I’ve never had an alternative in my life. In fact, being a teacher, well, that was my first permanent job ever. [. . .] When I was teaching in the polytechnic, I was head of a department. But that was for four years and then I left because the school personnel had a never-ending battle going on. I don’t like the insecurity that has been forever around whatever I touched. [. . .] I think I am always standing on the fragile side of ice. (Amal)

Frankly speaking, I haven’t found the kind of work that I wished for that is equivalent to my education and qualifications, except normal oral translation with refugees. [. . .] I have translation sessions within the Turku areas all the time. (Hanane)

The trajectories of Hanane, Amina, and Amal seem to be embedded within their readiness to accept any available employment partly because of their credentials and partly because of the “closed” labor market (Heikkilä 2005, Koikkalainen et al. 2011). Respondents who have temporary positions with fixed-term contracts with a lower university degree (i.e., bachelor’s degree) have met structural constraints either because they do not meet the recruitment requirements or because of
non-professional reasons. Thus, the barriers are a complex interplay of micro-level individual factors and macro-structural factors. Yet, it is possible that individual barriers, such as health problems, as in the case of Hanane, result from a combination of individual conditions, labor regulations, or geographic context. At the individual level, family life space has great significance for these women, and work is a crucial means for professional integrity and social well-being. Most respondents seem to aspire to a better professional and personal life through different channels. The means they used in social and career mobility, such as credentials, are important in their integration (Safaa, Warda, Sabah, and Malak). The data also show that the labor integration of the respondents is tightly linked to the nature and value of those fields of expertise that these women belong to (see Forsander 2003, Kyhä 2011). Those in academia, engineering, or healthcare have more chances for access into the labor market.

Thus, because of the structural constraints in employment, they do not have the option of choosing jobs that harmonize the demands of work and family duties. Other women had periodic unemployment and tended to take upon themselves family duties within the household (Amina, Amal, Hanane). These women may experience individual and spatial barriers to full integration into the labor market, but individual barriers are often less a result of individual choice than they are of the structural, economic, and policy context where these women live (see more below). Meryem, Amal, Sabah, and Hanane, as tied movers, shifted, at some points, their career direction because of their family responsibilities and because their spatial mobility led them to new localities where suitable job opportunities were absent. Yet, despite the incumbent situation as tied-movers, they manage to cope with the pressures of household and work for the well-being of the family.

Spatiality of Work, Equality, and Well-Being

The institutional regulations and policy measures related to immigration, the internationalization of the labor market, and integration affect the level of institutional equality structures (e.g., welfare, labor-market integration, citizenship, social justice) and social equality structures that enhance social inclusion in the host society (e.g., social participation, social stratification, cultural diversity, social empowerment, and receptiveness) (OECD 2010). The success of the Nordic social model involves important components, namely labor-market institutions and policies, social security, the welfare state, and fiscal policy (OECD 2010, 49). Finland is ranked with the top countries in terms of equality and opportunity, quality of life, life expectancy, gender equality, education, and technological development. The respondents admire the degree of consistency of a more egalitarian system of the wealth and resources of the country. Moreover, for most respondents, daily life in social spaces is attractive from the viewpoint of an employee. The respondents generally perceive the
welfare regime as family-friendly and work-friendly, as it helps to alleviate the pressures of their work activities and family responsibilities (Sabah, Meryem, Warda, Malak). Hence, the decision-making about whether or not to remain permanently is informed by the spatialities of work and home in Finland as a model country of institutional and social equality structures.

The respondents showed contentment with Finland, and now, after many years, think they are likely to stay longer than planned. Living in Finland is not financially as attractive for them as in other developed countries. In their narratives, they mention high taxation and the high cost of living, but it is the solid social security system and the priority they give to family well-being that most attracts them. The majority of respondents think the conditions of social life and education for their children are much better in Finland than anywhere else. The orderly system and the efficiency of daily life, as they call it, make Finland attractive and rewarding for them despite the labor-market constraints some have experienced. Respondents who are married and have children think more about settlement and their family’s future life and social well-being because of the presence of the Finnish welfare regime, which provides a stable family life. The national social services represent an essential, lucrative system that keeps an even balance for the living standard for individuals in the face of high taxation and a high cost of living.

I think it is very good, of course. For example, as a refugee in Syria, I had no rights at all for social security, political activity, or employment. [. . .] When I came here, they gave me Finnish citizenship, freedom, the possibility to participate in society. [. . .] This is, of course, something good, and, in Finland, we have aspects of good quality in life. (Meryem)

There is security, and as concerns the education of my children, it is very high quality education. Concerning professional life, it depends if one has work or not. (Hanane)

I don’t feel there is welfare in Finland even if we are leading a good way of life. But the kind of welfare we want for us will never exist, except maybe that I have a job and I have the same rights as a Finn and my life is well organized and that my health is good. This is welfare. (Warda)

The standard of living has not changed much for me since I came here to Finland. The living standard in Qatar was very good. [. . .] Services in Finland are going very well. [. . .] There is much cleanliness and safety and stability. There is much peacefulness. These are the most important things in life. As concerns material side of living, I have not seen much difference. (Amina)
The respondents thus highlight to various degrees the significance of the welfare regime in Finland regardless of the individual's employment situation. However, equality may also affect the way natives perceive Otherness in ethnic minorities. This would influence the social integration of ethnic minorities. Though ethnic-religious stereotyping, racism, and discrimination towards Arabs and Muslims are not acute in Finland as in other European countries, this would have adverse implications for their integration into society and for their labor-market experiences (Martikainen, Saukkonen, and Säävälä 2013). Positive changes have been observed in the last fifteen years with new immigration and integration laws targeting immigrants. Finland has launched the National Future Migration 2020 Strategy to create “an immigration policy which supports the building of an unprejudiced, safe and pluralistic Finland, and enhances Finland’s international competitiveness” (see Introduction, 3; Komulainen 2013, 119). However, recent studies show that the labor-market integration of the immigrant population has been very difficult (Kyhä 2011, Komulainen 2013), and many immigrants are employed in low- or medium-skilled sectors (Komulainen 2013). These negative developments may be related to bias, the insecurity of recruitment relationships, and social relationships. These negative developments have especially been observed in the public sector (Komulainen 2013). From the accounts of these women, prejudicial features in the workplace do not seem to be present as these women feel part of the employees at work. However, since the experiences of individuals have their uniqueness and particularities, some respondents do report the occurrence of bias and stereotyping in the workplace related to ethnic-cultural categorization and hierarchization.

These tendencies might appear in covert manifestation. The apprehension of “difference” and “incompatibility” might culminate in a genre of bias based on ethnicity or nationality more than educational attainments. A few respondents indicated this happened rarely, either from customers or co-workers, whereas the majority did not face such events. The differences that might surface between the respondents evidence the significant role feelings and emotion, or individual dispositions, play in defining their experiences from a subjective viewpoint. This problem might be seen as a form of competitiveness, jealousy, or even bias (see Heikkilä 2005). Amal, Meryem, and Warda are a few cases that indicate their apprehension that such incidents as they encountered could sometimes occur at work. However, other respondents did not mention such occurrences of bias or stigmatization at work:

Another woman once said, “It’s good they have given you a job!” I was surprised about this. They gave me the job because I deserve it, because they checked my competences, qualification, and documents. They didn’t pick me up from the street and gave it to me. There are many who think that they give you a favor if you have a job, as if you are not competent at
all to do it. However, there are many who are very respectful and nice, and interaction with them is wonderful. (Meryem)

Well, it is quite normal. I just forget that I am an African and a red-skinned woman, that’s all. Sometimes, I hear some bell rings that you will always be an African. But this is felt just a few times. There are some racists but very few and especially when it concerns women. A male foreigner might meet problems but not women. (Warda)

Though my colleagues I would hear during meetings say that we had a decision that no teacher in our field should be accepted if he or she is not perfect with mother-tongue, meaning that I don’t speak Finnish, and I said, “Oh, I totally agree with that.” I thought, well, I am perfect with my Arabic. [. . .] Suddenly, I noticed abroad I am not a problematic person. I managed very well and I was smooth. “Problematic” is the image Finns connect with my personality, and it seems it is connected more with the debate on the “Other.” (Amal)

To be honest, I really don’t have any problem. They know that I’m a Muslim and that I practice what I believe, so they never complain and they don’t complain. That’s fine. I really don’t have any kind of problem related to my culture, not at all. [. . .] Now I start to understand very well Finns and I like very much many things they do, and they consider me as a friend from Morocco (laughing). (Safaa)

It is argued that prejudice might stem from anti-immigration attitudes and behavior, the competition for important resources, or economic recession in the host country (UNDP 2009, 51). The narratives of these Arab women portray that ethnic visibility affects interaction in the field, in Bourdieu’s sense, where people work. The kind of action and interaction, as social practice, is more enjoyable once agents receive positive feedback from this interaction, usually on the basis of perceived proximity in values, attitudes, and behavior, and through visible attributes such as ethnic and linguistic traits (Berry 2006). In his study of ethnic hierarchies in Finland, Jaakkola (2005) indicates that the more cultural proximity and affinity natives feel to other groups, the more likely the latter are to be included and accepted, while the opposite holds true for groups culturally and ethnically distinct from the mainstream society, such as Russians, Arabs, Turks, and Somalis (see also Koskela, this issue). Ethnic cultural background may have an indirect bearing on employment and the integration processes of Arab immigrants in European countries. The visibility of ethnic minorities is hypothetically one factor; language proficiency and shared culture exacerbate further employment outcomes.
A survey done in European countries shows that 42 percent of Europeans think color or ethnic origin is disadvantageous for employment candidates (European Commission 2008).

However, there is no room for generalizing the tendency that these women in the study who experienced temporary employment and periodic unemployment are victims of bias in the recruitment procedure or in the equality of opportunity. This equality for some women relative to the native-borns and the secure employment of the majority in the sample in professional occupations can justify the absence of any forms of discrimination against skilled Arab women, either as an ethnic or as a religious minority, despite individual and exceptional cases that may occur because of structural factors more than for individual human behavior (Amina, Hanane, Amal). It is important to remember that the process of negotiations in a dual-career context within the family circle is mediated by the conditions and regulations in the local labor market as well as the nature of family relationships and the individual social dispositions of the spousal couples. In general, the attitudes of the respondents to their career and employment, family life, and social values, particularly in regard to the status of women, are important influences on their position in local spatialities of social and professional life. Most of them succeeded in keeping their career identity and managed to adjust, to varying degrees, to the new social spaces. They are satisfied with social equality and social welfare. The social welfare regime in Finland is a magnetic pull factor for these respondents to enter and stay in the country though the position of immigrants in the labor market is quite vulnerable and the unemployment rate is still high. The paper analyzes the lived social spaces of home and work for highly skilled Arab women and the significance of their dual-career experiences as an ethnic minority in Finland.

Conclusions

Spatiality is the “social world,” in Bourdieu’s sense, where individuals move to find “home,” secure in their family life and professional career. Ethnic, cultural, and social factors might affect the new social spaces experienced by the individual, resulting in new spatialities in the experience of international migration or mobility. The respondents’ narratives disclose the social reality that they live in similar social spaces as low-skilled immigrants from similar backgrounds, despite their labor market participation as highly educated labor. One reason might be that policy measures are characterized by a focus on skill and the economic outcomes of diversity while ignoring socio-cultural and structural challenges that ethnic immigrants might face in different social spaces. The experiences of the respondents show different paths and directions for their career experiences, the ways in which they use their individual agency to fit into the different social spaces and to face vulnerabilities and optimize
opportunities in the society. For most of them, the family space is most cherished, as they feel they need it around themselves to feel comfortable or intimate.

The main findings of the study can be divided into three areas: the structural and institutional effects, the individual effects, and the situational effects in the career experiences of these highly skilled Arab women. The welfare and social democratic regime of Finland is a reputational capital that draws attention from all around the world. The standard of social well-being and the well-being of children is a magnet for the respondents in this case study. They all reiterate that the welfare regime and family policies are important to their dual-career as highly skilled ethnic immigrants in Finland. Hence, they all tend to stay for long-term period, if not permanently. When relocating to a new destination, family social space is a priority, as regards family stability, the education of their children, and their children’s future. In the situation of dual-career work between the family and workplace, there is heterogeneity in their conditions. Unmarried women seem committed in work and career mobility (e.g., Safaa, Sabah), and temporary work incites them to work overtime to secure a stable position (e.g., Sabah, Safaa, and Amina).

These skilled women’s career paths are affected mostly by their family roles and the events of relocation. As concerns married women, the share of time between family and profession is not highly gendered because they create flexible timetables with their husbands for work days, and use other strategies, such as the enrollment of children in sports or cultural associations. Here, support from husbands is significant (Meryem, Warda, Malak). These women also show different degrees of compromise in their dual-career situations, depending on their work position and the presence of children. Yet, some women, because of their temporary work and periodic unemployment, rather turn to family work, which consequently affects their professional career (Amina, Hanane, Meryem). Moreover, personal life conditions influence the career success of these women. For example, early parenthood or divorce may negatively affect a woman’s career (Hanane, Amina, Amal). Moreover, most of the women identify themselves as Finns, despite their original identity, because their migration to Finland is thought of as a means to attain personal freedom, career and social mobility, personal empowerment, and a better lifestyle (Warda, Meryem, Malak, Amal). But spatial mobility does not always lead to career success (see Favell and Recchi 2011) because of possible structural barriers, including credentials, language skills, and specific labor-market demand (e.g., Amina, Amal, Hanane).

Thus, national or international spatial mobility is sometimes detrimental to a woman’s career mobility. For example, women who entered Finland as marriage migrants had problems in labor integration because their credentials did not match the demands of the labor market (e.g., lower qualifications, language), whereas those who had the qualifications demanded by specific labor markets were employed (Safaa, Malak, and Warda). Yet, the employment of the majority in this case study in
some professions implies an absence of any forms of structural bias in labor market opportunities. This shows the career experiences of these Arab women can be affected by individual, structural, and situational factors. The majority hint of a respected institutional equality in the country regarding all members of society, but a few individual incidents of bias and stereotyping happened regarding employment procedures and within the workplace (Ward, Amal, Amina, Hanane). Finally, a few women took temporary work as cultural brokers in organizations intended to introduce Arab culture to Finnish society, and as a means of keeping their children in touch with Arabic culture and language.

By highlighting the various paths and trajectories, it seems that the daily life of these women is situated within the specific social spaces of the household and workplace. They strive to gain social mobility by securing a job and strengthening the social space of the family. However, some respondents have not achieved their aspirations, as they could not secure jobs or a good standard of living. This case study provides a window toward evaluating immigrant Arab women in different family situations, each faced with different opportunities and different social milieus that make their expectations and aspirations either easily attainable or unattainable. At the empirical level, one limitation of the study is the difficulty of making any generalizations about the meso-institutional factors, such as factors affecting employment procedures, because it is a complex and contingent process that cannot be exhausted by the perspectives of a small sample of study at a specific time. The study does not represent the totality of immigrant Arab women in Finland because there may be a number of women who are not represented in the data, who have had different experiences under different conditions.

It is possible to extend this research through comparative analysis of related aspects of the lives of dual-career women of other ethnic minorities in Finland. Such studies can contribute to the understanding of diversity management at the workplace, for example. An attitudinal study of mainstream society regarding the challenges or opportunities of Arab immigrants in general could also create possibilities for development at the micro- and macro-level. The study also indicates that the relational approach used may help policymakers and stakeholders to better understand the range of issues at stake. This seems relevant, given the state’s strategy to strengthen diversity and internationalization in various sectors in order to achieve economic growth and become more competitive in the midst of the swift globalization of the economy (see Ministry of the Interior 2013). This study also sheds light on an under-researched subject, Arab women’s attitudes and perceptions as highly skilled ethnic minority workers in Finland. Despite their concerns about issues related to their labor integration, social life, identity, and culture, they share the same major priorities as mainstream Finnish women in terms of employment, dual careers, gender equality, and social well-being. It would be interesting to study the cases of those
women whose husbands are unemployed and who move with their employed wives who then play the role of family breadwinner. This phenomenon has recently found space in social research.

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INTERNATIONAL DEGREE STUDENTS’ INTEGRATION INTO THE FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION AND LABOR MARKET

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ABSTRACT
Highly educated immigrants are an important and conflicting question in the labor market in Finland. The Finnish labor market traditionally has been fairly closed, and even advanced degrees have not necessarily guaranteed job opportunities for immigrants corresponding to their qualifications from the countries of departure. This article examines how international degree students integrate into the academic community in Finland and into Finnish society. The results of the mixed-method study strengthen the idea that if one wants to understand international degree students’ integration more comprehensively, attention must be paid to all aspects of integration: cultural, social, academic, and career. There is a general satisfaction with Finnish higher education and its quality; however, the reserved social culture is considered as a primary reason for weaknesses in cultural or social integration. According to the students’ views, language barriers and a lack of social networks are the main obstacles. Hence, if other areas of international students’ integration can be improved, such as cultural, social, and academic, in higher education and beyond, this would also improve the international students’ possibilities for employment in the Finnish labor market.

Keywords: international students, higher education in Finland
International Degree Students’ Integration into the Finnish Higher Education and Labor Market

BACKGROUND

Internationalization is one of the buzzwords and an important strategic aim among higher education institutions worldwide, as it is in Finland. Internationalization is seen to be at the heart of university strategies and also a valuable source of cultural capital (see Jones 2007). Internationalization is also embedded in the reform of research, innovation, and higher education system in Finland, where the strategic goals have been recorded in the government program and policy documents. This is connected to, among other things, attracting highly educated experts to Finland, preserving the country’s international competitiveness, and filling the labor deficit caused by the aging population. However, both research and migrant experiences have shown that highly educated immigrants are a problematic group for the labor market in Finland. The Finnish labor market has been fairly closed; even having an advanced academic degree has not necessarily guaranteed immigrants a job that would correspond to either their education from the country of departure or their education completed in Finland (see Forsander et al. 2004; Wrede and Nordberg 2010). This so-called over-qualification phenomenon has also been common in other European Union member countries for some time (see Teichler and Kehm 1995).

Studying abroad for a degree differs from the exchange study experience. It signifies a several years’ stay in the country in question, and requires economic sacrifice and integration into a new university environment, culture, and society, all of which is a very demanding process. International degree education requires various support programs from the higher education institution itself, including the ability to reach and recruit suitable students, and to provide appropriate teaching and guidance services to support the progress and integration of those international students (e.g., Bartram 2007). A high appreciation of the level of education in Finland and the tuition-free higher-education system are important pull-factors that explain why Finland is chosen as a destination for study.

The aim of this article is to examine how international degree students studying in Finnish universities experience their integration into the academic community and into Finnish society. The second aim is to consider possible factors that influence academic and social integration and the willingness of the student to stay and work in Finland after graduation and to examine the prospects for employment for highly educated students.

INTEGRATION INTO THE HOST SOCIETY

Exchange students usually stay for a few months, whereas degree students spend several years in their country of destination before earning the degree. In recent years research on international students in higher education has been active internationally. Substantial research has been carried out in countries where the numbers of international students have been large, such as Britain, the Netherlands, the
United States, and Australia (e.g., Harman 2003; Alberts and Hazen 2005; Bartram 2007; Schweisfurth and Gu 2009; Guillen and Ji 2011). In Finnish higher education research, the focus has mainly been on the exchange students’ experiences. But the international degree students in Finnish universities and their integration into the culture has also been studied with greater frequency over the last decade (e.g., Ally 2002; Kinnunen 2003; Taajamo 2005; Niemelä 2008; Pietilä 2010; Lairio, Puukari, and Taajamo 2013).

Studying for a degree in a foreign society, culture, and community is a very demanding, long-term process (Leung 2001; Bartram 2007; Niemelä 2008). For international students, a study abroad experience is likely to be a significant transitional event with a considerable amount of accompanying stress, involving both confrontation with and adaptation to unfamiliar physical and psychological experiences and changes (Cushner and Karim 2004; Schweisfurth and Gu 2009). The conceptions of cultural integration and adaptation are versatile, and there are several theoretical models describing this. One widely known model is a so-called culture-shock model (Adler 1985; Ward, Bochner, and Furnham 2001), according to which there is, at first, a euphoric phase in the new culture that gradually becomes a stress and leads to the culture-shock state. When the culture shock continues, the views of the new and old culture become more realistic than at the beginning. The immigrant can see advantages and disadvantages in both cultures. If these phases are completed successfully, the new intercultural experience can be a transformative process that contributes to personal growth and development (Schweisfurth and Gu 2009). In Sue and Sue’s (2008) model, adaptation to the new culture has the same features as in the culture-shock model, but their model emphasizes the adaptation of the person’s cultural identity at five different stages. During the conformity stage, people have a preference for the dominant culture and tend to have negative impressions of their own cultural groups; they may even change their own cultural features. During the dissonance stage, individuals question information and experiences that counter some of their conforming attitudes and beliefs. One starts to confront the issues of oppression and superiority of the dominant culture. During the resistance and immersion stage, one tends to reject the dominant social and cultural norms and favor minority viewpoints. At this stage, individuals feel a strong sense of connection to their own ethnic group. During the introspection stage, individuals recognize that maintaining a strong orientation towards the dominant culture is psychologically taxing. The individual may experience some conflict as he or she begins to recognize that not all aspects of the dominant culture are bad. In the last integrative awareness stage, individuals develop a sense of inner security and have a healthy appreciation of their own culture as well as that of the other culture groups. One experiences a sense of solidarity in regard to one’s own culture as well as to the wider society (Sue and Sue 2008, 242–57.)
Evanoff (2006) adds members of the dominant culture into the sphere of cultural integration and adaptation. When immigrants adapt to the target culture, members of the target culture will also adapt themselves to the newcomers’ presence. From this perspective, Pietilä (2010) has outlined cultural integration to be a socio-cultural learning process that includes dialogical communication and intercultural sensitivity. Thus, cultural integration becomes a two-way process between dominant and minority cultures. In this study, this wider conception of adaptation of the person’s cultural identity is utilized. From this perspective, the cultural integration of immigrants can be understood as a process where one has contacts with the dominant population and society while still maintaining one’s own culture, thus either merging the two cultures or adopting a hybrid bi-cultural identity (see Snauwaert et al. 2003). However, there is some research literature pointing out that the adaptiveness of the Finnish dominant culture is relatively weak and immigration policy is assimilationist, which makes cultural integration challenging and forces minority cultures toward marginalization (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000b; Phinney et. al 2001).

The Question of Academic and Social Integration into Higher Education

From the international student’s perspective, the important question concerns what kinds of academic and social communities exist in the target university and how integration into these communities takes place. When participating in the practices of education, students mirror and identify the meaning that they give to their studies and construct their identity (see Wenger 1998). University is an academic teaching and learning community where particular teaching and guidance practices socialize students to become members of this community. In addition to the formal teaching and learning situations, the students’ social relationships and informal peer communities, like student organizations and leisure-time groups, are important. These may be significant to the studies from the integration perspective.

The major models of university student integration include Tinto’s *Theory of Student Retention* (1975, 1987, 1997), Astin’s *Theory of Involvement* (1984), and Pascarella’s *Model of Persistence* (1985). All these models were developed based on traditional students’ experiences in traditional residential institutions like those found in the United States. However, Tinto’s theory leaves room for an examination of non-traditional and minority students’ institutional experiences in a way that does not necessarily need to be dependent on the traditional student lifestyle (see Deil-Amen 2011). According to Tinto’s (1997, 618–20) argument, the interaction and depth of academic and social integration have an effect on the management of learning, and these also evolve over time, as the academic and social integration and commitment interact. Academic integration involves issues connected to the academic teaching and learning environment, such as academic performance, personal development, enjoyment of the subject, and identification with academic norms and
values. Social integration on the other hand includes one’s social contacts and friendships and personal contacts with academics. Students engage better in their studies when they perceive intellectual and social congruence, or a normative fit between themselves and the values, social rules, and academic quality of the institution (Deil-Amen 2011).

Tinto’s model has been a starting point in numerous empirical studies on student retention or loss but without a convincing confirmation to the theory as such (see Mannan 2007; Draper 2008). As one expansion to the model, Draper (2008) states that there are three fields for integration: academic integration, social integration inside the university, and social integration outside the university. Social contacts outside the university also have an effect on how student roles and self-conceptions during their studies, as well as conceptions about expertise after graduation, are realized. Social integration outside the university also touches on the international degree students’ cultural integration process into society at large.

The study by Tran (2011) explored how international students from Asia in the Australian higher-education system were adapting to disciplinary requirements, especially to academic writing, and how academics addressed the diverse needs of the international students. The study presented the complexities and multilayered nature of the academic integration process that international students go through in their endeavors to mediate their academic efforts. Tran (2011) showed that committed adaptation takes place when students exercise personal agency and deliberately position themselves to accommodate what is required of them. On the other hand, there are both pull and push factors from the point of view of the academic or social integration experiences. In the earlier studies on international degree students, especially in Finland, it was clear that international students appreciate the kind of informal social atmosphere of the Finnish university, which may deviate from the more hierarchical atmosphere experienced in the country of origin, and which supports their academic integration. On the other hand, the non-communicative teaching style, the lack of feedback, and the lack of Finnish contacts are matters that international students may have considered negative, and which, in turn, can negatively affect academic or social integration (Ally 2002; Kinnunen 2003; Taajamo 2005; Niemelä 2008; Lairio, Puukari, and Taajamo 2013).

Integration into Careers Before and After Graduation
Higher education prepares students for various areas of expertise and various fields of occupation. During a student’s studies, an idea of one’s own expertise and possible career orientation develops to help integration into the working life following degree completion. The acquisition of expertise and the planning for the career are built into higher education in different ways in different fields. It is worth noting that in Finnish higher education some professional fields, such as medicine, law,
psychology, or education, are strongly syllabus-oriented and create consistent paths of study and career aspirations. Correspondingly, generalist fields, like, for example, humanistic sciences, social sciences, educational sciences, and most of the natural sciences, offer a wide range of options for paths of study and trajectories for careers. Thus, the differences in disciplines must be taken into consideration. This is seen in the character of the degrees produced by these different paths of study where the studies in the generalist fields do not provide a similar professional competence as the studies in the professional fields but offer instead a general readiness for the working life (see Rouhelo 2006).

At the final stage of university studies, students usually develop an expert identity, but the actual development of expertise can begin from the engagement into the working life (Le Maistre and Paré 2004). However, international comparative surveys of traditional graduate students show that many during their studies are still ambivalent about possible careers and futures (Russo 2011). These results imply that doubts grow as students advance towards the completion of their degrees, and suggest that students experience many deficiencies in their career planning. However, some studies point out that international degree students might have more optimistic conceptions than domestic students of their expertise development and future employment possibilities (Harman 2003). On the other hand, the studies concerning Finnish working life and immigrants’ employment have noted the difficulties in finding employment, especially in Finland. In spite of the development of official support structures, even highly educated immigrants may have difficulties in finding employment (see Forsander et al. 2004; Wrede and Nordberg 2010). Highly educated immigrants tend to have lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates than their native-born counterparts.

According to the earlier findings concerning international students in Finland, two-thirds of them wish to stay in Finland after graduation, at least for some time; about one-third want to continue to another country; and the rest plan to return to their home country relatively soon (Kinnunen 2003; Niemelä 2008). The proportion of the ones planning to stay has been parallel or a little higher in some other countries (Alberts and Hazen 2005; Trice and Yoo 2007). The most important reasons for staying in Finland after graduating seem to be the desire to acquire work experience, to maintain social ties, and to experience the country as a new home country. In turn, the push-factors are employment difficulties in Finland, a desire to return to the original home country, or to seek more international experience (Kinnunen 2003; Niemelä 2008).
**Purpose and Framework of the Study**

This article touches on the different levels of integration of international students. Integration is a broad and general concept, which means adaptation at different levels. Adaptation is a process whereby the individuals adapt their ways of thinking and behavior to the demands of the new environment. Adaptation is also a constant interactive process where immigrants aim to maintain relationships with the dominant population and to cherish their own cultural and ethnic roots (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000a; Evanoff 2006). According to the classical Allport’s contact hypothesis (Allport 1954; see also Crisp and Turner 2009), interpersonal contacts and even imagined interactions are ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. Pietilä (2010) also points out that adaptation is an interactive process where both the foreign newcomers and the host society are responsible for the success of the adaptation process. The important concepts and levels of examining integration (in the light of adaptation) in this case are cultural integration, academic integration, social integration, and possibly career integration in Finland (see Fig 1.). Academic integration means engagement to the academic education. Mobility motives that encouraged the student to come to study in Finland are also part of this. Social integration means participation in student life and study-related social relationships at the university. Social integration outside the university can mean all the social relationships that have meaning for integration and adaptation related to studying or living in the host country. At another level, cultural integration refers to general engagement with Finnish society; therefore, it has an interface with the concept of social integration outside the university. Career integration means, especially in this case, international students’ conceptions of their expertise, future plans, and potential for a career in Finland after graduation.

The framework of the study describing the different sides of integration is formed from the personal/societal and institutional/professional levels (Fig 1.). The international degree student’s integration represents an interplay between the different fields of integration. The students’ experiences in different circumstances and contexts during the time of studying and living in Finland influence their integration experiences and expectations. It is worth noting that the expectations of international students and their experiences of different conditions and contexts in Finland can also come into conflict.

The main research questions addressed in this article are the following: (1) How do international degree students experience integration into Finnish society and what kinds of supportive social relationships do they have outside or inside the university? (2) How do they experience integration in the academic education and teaching and learning communities? (3) How do they consider their future prospects
for careers and employment in the Finnish labor market? Another research aim is to examine whether those international students studying in the generalist fields have special expectations and challenges when they plan their employment and career in Finland. Many uncertainties are connected with employment from the generalist fields in Finland. Employers in the private sector do not value the generalist university degree, or they are at least dubious of it (Rouhelo 2006). Immigrants are at risk of being excluded from the labor market, even though their acquisition of a degree in Finland gives a better starting point for employment than do degrees obtained abroad (Forsander et al. 2004).

**Figure 1.** Organization of the theoretical framework of the study.

**Data and Methods**

The analysis is based on a large national quantitative survey dataset and complementary research interviews. The qualitative interview data are collected to provide a deeper insight into the personal experiences of a selected sample of international degree students. The quantitative data used in this case came from the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (International Students in Finnish Universities 2007 Survey). The target group consisted of degree students of non-Finnish citizenship who were enrolled in Finnish universities during the spring of 2007. They had started their studies between 1997 and 2006, and their native language was other than Finnish. The sample size is 952 respondents, and the response rate is 39 percent, which is quite reasonable when compared to other surveys of this kind. However, the sample
is rather a non-probability sample than a probability one, so the results are more indicative than fully representative. The survey included six sections with the following themes: background information; the move to Finland; academic integration; social integration; and subsistence, accommodation, employment, and future plans. Thus, the available quantitative dataset suited relatively well to giving a general overview of the international students’ situation within the framework of this study.

The complementary qualitative data were gathered by interviewing seven international students in generalist study fields at the universities of Tampere and Turku in the spring of 2012. Interviews were targeted especially to generalist study fields because of the open and broad nature of the degree, which makes career integration and employment more challenging than in the fields of professional study. The interviewees were degree students in the final stage of their studies, doctoral students, or master’s program students. The interviewed students were studying the educational sciences, information technology, or the social sciences. The main interview method was a semi-structured interview, which is suitable for collecting information from individuals about their own practices, beliefs, or experiences, and it is specific, targeted, and focused on the specific area of research (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2011). When examining different experiences, it was necessary to find students who came to Finland from different geographical areas, such as Asia, Africa, the Middle East, or Europe. The informants included one woman; the remaining six were men.

The quantitative survey data have been analyzed mainly with descriptive statistics. Statistical decisions have been confirmed with inferential statistics and measures of associations, which are the normal basic statistical operations in social research (see Argyrous 1997). In the statistical description, the frequency and percentage distributions and the common measures of central tendency and dispersion were used, like mean, median, and standard deviation. Comparisons and associations of the variables describing different respondent groups have been examined with the help of the cross-tabulations and chi-square tests. Furthermore, the associations of quantitative variables have been examined with the help of correlations. The associations of the different classified or quantitative variables, which describe the different levels of students’ integration, were analyzed mainly with logistic regression analysis. This gave the same indicative results on the phenomenon.

The analysis of the interview data followed the logic of both data-driven and directed content analysis in which the raw data are continually examined structurally and thematically, with the aim of interpreting the data from as many points of view as possible (see Miles and Hubermann 1999). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) have discussed different approaches to qualitative content analysis, based on the degree of involvement of inductive reasoning. During data analysis, the researchers immerse themselves in the data and allow themes to emerge from the data. The analysis in
this case started from inductively reading the data and finding emerging themes; however, when comparing and combining results to the survey findings, it was done using directed content analysis. The main aim was to identify those main themes from interviewees’ narratives that bring to light the different aspects of the integration experiences in the university environment and beyond.

**Results**

*Who comes to study in Finland and what are the main reasons to do so?*

The International Students in Finnish Universities survey data describe foreign degree students’ situation in the year 2007. Since those data were collected, the number of international students in the Finnish universities has increased. By 2010, over 15,000 international degree students were studying in Finland; therefore, the number had risen approximately two-and-half fold in ten years. At the time of the research, most foreign degree students were coming from China, Russia, Sweden, and Estonia. The number of students coming from Asia and Africa has been on the increase recently; there are more students coming from countries such as Nepal, Cameroon, Vietnam, Ethiopia, India, and Nigeria (CIMO 2012).

The biggest group in the survey, altogether 42 percent, is from Europe (see Table 1). A large part of these students come from countries in the European Union and the European Economic Area (EEA), whose citizens formed about a third (32 percent) of the whole sample of respondents, while the rest are from other European countries. One significant individual group among these was Russians, who constitute seven percent of the respondents. The majority of the Asian respondents, the next largest group of the survey (40 percent), are Chinese, who also form the largest group of citizens from a particular country (20 percent) in the whole data.

![Pie chart showing distribution of respondents' citizenship](chart.png)

**Table 1.** The respondents’ citizenship in the survey (International Students in Finnish Universities 2007 survey).
Finnish universities seem to be gradually advancing towards their strategic internationalization objectives, which were set during the first decade of the 2000s. Most international degree students have enrolled in universities in the Helsinki area (especially the University of Helsinki and Aalto University, which together enrolled over 1,300 foreign graduate and doctoral students in 2010, more than one-third of all foreign students in Finland) (Niemelä 2008; CIMO 2012). It is worth noting that in terms of their student population, these universities are also the largest Finnish universities.

A slight majority (54.3 percent) of the international students who responded to the survey were men. Correspondingly, less than half (45.8 percent) of the respondents were women. The respondents’ age varied between 18 and 53 years; the average age was 27.3 years, and the median 26 years. The men were slightly older than the women, and the difference was also statistically significant (p=.05). The biggest age group of the sample was 25- to 29-year-olds, and the majority, three out of four respondents (76.8 percent), were under 30 years old.

The respondents were also asked to estimate the importance of different motives for enrolling in a degree program in Finnish higher education (Table 2). The quality of higher education (51 percent) and the possibility to study without tuition fees (47.9 percent) emerge as the most important and recurrent reasons. This also corresponds well with the general image of the pull-factors of Finnish higher education. Further, students’ own career development and gaining international experience in a foreign country were given quite often as very important reasons.

The most common field of study was technology, for more than a third of the survey respondents. The next highest share of students was found in the humanities, and the third from the social sciences. The popularity of the humanistic and social science fields seems to be rising among international students because their share in this sample was distinctly larger than, for example, in the earlier study of Kinnunen (2003). The international degree students are often already highly educated. About three international students out of four have completed at least a lower academic degree before they begin their studies in Finland. This naturally facilitates the academic integration into university study, but it is not necessarily mirrored in the other levels of integration, like social, cultural, or career.

International Students’ Cultural and Social Integration Beyond the University

In the International Students Survey, the respondents were asked if they felt excluded outside the university environment because they are foreigners. On the basis of this question, one can estimate that most international students have some sense of belonging, as nearly three out of four respondents (73.5 percent) did not feel
excluded. With the help of the logistic regression, an examination was further done about the factors that possibly serve as the best and significant predictors for the feeling of not being excluded (see Table 3). The effect of the individual explanatory variable appears in the first column’s coefficient (B) in the table (see Table 3). The sign (plus or minus) gives an indication of which direction the explanatory factor affects. The risk level \([\text{Exp}(B)]\) in the last column of the table represents how probably the individual factor predicts belonging into the "not feeling excluded" group. The best predictors proved to be European or Asian background and having enough social contacts. Hence, these factors are more likely than other factors to predict the development of feelings of inclusion among international students as a part of their cultural integration. Correspondingly, the coefficient of the variable “years lived in Finland” in the model is negative (Table 3), which indicates that a longer duration of stay in Finland may even increase the share of those among the respondents who feel excluded, although the addition of the share is very small on the basis of the coefficient. The overall classification percent of the logistic model is 76.2. It implies a 76 percent chance that the respondent will belong to the group of not feeling excluded. However, the explanation rate is fairly low, between 8.4 and 12.3 percent; thus, the model is only indicative for the development of the feeling of not being excluded. The explanation rate tells how well the found model predicts the phenomenon.

Table 2. The main reasons for decision to study for a degree in Finland (International Students in Finnish Universities 2007 Survey).
The respondents to the survey were also asked to evaluate the meaning of different social relationships and contacts for living in Finland. Most of all, the student’s own family in Finland was selected as “most important” more often than other factors (275 replies), and the second most popular choice was having a boy- or girlfriend in Finland (213) (Table 4). Furthermore, the significance of family in the country of origin was also frequently chosen as “most important.” These social relationships are clearly the most significant for social and cultural integration outside the university. On the other hand, fellow international students (107 replies) and students of the same nationality (96 replies) proved to be the most significant social relations inside the university. Thus, mutual relations and friendships among the international students are the most important factors facilitating social integration. Other factors, like relations with fellow Finnish students or leisure-time communities each received only a few individual replies. Learning the language of the country where one lives is also considered an essential part of the cultural and social integration of immigrants, especially in non-English speaking countries (Pietilä 2010). The international degree students’ Finnish language skills may be quite limited when they begin their studies (Niemelä 2008), which makes their integration into different fields (academic, social, cultural, and career) more difficult. At the beginning of their studies, half of the respondents (56 percent) did not know any Finnish, and every fourth respondent’s language skills were at the beginner or low intermediate level. The situation had improved essentially during their studies because, for two out of five respondents, the Finnish skills were at least at an intermediate level, and only 42 respondents (4 percent) replied that they did not know Finnish at all. In the interviews conducted in 2012, the learning of the language seemed to play a crucial part in the international students’ integration experiences, especially in reducing culture shock and overcoming communication barriers. As one respondent put it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does Not Feel Excluded for Being a Foreigner</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Standard Error (S.E.)</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp. (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU/EEA Country</td>
<td>1.019</td>
<td>.441</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>2.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European Country</td>
<td>1.589</td>
<td>.519</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>4.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>1.043</td>
<td>.462</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>2.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Lived in Finland</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough Social Contacts with Other People: Yes</td>
<td>1.053</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>2.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Percent: 76.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Logistic regression of factors related to the feelings of non-exclusion in Finnish society (International Students in Finnish Universities 2007 Survey).
The culture comes so much closer when you know the language and can express things, thoughts, and everything you feel. (I4: Female, education science, master’s-level student)

Table 4. With whom the international students have more active social contacts (International Students in Finnish Universities 2007 Survey).

Academic and Social Integration into Studies in Higher Education

The Finnish university system is often unknown to the international students prior to their entry into a university in Finland. Even though many of them have studied at a university before, their native countries’ institutions may be very different from the Finnish ones. However, acquaintance with the Finnish university system is essential to the startup and progression of studies (Niemelä 2008).

The excellence of the Finnish education system has clearly become an attractive pull-factor for foreign students, along with its success in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)² (OECD 2012). The respondents were asked, first of all, for their present view on the level of the Finnish education system. The estimates given by the respondents were very positive: nearly nine out of ten considered the level of education at least fairly good, while almost a third considered it to be extremely good. Inquiries were also made regarding satisfaction with the different parts of the academic education and learning environment (Table 5). The highest number of “most satisfied” replies were given to the general learning environment facilities, such as library services and computer labs, while about two-

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² The international PISA-assessment has been done since 2000 to evaluate the knowledge and skills of the world’s 15-year-olds. From the beginning, Finnish students’ success has been outstanding. For example, in 2009, Finnish students were ranked third in reading literacy and second in scientific and mathematical literacies.
thirds of the respondents stated that they were “very satisfied” with these services. All other areas of academic education, e.g., the quality of teaching, course content, curriculum, and assessment, also received quite positive evaluations, because about one-quarter of respondents estimated these to be very good.

In addition to general satisfaction with their education, the students’ academic integration affects the quality of their studies (see Trice and Yoo 2007; Rienties et
Seven out of ten survey respondents estimated that they were satisfied with the progress of their studies. This is a significantly better result than that of the average Finnish university student’s general satisfaction with the progress of his or her studies (see EuroStudent III-IV). Even though the majority of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the progress of their studies, half of them noted that the studies have not proceeded in a planned way, for at least one reason. Among the reasons slowing down the progress of studies (see Table 6), respondents most often mentioned that they did not have enough courses available in English (114 replies).

The other common factor was the lack of guidance concerning their studies (76 replies), which is related to academic education. The universities could influence both of these factors. However, factors such as working full-time or life situation/personal reasons, which received the next most replies, are clearly related to the respondents’ own life situation.

For international degree students, the reasons for the delay in their studies are partly the same as for Finnish university students in general (cf. EuroStudent III-IV). Foreign students experience more difficulties concerning the arrangements of teaching and are less satisfied with the guidance of their studies than Finnish university students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Feeling Excluded within Academic Community</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Standard Error (S.E.)</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp. (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent’s Age-Group: Under 20</td>
<td>-2.39</td>
<td>1.194</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU/EEA Country</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>.527</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>2.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European Country</td>
<td>1.550</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>4.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Studies: 2nd</td>
<td>.670</td>
<td>.308</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>1.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language of Delivery and Assessment: Finnish</td>
<td>1.146</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>3.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language of Delivery and Assessment: English</td>
<td>.411</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>1.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality and Quantity of the Information Received about the University: Both Accurate and Sufficient</td>
<td>1.914</td>
<td>.416</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>6.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality and Quantity of the Information Received about the University: Accurate but not Sufficient</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td>.416</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>2.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with the Progression of Studies: Yes</td>
<td>.489</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>1.631</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Logistic regression of factors related to the feelings of not being excluded within the academic community (International Students in Finnish Universities 2007 Survey).
In the survey, there was also a very general question about whether the respondents thought they had been excluded or treated as an outsider within the academic community because they are foreign. We conclude that the students’ felt-integration into the academic community was at a moderately good level because about four respondents out of five (80.3 percent) did not feel excluded. With the help of logistic regression, factors that possibly serve as the best predictors for the feeling of not being excluded were further examined. Again the effect of the individual explanatory variable appears in the first column’s coefficient (B) in the table, and the risk level [Exp (B)] in the last column represents the probability that the individual factor predicts the respondent’s belonging in the ”not feeling excluded” group (see Table 7). The best and statistically significant predictors proved to be European background, second year of study, Finnish or English as a language of instruction, adequacy of the information concerning studies, and general satisfaction with the progression of studies (Table 7). The negative predictor (with the negative coefficient) belonged to the youngest age group (under 20 years), which meant that the risk of feeling excluded was higher than in other age groups. The overall classification percent of the logistic model is 81.2 percent and the explanation rate is between 13.2 and 21.2 percent, which is a moderate level in this case. These numbers tell how well the found model is predicting and explaining the phenomenon.

The experience of integration was further explored in the interviews conducted in 2012. The interviewees reported both positive and negative integration experiences. The interviews brought out, in connection with academic integration, the positive theme of studying as intellectual growth where they described the meaning of education as a symbolic value in their life, and academic education as important capital that will make it possible to improve society. In their opinion, education was seen as something that brings about the growth and development of a human being. The positive experiences in academic integration were also connected to positive experiences in some other areas of integration, such as culture and career:

Self-confidence. Even though I have been in the profession and acting as a teacher before. [. . .] [T]he human being can always challenge himself and can see himself better [. . .] even if there are already many life experiences in the background. [. . .] And the self-assurance has increased. My own studying has been affected really positively. (I6: Male, education science, master’s-level student)

The falling in-between theme came forth as a negative experience related to academic integration, where the students described their studies as a movement in between the different marginal spaces of the academic community. In that case, one did not experience integration into the academic community. In these negative experiences, the distance of scientific community from the student’s world and the
academic actors’ bound roles and separation were emphasized. This affected, for example, communication and the flow of information. The academic community was regarded as hierarchical, and loneliness and a lack of communality characterized their studies.

You come from another country and then you try to accommodate here but you find yourself working alone. [. . .] Just feel that you are somewhere trying to belong, between different areas and groups. (I1: Male, education science, Ph.D. student)

I feel close to the learning community. I feel that there is more sharing ideas, rather than with academic professors. [. . .] I think I am kind of like in-between these divisions. (I3: Male, social sciences, master’s program student)

The relation of the student to fellow students and to faculty form the central area of social integration in the university environment. In the interviews, the centrality of the social agency theme was emphasized as an affirmative and positive feature. In this connection, international students described their own socially active role in the student community and emphasized the importance of social communication for success in their studies. In the positive social integration experiences, they showed a desire to engage with other students, in networking and interaction.

I have friends, international students . . . we also meet in different fields and occasions. I also have different kind of friends that I meet in the seminar groups and who are not information technology students. (I2: Male, information sciences, Ph.D. student)

The interviews also brought out the fact that, among international students, social interaction can easily be restricted only to the international students’ joint activities and their own meetings. This was described in the limitations of social activity theme. Social activity was considered to be the most central issue for integration, irrespective of the nationality. However, nearly all social contacts were restricted to the social relations among the international students.

In earlier studies, more negative integration experiences seem to be linked typically with large departments (great number of faculty and students), traditional mass lectures, and getting the degree in Finland. The atmosphere inside departments with smaller student numbers and more structured master’s programs is usually regarded as good (Niemelä 2008). In general, international students hope for more contacts with Finns, because they are considered important, for example, in strengthening one’s integration into Finnish society and in improving Finnish language skills (Taajamo 2005; Niemelä 2008). In the interview data, in connection
with the limitations of the social activity theme, the lack of Finnish contacts in the study community was also highlighted. Getting acquainted with Finns was regarded as a challenge. The interviewees also saw Finns in different ways, on the one hand as very helpful and responsible, but on the other hand as very cold and difficult to get close to.

The Finns are like Finns. They are cold like the weather. And I say this because the average Finn that I interacted with [. . .] they hardly speak to you. When I look at the academic community per se, especially the environment how you communicate, it is designed for Finnish culture only. (I1: Male, education science, Ph.D. student).

The respondents were asked also to evaluate some other areas of student life, such as student services, student unions, sports clubs, and such. The number of dissatisfied respondents remained small. However, in all kinds of social activities, there were a considerable number of international students who did not, for one reason or another, participate at all in these activities.

Concerning the social activities arranged by the students themselves and directed especially to international students, only a little more than half (56.7 percent) of the respondents participated at least sometimes. The active participants’ group can be considered fairly small. Among the reasons most often mentioned for non-participation (Table 8) were a lack of time (164 replies) and a lack of relevant information (119 replies). Moreover, language barriers and a lack of interest towards such activities were also mentioned among the reasons for non-participation. Thus, it seems that there are many restrictions for international students’ integration in the light of both the survey and interview data.

![Table 8. Reasons for not participating in social activities intended for international students (International Students in Finnish Universities 2007 Survey).](image-url)
There is a growing interest in the extent to which the international degree students plan to stay in or leave the destination country after graduation (Forsander et al. 2004; Alberts and Hazen 2005.) In the International Students Survey, respondents were asked about their future plans with the help of four different alternatives (Table 9). The majority of the respondents demonstrated a willingness to stay in Finland, mentioning either “surely” or at least “under certain conditions” (65 percent). Approximately every fifth respondent was definitely sure of staying in Finland after finishing his or her degree. Correspondingly, approximately every sixth (16 percent) was sure that he or she would leave Finland. The future was still open to approximately one fifth. The results are fairly congruent with some earlier studies (see Kinnunen 2003).

In Finland, work is seen as a key factor for integration into society. Thus the immigrants’ employment is an essential question from the perspective of career integration. Even though highly educated immigrants are usually in the best position in the labor market as compared to other immigrants, previous studies have repeatedly revealed the difficulty for international students in finding employment in Finland (Ally 2002; Kinnunen 2003; Koivisto and Juusola 2008).

![Chart showing students' future plans after graduating from university](chart)

**Table 9.** Students’ future plans after graduating from university (International Students in Finnish Universities 2007 Survey).

Working while studying is very common among Finnish students: studies indicate that about nine out of ten Finnish students work at some stage during their studies (EuroStudent III-IV). About three-quarters of international students (74 percent) who responded to the survey had worked in Finland at least once, but approximately every seventh respondent (15 percent) had not succeeded in finding work despite his or her attempts to do so. There were no significant statistical differences in employment in Finland between different nationality groups. However, the difference between male and female respondents was extremely significant statistically: it was more common for the men to be employed than for the women.
The survey also examined the respondents’ own conceptions on their labor-market status in Finland. The respondents were asked to estimate the three biggest assets and the three biggest obstacles to employment in Finland. Most of the respondents mentioned education as their biggest strength (64.7 percent) along with skills (58.9 percent) (Table 10). In addition, language skills and previous experience were quite often mentioned. In the assets, mainly formal evaluation criteria were emphasized in employment. According to the respondents’ conceptions, less value is given to personal factors, such as personality, contacts, or their international background.

Table 10. Major assets that students mention as helping jobseekers in the Finnish labor market (International Students in Finnish Universities 2007 Survey).

Inadequate skills in the Finnish (or Swedish) language were regarded as the biggest obstacle to employment. Other obstacles were not regarded as great as the language problem. In some earlier studies it has been noted that the better the Finnish skills international students have, the more likely they are to have work experience in Finland. Similarly, the lack of work experience probably indicated less skill in the Finnish language (Niemelä 2008). In earlier studies, the time spent in Finland has also proved to be a significant factor for employment. This probably can be explained by the fact that the students who stayed in Finland for a long time had more social contacts than the ones who had just moved to the country, and this also helps in finding employment (Kinnunen, 2003). Thus, the success and depth of social and cultural integration along with the longer stay in Finland enhance the international students’ career integration.

In the survey, the respondents’ views on the relevance of the Finnish higher education degree in the labor market was also examined. To what extent does the acquired degree in Finland provide smooth entry into international labor market, or,
similarly, will the international background of the applicant help to gain access into the Finnish labor market? The respondents believed that the Finnish degree was useful especially in the international labor markets: four out of five respondents agreed with this view. In the Finnish labor market, a distinctly smaller number of respondents believed in the usefulness of the degree. This observation of the competitive ability of Finnish qualifications in the international labor market probably finds an explanation in the conceptions of the excellence of Finnish education. The weaker competitive ability in Finnish labor markets on the other hand signifies difficulties in finding employment.

The themes describing career integration in the interviews supported the results of the survey findings. Especially the academic education as qualifier for a career theme came forth as a positive factor in connection with integration into a career. Though the interviewees represented generalist fields, they emphasized that their studies had a clear focus on a career path, and that the acquired formal competence with a higher education degree had meaning for them. The acquisition of certain knowledge and skills were expected from their higher education studies, and were thought to open the doors of certain professions and to help with future tasks.

Because of professional prospects [. . .] I think I have some quite good opportunities here. At least I feel that the master’s degree has some value there, professionally. [. . .] I tend to focus on the formal aspects like getting the degree and what it brings to me professionally. (I7, Male, information sciences, master’s-level student)

Another positive theme in the interviews emerged around the work career of many possibilities theme. In the students’ expectations, higher education studies were not clearly profiled to any profession but rather as an open attitude to the different possible options. This theme emphasized the fact that the generalist field does not prepare for a certain profession but rather that the degree can open up opportunities for a wide variety of careers:

I am really quite open about this because you never know. [. . .] It is not always something you have thought of yourself, it could just come in some other way, even if you haven’t thought about it. (I7, Male, information sciences, master’s-level student)

A negative theme that surfaced in connection with career integration is the theme of challenges of career engagement where language barriers and the lack of social networks were emphasized as obstacles. Furthermore, the pressure was caused, in the interviewees’ opinion, by the formal proficiency requirements that are characteristic of the Finnish labor market. The international students felt that this was too
demanding. The students may have regarded their own earlier education as inadequate to the high Finnish proficiency requirements.

It would be important to get the qualification. [. . .] That paper is emphasized here really much. Also, in the work, there are competent people, but if you are not qualified formally, it does not mean anything at all here in society. (I4: Female, education science, master’s-level student)

The international degree students’ conceptions of career integration are uniform from the points of view of both the survey findings and the interview results. Based on this comparison, it can be concluded that it is probable that the situation has not changed significantly in the few years that have passed since the survey data were collected.

**Discussion**

The results of this study strengthen the idea that if one wants to understand international degree students’ integration more comprehensively, attention must be paid to all aspects of integration, i.e., cultural, social, academic, and career. It is not enough to focus merely on the academic performance and success of their studies in the academic setting. The research on integration and adaptation of international students should widen its focus to the underlying mechanisms that may lead towards weak integration and negative experiences (see Rienties et al. 2011). Academic integration cannot be solely understood if, at the same time, the significance of cultural and social integration and the adaptation stages related to cultural integration are not identified (see Sue and Sue 2008). Furthermore, international students’ plans for their careers and their futures after graduation cannot be properly understood if the other areas of integration are not examined closely at the same time. The mixed-method data showed that in the different areas of international students’ integration, there were either strengthening or weakening aspects according to the students’ conceptions and experiences. Based on these findings it can be claimed that factors strengthening integration in other areas can restrain a more difficult situation in one particular area of integration.

In the area of cultural and social integration outside the university, the newcomer’s social contacts and networks and learning the local language are crucial for successful adaptation to and engagement with society and for overcoming possible culture-shock and cultural barriers (see Schweisfurth and Gu 2009; Pietilä 2010). Likewise, the social contacts and networks inside the university are significant for social integration, particularly the relations with other international students. On the other hand, the cultural and social integration of international students is characterized by the weakness of communication and contacts with Finns both inside and outside the university. The interviews strengthened the image that even though
international students identify the significance of social agency for success in their studies, they do not feel that they are getting enough contacts with Finnish students. Further, many international degree students seem to remain outside the space of student social activities.

The weak communication skills and limited contacts have generally been considered as a challenge to the internationalization of higher education in Finland. The reserved social culture was considered more as the reason for weaknesses in social integration than the attitudes or straight discrimination towards foreigners in this study. The challenges in the interaction between the Finnish and the international students are not a surprising finding. The issue has often come forth in earlier studies regarding both degree and exchange students (Ally 2002; Kinnunen 2003; Taajamo 2005; Niemelä 2008; Lairio, Puukari, and Taajamo 2013). In addition, the distance of the scientific community and academic personnel from the student’s world was brought out in the interviews. The international degree students’ social integration inside or outside the university does not take place in a desirable way, and the phenomenon seems to persist year after year.

In connection with academic integration, the different methods and data used showed both strengthening and weakening factors. There is, among international degree students, a certain prevailing kind of general satisfaction with Finnish education and its quality, the learning environment, and the progress of studies, but at the same time, the survey results reveal many weak factors in the progress and integration of the students’ studies, such as the inadequacy of courses in English or problems related to the guidance of studies. Although universities in Finland have considerably increased the number of courses taught in English over the past few years, the supply seems not to correspond adequately to the expectations. The findings give reference to the fact that if students’ cultural and social integration is weaker, it can also negatively affect their academic integration and contribute to difficulties in the progression of studies. This can be seen also in the students’ needs for more guidance and support. This is linked to how the question of guidance might relate to the normal cultural and social adaptation process (Lairio, Puukari, and Taajamo 2013). If cultural and social integration are stronger and supported, this could reduce the problems that hamper academic integration and the progress of studies.

Career integration and finding employment in Finland are big challenges faced by the international degree students (Kinnunen 2003). In the students’ opinion, the completion of their academic education in Finland is seen as a positive factor for international career possibilities; however, many challenges remain for career engagement, particularly in Finland. According to the students’ views, language barriers and the lack of social networks could significantly impede successful employment in Finland. Hence, if other areas of international students’ integration can be improved, such as cultural, social, and academic in higher education and beyond, it
would definitely improve the international students’ possibilities of employment in the Finnish labor market.

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International Degree Students’ Integration into the Finnish Higher Education and Labor Market


PART II:
OUTBOUND MIGRATION
STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFERRING CULTURAL CAPITAL: 
THE CASE OF HIGHLY SKILLED FINNS IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT
This article focuses on the labor market experiences of highly skilled Finns living in twelve 
European Union member states. It examines the transferability of cultural capital, i.e. one’s 
skills, work experience, and educational qualifications, across borders. The article identifies 
three strategies—adaptation, distinction, and reorientation—that highly skilled migrants use 
when looking for employment abroad. Adaptation to the conditions of the local labor market 
is necessary for all migrants, and, for some, using this strategy is enough to find work. Using 
the strategy of distinction can help in competing successfully with other job-seekers, if one has 
rare skills that are on-demand. However, for some, a complete re-orientation may be necessary if 
continuing in one’s own career is not possible. The article concludes that there are several ways 
in which to make it abroad and to find a good life and a new home in the border-free Europe.

Keywords: adaptation, cultural capital, human capital, migration in Europe, 
European Union
INTRODUCTION: HIGHLY SKILLED MIGRATION IN EUROPE

The current era of globalization has witnessed an increase in the numbers of educated and skilled migrants. A substantial increase in the numbers of skilled migrants was one of the “central migration stories of the 1990s” as the share of tertiary-educated migrants had risen to 35 percent of the worldwide migrant stock by the year 2000 (Lowell 2007, 14). The diversification of the types of international mobility (e.g., Vertovec 2007, Castles and Miller 2009) is visible also in the new routes taken by skilled migrants and in the types of educated migrants crossing borders. This diversity challenges the understanding of skilled migrants as a group that consists primarily of highly privileged Western business expatriates on company secondments or of Chinese or Indian IT professionals migrating to places like Silicon Valley in a one-way flow of talent also described as brain drain. Even though not all migrants end up losing out on their employment and salary status when migrating, it has been noted that, at least statistically, migration is a significant risk to one’s labor market prospects (e.g., Lusis and Bauder 2009; Bauder 2008). As this article demonstrates, finding highly skilled employment abroad is a complex process which should not be examined only in terms of loss of status or loss of the value of one’s qualifications. Even though some skills and work experience may be less valuable abroad, some other types of qualifications and skills may become recognized as valuable assets in the new context.

A migrant’s skill level is often determined by the number of years he or she has spent in formal education. Some of the most common definitions of a skilled or highly skilled migrant include tertiary degree-holder, university degree-holder, or an individual with extensive experience in a given field (Iredale 2001, 8). In this article, I use the completion of a university degree or university of applied sciences degree as the signifier of being highly skilled. With such a broad definition, this migrant category thus includes a great variety of people moving abroad for different reasons. Some plan to stay abroad permanently while for others the assignment abroad is a short-term career move or even an adventure. For many highly skilled migrants, migration is voluntary, but for some it is the only option available. What can be said to unify this migrant group is that they all face the risk of having to accept work that does not match their qualifications, if their education and work experience loses some of its value during the process of migration.

Michael Samers (2010, 14) has pointed out that no migrant is in fact “un-skilled”; thus, the concept of highly skilled migrants is highly context dependent, as particular countries’ and employers’ definition of “skilled” and “not-so-skilled” varies over space and time. Some highly skilled migrants are not (immediately) successful in gaining employment at the expected level and suffer from a process called skill downgrading, de-skilling, or even brain waste, because, despite their levels of education, not all are necessarily regarded in the country of destination as highly skilled (Bertoli
et al. 2012, 20). Ideally, the labor market skills that they possess should be transferable across borders, and their experience should be internationally recognized, for the transfer to a new country to go smoothly. But to be able to benefit fully from their previous education and work experience, the migrants must also possess the necessary skills and language proficiency to negotiate the value of their qualifications in the destination country’s labor market (Csedö 2008; see also Koikkalainen 2009). This is especially the case for those migrants who do not relocate with the help of their employer, but have to find employment on their own.

The European Union, comprised of twenty-eight countries\(^1\) with more than 500 million inhabitants, is currently the world’s best research laboratory on legal, transnational migration. This paper focuses on highly skilled migrants who have utilized their right to free movement in the EU: university-educated Finns in the EU-15\(^2\) countries. A focus on such a small national group can contribute to our understanding of contemporary labor mobility in Europe, as the empirical studies have so far tended to focus either on the large EU member states (e.g., Favell 2008a; Recchi and Favell 2009; Ackers and Gill 2008) or on the more recent and more populous movement of workers from the eastern and central European new member states towards the EU-15 (e.g., Favell 2008b; Kahanec, Zaiceva, and Zimmermann 2009; Eade and Valkanova 2009; Black et al. 2010). In addition, it is interesting to see whether the experiences of these *Scandinavian Eurostars* differ from the results on research into intra-European mobility between larger EU member states. I borrow this concept from Adrian Favell who introduced it to describe the free-moving Europeans living in London, Amsterdam, and Brussels in his book *Eurostars and Eurocities* (2008a). My research therefore asks whether moving and settling abroad is different for the mobile professionals originating from the European periphery. Is finding work more difficult for Finns, who have belonged to the free movement area only since 1994,\(^3\) than it is for those originating from EU states with a longer experience of cross-border mobility?

The structure of the article is the following: first, the concepts of human capital and cultural capital are introduced as the theoretical background of the article. After the presentation of the research data that this study utilizes, I conclude that these mobile Europeans use the strategies of adaptation, distinction, and reorientation in order to succeed in the destination country’s labor market. The active agency of the

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1 Croatia became the 28th member state of the EU in July 2013.

2 The EU-15 are the so-called old member states that formed the EU after Finland’s accession in 1995 until 2004 when the first ten new central and eastern European countries joined the Union. For a discussion of how mobility from the twelve states that joined in 2004 and 2007 differs, see Recchi and Triandafyllidou (2010) or Koikkalainen (2011).

3 Finland joined the European Union in 1995, but Finns gained the free movement rights already in 1994 when the country joined the European Economic Area.
migrants themselves in utilizing these strategies or tools plays a role in determining whether the move abroad signifies a loss or a gain for their cultural capital.

**FROM HUMAN CAPITAL TO CULTURAL CAPITAL**

Highly educated professional migrants moving from one country to another bring along their education and the skills acquired in the country of origin. Human capital as the embodiment of an individual’s education, abilities, skills, and knowledge has been utilized especially in the neo-classical migration theory, which claims that migrants seek the best return for their human capital investment and thus move to where the salaries are highest (e.g., Arango 2000, 285; Samers 2010, 60–61). Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) concepts of cultural and social capital have also been used to explain the problems of transferring skills from one society or cultural environment to another. Bourdieu defined three different types of capital. Economic capital refers to a command over economic or monetary resources. Social capital refers to resources based on membership in certain networks or groups, such as influence and support. Cultural capital on the other hand refers to skills and knowledge acquired through education and through the socialization process (Bourdieu 1986, 242–43). Even though the effects of the loss of social capital and the weakening of ties (Granovetter 1973) that would help in finding employment are also important for highly skilled migrants, in this paper I focus specifically on cultural capital (on social capital see, e.g., Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Lancee 2012).

Bourdieu divides cultural capital into three subtypes: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Embodied cultural capital includes dispositions, which are embodied on the habitus of an individual, such as a set of habits or traditions learned from one’s family (e.g., Bourdieu 1977; 1993, 86–88). Objectified cultural capital refers to things that can be owned. The institutionalized type of cultural capital refers to the academic qualifications of a certain individual, which can then be assigned a monetary value in the labor market (Bourdieu 1986, 242–43).

In the event of migration, the acquired cultural capital is put to the test because what is perceived as valuable work experience or as a good education in the country of origin may, in the worst case, be worth little or nothing in the country of destination. A lack of embodied cultural capital in the form of correct modes of behavior in a particular setting and/or a lack of institutionalized cultural capital in the form of degrees and/or membership in professional bodies, for example, may lead to a denial of job opportunities in one’s own field (Bauder 2008, 308). Cultural capital is thus related to the concept of human capital, but it includes an important additional dimension: the value of this capital is always defined in social interaction and in reference to the cultural context in question. It is, therefore, better to utilize cultural capital to describe the entire set of skills and qualifications that highly skilled migrants, such as the Finns of this study here, possess.
One application of the concept of cultural capital in the context of migration can be found from the work of Nohl, Schittenhelm, Schmidtke, and Weiss (2006, 2010b). They argue that during migration the form and the particular characteristics of one’s cultural capital, such as degrees and language proficiency, are of significance. The recognition of institutional cultural capital, such as educational titles, can be regulated through the authorities responsible for foreign degree recognition in the respective countries. Incorporated or embodied cultural capital, such as mental schemes and action orientation, language, value, and competences are tied to the habitus of each person who acquires these through a long process of socialization and education. As institutionalized cultural capital is usually applied in national contexts, its value or relevance may diminish abroad. Nevertheless there are some fields of specialization, such as international business and the information and communications technology sector, where a transnational labor market exists and cultural capital can be utilized regardless of where it was obtained (see, e.g., Nohl et al. 2006, paragraphs 15–16; Erel 2010, 646–50.)

Individuals need to present their cultural capital in a favorable light when trying to find employment. Nohl and colleagues (2006, paragraphs 18–19) call the negotiations that individuals undertake in trying to find work symbolic struggles over the assessment of capital between migrants and the native population.4 These struggles can also take place with recognition of knowledge and abilities that may not have been utilized in the migrants’ country of origin, and have become valuable during the migration process. Krisztina Csedő (2008) also sees the process of gaining employment as a situation where the job applicants have to negotiate the best possible value for their cultural capital. Her research on Hungarian and Romanian graduates and professionals in London highlights the importance of social context and immigrant agency in the assessment of skills and human capital. In her study, only those tertiary-educated migrants (i.e., those with university degrees), who on top of their high qualifications also had globally valuable and transferable social and work experience, were successful in transferring their skills (Csedő 2008, 819).

All types of knowledge are not equally valued: some types of knowledge are more mobile and easier to transfer and translate, and the valorization of different knowledge and skills is often linked to occupations, status positions, and gender (Kofman 2013). Some forms of cultural capital can be transnationally recognized. Members of this “transnational upper class” are typically characterized as having an internationally valued education, correct (Western) habitus, and labor market skills that are not country-specific. They have considerable spatial autonomy, as they can move globally in pursuit of better career prospects. For them, migration can be a way of achieving upward social mobility (Weiss 2005, 712–16). An individual’s cultural

capital is not a static entity, but migrants also create new cultural capital in their new country of residence and find ways by which to validate their capital in the new context (Erel 2010, 649–50). The migration experience itself may also contribute to one’s cultural capital: crossing borders and managing in changing circumstances as a student or as an employee gives one mobility capital (Murphy-Lejeune 2003), and can be an important element in enhancing one’s career capital (Jokinen, Brewster, and Suutari 2008; Habti 2012, 31, 92).

It can be argued, therefore, that in a new country the transnationally mobile individuals have to negotiate the value of their cultural capital and present their skills, experiences, and qualifications in a way that is rewarded by the employer. In the following sections of this article, I discuss how transnationally mobile Finns manage this process in a border-free Europe, where moving abroad is so easy that it has been said to be more like internal mobility than international migration (e.g., Favell 2008a; Recchi and Triandafyllidou 2010; Koikkalainen 2011). I argue that the agency of the highly skilled migrants themselves is important in the way in which their cultural capital is assessed in the destination country. The migrants are not simply brains drained or brains wasted, but they do influence their own labor market outcomes abroad. It is this active agency that can be the key in determining whether the move across borders signifies a loss or a gain for the cultural capital of the migrant.

A View into the Working-Life Experiences of Finns Living Abroad

Around twelve thousand individuals move abroad from Finland each year. In the past ten years, the European Union has consistently been the destination for most outgoing migrants. At the same time, the choice of Sweden, traditionally the top destination for Finnish migrants, is in steady decline: in 1995 when Finland joined the EU, 34 percent of Finnish citizens who moved abroad migrated to Sweden, as compared to only 22 percent in 2011 (Statistics Finland 2011). The share of tertiary-educated migrants of all Finnish citizens moving abroad has varied between 21 and 36 percent over the past twenty years. In terms of numbers, this has meant that between 1,115 (in 1991) and 3,802 (in 2001) highly educated Finns have moved abroad each year (Statistics Finland 2011). More individuals move abroad than come back. This is illustrated in Table 1, which depicts the number of outgoing and incoming tertiary-educated Finnish citizens from 1990 to 2011.5

5 From 1990 to 2011, a total of 60,949 tertiary-educated Finnish citizens moved abroad. While the number of returning citizens was 41,190, the size of the skill outflow was 19,759 highly educated individuals over the past twenty-two years. These data do not take into account incoming educated migrants, who are not Finnish citizens. It is also possible that a sizeable number of Finnish citizens who were educated abroad do not show on the return migration figures, as their degrees may not be recorded in the Finnish databases that Statistics Finland uses.
Table 1. Comparison between outgoing and return migration of highly educated Finnish citizens 1990–2011.

This article is based on a virtual ethnography of Finns living in the EU-15 countries (for a detailed explanation of this virtual ethnography, see Koikkalainen 2012). It started with the Working in Europe survey (2008, n=364) that was distributed via websites servicing Finns who live abroad (Koikkalainen 2013). Because the sample is based on participant self-selection and is thus a non-probability sample (Ritchie, Lewis, and Elam 2003, 78; see also Warren and Karner 2010, 141), the data are examined with qualitative methods, rather than analyzed statistically. This choice in the type of analysis conducted differentiates my approach from mixed-methods research, where the use of quantitative and qualitative data and methods is combined to examine the various sides of the same research topic (e.g., Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). The survey had twenty-seven multiple-choice and open-ended questions concerning the respondent’s background, reasons for moving, and labor market experiences both in Finland and abroad. The data were supplemented by a follow-up survey (2010, n=194) and eighteen semi-structured Skype interviews (2011) of selected respondents of the two surveys (Koikkalainen 2013). Whereas the respondents to the surveys included all kinds of professionals, only those who had moved abroad on their own initiative (as opposed to having been sent by their employers) were selected for interviews, as the experience of looking for work and adapting to the new country’s labor market are considerably easier when transferring within the same employer, for example.
The participants in the study include, for example, tertiary-educated consultants, finance managers, information and communications technology engineers, post-doctoral scholars, free-lance journalists, and self-employed language specialists. Their intended stay abroad varies from that of a *settler* to that of a *sojourner*, from permanent emigration to short-time mobility with a fixed time limit. Also, their desire to integrate varies, as some are strongly rooted to the current home country, while others contemplate either returning to Finland or moving on to a new destination. Even though career advancement is not the sole reason for moving, a clear majority of the participants in the study are happy about their labor-market situation abroad (Koikkalainen 2009). Yet, the mobility decision is not viewed only through the prism of higher salary expectations or career plans, but also as an important learning opportunity and as an adventure, with the possibility of finding a new country that feels more like home.

Over two-thirds of all respondents were female: there were 280 female (77 percent) and 84 male (23 percent) respondents. Forty-five percent of the respondents were cohabiting, 28 percent were married, and 27 percent were single. Most respondents (76 percent) did not have any children. The respondents’ average age was thirty-two years, and they were fairly recent movers as 78 percent had moved abroad after the year 2000. The educational backgrounds of the respondents were rather varied: 48 percent had obtained their degree in Finland, 20 percent from abroad, 25 percent had a degree from both countries, and 7 percent were still studying. Overall the most common fields of study were social sciences, business, marketing and economics, and the humanities. Eighty-seven percent of all responses were from five countries: the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, France, and Spain.⁶

According to Ettore Recchi (2008, 217–18), there are three main forms of cross-state mobility for EU movers to the largest Western European member states: mobility motivated by work, mobility motivated by personal and affective relationships, and mobility motivated by quality of life. The survey respondents could select from a list of fifteen reasons to answer the question, “Why did you move abroad?” Their motivations fell into four different categories: reasons related to work (e.g., “to look for work”), reasons related to partner and family (e.g., “because my partner was foreign”), reasons related to quality of life, and reasons related to studying. Nearly one third of all respondents (117) did not choose any of the possible options related to work or career, so clearly these highly skilled migrants are not simply trying to maximize returns from their human-capital investments as the neo-classical approach to migration suggests. It is good to note that, in many cases, these motivations overlapped as all respondents chose an average of four reasons to explain why they had moved abroad.

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⁶ A detailed breakdown of countries and educational backgrounds is included as Appendix 1.
In an effort to bring a “human face” (Favell, Feldblum, and Smith 2006) to the study of global mobility and to complement the overall picture given by the survey, eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2011 (see Koikkalainen 2012). The interviewees were selected from among those survey respondents who provided their e-mail address and agreed to be contacted later. Instead of focusing on a single destination country or educational background, for example, I wanted to highlight the diversity of the labor-market experiences of these Finns. The aim was thus to gather a purposive sample (Ritchie, Lewis, and Elam 2003, 97) that would be as diverse as possible in terms of the migration motivation, year of mobility, educational background, field of study, career, country of residence, life situation, and the kinds of positive and negative labor market experiences they wrote about in the open-ended questions of the surveys. Six male and twelve female respondents, living in twelve different countries, were interviewed online via Skype in 2011. Each interviewee was given a pseudonym, so the names used in the interview quotes of the following sections of the article are not the real names of the interviewees.

The method of analysis I used draws from the documentary method (e.g., Bohnsack 2008; Nohl 2010; Nohl and Ofner 2010). Nohl (2010, 203–204, 210–12) concludes that the documentary interpretation of narrative data takes places in four stages: formulating interpretation, reflecting interpretation, comparative sequential analysis, and the type formation. In the formulating interpretation stage, topics of interest are identified from the interviews to essentially find out what the interview or piece of textual data is about. This stage can also be referred to as a “first cycle coding method” (Saldaña 2009, 45–46). The reflecting interpretation phase aims at clarifying how these topics are discussed and in which context. The research data are then open for comparative sequential analysis, where the cases are contrasted with one another to find the orientation frameworks in which various topics are discussed. From this basis, various typologies are formulated to complete the analysis. A particular orientation framework initially observed in a particular interview, for example, can be identified in other interviews as well and thus becomes a type, rather than being just a single case (Nohl 2010, 204, 210–12).

With the documentary method, the analysis does not stop at the literal level of what the participants write in response to the survey questions or say during the interview (e.g., Nohl et al. 2010a, 15–16). Looking at different themes that occur in various pieces of data and contrasting them with other cases also brings forward the tacit knowledge on topics like the respondent’s experiences of success or discrimination, labor-market strategies, or feelings of belonging and identity. In the

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7 In 2011, the interviewees lived in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. Four of them had changed countries after initially responding to the survey in 2008, and two were about to relocate to Asia after the interview.
formulating interpretation stage, I coded the interview transcripts with descriptive codes (Saldaña 2009, 70–71) that included topics such as ways of looking for work, education abroad, education in Finland, making new friends, and meeting one’s spouse. During the reflecting interpretation stage, I examined the data again to look for similarities in the topics discussed and for connecting themes that appear in more than one case. In the comparative sequential analysis phase, I distributed the data into the themes, such as migration motivations, difficulties, future plans, and career progress. In the type formation phase, I examined the data once again and distilled the key findings on the transferability of cultural capital into three overlapping strategies that highly skilled workers can use either consecutively or at the same time: adaptation, distinction, and reorientation.

**Three Strategies of Adaptation, Distinction, and Reorientation**

The transition to the new country’s labor market has mostly been easy for the Working in Europe survey respondents: in 2008, when the survey was conducted, 76 percent were in full-time employment, and only 3 percent said they were unemployed. On the question of how long it took them in the new country to find employment that matched their degree, only 4 percent reported that they had not found such a job, and another 4 percent said that they had been unemployed and had looked for work for longer than six months. Seventy-six percent had found work within weeks, either before or immediately after moving or before or immediately after graduating from a local institution. The respondents were also asked to compare their current country with Finland on a number of claims related to their labor-market situation. The respondents were rather content with their situation in the new country: the share of “agree completely/somewhat agree” replies to “I get a better salary than in Finland” was 70 percent; to “I have a job that fits my qualifications,” 79 percent; “My degree is recognized,” 77 percent; and “My previous job experience is recognized,” 77 percent. Being foreign had not been a major obstacle in finding work, as only 11 percent report having faced discrimination (Koikkalainen 2009).

The respondents to the survey hold university degrees in a variety of fields, ranging from architecture to theoretical physics and from nursing to engineering. At the beginning of the research project, it was anticipated that some factors that make one more likely to succeed in the destination country labor market could be identified, based, for example, on previous education, language skills, or destination country. Would respondents with a degree in fields such as business or law be more satisfied with their situation abroad than those with a degree in a field that could be perceived to generate knowledge and skills that are more tied to national contexts, 8

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8 Ten percent of the respondents were either freelancers or had a part-time job, 6 percent were still studying, and 4 percent were on parental leave or caring for family members. Three respondents were allocated to the category of "other" (1 percent): one had his own business, one was a trainee, and data were missing from one respondent.
as, for example, teacher education or the Finnish language? Or would the level of the education matter: would the situation of those with a polytechnic bachelor’s degree differ from those who have a university level master’s degree? Also, gender differences could be foreseen, as prior research has shown that transnational mobility even within Europe can be a career risk for women (Recchi and Favell 2009).

Yet, the possibilities of making such comparisons from the survey material proved challenging. An overwhelming majority of the respondents were engaged in fulltime employment, and, in addition, more than 80 percent of those who replied to the open-ended question on whether “moving abroad was a good decision for their career” regarded the move abroad as beneficial. Only a small minority of respondents reflected on the negative consequences for their career of the move away from Finland: some had experienced discrimination, failed to find a job that would match their education, or felt that they were “committing a career suicide.” A far more common reply to the question of whether the move was a good decision for one’s career was simply: “Absolutely yes!” The very concept of labor-market success is subjective, and, as many respondents explained, they do not really know or care if the move was a positive event for their work-life situation, as career was not the reason they moved in the first place.

The survey data showed no traces of significant deskilling, a term used to describe the process where tertiary-educated migrants work in the low-paid service sector or in other jobs that are a poor match to their education. In this respect, the labor-market paths of these Finns do differ from what has been observed of the career prospects of Central and Eastern European migrants who originate from the twelve EU member states that joined the Union in 2004 and 2007. As Recchi and Triandafyllidou (2010, 132) note, there are two different migration streams in operation within the EU. Mobile EU-15 citizens are more likely to get jobs at the upper end of the socioeconomic hierarchy than their co-nationals who stay at home, while the exact opposite seems to be the norm for those moving from the new EU member states. Bauder (2008, 326) argues that citizenship is also a form of capital—of making a distinction between those who are entitled to rights and belonging, and those who are excluded and, to a degree, can be exploited in the labor markets. However, rather than being discriminated against for being migrants, the Finns of this study seem to fall within the group of privileged and widely accepted Western European freemovers, for whom foreign citizenship is not a barrier to employment.

The Working in Europe data cannot be used to draw categorical conclusions about the types of degrees or work experience that transfer easily across the intra-European borders. The 364 respondents had obtained 423 different degrees altogether, so many of the respondents had several degrees, some from different disciplines.

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9 The countries that joined in 2004 were the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007.
and from different countries. Simple survey questions cannot reveal which parts of this institutionalized cultural capital were the most valuable in the new context, and focusing only on the highest degree, for example, would simplify the picture too much. Also, because the share of those who felt disappointed or discriminated against was very low, there was not much point in trying to explain differences between countries either. Because of the nature of the data-collection process, it is impossible to be certain that the results are not somewhat biased. It is possible that only those with positive experiences chose to respond to the survey in the first place or that the respondents were perhaps tempted to describe their life abroad as a success story. However, the data proved fruitful in terms of focusing on individual agency: what can the highly skilled migrants themselves do to succeed in the new context?

The analysis of the survey data and the interviews revealed that highly skilled Finns use three kinds of strategies to negotiate the value of their cultural capital: adaptation, distinction, and reorientation. These strategies are somewhat overlapping, and the skilled migrants can utilize either one, two, or all three of them at the same time or consecutively. Adaptation varies from very concrete steps in applying for jobs, such as the use of expected CV formats and use of the appropriate channels to contact potential employers, to larger scale choices about what kinds of skills to acquire and promote. For some interviewees, this adaptation had been enough and they were able to continue with their chosen profession or career in the destination country. Distinction, on the other hand, refers to tactics for utilizing one’s skills, education, and experiences to gain a competitive advantage. These tactics can include, for example, the knowledge of rare languages or contacts to Finnish businesses and the financial sector. If continuing on a career in one’s own field is not possible in the destination country, a strategy of reorientation can help one to gain labor-market access in another field or as a freelancer, for example. The three strategies are presented below in more detail.

Adaptation
All interviewees had used the strategy of adaptation because they—as any job applicant in any context for that matter—had to adapt to the realities of the labor market that they were participating in. They had to use the correct job application formats and acceptable language; they had to look for work through the correct channels; they had to behave in the expected manner in the interview and know what kinds of references to ask for. In short, they had to be able to present both the embodied and institutionalized cultural capital in the best possible light. This was the main type of strategy used by those migrants whose qualifications were obtained in the country of destination. If one’s institutional cultural capital from Finland was limited to having a senior secondary school diploma, carrying its value across the border was not significant for the future direction of one’s professional career.
Also, some of those educated in Finland (or in some third country) managed to continue in their profession or as freelancers rather easily. Finding the first job may have taken quite a lot of effort, but they nonetheless found jobs that matched their education. Nohl et al. (2010a, 10–11) use the concept of status passages to describe the multidimensional school-to-work transition in the new country. They also differentiate between migrants who were educated abroad (Bildungsausländerinnen) and migrants who were educated in the country of destination (Bildungsinländerinnen) because, from the perspective of the labor market, the source of the qualifications influences the status passage (Nohl et al. 2010a, 14). Under the current conditions of competition in the labor markets, and especially for migrants in a new country, this passage is not automatic, but requires efforts and struggle if one wants to claim a place for oneself. As Mika, one of my interviewees from London (b. 1976, UK) explains:

I just kept on sending and sending my CV to the companies […] and then there was this graduate fair where people from a finance company were giving talks and trying to meet as many people as possible […] so after about a month I got my first job there, and from then on I worked as a tax advisor for about three to four years […] until I was headhunted to a totally different kind of business. (Mika, male, b. 1976, Swedish degree in economics)

Having arrived in the country with a foreign degree from Sweden, Mika had to adapt to the rules of the game in the United Kingdom. He describes the start of his career there as a difficult time, when he did not even have money to buy Christmas presents for his family. This process of adaptation required Mika, as also other highly skilled migrants like him, to learn the correct channels of finding employment, how to write a convincing CV, and how to behave in a job interview. Depending on the country, the correct way to look for work may vary from going to graduate fairs, contacting temp agencies, compiling application packages, filling out online application forms, or soliciting recommendations from one’s social network. In Mika’s case, this hard work and learning to maneuver in the UK labor market gradually paid off, and he explains that since that rocky start, his career has progressed in a more than satisfactory manner. At the time of the interview, he was about to relocate to Hong Kong.

Adaptation – Distinction
However, using the strategy of adaptation was not enough for all interviewees. In addition to learning the rules of the destination-country labor market, Minna (b. 1976, Ireland) has utilized the strategy of distinction to find work. She has a university degree in Nordic philology (Swedish language) from Finland, but with this
perhaps surprising educational background she has been able to create a mobile lifestyle that she enjoys. Her career moves have been based more on location than on career planning, as she has worked in diverse jobs, ranging from a traineeship with EuroDisney to a call center and to the administrative offices of IT companies that have concentrated their European operations in London and Dublin. She has had to adapt to the situation in whichever country she has been living, as the available jobs have differed from what she thought her options would be when she was still studying. She explains:

Whatever jobs I have had, none of them has felt like that this is exactly what I always wanted to do, it’s more like I just drifted there . . . especially because I have changed countries so many times . . . so I’ve mostly drifted to the jobs that I found, and I do not have a dream career yet, so I am still looking. (Minna, female, b. 1976, Finnish degree in Swedish language)

The strategy of distinction has also worked in her favor: the knowledge of rare languages, especially Swedish and also to a lesser extent Finnish, has given her a steady income for ten years, as well as the opportunity to live in four different countries. She has no regrets for moving abroad as she has managed to use her language skills to give her a competitive advantage, even though for her the languages come so naturally that she hardly recognizes them as special skills at all. She was single at the time of the interview in 2011 and had no definite plans to integrate into a particular country or to start a family. She is confident that her cultural capital offers her the possibility of moving again:

I live in Ireland for the time being, it is the same always with me . . . that it is not permanently, nor for a little while but it is for now, so that when the wind blows again, when I begin to feel restless again and think where should I go now. . . . (Minna, female, b. 1976, Finnish degree in Swedish language)

Another participant in the study, Antti (b. 1973, Germany), has also utilized these two strategies, but somewhat differently. He has a degree in engineering from a Finnish university of technology and he moved to the United Kingdom in 2000 after having realized that his career with a large telecommunications company in Finland was not going anywhere. Having a specific type of experience from his previous employer was the aspect that made him highly employable in the new country’s labor market. Antti explains:

The British company was looking for someone to build an automated testing environment for cellular phones and my work experience was the ace up my sleeve that got me in. [. . .] The company was launching a
new technology at the time, and I thought that if I want to get to the top, I have to take the risk now and see if it works, but I have to get in before it becomes common knowledge. (Antti, male, b. 1973, Finnish degree in engineering)

The type of strategy of distinction Antti used was that of highlighting the relevant aspects of the previous work experience and his skills from a relatively narrow field for which there was demand in his country of destination. The reputation of his previous employer also played in his favor. Antti explains that he has been able “to sell myself in the job interview by saying that whatever new task I have been faced with, I have learned it in two months.” His career trajectory in the UK did not, however, prove to be straightforward, and he had to rely on the strategy of adaptation to stay in the job. He was asked to make another important career choice after only two months as the company was looking for someone to specialize in yet another type of technology:

The boss came to me on one fine day and asked what I think of something called [abbreviation for a cellular phone technology]? I thought about it for one and a half seconds. I had learned a little about the English mentality and knew that if I say that I am not interested, I am let go, and if I say I am interested, then I have to learn a new field on the spot. (Antti, male, b. 1973, Finnish degree in engineering)

Having invested in learning these new technologies, but being dissatisfied both in his employer in the UK as well as the general atmosphere in the country, he found a new job in Germany in 2002. Again the gamble, as he calls it, in learning very specific technologies in a fast-developing field paid off, as his particular cultural capital had value regardless of the national context:

By going through these internet job sites it turned out that, hey, they are looking for a consultant in Germany who has one year’s experience of [abbreviation] and also [abbreviation] was mentioned in the so-called sacred combinations of letters, so I went to the interview via an agency and after a couple of phone calls and two weeks later I had a contract in my hands: welcome to Germany. (Antti, male, b. 1973, Finnish degree in engineering)

At the beginning, he thought that the stay in Germany might be only temporary, as he worked as a freelancer with contracts that lasted only three months. Yet, at the time of the interview, he had already worked for the same company for nine years. Still, he describes himself as a “Gastarbeiter” who will most likely return to Finland at some point, even though this will require him to learn a totally new
trade, because he does not think Finnish employers will value his international work experience.

The strategies that the job applicants use change as their careers advance. Even though they may gain their initial jobs because they have some distinctive skills, such as knowledge of some new technology, of Scandinavian business environments, or of rare languages, later, as their careers progress, this knowledge may become less significant. This is natural, as the work experience begins to weigh more in the person’s competence than does the educational background, for example. The response of Juhani (b. 1977, Spain) is illustrative. He received the first job he ever applied for abroad because the company needed a Finnish speaker. His subsequent jobs have no longer been limited to one language or geographical area, and his career path follows a somewhat typical progression of a company career. In his 2008 response to the survey question about what it was like to look for work abroad, he writes:

I got my first job [in Ireland] through the career service of my Finnish university already before graduating. [. . .] In the country where I live now, the Netherlands, I have passively looked for work from Internet sites and the local agencies. I have also been approached by headhunters. I found my new job through an internal call of our company. (Juhani, male, b. 1977, Finnish degree in business administration)

After his first language-related job, Juhani has worked in the same company, a big manufacturer of household electronics, for several years. His corporate career has taken him from Ireland to the Netherlands and later to Spain. He is no longer looked at as the Finnish speaker, and his career advancement is no longer dependent on this particular type of distinction.

**Adaptation — Reorientation**

The third type of career strategy that emerged from the survey and interview data is that of combining adaptation to career reorientation. Any individual who contemplates crossing borders in search of work stands at a crossroad: staying at home would signify choosing the path of the familiar, while deciding to migrate leads to a future that is more mysterious. One part of the appeal of taking the unknown road as a Eurostar, a highly skilled and educated mobile European, is that it can lead to “denationalized freedom: in both the spatial (economic) and cosmopolitan (cultural) sense” (Favell 2008a, 9, italics in the original). Stepping out of the beaten track of your peers back home may require facing challenges in finding work, but for some that may be exactly why they moved in the first place. Choosing to work in the destination country in a field different than the one studied at university might appear as skill downgrading, but, from the point of view of the mobile individual, the situation may not be perceived in such bleak terms.
These strategies of adaptation, distinction, and reorientation are not mutually exclusive; therefore, job applicants can use different strategies in different contexts and at different stages of their working career. A good example of the overlap between the strategies is found in the example of Pauliina (b. 1980), who has a degree from Finland in the field of plant biology. After graduation she looked for work in Finland, but as she did not find a job in her own field, she decided to look for work in Denmark, the home country of her boyfriend. There, she used the skills that made her distinct and the parts of her embodied cultural capital that made her stand out among the other job applicants. As Copenhagen is the home of the accounting departments for several major Nordic department store chains, such as her Norwegian employer, which sells household electronics in all the five Nordic countries, there is demand for speakers of the Finnish, as well as for Swedish and Icelandic, language. Pauliina explains:

I found work via the Internet. They did not really ask for anything else beside knowledge of the Finnish language and that was enough. In that situation, where I had been looking for work in Finland for three months and had not found anything, it was so wonderful that I got the first job I applied for here. (Pauliina, female, b. 1980, Finnish degree in biology)

The move abroad signified a change of direction in Pauliina’s career. When she was finishing her studies in Finland in 2006, she did her master’s thesis at the botanical gardens. Since then, she has not really worked in any job related to biology, and she has not found work that would match the field of her degree in Denmark. She thinks that it is increasingly less likely that she will find anything in the future either, as more time passes. “As I have not worked in the field, I no longer remember even the names of plants in Latin, so unfortunately one forgets these things, especially when focusing on new issues and studying new things,” she explains. However, Pauliina is quite happy about her new career in accounting and has started studying business administration and economics at the Open University in Finland to increase her competence in the field.

She does not have second thoughts about her migration choice even though, in a sense, she wasted the skills and competence gained through her university education in the natural sciences. Had she stayed in Finland, she would have pursued a career in her chosen field of study. Yet, in her current career, the fact that she does have a university degree, regardless of its subject matter, is important. When she was transferred to a new job she noted that “they were not interested in the fact that I studied biology; it mattered more that I had university education, as it tells them about my ability to learn new things.” There was a group of approximately twenty Finnish girls working in the same company with her when she moved to Copenhagen. Pauliina notes on their career progress: “Those who stayed here have
learned the [Danish] language, and they are beginning to be in a position similar to mine . . . the job does not necessarily have to be linked only to Finland anymore.” Hence, even though the entry into the labor market may have been facilitated by the knowledge of in-demand languages, other jobs also come available in time when the employee accumulates local work experience (on the importance of languages, see Henkelmann 2010).

It is interesting to note that all those interviewees who had chosen the strategy of reorientation were females, many of whom lived in a particular country or city because of reasons not linked to their own careers. The women migrating to follow their partners are often seen as “marriage migrants,” even though such tertiary-educated women are also highly skilled migrants (Kofman 2013). Many female survey respondents whose partners were not Finnish had been engaged in long discussions about where the couple should live, and choosing the husband’s home country was somewhat typical. Many respondents explained that this was the best decision to make because “finding work in Finland for him would be even more difficult.”

One example of such a migrant is Maarit (b. 1964), who was the oldest interviewee in this study. Having migrated prior to the Finnish accession to the EU and thus being of a somewhat different migration generation, her story still resonates with the experience of the later migrants of this study. For her, moving to France signified both an opportunity and a necessity to rethink her field of study and future career. She had applied to study medicine in Finland twice without being accepted10 and started studying nutritional sciences and the French language instead. After having met her future husband in Finland, they decided to move to his native country, France, in the late 1980s. In France, Maarit discovered that her chances for finding work were non-existent, as she had not completed her university studies in Finland. Furthermore, the French employers “did not see Finland as a European country at all [. . .] so I understand how they now treat Arabs and those coming from Russia or Eastern Europe, as they are today. I was asked why do you come here, we have plenty of unemployed people here already.” In her experience, most French people still do not know that Finland has joined the EU, and hence some of these prejudices still prevail.

When finding employment with her qualifications and with the cultural capital she possessed proved impossible, she decided to give medicine one more go and was accepted to study at a French university to become a doctor. The fact that there was a shortage of medical doctors in France also influenced her decision: after the disappointing experience in failing to find work, she wanted to work towards a degree

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10 All Finnish universities are largely funded by the state and have strict entrance examinations. For some fields, such as medicine, the competition is very tough, so less than 20 percent of the applicants are offered a place of study each year.
that would guarantee a job. The decision proved to be a good one, and even though studying in French was hard, since graduation she has had a steady career and now has a successful private practice in the countryside with her husband, who is also a doctor. She is convinced that in France the country where you obtained your qualifications plays an important role:

I think that [. . .] once you have any kind of French certificate or diploma, then your nationality does not matter any more, but before you obtain that piece of paper, you have to be really persistent [to succeed].” (Maarit, female, b. 1964, French degree in medicine)

Maarit’s life situation differs from that of the other interviewees as her children are already adults. In terms of family, she would therefore be free to return to Finland for a while to practice medicine there. Even though she thinks it is unlikely that she would go through the trouble of realizing the plan, she did get her French degree evaluated by VALVIRA, the agency that grants the right to practice medicine in Finland to those with foreign degrees. “I just kind of wanted to know if Europe exists for the common man, to see if they would accept my degree there. And they did, but I do not know if I can bother with such a leap [that I would really move].” Settling into France has taken so much strength that she no longer wants to experience moving again. Transferring her French cultural capital to Finland would signify another process of negotiation and adaptation.

**Conclusion**

The European Union has regulations on degree recognition, and transnationally mobile European citizens should ideally not be discriminated against when moving within the EU. However, while the institutionalized cultural capital in the form of academic degrees can often be recognized and officially accepted in a relatively trouble-free fashion, this does not mean that individual employers in the destination country’s labor market recognize the cultural capital of an individual job applicant. National differences in degree structures and fields of study also still prevail despite efforts to harmonize the European higher-education system, and, therefore, individual migrants are still sometimes faced with the task of defending the value of their education. In addition, as the individual’s habitus evolves through a long socialization process in the country of origin, it cannot be easily changed. Thus, the embodied components of the cultural capital can be regarded as “foreign” (Nohl et al. 2006, paragraphs 17, 33).

It is clear that many individual factors, such as the country of residence, profession, degree, and career situation affect the labor-market performance of such highly skilled migrants as the Finns of my study. Yet in this study the stories of a wide variety

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11 By this I refer to what is commonly known as the Bologna process.
of migrants were compared with one another to tease out the similarities that were shared by many regardless of the particularities of each case. As first generation migrants, they share a common background in Finnish society\(^{12}\) and a common habitus, the embodiment of cultural knowledge created during their childhood socialization. Despite having chosen differing professional paths, they have grown up sharing at least some understanding of how the labor market (in Finland) operates and, for example, of the kinds of career expectations that are attached to certain degrees. In a way, they are part of the same “community of practice” (O’Reilly 2012) as they share the important background experience of having grown up in Finland, and they all have made the choice of looking for work abroad.

Most of the Working in Europe survey respondents were content with the life choices that they had made and, in that respect, the results of this survey did not differ from results gained in other studies: all groups of intra-EU movers express a higher level of life satisfaction than comparable samples of nationals of their country of origin (Recchi 2008, 218). The Finns of my study had found several ways in which to communicate their skills and cultural capital in the destination country labor market, and were, thus, satisfied with their situation even if considerable adaptation was required when they first moved to the new country. Even though finding a better job was not their main reason for mobility and migration, a clear majority of the survey’s respondents were happy about their labor-market situation in the host country and saw the move as a beneficial decision for their careers.

Transnationally mobile individuals, however highly skilled and educated they are, must be willing and able to adapt to the situation in the local labor market. As the analysis in this article demonstrates, some find a competitive advantage from the skills they possess and succeed in finding satisfactory employment via the strategy of distinction. For others, the move abroad signifies a change of direction, as they must rely on the strategy of reorientation to gain an entrance to the labor market. While this could be seen as skill downgrading, deskilling, or even brain waste, the participants of this study do not interpret their situation in that way. The fact that their job may not be in the field that they had studied may be overshadowed by the other positive aspects of the move, such as finding love, having children, living in a warm climate, or being able to enjoy life in an exciting global city, such as London. There are numerous ways to “make it abroad,” to find a good life and a new place for oneself in a border-free Europe.

\(^{12}\) A couple of the interviewees had lived abroad for some years when they were children. Yet they had returned to Finland to finish their secondary schooling.
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APPENDIX 1: SOME OF THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKING IN EUROPE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Country of Residence (2008)
- UK (143)
- Germany (72)
- Belgium (40)
- France (38)
- Spain (23)
- Netherlands (12)
- Italy (7)
- Austria (8)
- Luxembourg (7)
- Ireland (6)
- Denmark (6)
- Portugal (2)

Highest degree obtained (2008)
- Polytechnic bachelor (77)
- University bachelor (48)
- University master (199)
- PhD (14)
- Degree not finished/studying (26)

Country where degree obtained (2008)
- Degree only from Finland (174)
- Degree only from abroad (74)
- Degree from both (90)
- Degree not finished/studying (26)
How Globally Mobile “Elites” Experience Distance: Highly Skilled Finns in Silicon Valley

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Abstract
This article challenges the idea, present in prominent social theories, that the meaning of distance has been erased or, at least, diminished in the global world. The diminishing meaning of distance has been assumed to be true especially for elite migrants because of their freedom to move geographically and to access the latest information and communication technologies. By examining the experience of distance in the case of highly skilled Finns who work in Silicon Valley, I will show that rather than simply erasing distance, virtual communication has also increased the awareness of distance. Thus, the role of virtual communication in the experience of distance is more complex than simply that of reducing it. Furthermore, this article shows how other aspects besides virtual communication continue to be relevant in the experience of distance. These include aspects such as travel time, time difference, and the physical demands of travel as well as proximity of people from the home country. Based on empirical findings, the article aims to show how the experience of distance is both complex and dynamic. This study contributes to the growing body of studies about the experiences of globally mobile, skilled migrants, and to studies on global and distributed work.

Keywords: skilled migration, virtual communication, distributed work, geographical distance

1 This article is based on parts of my doctoral dissertation, “The World Is My Workplace? The Meaning of Locality and Distance for Finnish Professionals in Silicon Valley.” European University Institute, 2010.
INTRODUCTION

Has distance lost its meaning in the global era? Many influential authors have claimed in their treatises on globalization that the meaning of distance has diminished. Towards the end of the past millennium, Cairncross (1997) launched the idea of the “death of distance” in her popular book, linking it to the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT). Notable academic theories reflect this view. The general assertion is that advances in ICT, together with other types of new global interdependencies (such as economic), have fundamentally diminished or completely erased the meaning of geographical distance. Prominent social theorists have used diverse conceptualizations to describe the changing landscape of geography. Giddens (1990) has theorized about “time-space distanciation” and the “disembedding” of social relations from local contexts. Castells (2000) has been one of the most recognized authors on the new global networked society, with famous conceptualizations of the new virtual connectedness as a “space of flows” and its “timeless time.” In particular, the claimed disappearance of geographical distance is perhaps most straightforwardly stated in expressions such as the “collapse of distance” (Beck 2000) and the “annulment of temporal/spatial distances” (Bauman 1998).

The death of distance has been proposed particularly for highly educated or otherwise privileged global “elites.” It has been assumed that as these people appear to be the freest to move and travel, and have the best levels of access to the latest communication technologies, they form a group who are detached from place and for whom distance is insignificant. Bauman (2007, 75) has argued that the virtual world is the real home of the privileged, and that the places where they physically live are “just one locality among many.” In a similar vein, Appadurai (1996, 9–10) and Castells (2004, 11) have suggested that globalization has diminished distance and the meaning of place, particularly for elites, who inhabit the “timeless space of flows of global networks and their ancillary locales” (Castells 2004, 11).

In some ways, the social theories of the early 1990s and 2000s already seem overly enthusiastic concerning the changes in the meaning of place and distance. Empirical studies of transnationally mobile, skilled people are more careful in estimating the degree and rapidity of the changes associated with globalization and virtual technology on the human level. Bozkurt (2006) and Nowicka (2006), for example, have noted that the changes are much more gradual, uneven, and complex than what the abstract theories assume. New and old patterns in spatial relations appear simultaneously. Others, such as Aneesh (2006), opt for the language of change, but nevertheless point out that geography is not disappearing.

Indeed, from the perspective of empirical studies on transnationalism, global connectedness, and global work, the image becomes more complex (see Favell, Feldblum, and Smith 2006; Favell 2008; Kiriakos 2011). The concrete experiences of globally mobile people indicate that although significant changes have been
brought about by information and communication technologies, and globalization more generally, the connectedness between distant places is not as straightforward as it may seem on the level of abstract theory. Empirically grounded literature suggests that distances continue to matter, although perhaps not exactly in the same ways as they used to.

**Distance in Mobile Lives and Work**

Nowicka (2006) has studied the experiences of employees of an international organization and notes that spatial dualisms typically used in research on globalization and migration (such as presence-absence; embeddedness-disembeddedness) are relevant, yet limited for investigating contemporary issues. She points out that presence in a place does not always lead to inclusion or, correspondingly, absence from somewhere (for example, the home country) to exclusion. Instead, new and old patterns of socio-spatial processes appear simultaneously.

Ó Riain (2000, 2006) has suggested that rather than diminished, the experience of time and space has been intensified in the era of virtual connectedness. In an empirical study of a global, geographically dispersed work team, Ó Riain found that, because of distance, challenges and frustrations emerged in the collaboration. Furthermore, distance was utilized by employees as a mechanism to subtly resist managerial control. These findings, which Ó Riain captures in the notion of *time-space intensification*, point to the continuing significance of distance and the changes and struggles that virtual connectedness has brought to the work of globally operating professionals. Ó Riain thus proposes that in the global era, *time and space have actually become more explicit elements of human experience*.

Aneesh’s (2006) findings also point to the complexity of virtual work. His study on Indian programmers working for U.S. companies without leaving India—a phenomenon Aneesh characterizes as *virtual migration*—offers an illuminating perspective on both the flexibility and the challenges that virtual work involves. Aneesh argues, on one hand, that, like money, programming code is virtual and travels effortlessly across physical distances. Yet, in a balanced way, he also reports the difficulties of understanding and communication related to virtual interaction. Similar challenges have been documented in other empirical studies on virtual and distributed work (e.g., Bradner and Mark 2002; Hinds and Kiesler 2002).

Existing findings thus suggest that highly skilled professionals’ experiences of global mobility and virtual work are often complex; characterizing these realities as living detached in the “space of flows” (Castells 2000) appears rather one-sided. As Nowicka’s (2006, 2007) studies also suggest, the most central questions concerning the experiences of location and distance are not about clear, mutually exclusive categories, but more complex dynamics. Thus, it appears that when considering the
meaning of distance and global connectedness today, it is useful to pay attention to both what has changed and what has remained unchanged.

By analyzing the experiences of highly skilled Finns who have moved to Silicon Valley, this study contributes to the growing body of research on the micro-level, human dimensions of transnational and, in particular, skilled mobility. Favell, Feldblum, and Smith (2006) have noted that highly skilled mobility remains insufficiently understood; because of this, there are many assumptions regarding globally mobile “elites” that remain empirically unfounded. Furthermore, Conradson and Latham (2005, 228) have called for research on the “everyday practices inherent to transnational mobility, the mundane (phone calls, trips to the travel agent, Internet usage and grocery shopping).” They have also pointed to the need for more empirical studies on the “middling” forms of transnational mobility that have, thus far, been largely neglected in the literature on transnational mobility: the movement by the well educated and the middle class that takes place between North America and less-developed regions.

As noted above, the existing literature suggests that typical dualisms related to the global world, such as presence-absence or embeddedness-disembeddedness, may not be that useful for capturing actual human experiences which tend to be more complex and dynamic (Nowicka 2006, 2007; Ó Riain 2000, 2006). The most fruitful questions, therefore, may not concern whether people are either embedded in localities or detached from them, or either present or absent locally or virtually. Instead, it is useful to ask what constitutes the experience of distance and proximity and to deconstruct the kinds of dynamics that are involved in it.

In line with the empirical research reviewed above, this study examines the following questions: how do skilled migrants experience distance in their lives and work, and what are the aspects relevant in the experience of distance?

This article challenges the simple notion that the meaning of distance has been erased in the global world, especially for elite migrants, as a result of widespread access to virtual communication technologies. In what follows, we will see that the role of virtual communication is more complex than simply diminishing distance, and that there are also other aspects relevant to how distance is perceived.

Based on the empirical findings, and in line with the research of Ó Riain (2000, 2006), Nowicka (2006, 2007), and Aneesh (2006), the key argument is that the experience of distance is both complex and dynamic. The study of Finns in Silicon Valley sheds light on what, specifically, this complexity and dynamism means in practice and what aspects of daily life are relevant in the experience of distance.
Empirical Focus: Finns in Silicon Valley

Empirically, this article focuses on highly skilled Finns who have moved to Silicon Valley for their work. Finland is an interesting case for studying global ties and mobility, because unlike many other nationalities or ethnic groups, Finns do not have significant diaspora or professional migration to Silicon Valley (or any other technologically significant area outside Finland) that would clearly facilitate the global connections of today’s innovators. Finland is a technologically advanced, successful economy, yet small and geographically relatively peripheral. It is in many ways a relevant area for global high technology markets, yet, in many ways, marginal. Because of the absence of large professional immigrant groups of Finns in the most important high technology areas, in particular Silicon Valley, the ties between Finnish and other actors are novel, crossing boundaries and connecting previously unconnected—or only weakly connected—areas. Furthermore, highly skilled Finns apparently fall into the category of people—the privileged—for whom distance and location are assumed to be less meaningful. Finnish professional mobility to Silicon Valley represents a case of West-West migration, from one economically developed and successful location to another.

This is a qualitative study in which fifty-five in-depth interviews are used as a primary data source. The criteria for selecting interviewees were Finnish nationality and employment in Silicon Valley’s innovation activity at the time of the research or within the past decade. All of the informants worked in the broad field of information and communication technologies (ICT), but their specific professions varied; the group included entrepreneurs, employees in large companies, academic researchers, venture capitalists, public officials, and other experts.

Interestingly, about half of the informants had multiple roles and could not be placed in only one professional category. Those with multiple roles worked, for example, for a public office, but with prior or additional careers as entrepreneurs, or the other way around: former public officers who had started their own firms in Silicon Valley; academics who had started their own firms; and academics employed

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2 Silicon Valley is not a location with specific, official boundaries; it typically refers to the southern part of the San Francisco Bay area in northern California known as Santa Clara Valley. There are several cities and towns in this area, for example Palo Alto, Santa Clara, Mountain View, and San Jose (see Saxenian 1994). For the purposes of my research, a rigid geographical delimitation of the area was not required. The objective was to study Finns who work in the most important high technology region in the world. Thus, in addition to Santa Clara Valley, I understand Silicon Valley in a rather broad sense as consisting of the San Francisco Bay area, including the City of San Francisco. Brown and Duguid (2002) characterize Silicon Valley as the “ill-defined area that stretches from north of San Francisco to south of San Jose, California” (427). They further note that “Silicon Valley is still, if not the absolute center, then one of the most significant nodes in the ‘wired,’ the ‘digital,’ the ‘networked,’ or most simply the ‘new’ economy—a concentration of inspired ideas, astounding wealth, and the means to turn the former into the latter” (428).
by large firms because of their expertise. In general, many of the informants had wide-ranging career paths (or perhaps a career in the traditional sense is not the appropriate way to describe the work paths of these professionals). They were clearly in many ways “the best and the brightest” of their home country, in the sense that Saxenian (2006) describes the new Argonauts in her research. Most of the informants had advanced university degrees (master’s or doctorate) from a Finnish university. The majority of the degrees were in engineering or a closely related area; other educational backgrounds included economics, management, computer science, and physics.

Considering the multiethnic and diverse character of the population in Silicon Valley, Finns are not a large or particularly visible population in the area. As Silicon Valley is not a specific location as such, there are no official statistics on the number of Finns living there. According to different estimates, the number of Finns in Silicon Valley ranges from a few hundred to a few thousand. The wide range in estimates is probably related to the fact that there are different kinds of Finns in the area. The two most distinct groups are (1) “older-generation Finns” who arrived in the San Francisco Bay area during the first half of the twentieth century, and (2) Finns who have come to the area in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It seems that there has not been much significant interaction between the two groups, or contact has been limited to occasional and rather formal events, such as the traditional Finnish Independence Day celebration. The latter group—Finns who came to the Silicon Valley area over the past ten to fifteen years—is the natural focus of the present study, since it is the population most relevant for understanding the mobility of highly skilled Finns and global “brain circulation” (Saxenian 2006) today.

The estimated number of such Finns in Silicon Valley at the time of the data collection was a few hundred (200–300). This estimate includes both those whose work was the reason for relocation, and their spouses. Without spouses—some of whom also work in relevant fields—the population of interest for the present study was roughly one hundred to two hundred individuals. As there was no official record of Finns located in the area, I found the fifty informants (forty-four men, six women) of the study using a snowball method. The youngest informants were in their late twenties, and the most senior one was sixty-two years old. The main theme of the semi-structured interviews was the informant’s personal experience of moving to Silicon Valley and daily work and life there. A second theme focused on the informant’s views of Finns in general from the perspective of global mobility and innovation activity.

Based on the interviews and observations (made when interacting with Finns in the area and participating in Finnish meetings and gatherings), it is clear that there is a constant, albeit relatively small-scale (in terms of the number of people involved), activity by Finns in the area, in particular in the form of academic research visits and
temporary assignments for Finns from local Finnish companies. These typically last from a few months to a few years. In addition, there are Finns, entrepreneurs and others involved in entrepreneurial or innovative activity, such as venture capitalists and consultants, who are more permanently located in Silicon Valley. More than half of the informants moved to Silicon Valley with their spouses, and many of those with spouses also had children. About half of the informants had already lived abroad (either in the United States or elsewhere) at some earlier point in their lives.

**Distance in the Everyday Experience: Finland is Both Close and Far**

In examining the experience of distance, this study focuses specifically on the distance between Silicon Valley (the informants’ location at the time of the interviews) and Finland, their country of origin. All of the informants continued to have either personal or work-related ties to Finland (often both), regardless of how long they had been located in Silicon Valley; some had arrived in Silicon Valley within the past year, and some had already lived there for several years.

Based on the findings, it is clear that the experience of distance is complex and dynamic (Nowicka 2006; Ó Riain 2000, 2006). When the interviewees discussed whether Finland seemed to be close or far from Silicon Valley, they typically contemplated the question carefully. Different aspects and viewpoints were considered and brought up spontaneously. Thus, an initially somewhat simple issue turned out to be fruitful and revelatory, highlighting the complexities involved in the daily lives of globally mobile elites (Conradson and Latham 2005; Nowicka 2006). Rather than settling the issue of whether distance has been diminished, or “died,” the data point to the different aspects that are relevant to how distance is perceived. The study uncovers the different aspects of daily life that matter for distance and what, actually, skilled people find relevant in their experience of distance.

In the following, I will first describe what makes Finland feel far away and then what brings it closer. After this, I will summarize and consider these findings in more detail. The final section of the article is dedicated to reflections on these findings.

**Finland is Far**

Interviewer: Do you think Finland is close or far?

Informant B26: It is mentally close, but, but it would be nice if it were from the financial perspective so close that you could just get up and go there to visit, for a vacation, without a particular reason. But we are not in a situation in which there would be so much money and time that you could just impulsively go and visit Finland.

Finland is far because it takes a long time to go there and the travel expenses are still relatively high: at the time of the data collection no direct flights existed between
Helsinki and California, at least one change of flights was thus necessary, and travel time was typically between 15 and 20 hours. Most informants mention being aware of the geographical distance; it feels very real. The one thing that makes it especially concrete is the ten-hour time difference: the Finnish professionals in Silicon Valley are acutely aware that people in Finland are not awake at the same time as they are. A practical concern is that there are no shared business hours. A consequence of this is a fragmented, twenty-four-hour working day, in which the professionals are expected to participate in virtual meetings when it is nighttime in Silicon Valley. The time difference and the need to stretch the workday across several time zones is an essential part of the global professional’s daily life; similar findings have been reported in Ó Riain’s (2000, 2006) study on Irish software developers and in Beaverstock’s (2005) study on British inter-company transferees in New York.

The time difference and the acute awareness of it permeate the professionals’ local day and night in different ways and on many levels (Ó Riain 2000, 2006). It is a practical concern: one has to take the time difference into account when contacting colleagues or friends in a distant location. It is also a mental issue: when one is in contact with people in distant locations, the time difference matters to the interaction itself. It is more challenging to understand each other perfectly and be on the same wavelength when it is a different time of day for the people involved.

Informant B29: When you are here, whether it feels close or far . . . you are aware, you are conscious of the physical distance. And the fact that often people are not awake at the same time. So in that sense [it feels] far, a little far. If I could choose so that everything else would stay the same, if you could keep everything else the same but move to Europe, that would be better.

Many informants reflected on these different aspects of time difference throughout the interviews. Time difference is not simply about the different hours, not only about someone being in bed in the middle of the night while the other is working. It is a reminder of the distance and the role that a shared context plays in social interaction. When the locations and the time of day are clearly so different (morning-evening, night-day), even virtual interactions become less smooth and more challenging.

It is also noteworthy—and often ignored—how much effort is put behind the “smoothness” of virtual connectedness. When studying Polish migrants in Britain, Burrell (2008) found that simultaneity, quickness, and real-time connectedness have limitations: connecting virtually across localities and time zones requires considerable planning and arrangements—and these as such are time-consuming. The same goes for travel: it still takes time to move from one physical location to another, and one “cannot physically be in two places at the same time” (Burrell 2008, 35). Thus,
virtual connectedness does not mean that it is possible to be connected all the time. Because of time differences, preparation is required to make the connection, agree about the time, and be in the place where virtual access is available.

Reasons other than practical ones (such as expense, actual geographical distance, travel time, or time difference) also intervene to make Finland seem farther away. The informants talk a lot about mental and cultural distance. Communicating across ten time zones means that it is a different time of day in the two locations and many experience this as a real challenge for communication. In addition, seasonal conditions also make the context of communication for each individual very different, and, according to the informants, the interaction more challenging. It seems that it is more difficult to understand one another across all contextual differences.

The Finnish professionals in Silicon Valley typically spoke Finnish with their Finland-based collaborators; yet, despite the common language, it was not always easy to communicate effectively across the notable geographical distance. One informant described how he routinely talked on the phone with a collaborator in Silicon Valley when he was in Finland, but it was difficult to understand what the collaborator was saying and to be on the same wavelength. The Silicon Valley partner developed a technique to overcome this difficulty: the collaborator told the Finland-based informant to close his eyes, breathe, and remember the client’s office and how they had sat together outside after a meeting when the informant had visited Silicon Valley—to feel the sunshine and look at the palm trees. The informant said that this mental exercise helped him to understand the collaborator better so that they could make joint decisions even when in distant localities.

Nowicka (2006, 425) also stresses the importance of face-to-face interaction in the lives of geographically mobile professionals: “on no account can the instruments of distance communication replace face-to-face interaction.” In a similar vein, Aneesh (2006) has pointed out that virtual connectedness has not erased the continued importance of face-to-face interaction. Even in the cases where work is mostly virtual, it is often supported by regular, or at least occasional, face-to-face meetings.

By decoupling work performance from the site of work, virtual integration overcome distances, but only by losing the rich, multilayered, face-to-face interaction provided by place-based integration at work. Companies attempt to recover this loss of spatio-temporal immediacy by various mechanisms such as direct phone connections, video conferencing, electronic message boards, and instant messaging, as well as limited on-site visits. (Aneesh 2006, 79)

Aneesh (2006, 80) also describes how face-to-face communication is crucial for solving problems swiftly. He notes that sociocultural differences cannot be quickly overcome in virtual interaction. One of his informants reported that programmers
located in India had difficulties in understanding their American clients’ wishes, because they did not have enough knowledge of the United States in general and could not easily grasp American styles and speech. The programmers often depended on senior managers who had experience in working in the United States and could thus act as mediators. Likewise, Saxenian’s (2006) study on the “global Argonauts” highlights the continued importance of people who have the cultural capital and the ability to be the connectors of distant localities and help the prosperity of both. The importance of face-to-face meetings for communicating what is “really going on” is also reflected in Bozkurt’s (2006) findings in the case of highly skilled workers in multinational companies.

Moreover, the mere assumption of geographical distance can lower the motivation to collaborate with someone. As Bradner and Mark’s (2002) study showed, people were less eager to collaborate virtually with a person they were told is in a distant location. A similar issue emerged in the case of those Finns who were based in Silicon Valley themselves, but whose work-team members were mostly located in Finland. Some informants described how they felt left out and forgotten when not physically in the same place as other team members or colleagues; they had to make an effort so that colleagues continued to remember them and to include them in more informal discussions, as well as virtual ones. Curiously, although e-mail is not supposed to be tied to physical location, it is often used in a very local way. More informal e-mails are sent only to those who are in the locality or in close proximity, especially if they include a topic that is tied to location, such as organizing an informal meeting at the pub after work. Still, the chatter in these kinds of e-mails often includes other information that will never reach those far away, but that may nonetheless be relevant for business or collaboration.

Besides the long traveling times, geographical distance also manifests itself in jet lag and other physical symptoms caused by long-distance travel. In particular, informants who have to travel between Finland and Silicon Valley frequently (e.g., once or even twice a month), talk about emerging health problems when this routine continues for a long time. The health problems mentioned include sleep difficulties and inconsistent sleeping patterns, stomach trouble, weight gain, and increased blood pressure. Besides health problems, there are also issues related to family and social life. Being away a lot obviously places a burden on family life. Also, when one travels frequently, one is not fully present in any place, but rather in between the last and the next trip. This makes it more difficult to connect with people and to tap into relevant local information, especially in terms of hearing weak signals and understanding information that is more tacit in nature. One informant mentioned, for example, that after being away for six weeks, he really felt he had no idea what was happening in Silicon Valley, and it took time to catch up.
There are other practical reasons for why Finland seems far away: as mentioned, it is relatively expensive to travel there. The cost of travel is a concern especially for those informants who pay for their own expenses or who own a small firm rather than work for a multinational company. Traveling with family brings more practical considerations: one informant says it is a “significant logistical effort” to travel to Finland with small children, and this is why he does not do it more than once a year.

Many mention that Finland feels particularly far away when they receive invitations from friends for weekend getaways or parties: it is too far to go just for the weekend, as one could from other parts of Europe or even from the East Coast of the United States. The same issue has been observed in other studies of global professionals (Beaverstock 2005; Conradson and Latham 2007), whose subjects have reported the feeling of being far away from the home country when they could not just go and have coffee with old friends or attend important family events. The fact that visiting Finland always takes several days at minimum (including travel time and jet lag) makes it a distant location from the perspective of Silicon Valley. This example highlights the dynamic of connectedness and distance: while everyone, regardless of location, receives the same e-mail invitation at the same time (although not the same local time), only those who are geographically close can actually go. Hence, increasing connectedness means being “closer” virtually, yet physical distance still makes an essential difference.

Finally, there is a significant “mental” reason concerning the differences between Finland and Silicon Valley. This suggests that Finland is far not just in terms of physical distance, but also because it is so different from Silicon Valley. Some informants say that when they go to Finland, it seems like a very small place. Compared to Silicon Valley, Finland is very homogeneous; people generally look and act the same when considered from the perspective of Silicon Valley.

Even for Finns who grew up in Finland, this is striking when visiting from Silicon Valley. Finland sometimes does not seem diverse or multicultural enough; in some ways it is even too familiar, but in others it feels like a different world for someone living ten time zones away on a different continent. Especially when it comes to attitudes towards sociability, openness, entrepreneurialism, and risk-taking, Finland seems like another world. Some informants describe how their achievements in Silicon Valley are met with silence or envy in Finland. People may seem either uninterested or envious, and this can make the Finns based in Silicon Valley feel like their home country is an environment light years away from the Silicon Valley culture.
FINLAND IS CLOSE

Interviewer: Do you think Finland is, looking from here, does it feel close or far?

Informant B34: Maybe a little closer than I had thought. Like . . . the last time I visited Finland it felt just like before. Of course I hadn’t been away that long, but still. Like you almost didn’t remember that you now live somewhere else.

Despite the geographical and cultural distance described above, Finland turned out to be in some ways close. The main and, perhaps, most obvious reason is virtual connectedness: Finland is close because it is so easy to be in real-time contact with people there. Even when it is not the same time of the day, one can see if friends or colleagues in Finland are online on Skype, for example. Talking on Skype, e-mailing, and using instant messengers is free; when one is online, there are practically no additional costs to being connected to people in Finland. Today, virtual connectedness is a natural part of a globally mobile skilled professional’s life; often in empirical studies, it is only mentioned in passing, as something related to maintaining globally dispersed professional or personal networks or as part of the typical working day (e.g., Beaverstock 2005; Ó Riain 2000, 2006).

Web cameras enhance the feeling of physical closeness as people can see each other on screen. Video conferences are an everyday part of many global professionals’ work. The simple fact of being able to have regular, cost-free contact with people in Finland makes it feel closer. This is the aspect of global connectedness that applies almost no matter where one is or what the actual distances involved are; virtual connectedness brings people in different, distant localities closer together. This empirical finding is in line with the assumptions made in the grand theorizations about new kinds of global connectedness that characterize the current times (e.g., Castells 2004).

A similar issue (i.e., closeness regardless of where one is) is virtual access to local newspapers, discussions, and other information. This is also crucial in bringing Finland closer. Many informants said that they followed Finnish newspapers online every day; others did not follow them quite so often, but perhaps on a weekly basis. This depends greatly on what kind of (local) news and information concerning Finland one finds relevant or useful in daily life and work in Silicon Valley. Certain basic information to help one stay updated and generally informed about what is happening in Finland is easy to access on the Internet. Local mailing lists (for example, related to work or hobbies in Finland) also bring information that one could not otherwise access from a distance.
An important aspect that brings Finland closer is visits from family, friends, and colleagues. Some informants in particular said that they received visitors from Finland so often that it did not really feel distant. When people from Finland come to visit, they bring typical Finnish food: if you always have plenty of black rye bread (the special Finnish kind) in your kitchen, you feel closer to Finland. Many actively celebrate Finnish holidays, such as the First of May, Independence Day, and Christmas. Yet it seems that not all Silicon Valley Finns are equally interested in participating in the Finnish activities or networks there; some emphasized that they consciously focus on creating and strengthening local connections and do not wish to spend most of their time with other Finns while living in Silicon Valley. It appears that family status and the specific area where one lives may be related to how much the skilled migrants interact with others from their home country. In Beaverstock’s (2005) study, those British nationals who relocated to New York with their spouses and children and lived outside Manhattan spent more time with British friends. By contrast, those who were single or married without children and resided in Manhattan had weaker connections to other British nationals in the city.

The informants also mention how their own visits to Finland help reduce the feeling of distance. Even though they may experience a certain kind of reverse culture shock, as described above, another common feeling when visiting is the sense that one never truly left Finland. Finland feels cozy and familiar, and nothing fundamental has changed. Some mention how small it is: visiting is like going from the big wide world back to cozy little Finland. It is like a safe haven, a home base that stays the same and to which one can always return from global adventures.

There is also a mental and cultural closeness that one experiences with fellow Finns either when working with Finns in Finland or Finns in Silicon Valley. Many talk about how working and collaborating regularly with other Finns helps to maintain the feeling that Finland is close. Here, of course, Finland is close in one’s mind, in the sense that it is not easily forgotten, or that one’s own background as a Finn is somehow present even in the everyday life of Silicon Valley.

The issue of language did not explicitly emerge as central in the experience of distance, most likely because many of the informants were either part of multinational (virtual) work teams that consisted of people of different nationalities, not only Finnish, and, secondly, many also had non-Finnish spouses, in which case the language used at home was one other than Finnish. However, it may be assumed that the Finnish language is spoken, at least alongside English, in the gatherings of Finns in Silicon Valley, and in many instances of virtual interaction, particularly with family members in Finland. When the Finnish language is used, it is presumably one aspect that brings Finland closer. Even in a “traveling life” (Beck 2000), one maintains an identity as a Finn and a special connection to other Finns. This is a reminder of how the place a person comes from still matters in the global world. Many interviewees

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also imply that these connections are important: even when being a Finn is not immediately relevant to one’s everyday work, it is an important source of identity and pride. The informants describe how it is good to be a Finn in Silicon Valley, because Finns, where they have a reputation, are typically known as honest, trustworthy, and skilled people. Finally, there may be an important temporal dimension to the experience of distance: Finland is closer to those who have been in Silicon Valley for a shorter period of time. Thus, time may increase distance, that is, the feeling that Finland is far away. Distance, therefore, is not only about distance in geographical space, but distance in time as well.

**The Complex and Dynamic Experience of Distance**

As has been demonstrated above, Finland is not either a distant or a close location in the experience of Finns based in Silicon Valley. It is both, and there are aspects in daily life that make it seem far away and others that bring it closer. It can be postulated that these empirical findings strengthen the previous ones (e.g., Ó Riain 2006; Nowicka 2006, 2007; Aneesh 2006), which have emphasized distance in the global era as complex and dynamic. The data on Finns in Silicon Valley show that the experience of distance is complex because it consists of diverse aspects within everyday life and work, and it is not solely based on actual kilometers or virtual connectedness. The experience of distance is also dynamic since the same types of factors, such as cultural aspects or virtual connectedness, can both bring another location closer or make it seem far away. Thus, it is the ongoing dynamic between the various aspects—smooth virtual connections and difficult ones; meeting Finns physically and being unable to participate in (but nevertheless being aware of) local events in Finland; and appreciating some aspects of both Finnish and Silicon Valley cultural environment—that shape the experience of distance.

The aspects that constitute the experience of distance and proximity in this study are summarized in the following table. The middle and far right columns (“Finland is close” and “Finland is far”) summarize the different aspects relevant in the experience of distance that emerged from the data. The far left column (“Aspect”) illustrates how the experience of distance consists of different kinds of aspects: the first type refers to a person’s contact to Finland and Finnish people, either through his or her own visits to Finland or the proximity of other Finns in Silicon Valley. These types of aspects bring Finland closer. The second type of aspect is geography itself: these are things, such as travel time and time difference, that still make Finland feel far away. Furthermore, I have placed travel costs as one of the “geography” type aspects, because costs are related to the length of the physical distance between Finland and Silicon Valley. The third type of aspect concerns culture and customs: depending on the specific aspect, culture and customs will either bring Finland closer or make it feel more distant.
Table 1. Aspects that constitute the experience of distance.

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<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Finland is Close</th>
<th>Finland is Far</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspects that diminish experienced distance</td>
<td>Aspects that increase experienced distance</td>
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<td>Contact With Finland and Finnish People</td>
<td>Visits to Finland</td>
<td>Travel time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Visits from family/friends in Finland</td>
<td>Travel costs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collaboration with other Finns in Silicon Valley</td>
<td>Physical demands of traveling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geography/Physical Realities</td>
<td>Travel time</td>
<td>Time difference</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Travel costs</td>
<td>Differences in context: climate, scenery, local people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture &amp; Customs</td>
<td>Cultural differences between the locations</td>
<td>Communication challenges in virtual interaction (differences in local mindset, misunderstandings, trust)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Celebration of Finnish holidays, such as Independence Day, Midsummer</td>
<td>Regular collaboration with Finns in virtual teams</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having Finnish food &amp; other typical Finnish items at home</td>
<td>Online news</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>Virtual meetings, calls, e-mail</td>
<td>Receiving information &amp; invitations but not being able to participate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular collaboration with Finns in virtual teams</td>
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Naturally, the presence of typically Finnish food items or other objects (such as Finnish design pieces of decoration) at home makes Finland seem closer. Many informants mentioned that they have a regular supply of typical Finnish rye bread at home in Silicon Valley, for example. In contrast, as reported above, the differences between the Finnish and the Silicon Valley cultural environment are also an essential aspect that emphasizes the distance between the two locations.

The fourth type of aspect is virtual technology, which is perhaps the most interesting, considering the presumed role of virtual connectedness in diminishing distance. Firstly, in line with grand theories, such as Castells (2000), this study found that, in general, virtual connectedness is indeed one of the central factors in the experience of distance. Thus, there is clearly truth in the assumption that
virtual technology creates new dimensions in how geographical distance is perceived. However, it is equally important to note that, as the table illustrates, virtual connectedness is not by any means the only type of aspect relevant for the experience of distance. Thus, the continuing importance of physical proximity and the realities of actual kilometers/miles make the overall experience of distance more complex than what the grand theories have implied.

Furthermore, the role of virtual technology in the experience of distance is not limited to diminishing it. Virtual connectedness actually brings along a new awareness of distance and challenges related to it. The challenges reported by Finns in Silicon Valley include difficulties in understanding or accepting the distant party’s point of view and in creating trust solely in virtual communication. Curiously then, virtual connectedness both diminishes and increases the experience of distance. As Table 1 aims to illustrate, virtual technology and interaction clearly emerged in the research as a double-edged sword: it is not an aspect that brings Finland either close or far, but it enhances both the experience of closeness and of distance.

Concluding Remarks
The informants’ experiences suggest that despite the idea of the death of distance, physical distance is actually difficult to completely overcome or erase. Even with faster travel and real-time connectedness between distant locations, it nevertheless takes a certain number of hours to get from one place to another, and there will still be differences in local times. Thus, according to my data, geographical distance manifests itself in aspects such as travel times, time differences, and also differences in landscapes, weather, and the way places look and feel.

Furthermore, we have seen that global professionals are often aware of distance as a factor that causes difficulties in their working life and as a fact that affects their relationships to family and friends back in Finland. This awareness of distance is worthy of note, because the theorists who discuss the diminishing meaning of distance (e.g., Bauman 1998; Beck 2000; Castells 2000, 2004) often do not acknowledge whether we think about distance in our everyday lives and communications, or whether it plays any role in real-life interactions. If distance were completely meaningless, we would be free to ignore it. But strategies are needed to overcome physical distance in global communication: the fact that there are spontaneous, subtle strategies employed to diminish distance implies that it still exists. The informants mentioned how virtual conference calls or phone calls to distant locations typically start with small talk about the weather and what time it is in the different participants’ locations. These seemingly trivial, routine practices reveal that there are still obstacles that need to be overcome before the “real” business can be effectively discussed.

Awareness of distance is not always fully conscious. Often, we do not think consciously about how to overcome distances in global communication, we simply do it.
Still, many informants mentioned that in their communications from Silicon Valley to Finland—and often to other locations as well—they were very aware of the distances involved. In some ways, this is unavoidable. Time zones and differences must be taken into account in order to contact distant colleagues during business hours (see also Burrell 2008). Indeed, it is not only a matter of being aware of distance as such, but also of what is happening in the other location, whether it is morning or evening, whether there may be some significant local events that matter for doing business or communicating on any given day, or who the right people to contact in the other location are for different issues. In sum, a certain amount of local awareness is required even at a distance. As Biggart and Guillen (1999) have accurately observed, instead of making the world one place, globalization has brought about an increased awareness of difference.

Finally, it is useful to pose the question of whether distance even needs to be erased completely—in other words, is distance all bad? In their study on the “affective possibilities” of a location, i.e., the opportunities a relocation may offer for skilled migrants on an emotional level, Conradson and Latham (2007) found similar downsides to distance that were noted in the case of Finns in this study; for instance, homesickness and the frustration of not being able to attend important occasions in the lives of family and friends in the country of origin. However, they also note another side to distance: freedom. In particular, distance offers social freedom from family and community expectations in the home country (for similar findings, see Favell 2008). This way, distance may be significant and have particular value in the process of self-discovery and self-development. In some cases then, the distance from the home country provides room for the personal self to develop. Therefore, the “affective possibilities” of locations (Conradson and Latham 2007) may in some ways be equally related to the distance—and the ensuing liberation—from the social and other norms in the country of origin, as to qualities of the destination location in itself.

To conclude, this study contributes to the literature on the real-life experiences of highly skilled and globally mobile people by showing how their experience of distance is complex, dynamic, and related to diverse aspects present in daily life. It highlights the ways geography still matters and the way virtual connectedness not only diminishes distance, but also increases it by bringing along heightened awareness and communication challenges related to distance. The study contributes to the understanding of skilled migrants’ everyday realities, particularly in the case of distant work and collaboration. The findings suggest that, in both research and the practice of global professional mobility, the fruitful way forward is based on the acknowledgement that distance still matters, and in the recognition of both the possibilities and challenges related to virtual connectedness.
REFERENCES


THE PERILS OF HIGHLY SKILLED MOBILITY: WELFARE, RISK, AND TEMPORARY MIGRATION FROM THE NORDIC REGION TO INDIA

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ABSTRACT
European welfare states were founded on the assumption that citizens in need of welfare protection were resident within the national territorial boundaries. Nowadays, jobs are often carried out, wholly or in part, abroad. Citizens and residents incur new social risks as their social and political rights in their home country often diminish as a result of the move. One example of this is what is referred to as international secondment—when, for instance, European firms send abroad employees from European offices to complete work assignments. Taking the example of secondment to India, this article investigates the extent to which both employees and their accompanying partners’ social rights are protected when they move outside of the European Union and the European Economic Area from their country of usual residence—in this case Denmark and Finland. This study is an analysis of how the social rights of seconded employees and their dependents, considered to be privileged migrants, are protected by the state. A key part of this analysis is the comparison of the pre-conditions for entitlement to basic social security while abroad. As well as illuminating the extent of the employees’ dependency on the company and the market for social protection, the findings indicate that temporary migrants incur new social risks (albeit to varying extents) depending on the country of origin, their labor market activity, and the conditions of the contract of employment with the sending company.

Keywords: social risk, welfare state, highly skilled, migration
Egalitarianism, as reflected in the universal welfare state tradition, is a strong thread in Nordic societies. Affordable care, education, and decent housing are provided for most, and the welfare system also redistributes income between households through taxation and transfers. In principle, “. . . everyone is entitled to the same services and [has access] to the same benefit systems; eligibility does not depend on income and wealth as much as on age or need” (Kiander 2005, 213). Some scholars argue that this egalitarian tradition is the reason for the Nordic countries’ reputation as the “happiest” places in the world to live, and as places where the standard of living and quality of life are high (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). While not all of Europe’s welfare states can boast such achievements, they do share, as their foundation, the assumption that citizens in need of welfare protection be resident within the national territorial boundaries. Nowadays, it is not uncommon for jobs in a knowledge-based society to be carried out abroad, wholly or in part, yet mobile workers simultaneously maintain strong personal and professional, formal and informal social ties in their home country. The following question then arises: what happens to the egalitarian cornerstones of the Nordic welfare state when citizens choose to work abroad for a period of their lives?

Conceptual frameworks that rest on the assumption that the nation-state contains society and its citizens are recognized as becoming somewhat redundant when international mobility is considered in research on political citizenship1 and transnationalism (see, for example, Bauböck 1994, 2010; Weinstock 2001; Smith 2007; Croucher 2009). The welfare state rests on the same assumption as it has historically been built upon: the premise that the populations are sedentary. While there is an increasing literature on the impact of international mobility in the form of foreign people entering different countries and hence their welfare systems (mainly low-skilled migrant workers and refugees), there has been little attention given to the phenomenon of citizens exiting their countries and what happens to their relationship with the welfare state they are no longer residing within, yet still remain a part of. Despite the increase in international secondment, which is when an employer sends an employee to an office abroad to complete a work assignment, I note two distinct gaps in the literature on migration and social policy. First, there is an excessive focus on the precarious nature of migration “from below” (the low-skilled, refugees, asylum seekers, and east-west or south-north migration), and little is known about the precariousness of migration “from above” (highly skilled mobility, west-east or north-south migration). Second, there is an overwhelming focus on the impact that immigration rather than emigration has on the social ties individuals have in and with the countries they move between.

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1 Political citizenship refers to the political rights (e.g., the right to vote) and duties (e.g., active participation) that citizens have.
After discussing the aforementioned motivations for the study and reflecting on the previous research in more detail in the next two sections, I state the research questions this article addresses. I then summarize the data and methods used and subsequently divide the analysis into two parts: first, I examine what happens to the eligibility and entitlement rights and conditions of social security in Denmark and Finland when Danish and Finnish citizens move to India for a period of their working lives. This stresses the importance of considering the position of emigrants, rather than solely immigrants, in welfare state research. Second, using qualitative data collected in 2009 in India through fieldwork with Danish and Finnish migrants operating in the knowledge-based society, I discuss a broad spectrum of social risks that different groups of highly skilled emigrants face during their stay in a non-EU country. Thus the focus is on migration from above. The analysis sheds light on how policy decisions regarding social security and migration impact the migrants’ everyday lives. I also discuss the strategies these migrants use to overcome the loss of rights and, to some extent, their attitudes towards the Nordic welfare state. In the final section, I draw some conclusions and make suggestions for future research in this area.

**Motivations for the study**

*Secondment* is the act of sending an employee to a different office for a temporary period to complete a work assignment. This type of worker mobility is increasingly common at the international level under globalization and is more commonly referred to as expatriation (see, for example, Fechter 2007a; Hindman 2007; Farh et al. 2010; Beaverstock 2011). I avoid the use of the term *expatriate* to refer to the subjects of this analysis. This term derives from the Latin *ex-patria*, and it draws excessive attention to the detachment from one’s native country. In reality, seconded workers are not solely being sent abroad by national institutions, but also by international institutions. Previously, international secondment was the domain of missionaries, soldiers, embassy officials, and aid workers, but now it is also a common practice in small, medium, and large multinational enterprises, as well as in international organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). Seconded employees (and their dependents) more often than not constitute a sector of the mobile highly skilled workforce, as they tend to have completed some form of tertiary education or to have an occupation (e.g., that of a manager, executive, technician, engineer, or entrepreneur) that requires a specific level of skills (see Chaloff and Lemaître 2009 and the introduction to this special issue for a more detailed definition of the highly skilled).

In this phase of globalization, it is hardly surprising that the number of Nordic highly skilled workers who spend a portion of their working time abroad has increased as the Nordic countries are overwhelmingly export-driven. University education in Denmark and Finland has also become so international that choosing to
work abroad is now an obvious and even expected step in young, educated people’s career paths (Koikkalainen 2009; Munk 2009). Studies show that large numbers of graduates from Finland and Denmark work abroad in the early stages of their careers (e.g., Saarikallio-Torp and Wiers-Jenssen 2010; Koikkalainen 2009). Within Europe, there has been some progress in the treatment of temporary EU migrants in the area of social policy. Mobility and migration have been vibrantly debated since the 1990s partially because of the further expansion of the EU. Changes have been made to allow greater freedom of movement for EU citizens between the now twenty-eight Member States:2 EU citizens contribute to the social security system in only one country; they have the same rights and obligations as a country national of the country where they are covered; when claiming benefits, previous periods of insurance work or residence in other countries are taken into consideration if necessary; and finally, if entitled to benefits in one EU country, the person may also be eligible for benefits if living in another EU country.3

The principle of equal treatment for mobile EU citizens within the member states has thus been promoted by EU policymaking. Meanwhile outside of the member states, bilateral agreements have been made between individual member states and a number of non-EU countries4 in the areas of social security and tax contributions. Policymaking at the state level, hence, continues to focus on immigration rather than emigration policies. For Nordic citizens, there are few migration destinations outside of the EU (and arguably inside as well) where the quantity and quality of social services and assistance are as extensive, as substantial, and of equal or better standard than in the notoriously generous and comprehensive Nordic countries. Consequently, in reality, even though these agreements exist, the actual experience of Danish and Finnish migrants using the various services may differ quite drastically, depending on the destination country.

Attention has so far been given to highly skilled mobility within the EU and in other Western destinations (see, for example, Harzing 2004; Smith and Favell 2006; Favell 2008; Koikkalainen this volume; Koikkalainen 2011), yet there has been limited academic focus on the complexities of highly skilled mobility to non-traditional, non-Western destinations, in spite of the rise in the numbers of knowledge workers moving to growth economies.5 As this study shows, in the case of Danish and

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2 Croatia became the 28th EU member state in July 2013.
3 For further information, see http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=850. On the relationship between migration and welfare in Europe, see Carmel, Cerami, and Papadopoulos 2011.
4 See europa.eu for a comprehensive overview of all the bilateral agreements undertaken by individual EU countries.
5 According to data obtained from Statistics Finland (The migration of Finnish citizens by gender, level of education and destination country 1990-2009. Copy of maastam19902009), there was a tenfold increase in the number of highly skilled workers who moved to Asia between 1990 and 2009,
Finnish highly skilled workers seconded to India, the universal nature of the welfare state is called into question when their position as temporary emigrants is taken into account. Not only do their social rights often diminish in their home country depending on the duration of the assignment, among other factors, but they are located in entirely different surroundings that require equally different forms of protection, while still being officially recognized as “citizens” of their country of origin.

**Previous Research**

Seconded workers are of particular interest within the field of social policy as their decision to move abroad is often based on personal rather than professional or societal grounds (see, for example, Mahroum 1999; Liebig and Sousa-Poza 2005; Florida 2010, 148); they personify the rhetoric on the crisis of the welfare state pertaining to self-interest and increasing individualism (Taylor-Gooby 2009, 111–29). This situation, it is feared, weakens the support for welfare states, which are founded on the principle of reciprocity (Taylor-Gooby 2009). Furthermore, the ties secondees and other outgoing migrants have to their state of citizenship are weakened as in many cases they not only lose some of their social rights but also experience a different emotional attachment to their country of origin, thus destabilizing the intergenerational contract. Prolonged stays abroad may, in addition, affect the level of their future pensions as that system was also originally created with a stationary population in mind. Questions therefore arise as to whether or not or how social responsibility can be fostered among transnational populations. Secondment and emigration from welfare states such as Denmark and Finland could be seen as supporting the argumentation for less generous yet more comprehensive publicly financed benefits and services.

It is widely acknowledged that the welfare state (at least in the context of Western and Northern European countries) creates social cohesion within society by tending to the needs of a broad spectrum of marginalized groups (Esping-Andersen 2002), including migrants. Bonoli (2007) recognizes that in the post-war welfare state, social policies were implemented as a response to the social instability that was brought about by industrialization, and centered round the “stable” male-breadwinner family model. The post-industrial welfare state meanwhile introduced new social risk policies to deal with problems that arise from socio-economic transformations

and in Denmark, according to Statistics Denmark (VAN2KVT: Emigration (yearly) by municipality, sex, age, country of destination and citizenship (provisional data), the number of migrants to India doubled in the same period. See www.statisticsfinland.fi and www.dst.dk.

6 The political rights of secondees also depend on the length of stay abroad; however, it is solely the issue of social rights that this study will address.

7 Although it will not be tackled in this article because of space limitations, this picture is further complicated for third country nationals who embark on secondment to a fourth country.

8 For further discussion on the intergenerational contract, see OECD 2007.
such deindustrialization and tertiarization of employment, the mass-entry of women into the labor market, increasingly untraditional or “unstable” family structures, and the destandardization of employment (Bonoli 2007, 498) leading to increasingly precarious work. Hence, in the discourse on new social risks (Taylor-Gooby 2004; Armingeon and Bonoli 2006; Bonoli 2007), single mothers, the long-term unemployed, children, and immigrants have been recognized as additional at-risk groups in the post-industrial welfare state.

I propose that the current era of globalization and more specifically the present “age of migration” (Castles and Miller 2009) is another social transformation that brings an additional, perhaps unexpected, set of individuals to the at-risk group, namely emigrants from wealthier sectors of the population. The tendency to focus on immigration and to persist with a nation-state framework in welfare state analyses has led to a situation whereby specific groups of emigrants, such as seconded workers and their partners, are excluded from debates about social risk and the welfare state (see, for example, Castles et al. 2010). Furthermore, in the case of secondees, a return to the post-war male-breadwinner family model can be witnessed, albeit with some new deviations. In the case of Nordic highly skilled emigrants, these outcomes suggest a weakening of the universalist, egalitarian Nordic welfare model.

At the intersection of social policy and migration research, not only have studies tended to focus on immigration rather than emigration and the welfare state, they have also had a stronger tendency for “studying down” (e.g., Faist 1995; Andersen 2007; Fink and Lundqvist 2010; Abadan-Unat 2011). While it has been acknowledged that this trend persists among anthropologists, that is, they continue to study more individuals or groups who are perceived by the researchers and power-holders in society as more vulnerable (Fechter 2007a; Nader 1972), there has been little to no recognition of the fact that social policy research has historically had a similar tendency. This is not surprising if we consider that welfare states were created to provide protection for “vulnerable” members of society. In keeping with Bonoli’s differentiation between the post-war and post-industrial welfare state however, the vulnerable now include sectors of the population who are victims of social rather than merely structural change, and whose vulnerabilities are not necessarily eased with monetary support in the form of benefits.

Research on the welfare state and migration has been conducted in relation to finding solutions to the aging population crisis in many countries in Europe, in relation to the poverty among and social exclusion of migrants, and on the impact of heterogeneity on solidarity and redistribution (Castles et al. 2010, 13). In the context of immigration in the Nordic welfare state, it is well recognized that incidents of welfare chauvinism arise when the phenomenon of migration is taken into account: immigrants in Denmark, as a result of the length of their stay in the country, are treated differently regarding their pension rights and unemployment assistance (see
Andersen 2007); in Finland, immigrants have been found to have precarious access to the labor market (see Valtonen 2001; Heikkilä 2005; Koskela and Clarke, this volume), and there has also been inadequate recognition of the divergent needs of migrant workers by labor unions (see Ristikari 2010). Attention has also been drawn to the dubious nature of “women-friendly social policies” if one uses a multicultural rather than an imagined mono-cultural framework (see Siim and Borchorst 2010; Siim 2010).

Part of the reason for the lack of focus on highly skilled emigration in the Nordic countries may be that although there is some concern about the number of individuals with tertiary-level education or higher leaving during their most productive years, there is confidence that the majority of them will return. According to a survey conducted by The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), approximately 65 percent of the well-educated Danes who left the country in 1998 had returned by 2003, and an astounding 81 percent of those who left in 1981 had returned by 2003 (Madsen 2006). In addition, net migration in Denmark has increased over the past few decades, creating a greater demand for immigration research from policymakers and power-holders. Meanwhile, in Finland, the number of incoming migrants began to exceed the number of outgoing migrants in the 1980s (Heikkilä and Koikkalainen 2011), and immigration has become a matter of political concern only in recent years. Even though the number of tertiary-educated Finnish citizens leaving Finland has exceeded the number of those returning every year since at least the beginning of the 1990s (Koikkalainen 2011, 48), the phenomenon has not received wide scholarly attention.

Nevertheless, the international mobility of the highly skilled is not an entirely new area of study. As noted by Fechter (2007a), it has thus far been chiefly limited to particular fields, such as human geography (e.g., Findlay et al. 1996; Beaverstock 2005, 2011; Willis, Yeoh, and Fakhri 2003), and human resource management and business studies where attention has been given to expatriate management (e.g., Suutari and Brewster 2000; Clegg and Gray 2002), expatriate adjustment, including the influence of the spouse on assignment outcomes (e.g., Black and Stephens 1989; Ali, Van der Zee, and Sanders 2003; Lauring and Selmer 2010; Okpara and Kabongo 2011), and expatriate failure (e.g., Lee 2007). Arguably this focus, while ultimately serving the interests of the business community and multinational enterprises, has highlighted the importance of recognizing the plethora of social interactions that impact the migration and life experiences of highly skilled mobile workers and their accompanying families.

Turning to the field of anthropology and, to a lesser extent, political science, Anne-Meike Fechter and others (see Fechter 2007a; Amit 2011) have in more recent years conducted ethnographic research that focuses on “privileged” migrants, who thus far have been referred to as Western sojourners in India (Korpela 2010),
as retirees in Spain (O’Reilly 2000), and as British leisure migrants in Hong Kong (Knowles 2005). In non-European countries, they have also been referred to as highly skilled Europeans and Americans (Fechter 2005; Fechter and Coles 2008; Hindman 2007; Walsh 2008; Croucher 2009). In many of these studies, the position of privilege is born out of the migrants’ originating from a society that is more “privileged” than the host society (c.f., Torresan 2007; Olwig 2007). For Fechter (2007a) the term “privileged migration” is also used to denote transnational migration from above rather than from below, the latter exemplified by the traditional low-skilled labor migration: migrants are privileged by virtue of their own status in as well as the global status of their home country.

Ethnographic studies of the highly skilled tend to focus on groups of migrants who are abroad as a consequence of their employers sending them on or offering them secondment abroad, be it with a multinational corporation, an international organization, or on diplomatic service. Thus, their position of privilege is assumed prior to the undertaking of migratory activity, as is the case of the seconded workers and their partners in this study. Research on the privileged migration of the highly skilled from white-dominated Western countries has addressed the existence of boundaries in transnational living (e.g., Fechter 2007a, 2007b; Croucher 2009), culture and identity (e.g., Hindman 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Fechter 2010), and belonging (Walsh 2008). Again, within this privileged migration literature, there is a strong focus on different socio-cultural and socio-economic factors that contribute to emigrant well-being. The findings show that in spite of being in a position of privilege, many privileged migrants both indulge in more extravagant lifestyles and experience strong limitations and restrictions in their everyday lives.

In consideration of the state of the art of research on highly skilled mobility at the intersection of migration and social policy, this article is guided by the following research questions: To what extent do the Danish and Finnish welfare states protect seconded workers and their partners from risk when they emigrate for temporary periods outside of the EU? How does this impact their relationship to the Danish and Finnish state? What kinds of social risks are the migrants exposed to and how do they mitigate them? Beyond social citizenship rights, what are the broader social challenges impacting the migrants’ welfare, and how do they negotiate them?

**Data and Methods**

Migration has been undertaken for centuries by the highly skilled or highly educated and, consequently, the more wealthy and powerful members of the global population, yet contemporary migration research continues to focus on the less wealthy (Olwig 2007, 87). Castles and Miller in their seminal book, *The Age of Migration* (2009), draw attention to the brain-drain phenomenon in non-Western countries (Castles and Miller 2009, 63–67) yet fail to acknowledge the significance and impact
that highly skilled mobility from Western countries has in the context of globalization. An obvious reason for the general lack of focus is that low-skilled or low-status migrants (e.g., refugees and asylum seekers) are far greater in number. A less obvious reason may be that it has for a long time been the wealthy and powerful who have dominated Western academia. Mirza (1998) has claimed that being dominated by white middle-class and/or male researchers, the academic agenda has made the marginal, the powerless, and the oppressed the “excessive object of study” (Mirza 1998), and consequently we know more about the poor than the powerful (Fielding 2007, 238). It has also been recognized that for various reasons elite groups may resist taking part in qualitative research (ibid).

The interview data analyzed here are from semi-structured interviews conducted in 2009 with sixteen Danish and Finnish highly skilled workers or their partners who originally came to India in conjunction with work. When working at their home office, their social status is not that of an elite, as they mostly fulfilled technical or middle management positions. However, in the Indian context, all of the informants are a part of the wealthy elite locally, and, coming from Scandinavia, they are also relatively few in number (compared, for example, to the number of British and American migrants). As most multinational enterprises (MNEs) proved unwilling to assist in recruiting interviewees, the Nordic informants were found through the Danish Embassy and the Delhi Network, the Bangalore Expatriate Club and the Overseas Women’s Club, one Finnish company, word-of-mouth, snowballing, and attending “expatriate” functions during my fieldwork. In addition, I established a website with information on the broader research project.

In preparation for the interviews, all but two of the informants completed an online pre-interview questionnaire that was to be used to collect quantitative data with MNEs, had I gained their cooperation. The questionnaire provided basic socio-demographic data about the informant, as well as information on some of the challenges and successes they were experiencing in India. The audio-recorded interviews, which were conducted in people’s homes, their offices, at cafés, and five-star hotels, were not directly transcribed, but a descriptive narrative text was written for each interview. This was done for two reasons: it was important for the broader doctoral research project (Foulkes, forthcoming) that the interviewees firstly have the opportunity to comment on my understanding of what was said during the interview, and secondly at a later date to reflect on their comments during the interview. The interviews took place during three one-month field trips in 2009 to Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai. In 2012 the interviewees were asked to reflect on the interview narrative and give additional feedback.

This study employs a multi-method approach, in so far as I use diverse approaches within conventional qualitative methods (Collier and Elman 2008), in order to gain practical insight into how the “small print” of a particular area of social
policy actually affects people. First, I conduct a normative analysis of the eligibility and entitlement rules for basic social security in Denmark and Finland during migration. The two countries are representative of the Social Democratic or Nordic Welfare Model (Esping-Andersen 1990). Assumptions about how well states look after their citizens are often made on the basis of regime classifications; for example, the assumption is often made, based on the “very good” ranking of public social protection and the frequent use of the term “universal” in the literature, that the Nordic countries protect all of their citizens against social risks far better than the liberal, corporatist, or Southern European welfare states. However, as Kangas and Palme argue, “[W]e need to base our evaluation of different social policy strategies on facts and systematic analysis, not on assumptions” (2005, 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>NATIONALITY</th>
<th>COUNTRY OF USUAL RESIDENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Finland (6)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Finnish (8)</td>
<td>Denmark (4)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>WORK ACTIVITY IN INDIA</th>
<th>PRIMARY REASON FOR BEING IN INDIA</th>
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<tr>
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<td>In paid employment (10)</td>
<td>Accompanying partner of seconded worker (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (9)</td>
<td>Self-employed (1)</td>
<td>Seconded from European multinational enterprise (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not in official paid employment (5)</td>
<td>Limited contract with an international organization (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneur with Indian spouse (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accompanying partner of governmental worker/diplomat (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1. Profiles of Nordic Highly Skilled Migrants Interviewed. *One interview was carried out in Mangalore (pop. 1 million) where the interviewee lived. He traveled frequently for work to Bangalore, Delhi, and Mumbai, and originally moved to India with a Danish company.

With this goal in mind, rather than focusing on surface characteristics, such as financing, generosity, and duration of payments, as numerous welfare state analyses do, this study digs beneath the surface in order to look at the qualifying pre-conditions for the entitlement to basic social security, in order to reflect upon the
consequences that the restrictions pose for temporary migrants. After identifying the main similarities and differences between the two countries, I use the interview and questionnaire data to analyze the different ways that the policy decisions regarding social security affect the migrants in their everyday lives. I highlight the broader spectrum of social risks that the migrants are exposed to and the different ways they respond to those risks. The migrant profiles are outlined in Table 1.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

*Changes in Social Rights under Temporary Migration Outside of the EU*

In Denmark, the possession of a permanent address in the country is crucial to eligibility for basic social security. Challenges arise for individuals as a result of the legislation and rules attached to different housing solutions. Furthermore, if, at any point in time, individuals decide to give up their residency in Denmark, they automatically lose their right to social security. Denmark is unique in that the employee and the accompanying partner experience equal access and denial of rights; it is also unique in that working in the destination country does not have any negative consequences (i.e., both the employee and the accompanying partner maintain full coverage in social security as long as the secondment is for no longer than two years). The accompanying partner is thus free to choose whether or not to depend on his or her partner’s income and contract of secondment for his or her own basic welfare needs. In reality, however, visa restrictions and difficulties in obtaining working visas hinder most partners from taking up paid employment in India.

Basic social security in Denmark includes access to healthcare, health insurance, benefits related to childbirth and adoption, unemployment insurance, basic state pension and early retirement pension, service pensions, a supplementary and compulsory labor market pension, family allowance, and work accident insurance. There is no rule governing secondment outside of the borders of the EU/EEA, which explains why there is no instance where full coverage automatically applies.

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9 By way of example, I refer briefly to the system of part-ownership housing (andelsbolig). According to Denmark’s statistical database, Statistikbanken (www.statistikbanken.dk), there are approximately 200,000 part-ownership associations (andelsforeninger). The members of the association have bought their “share” of the property (e.g., an apartment). Each association has its own set of rules based on the laws pertaining to this type of housing, the andelsboliglov. A common restriction addresses the length of time one can rent out the accommodation to a third party (fremleje), the maximum usually being between one and two years. Hence, if an individual living in a part-ownership property is offered a three-year secondment abroad, they face losing their home.

10 Every person who works in Denmark is required by law to pay towards an ATP (Arbejdsmarkedets Tillægspension) pension, which is a compulsory supplementary labor-market pension. One-third of the contribution is paid by the employee and two-thirds by the employer. Payments are made from the time of retirement until death. See www.atp.dk for more information.
Denmark has bilateral agreements regarding social security with sixteen countries. The agreement with India was first signed in February 2010.\(^\text{11}\)

In Finland, labor-market attachments and pre-departure eligibility for social security are of greater importance. If individuals are eligible for social security prior to departure, they may reside abroad for up to one year and maintain full coverage. The Finnish Social Insurance Institution (KELA) expresses that, in the case of temporary assignments abroad, they rarely deny coverage to those who apply for up to five years’ extension as long as the conditions regarding labor-market attachment and previous coverage are fulfilled. The employee must remain employed by the Finnish company during the secondment, and the employer must pay social insurance contributions to the Finnish state. In addition, if employees are sent abroad by their Finland office to a subsidiary to be paid locally, the employees must keep their permanent residency in Finland to qualify for residency-based social security entitlements. These include national and survivors’ pensions, family allowances, maternity grants, and general housing allowances. If the secondment is for one year or less, the secondee is also entitled to pensioner’s housing allowance, disabled person’s allowance, childcare allowance, front-veteran’s supplement, and special support for immigrants. The situation for partners is somewhat more precarious as they lose their right to social security if they work in the destination country for a non-Finnish firm, regardless of their previous eligibility. In this case, the partner falls under the social security system of that country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYEE</th>
<th>Pre-Conditions</th>
<th>Full Coverage</th>
<th>Apply for Coverage</th>
<th>No Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Folkeregister &amp; permanent residency</td>
<td>For up to two years</td>
<td>If secondment lasts for more than two years (with some exceptions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Covered by Finnish social security before departure; Finland-based employer; residency in Finland</td>
<td>Up to one year</td>
<td>If secondment lasts for more than one year (can be given decision for up to five years)</td>
<td>If not covered by Finnish social security before departure; if hired by local subsidiary/firm &amp; no residency in Finland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) The other countries are Australia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, Israel, Croatia, Macedonia, Morocco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Pakistan, Quebec (Canada), Serbia, Turkey, and USA.
In reality, when employees are sent abroad by a company, they usually negotiate a package that includes health insurance coverage. For the informants of this study, the comprehensiveness of that insurance varied quite substantially, and even if the migrants have extensive healthcare coverage, standards vary greatly from one hospital to another, and the paperwork involved in reclaiming money spent can be very time-consuming. This presents problems for secondees who travel alone, or for couples who both work.

As the case of healthcare exemplifies, when Nordic employees become secondees abroad, they move from a space where their social rights are guaranteed by the state to a space where they have industrial/occupational rights (Marshall 1950) guaranteed by the employer. Other occupational rights that are ensured through collective agreements and/or legislation for work environments when employed in the home country include the right to fair wages, the right to healthy and safe working conditions, and freedom from discrimination. Western secondees in Asia typically continue to be offered high salaries and, in the case of India, extra salary as it is often considered a “hardship” posting; furthermore, they are more likely to be subjected to positive rather than negative discrimination as the result of the hierarchies of difference (Hindman 2009a). Being both foreign and white has its advantages, and if one is also male, the positive discrimination is even stronger. However, the labor standards, for example the office facilities or the office climate (i.e., temperature or humidity), in emerging economies such as India are a major concern in the globalization discussion as host countries, in their eagerness to attract investment, are said to compromise their standards (Meyer 2004, 270). These aspects are blind to hierarchy and difficult to control.

Table 2. Eligibility for basic social security in Denmark and Finland when employees are seconded outside of the EU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCOMPANYING SPOUSE</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
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The Perils of Highly Skilled Mobility
Social Security Outcomes for Highly Skilled Migrants

As Table 1 above shows, only four of the Danish migrants interviewed were usually resident in Denmark and of those only three actually had Danish political citizenship; one woman was of British origin and had been permanently resident in Denmark for over twenty years. Of the four, three were on secondment themselves (two males and one female) and only one was an accompanying unmarried partner (a woman). Two of them had chosen to have their permanent address in India in spite of their initial contracts being only for two years. They thus chose to detach themselves from the Danish social security system during their stay in India. The remaining four (male) migrants, while originally leaving Denmark in conjunction with secondment, had in 2009 been resident outside of Denmark for between four and twenty years and hence had no formal ties to the Danish social security system.

The informants with formal ties to the Danish welfare system were aware of their rights and, in not discussing the pitfalls of being outside of the system during the interviews, showed a silent confidence in their labor-market attachments and the ability to support themselves financially through employment, savings, or their partners’ income upon their return. Indeed, those on secondment themselves were all guaranteed a position with their company when back in Denmark, and they had employer-financed private pension coverage. By contrast, three of the four interviewees who had severed their ties to the Danish welfare state, spent much time critiquing the Danish system, referring to it as restrictive and controlling. All four were, however, accepting of the fact that they had no right to access any form of social security in Denmark.

I use the case of Greg to highlight the perils of living a mobile life outside of Denmark and the EU, and of having a family with international cultural and political ties. Despite having left the country over fifteen years ago, Greg still felt very Danish and thought of himself as one of the country’s (unofficial) ambassadors in India. He has maintained few, yet strong, family and friendship ties in Denmark. Nonetheless, he felt that he was being officially rejected by the state in many different ways. Having a wife who is not European, having lived in fifteen different countries, and having a daughter who was born in the Middle East and has lived in ten countries in as many years, Greg would face problems if they ever wanted to move to Denmark: he is not able to obtain an international driving license because the Folkeregister (the National Registry) in Denmark de-registered him; he cannot obtain residency in Denmark because he works abroad, and neither is he registered as living in India because of the nature of his job; he would have problems if he wanted to divorce because of rules in the divorce laws in the countries where they have ties regarding residency and where

12 As there are so few Danish and Finnish migrants in India in the professions that my informants have, little detail is shared about the nature of their work in order to protect their anonymity.
one pays taxes. Greg concludes that living an international life is not as glamorous as people imagine it to be. He has ended up in a position of not being officially resident anywhere and hence entirely reliant on private sector services for his own and his family’s welfare.

The informants interviewed who had Finnish nationality were a more homogeneous group in so far as they all had intentions to move back to their “home” country after the secondment period. All fulfilled the pre-conditions for entitlement to basic social security, with the decision being given for up to five years. Four of them were partners (female) to secondees, and two were the employed secondee (one male and one female). The remaining two accompanying married partners (women) would be returning to lives in the United Kingdom with their English spouses and had no formal ties to the Finnish social security system.

One of the Finnish secondees was employed locally in India but under contract at the Finnish office. He continued to make social security contributions in Finland but had no permanent address in Finland. The other was employed and paid by the Finnish office, and the usual social contributions were made by her and the company; she also still had her official residency in Finland. The main issue that was strongly addressed by five of the remaining six female partners, as well as several other partners from different nationalities, was about the risks involved with taking a career break in order for their family to accept the assignment. In spite of the visa restrictions several of them faced, a variety of solutions—self-employment, project assignments, voluntary work, and Internet-based work—were found.

The Finnish rules and conditions clearly allow for more flexibility with combining different choices regarding residency and employment for the employed secondee, and in spite of the restrictions placed on accompanying partners of most secondees regarding taking up employment locally, the Finnish partners were extremely efficient at making use of their time and continuing some form of work activity reflecting the Protestant work ethic that the Nordic region is renowned for practising. Possibly as a consequence of this, there was no critique of the Nordic welfare state from either the seconded workers or their partners who furthermore made no mention of the impact the time spent outside of the Finnish labor market may have on their state pension.

**The Broader Spectrum of Social Risks**

For Nordic accompanying partners, who often spend a lot of time interacting with the local environment, other aspects of the social sphere that in the Nordic countries are considered to be either societal norms or responsibilities to be provided by the state were more pertinent and lacking in India, where the domestic population has quite divergent needs and wants as a result of their different traditions, customs, and historical development. In addition, social services provided in the Nordic
region—public parks, leisure facilities, and public roads and spaces—are also financed by the welfare state and contribute to protection against health and safety risks. The ability to rely on public institutions (e.g., the police and public offices) also contributes towards the stability of the welfare state and people’s confidence and trust in it. Below, I give a brief overview of some of the main challenges and risks for the Nordic migrants, usually mitigated by Nordic welfare state traditions and public institutions, and how the migrants deal with them.

**Gender Discrimination**

Denmark and Finland are renowned for their achievements in gender equality; hence, the culturally embedded difference in the relations between men and women in India was a topic of discussion, particularly among the female informants. For some of them, the difference in the treatment they received from Indian men, in the sphere of the home and in public spaces, was a cause of offence, while for others it was accepted as a part of Indian culture. Workmen only wanting to communicate with the “man of the house” proved to be a challenge for several Nordic women whose husbands were at work during the day. In addition to the frustration and stress caused for the female partner, this custom also meant long delays with getting things repaired, and the husbands sometimes needed to take time off work to speak to the workmen.

In other situations though, the female migrants were able to use their own agency to overcome any potential challenges. For Saara, a Finnish woman accompanying her husband and three children, when people addressed her husband in response to her questions, it was “not a big deal” as they had previously lived in the Middle East where this was an accepted cultural norm. As well as previous exposure to different cultures, age was a mitigating factor in dealing with differential treatment. Anna, a self-employed Finnish woman accompanying her seconded partner, relayed that she feels her gender and age work to her advantage when meeting with business partners, even though she is sure that people may think of her as young and inexperienced. She takes strong heed of the cornerstone of doing business in India, building good relations: she smiles a lot, brings cakes when she meets suppliers, and invites people home for business meetings. Meanwhile, Hanne, who is in her late forties, feels that looking like an older, more mature woman is the reason why men treat her with respect. Only when she is out for dinner with a man does she note that the waiters always address the man instead of her. She finds it “appalling.” Being a “Western woman” was also cited as a mitigating factor particularly regarding dress codes.

**Public Service Provision**

Another defining feature of the Nordic welfare state is the standard and quality of the public service provision. Several of the respondents from the Nordic region,
as well as migrants I spoke to from other Northern European countries, found it challenging that there were not as many sport and recreational facilities available locally. However, the Nordic respondents were not unanimous in their response to the lack of facilities available. Some made use of what was there and simply accepted the lower standards (of parks, for example) as part of the India experience. Others responded with dismay and avoided the spaces altogether as they did not feel comfortable and in some cases felt that there was also a health hazard. One strategy used to overcome this shortcoming was to find alternative activities. This required a major time investment: to research and network in order to find out where one could partake in different activities, and then, because of the bad state of the roads and the traffic in the cities where the migrants were living, to reach the chosen destination. Consequently, whether the migrants were on secondment alone and working full-time or with a partner who had more spare time to do the required research and networking impacted the ability to partake in different activities.

Another aspect that had an impact on access to sports facilities was the locations the migrants chose to live in. Those who chose closed-off gated communities and embassy compounds had high-quality wellness centers and sports facilities on-site. These housing areas also had well-constructed roads and pavements and little traffic, and both of these facts were given as reasons for not walking to the shops or exercising in public areas. The decision about where to live in the cities was contingent on factors chiefly associated with the opportunities offered by the sending company, such as whether or not a pre-visit was organized or offered and how it was structured. Some informants had very short visits and felt that the real estate agents showing them around had “wrong” preconceived ideas about the type of accommodation they wanted to choose from. Others from smaller multinationals were not offered an orientation visit at all and had to rely on the choices made by the previously seconded family/individual. Furthermore, the budget that was afforded the secondee for housing also limited or expanded the choice of where to live.

Another pertinent topic was the (lack of) trust the Nordic migrants had in the police and public offices. Several stories were relayed about incidents with traffic police where the drivers were stopped for speeding when they weren’t speeding, and a payment was required: one price for a payment with a receipt and the possibility of future problems for the driver, and another lower price for a payment without a receipt and no record of the incident. All of the temporary migrants paid the bribe. Bribery was also mentioned in conjunction with getting things done at public offices, for example, organizing visas and getting driving licenses and permits for animals. The influx of foreign workers in India has created a new market for relocation services, and, at the time of the interviews, the informants who used some of the services had the impression that much of the fast-tracking of their paperwork came as a result of money being passed under the table rather than through any formal
arrangements between service providers and officials. Nevertheless, as one Danish migrant commented, as long as he could produce a receipt for the service, his company was happy. The paying of bribes was justified by many as a way of life that just needed to be accepted in order to get along.

Health Risks and Healthcare

The last prominent feature of the Nordic welfare state that presented challenges for Nordic migrants concerned general health and safety and healthcare. Nordic welfare states ensure a strong safety net for their residents and citizens: they provide well-functioning transport and road infrastructure, enforce stringent health and safety standards in public areas as well as work places, implement regulations regarding different food items, create institutions to monitor whether public and private companies adhere to those rules, and provide universal access and provision of high-quality healthcare. It is impossible for the Nordic states to provide protection from many of the locational risks abroad.

As mentioned previously, at the time of the interviews, the roads in Indian cities presented a hazard for pedestrians, drivers, and passengers, partly as a result of the poor construction and partly because of the high volumes of traffic and non-adherence to traffic rules. Most of the informants I spoke with avoided using public transportation because the buses were overcrowded and rarely air-conditioned and the metro network did not extend to the areas where the foreign populations live or needed to go to. Instead, almost all of the foreigners I came into contact with had personal drivers and traveled by car. Only one of the Nordic migrants I interviewed did not have a driver, and she and her husband moved around the city by auto-rickshaw (three-wheeler motorized vehicle). They were usually resident in London and commented that they found commuting to work in Delhi easier to deal with and quicker than in London.

The hazard that was spoken of by the Nordic and other nationality migrants was less about being seriously hurt in an accident and more about the danger of not being able to reach a hospital in time. As one Nordic migrant said, “The traffic does not move very fast so if you get hit, you probably won’t die!” There were several migrants who suffered from illnesses or had had accidents; one had children who were fairly accident-prone. She stated,

When my son had the head trauma, luckily [. . .] it was a Sunday and the traffic was not too bad. You must have seen ambulances stuck in the traffic? It is the worst thing here. If something happens and you need to get to the hospital quickly, it does not happen here. The roads are terrible.

Unfortunately, no amount of privilege or formal social protection can shield migrants or even ordinary citizens from this kind of risk. The main cause of illness
among the Nordic migrants was related to food. There were mixed responses to the food culture in India: some informants were extremely cautious, never eating food bought at street vendors (fresh or cooked); others enjoyed the opportunity to shop at these vendors as part of the India experience. Some enjoyed trying smaller local restaurants, yet the majority ate out at the five-star hotels and top restaurants in the cities. There was no consistency in the eating and cooking habits of those who became ill from the food, nor with the severity of their illness.

The experiences with the healthcare system also varied. Some respondents were very impressed with the standard of care, and others were dismayed. One hospital in Bangalore, where foreigners suffering from minor injuries are treated together with the locals (albeit with priority given to the foreigners) was described as “chaotic” and “filthy.” When admitted for more serious illness or injury, foreigners are taken up to a different floor where the rooms are clean and the atmosphere calmer. I was advised that if I ever needed treatment, I should immediately go up to the “eleventh floor” of a particular hospital. One Nordic migrant had the following comment:

[. . .] in some way the healthcare is better as the doctors see you as a whole person and are more holistic compared to Finland where they just treat the one symptom. If you are in a private hospital, they run tests much more easily, while in Finland they are more concerned with saving money.

Others commented that the care they received (for very little money) was far better than anything they have ever experienced back home.

The healthcare in India is not universally accessible, and having comprehensive insurance was a priority for the migrants I spoke to. This leaves the secondees and their families in the hands of the employer or the private healthcare market. For one Nordic family, the sending company initially offered insurance only for the working spouse and not for the wife and children. However, during the orientation visit, the wife became very ill, and so they insisted on having full coverage for the whole family for the duration of the assignment, otherwise they would not go. The company accepted this pre-condition; however, for unmarried partners companies tended not to provide coverage. In the case of the two Nordic women who were not married to their seconded partner, one managed to negotiate doing some work for his company and hence traveled on her own business visa, thus receiving healthcare coverage from the company; the other took out a private plan for herself.

**Conclusions**

The Danish and Finnish welfare states vary quite substantially in the pre-conditions they set out for individuals planning to spend a period of their lives outside of the
country. In spite of groups like secondees and their partners (and others such as aid workers) simply fulfilling the labor-market demands of the home country, they are disadvantaged to varying extents. In Denmark, the state does not differentiate between the seconded employee and the non-employed partner. However, the two-year time restriction and stringent residency rules mean that Danish citizens are heavily penalized for spending longer periods outside Denmark. As the interviews reveal, this situation is a concern for longer-term migrants. In the case of Finland, the accompanying partners are restricted in so far as they lose their rights to basic coverage if they undertake paid employment in the destination country. The Finnish partners interviewed were extremely efficient at finding alternative work activities that did not involve paid employment in India. Nonetheless, the results indicate that the egalitarian nature of Nordic welfare states falls apart when the position of temporary migrants is under analysis.

The fact that secondees continue to be predominantly male and accompanying partners female means that a return to the male-breadwinner family model (Lewis 2001) is witnessed among seconded families. Even if states like Denmark do not discriminate between the working and non-working partner, the difficulty of getting a working visa in countries like India means that partners are still denied access to the labor market. As the data show however, some women interviewed found alternative channels to carry out work activities and hence to keep up their careers; others happily chose to use the time to explore other hobbies or to spend more time with the family. A further difference between this situation and the “old” male-breadwinner model is that domestic workers are employed to take care of the chores of keeping house (and in some cases childcare, too) rather than the wife having this double burden. Seconded workers and their partners had little critique of the Nordic welfare state. In the follow-up questionnaire, all of the respondents, usually resident in either Denmark or Finland, indicated they were committed to supporting the welfare state, which contradicts the fears expressed by Taylor-Gooby (2009) and others regarding increasing individualism and its negative impact on the welfare state.

Secondees and their partners become heavily reliant on the generosity of the company and on their own abilities, economic and social, to mitigate the risks they come up against during secondment. As the findings reflect, there are several different social risks that do not fall into Bonoli’s (2007) neat definitions of new and old social risks. It is difficult for the Danish or Finnish state to protect against these risks, and even being in a position of “privilege” does not have a great impact. Furthermore, the informants had quite divergent responses and experiences in similar situations: even though they belong to the group of “Nordic highly skilled,” the results may reflect a wide variation in basic attitudes, previous experiences, and the quantity of their social, cultural, and economic capital. The study highlights some aspects of the precarious nature and “perils” of highly skilled mobility. While not wishing to exaggerate the
urgency of addressing these issues that affect a more wealthy and advantaged sector of the population—as compared to the need for policy to protect sectors of the population who have fewer resources to protect themselves—it is important to consider more carefully the outcomes for this group as Nordic societies become increasingly knowledge-based and international mobility becomes commonplace. Future studies in this area would benefit from the use of quantitative data from individual countries. These quantitative data would help to gain a better insight into the general trends so that policy may be more effectively targeted.

**REFERENCES**


The Perils of Highly Skilled Mobility


The Factors Contributing to Work/Life Conflicts and Enrichment among Finnish Global Careerists

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Abstract

It has been argued (see, e.g., Haslberger and Brewster 2008; Lazarova, Westman, and Sheffer 2010; Mäkelä, Känsälä, and Suutari 2011; Mäkelä and Suutari 2011) that expatriates have difficulties balancing work with the rest of their lives. Our understanding of the issues and factors contributing to the work/non-work balance is limited. To increase our understanding of these issues, twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with Finnish global careerists, each of whom had spent most of their working lives outside their home country. The results of the study indicate that, besides facing conflicts, global careerists benefit from the interface of their work and non-work life. Several work-domain, non-work domain, and individual factors were identified. We argue that the literature regarding the work/life balance needs to take into account context-related factors and to put more emphasis on the perspective of enrichment.

Keywords: Finnish expatriates, work/non-work conflicts, work/non-work enrichment
INTRODUCTION
Research on the international work force and expatriation has begun to expand its scope from the traditional focus on aspects of the single international assignment cycle within multinational corporations (MNCs) to new topics aimed at better reflecting the reality of international careers. Expatriation—the situation in which people are working outside their home country either as employees sent by the home country employer (organizational expatriates) or as employees who have themselves taken the initiative to be employed abroad (self-initiated expatriates), sometimes discussed in parallel with migration (Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry 2013; Suutari and Brewster 2000)—is more often becoming not only a “once in a lifetime experience” but increasingly involves longer-term “global careers.”

Global careers involve repeated international work experiences, and they encompass a succession of multiple international assignments (Cappellen and Janssens 2005; Dickman and Harris 2005; Mayrhofer et al. 2004; Stahl and Cerdin 2004; Suutari 2003; Suutari and Mäkelä 2007; Thomas, Lazarova, and Inkson 2005). These global careers might also include short-term or long-term internationally oriented jobs in a variety of host countries or at the corporate headquarters. We use the term “global careerists” to refer to people involved in such careers. Managers with such global careers are the most experienced international management group, with learning experiences from many cultural contexts (Roberts, Kossek, and Ozeki 1998) and typically also from different international organizations (Stahl and Cerdin 2004). In the Finnish context there is evidence that, among highly educated Finns, around a third of expatriates (35 percent) have undertaken three or more assignments (Jokinen, Brewster, and Suutari 2008). However, there is limited empirical evidence on the specific features of careers among such people.

Expatriation involves more than just the individual: from the perspective of the global careerists with numerous moves across borders, taking into account the instability and the ongoing adjustments required, the situation can be challenging not just for the assignees but also for their partners and children (Caligiuri et al. 1998; Shaffer and Harrison 2001; Foulkes, this volume). Such careers may be too challenging for many individuals and their families (Forster 2000). Further, it has been suggested that women face more difficulties than men as part of the global workforce (Ho 2006; Man 2004; Meares 2010; Suto 2009), especially if working in masculine cultures (Hutchings, French, and Hatcher 2008). Lazarova, Westman, and Shaffer reinforce the uncertainty and stress of international assignments but point out that “they also offer the promise of new opportunities and challenges” (2010, 111). For the global careerists, we can expect a learning curve, with the expatriates and their families having the opportunity to use their earlier adjustment experiences on subsequent assignments. How this happens and what the antecedents of its happening
The Factors Contributing to Work/Life Conflicts and Enrichment

(i.e., factors which are contributing to work/family conflicts and enrichment experiences) are, have, however, been studied little.

At a more general level, the dynamics between working life and personal life have been actively discussed in the literature. Most of the previous research has adopted the view that these two domains are competing, and studies have concentrated on the conflicts between them (see Eby et al. 2005; Kinnunen and Mauno 2008). More recently, some of the positive aspects of work/life dynamics have gained attention, and concepts such as facilitation, enrichment, and positive spillover have been brought into the discussion (Frone 2003; Carlson et al. 2006; Wayne et al. 2007). Usually, the work domain has been seen as the one detracting from personal life, but effects in the other direction have been identified as well (Kinnunen et al. 2010). Both research and practical organizational interventions have focused on how to reduce conflicts rather than how to promote positive interaction between the spheres of the personal life and the work life (Grawitch, Barber, and Justice 2010). In practice, of course, crossover happens, and either domain can influence the other either negatively or positively (see Eby et al. 2005; Frone 2003).

Most of the previous research focused on the crossover effects from work to family and vice versa (for general studies, see Eby et al. 2005; Guest 2002; Lapierre et al. 2008; Rantanen et al. 2008; and for expatriates, see Haslberger and Brewster 2008; Lazarova, Westman, and Sheffer 2010; Mäkelä, Känsälä, and Suutari 2011; Mäkelä and Suutari 2011). However, a broader definition of the non-work dimension is required, to also include individuals other than those with traditional family responsibilities (Fisher, Bulger, and Smith 2009; Grawitch, Barber, and Justice 2010; Sturges and Guest 2004). This broader definition is adopted in the present study. This study, for the first time, uses empirical evidence to explore not just the conflicts but the full range of interactions between work and non-work.

We approach the interface between work and non-work for Finnish global careerists as dynamic and interactional; we consider work to non-work and non-work to work interactions; and we seek both the negative and the positive sides of these phenomena. We aim to analyze (a) how global careerists’ work and non-work domains positively and negatively influence each other; and (b) what kind of factors can be identified behind these influences. After a brief review of relevant aspects of the literature, we critique current assumptions on the application of these theories to Finnish global careerists. We then discuss our methodology and present our findings. Finally, we draw conclusions and discuss the relevant implications for theory and practice.

The Factors Contributing to the Work/Life Interface

The dynamics between work and non-work have been studied mainly by adopting either role theory (Kahn et al. 1964) or conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll
Role theory analysis argues that people have multiple roles, some related to working life (e.g., one person may be a supervisor, technical specialist, trade union representative, etc.), and others related to non-work (partner, elderly parent, sports-club member). The spillover of demands within these roles may create work/life conflicts (Bagger, Li, and Gutek 2008; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; for a review, see Kinnunen and Mauno 2008). However, the spillover may be positive: for instance, friends may provide useful contacts for solving a work problem. Positive aspects are also termed work/life enrichment, or facilitation (Carlson et al. 2006; Frone 2003; Wayne et al. 2007).

Interaction between work and non-work at the individual level has also been studied using conservation of resources theory (COR). Resources such as time and energy are restricted, and overload causes stress. Here, too, the work/non-work conflicts emerge if resources in one domain are depleted through the demands of the other domain, and enrichment occurs when resources gained from one domain improve the situation in another (Greenhaus and Powell 2006; Carlson et al. 2006).

Studies have explored the antecedents of either conflicts or enrichment (see Eby et al. 2005). Antecedents to work and non-work interactions have been classified in three main categories: work-domain, non-work domain, and individual domain (Guest 2002; Kinnunen and Mauno 2008). Work-domain antecedents (Byron 2005) include flexibility of work schedules, total working hours, co-workers’ and supervisors’ supportiveness, and organizational culture. The non-work domain includes factors such as families, communities, and choices of leisure-time activities (Guest 2002). These will vary considerably, depending, for example, on whether one is single or has a partner, the number and age of children, and the age of parents (Guest 2002; Frone 2003; Byron 2005, Eby et al. 2005; Kinnunen and Mauno 2008). Individual and demographic variables include such factors as gender, age, career stage, skills, and personality. Research focusing on gender is not unambiguous, but there seems to be evidence that women are more susceptible than men to conflicts between the work and non-work domains, because traditional societal norms require females more so than men to adopt family responsibilities, childcare, and elderly care (see Guest 2002).

**Issues Arising: Expatriates and Global Careerists**

How does this generic evidence of work and non-work interactions transfer to expatriates and then to global careerists? International assignments of more than a few months typically include either the international relocation of the whole immediate family or the splitting of the family. This may be particularly significant in societies where families are “larger” and parents or siblings would be seen as a key part of the family—they are nearly always left behind. As a rule, the literature has not taken a holistic view of the family (Haslberger and Brewster 2008), and in the expatriation
The Factors Contributing to Work/Life Conflicts and Enrichment

literature, the role of the family on expatriate selection, adjustment, and performance is generally considered only as a restraint that leads to a refusal to relocate (Collings, Scullion, and Morley 2007). Family may also explain the early return of the expatriate (Shaffer et al. 2001).

Working abroad has been found to be challenging for expatriates. Overall, the research (Bossard and Peterson 2005; Gregersen and Morrison 1998; Kohonen 2004; Roberts, Kossek, and Ozeki 1998; Suutari and Mäkelä 2007) suggests that international jobs are perceived both as challenges and as opportunities for professional development. Work issues that caused conflict in expatriates’ personal lives occur more frequently than personal conflicts that impacted the work domain. Such conflicts, especially from work to personal life, have also been found to have negative effects on expatriates’ health (Grant-Vallone and Ensher 2001; Fishlmayr and Kollinger 2010). The work-related challenge is caused by many factors that are found to be typical features of expatriate jobs. For example, the breadth of responsibilities is usually broader than on domestic tasks because expatriates often work in smaller foreign units, often in less developed contexts, and often at higher organizational levels than before the assignment. They are very visible, and the distinction between work and non-work often becomes difficult to maintain (Caligiuri and Lazarova 2005). Working in another culture and environment is more challenging and risky than working in the familiar domestic environment. At the same time, expatriate managers typically also have more autonomy because of both the distance from headquarters and the smaller size of foreign affiliates.

Assignees, therefore, have to use all their resources and energy to deal with difficult job-related challenges. As a consequence, they may not be able to fully support a family that also faces its own adjustment challenges as it tries to settle down in a new country. There is increased pressure on partners to take on a bigger role in family affairs, which, in turn, makes it difficult for them to concentrate on their own careers (Mäkelä, Käänsälä, and Suutari 2011). The centrality of the role of the family in the successful expatriate cycle (Punnett 1997; Shaffer et al. 2001) makes it an important concern for the assignee and the employing organization. For example, the role of the family/partner as a primary reason for costly premature returns to Finland has long been recognized (Riusala and Suutari 2000). Expatriation has also been found to lead couples to divorce or to cause expatriates to worry about the future of their relationships (Fishlmayr and Kollinger 2010).

Sometimes families (e.g., dual-career couples or couples with teenagers) also choose alternative solutions, such as living apart during the international assignment (Hardill 2004). This solution is naturally more convenient when the expatriate assignment is located in a nearby country with good travel connections. It may solve some problems (e.g., making it possible for the children to stay at the same school and in the same living environment in the home country and for the non-assignee
partner to maintain the job in the home country), but, naturally, at the same time it creates other kinds of challenges as families must cope with the problems of an absent partner and/or parent (Mayrhofer et al. 2004). Frequent international travel may also cause conflicts between work and personal life, and its disturbance of the travellers’ daily routines, such as eating and sleeping habits, hobbies and social activity, as well as the pressure it places on family and work commitments, all are likely to cause stress and increase the probability of burnout for the commuting partner (Mayerhofer, Mueller, and Schmidt 2010; Demel and Mayrhofer 2010; Konopaske, Robie, and Ivancevich 2009).

When analyzing possible challenges between the work domain and the non-work domain for experienced global careerists, there are two different perspectives: the challenges faced by repeated assignments may either exacerbate the problem, or the expatriates may have learned from past experience how to handle it. From the first perspective, it is not surprising that global careerists and their families may feel “rootless” and face problems in maintaining social relationships when they are frequently changing locations. They are also facing frequent adjustment challenges during relocations and, overall, their lifestyle is pressured by the feeling of discontinuity and uncertainty when it is not clear what happens after the present—often fixed term—assignment (Mäkelä and Suutari 2011). It is, thus, not surprising that challenges to cope adequately with work and non-work life are among the key problems faced in this kind of career (Suutari 2003). Dual-career situations are often problematic and may be related to gender roles (Cooke 2007), female assignees having more problems with their male partners. It has also been shown that the employee’s willingness to relocate again is related to their partner’s previous experiences of relocation (Selmer and Leung 2003). The most common reasons given for agreeing to be relocated multiple times are adventure, the opportunity for new experiences, a commitment toward an international working environment, and the possibility to be together with the partner (Suutari 2003). The trailing partner also has a significant role in creating connections in a new location, and, moreover, relocation difficulties are eased by being part of a community where other expatriates are facing the same challenges.

From the other perspective, global careerists and their families have already experienced several relocations and undergone the related adjustment processes, and, thus, coping in the international career environment is one of their competences. Clearly, the expatriates—and their families—can utilize some learning points from previous assignments in the new assignments (Jokinen 2010). While the focus has traditionally been on analyzing the adjustment challenges, less is known about the positive issues faced by both of these groups during their global careers. However, it has been reported that global careerists typically perceived that overall the positive implications overrode the negatives (Suutari 2003). In fact, despite the challenges
concerning international assignments stressed in the literature, a global career may offer an enjoyable and inspiring working environment with different kinds of enriching experiences. Such a perspective might also be expected with regard to interactions between work and personal life for these global careerists and their families.

**METHODS**

International business studies have been dominated by the quantitative research tradition. Recently, however, more qualitative research has started to emerge (Marschan-Piekkari and Welch 2004). Qualitative research is useful when the aim is to gain new insights and explanations in order to understand less studied phenomena (Ghauri and Grønhaug 2010), and interviewing people about their experiences has been found to be an appropriate way to gather data for such purposes (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008). Therefore, we adopted a qualitative research design based on semi-structured interviews with twenty Finnish managers with global careers, empirically defined as having had three or more international assignments during the course of their working life. The sample was derived from a larger quantitative survey, which was targeted to all the expatriate members of the Finnish Association of Business School Graduates (SEFE) (see Jokinen, Brewster, and Suutari 2008). The necessary sample size of the qualitative extension was evaluated based on the data saturation point rather than sample size (Ezzy 2002), i.e., after a certain number of interviews, the key findings started to appear repeatedly from the data. Twenty interviews were conducted. The respondents represented a variety of industries, and their assignment locations covered thirteen countries and all other continents, except Antarctica. Fifteen of the Finnish global careerists were male and five were female. Fifteen of the respondents had a partner and fourteen had children who had been with them on assignment. Twenty-five percent had been on three international assignments prior to their current one, 30 percent had been on four, and 45 percent had been on five or more assignments.

The interviews lasted between half an hour and two hours and fifteen minutes, resulting in an extensive database of word-by-word interview transcripts for analysis. The interviews were all conducted in Finnish, and the verbatim quotations were translated into English by the authors. Interview data were content analyzed, and emerging themes were identified by focusing on the repetition and replication of the themes within interviews. Semi-structured open-ended questions were used in order to bring out underlying patterns and relationships. First, the interviewees gave a detailed account of their previous career paths and current assignments. Second, we asked them about negative and positive work/non-work experiences which they had faced during their recent assignment as well as during earlier stages of their global careers.
Three measures were applied to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. During the analysis process, the data were first carefully read and reflected on several times by the authors. Construct validity was enhanced via researcher triangulation; in other words, the authors analyzed the raw data independently. The data were coded and allocated to pre-assigned categories reflecting the theory-based dimensions concerning work/life balance and related factors.

**Findings**

In this section, we report the empirical findings concerning the dynamics between the work and personal life spheres of these twenty Finnish global careerists and the antecedents of experiences in this kind of atypical career environment. Illustrative quotations from our sample are also given as insets. All three categories presented in the previous literature concerning the reasons for different work/life dynamics (i.e., work related, non-work related, and individual antecedents) also exist for global careerists. We explore both the negative and the positive elements of each factor in turn. These seem to impact global careerists differently than other employees, and, additionally, we identified several that did not fit any of these categories. We suggest that this indicates the contextual nature of work/life dynamics, and we explore this factor further in our conclusions.

**Work-Related Factors of Work/Life Interface**

Work-related issues that had either negative or positive effects on work and personal life included issues such as the number of relocations, type of international assignment, level of autonomy, and compensation. Two organizational-level factors were raised: the organizational policies of the company and the level of organizational experience in international human resource management (IHRM).

**Negative Dynamics**

Finnish global careerists experience conflicts between their life spheres that directly reflect their mobility requirements. First, in contrast to domestic jobs, international assignments usually require both the assignee and the whole immediate family to move from one living environment to a different and sometimes a distant one. This creates adjustment challenges when dealing, for example, with new living and working environments, including culture, climate, education, and day-care systems. Sometimes, families live apart if the mobility requirements are too difficult:

> We have had challenges to explain our situation even to the tax authorities—living separately for fifteen years now but still being happily married. (Female, 48 years old, office manager)

Second, the mobility requirement and the discontinuity it creates causes conflicts between work and private lives and creates uncertainty. Job-related concerns
may be in conflict with family concerns (e.g., a very interesting job in a very challenging living environment for the family). International assignments typically last only a few years, and, thus, global careerists and their families need to uproot their living arrangements and social connections frequently:

So there is this three- to four-year time-period when everyone changes. It is very hard in a way that one has to re-create these social contacts and networks and so on . . . because those old ones regularly disappear. (Male, 59, EU adviser)

The number of international relocations was found to impact family decisions and situations:

As my life has been so unstable and mobile, it has been hard to create long-lasting relationships. Due to that, I got married rather late, when I was thirty-five. And therefore I became a father very late. I was forty-five years old. (Male, 56, entrepreneur)

Moreover, the international work context was also related to divorces:

We divorced, and I think that partly it was because of my travelling that the relationship with my wife suffered. It was very much due to this work. (Male, 64, marketing manager)

In many cases, decisions concerning the next assignment have to be made very quickly among the alternatives that were available. This causes work/non-work conflicts when families do not know where they will live next year:

It takes quite a lot if you leave your stuff and systems and friends. Take your family and go again and then build it all up somewhere else. And everybody has to; husband and son have to restart with work and schools and friends. (Female, 61, PR manager)

We found many examples of work/non-work conflict among global careerists that were related to the characteristics of the job. These included increased responsibilities in foreign affiliates, high levels of personal responsibility, and a high level of autonomy. Twenty-four-hour availability, long working hours, and lots of traveling affected the global careerists’ family lives. As one of our interviewees said:

When working days are long and you are working during weekends as well, it, of course, limits the time you can spend with your family. (Male, 59, EU adviser)
The level of autonomy at work was typically seen to be higher than in their domestic jobs, since there was less control from superiors, who were often located in other countries. The high level of responsibility and the challenging nature of assignments caused conflicts between life spheres:

I worked as a CEO in one company here, started up the whole business for them, recruited people and handled the paper work and created the processes [. . .]. I did not have any other life outside of work for about one-and-a-half years. (Female, 39, entrepreneur)

In addition to these conflicts caused by the nature of this international work, other organizational factors were given as a reason for the negative relationship between work and personal life: the lack of organizational policies in the company and the lack of organizational experience in international human resources management (HRM). For example, bigger organizations typically had more experience and more support was available.

However, although working in the international context appeared very challenging, it also created positive dynamics between work and personal lives.

Positive Dynamics
Living and working abroad sometimes helped the Finnish global careerists to achieve a better balance between work and non-work life:

When you are travelling [to see customers] from Finland, you are not always able to get back home at night. Now I am travelling significantly less than earlier, and those travels are in Central Europe from Frankfurt, and I don’t need to stay overnight. (Male, 54, vice president)

Enrichment was also seen to occur in the development and skills of the children. Because of their parents’ global careers, the children had a range of opportunities that they would not have had otherwise:

For children, it is of course the opportunity to see the world. It can be said that they have been even in a privileged situation, education here, and now studying in England. (Male, 53, finance director)

Global careerists also talked frequently about the enrichment caused by their international work and the possibility of a better lifestyle and better opportunities to cultivate certain hobbies. Ironically, the enhanced pay packages, one of the reasons why many expatriates accept their international assignments, are hardly ever mentioned in the literature on work/life balance. Obviously, they are important. The overall level of compensation (including benefits) often made it possible to arrange
external help and leisure-time activities, and, depending on the context, also provided a high standard of living:

And now here in Hong Kong we have a full-time housekeeper, and that naturally makes it possible for [my partner] to enjoy leisure activities as well. Those arrangements have had a very central role when I think how she has managed here. (Male, 46, sales manager)

Another interviewee stressed the leisure possibilities:

You can go sailing together [with the family] or spend a skiing holiday together; you can rent a house in the Alps or rent a sailing boat from the Mediterranean and have time together. [. . .] You have opportunities to do these kinds of things when you have enough money. (Male, 59, EU adviser)

Organizational issues were also presented as a reason for positive dynamics between work and personal life. The existence of organizational policies concerning organizational support and training during relocations was clearly an important factor:

There has always been language and cultural training, and I think it is good and we have utilized it fully. (Male, 41, quality manager)

Less typical, but interesting, examples of organizational HRM practices that helped global careerists to balance work and non-work life were that some companies provided work opportunities for the partner or compensated for the partner’s lost salary during the assignment. Overall, the experience, policies, and capabilities of the corporation in managing international HRM, and international mobility in particular, were mentioned frequently.

**Non-Work Related Factors of Work-Life Interface**

When negative and positive dynamics between working and personal life were related to the non-work issues, immediate family status was the most influential factor. If the global careerist had a family—partner and/or children—it had a strong influence on both negative and positive experiences.

**Negative Dynamics**

Having a family was often pointed out as being a major work/personal life challenge. Families were seen to make global career opportunities more problematic and reduced the global careerists’ work and hobby possibilities. For example, one of our interviewees compared his present situation as a father and a partner to the time when he did not have a family and noted that family responsibilities have reduced
his time spent at work and reduced his participation in other leisure time activities beside his family:

[When I was single] I did many working hours per week, and I had more opportunities to have hobbies and spend time with friends and less time at home. And now, when I have family, it is home and work [. . .] only these two alternatives. Less hobbies and less time for friends. (Male, 36, material manager)

In addition to discussing the family situation in general, global careerists highlighted specifically the role of their partner in the dynamics between work and personal life. Many partners had been forced to leave their own careers to support the career of the global careerist. The adjustment of the partner impacted the experiences of the whole family: where there were problems, more time and effort was required from the assignee to support the family. Children were also often mentioned as a source for negative dynamics between work and personal life. As a father of two children (now adults) explained:

[. . .] because we had teenage children at home, it was much more difficult to move. The children were very negative towards this change in situation. (Male, 54, vice president)

Similar issues were mentioned regarding elderly parents living at home, who were in poor health. Respondents found it difficult to support their elderly parents when abroad, and they often found the situation challenging and felt guilty:

This means adaptation to the different situations. . . . My father is already gone. He died when we actually lived in Finland. My mother is getting older, but fortunately my siblings live in the same city with her. (Male, 48, area manager)

*Positive Dynamics*

On the other hand, family provided a source of support for expatriates aiming to balance work and non-work life:

[I]t is very important that you have a sort of support group with you, you have a family. . . . Thus there is no risk that you stay alone at home and wonder: what am I going to do? (Female, 61, PR manager)

Another interviewee said:

It is hard to imagine the situation without the family and how I could manage here. I suppose I would have driven myself to burnout with my work. This family is an offset for the work—you don’t always need to
think only about the work and the company. Family creates balance and energy to life. It is very important. (Male, 36, material manager)

Families often tended to thrive in the new country:

The most important thing was that family enjoyed the place. Thus you can focus on your work and you have more to give yourself. (Male, 54, vice president)

The non-work domain was presented as having positive influences on working life at a practical level:

Of course, adults learn many things and several ways to handle situations [at home] which one can utilize at work, like flexibility and taking other people into consideration. (Male, 53, finance director)

Among family-related factors, the partner-related arrangements appeared to have a very important role in creating positive dynamics between work and personal life. For the global careerists, their partner was often an important support in ways both practical and emotional. The partner’s importance was highlighted particularly in relation to more family-supportive roles abroad (i.e., often staying at home and taking care of family-related tasks full-time). The partner’s attitude towards the global careerists’ work and the relocation was also crucial:

My wife understands my work; you are tied to it, and sometimes you need to answer the phone in the evenings and do extra work. Of course, sometimes she criticizes that. (Male, 36, material manager)

Among singles, their family situation was seen as positive:

In a sense I can say that as I don’t have a family, it has been good for working life. I have had an opportunity to do this work. (Female, 39, entrepreneur)

Unusually, although the literature discusses the problems of the partners’ loss of a job and profession, for many of these Finnish global careerists the partner’s profession was mentioned in a positive sense, because they had jobs that were easy to arrange abroad (e.g., nurse or waitress), or the international experiences improved the partner’s profession and career. In such cases, work/non-work experiences were positive:

As a nurse, it is quite easy to get a job [in any country] even though not always a permanent contract but temporary posts. (Male, 53, finance director)
Or, as another interviewee explained:

> My wife’s job, she has an agency and importing company in Finland, it works fine [from any location] as long as the communication facilities such as fax, e-mail, and mobile phone are working. (Male, 54, vice president)

The number and age of the children had a significant impact on experiences of work and non-work interactions. Younger children faced fewer challenges in moving than those starting school or teenagers. Thus, less effort was needed from the assignee and less reflection on such issues. For older children, positive attitudes towards moving and living in several countries played an important enriching role:

> For a long time, my children, especially my daughter, had asked if it would be possible if we can move abroad. She studied in the international school, and some of her friends from the school left to the States and someone to Africa and she just felt stuck in Finland. (Male, 53, finance director)

**INDIVIDUAL FACTORS IN THE WORK/FAMILY INTERFACE**

Several individual-level reasons were identified as impacting global careerists’ work and family dynamics. Gender, life and career stages, personal values, and international experience appeared particularly important.

**Negative Dynamics**

Gender, here taken as a separate factor even though other aspects could have been discussed from a more gendered perspective, seemed to be related to negative dynamics. Global careers put a lot of stress on the flexibility of the partners and their careers. Female “trailing spouses” (Lauring and Selmer 2010) had often left their own careers and stayed at home while supporting the global career of the assignee (Yeoh and Willis 2005). Such life situations are typically seen as more challenging for female assignees and their male partners than the other way round (Mäkelä, Suutari, and Mayerhofer 2011; Fishlmayr and Kollinger 2010). Our interviewees did not directly talk about gender, but some conclusions can be drawn from our data. Thirteen of our fifteen male interviewees had children; one of our five female interviewees had a child, and another (closer to her fifties than forties) had recently adopted a child as a lone parent. It seems that it may be more challenging for women to work as global careerists and have a family.

Age and career stage were also important issues affecting the dynamics between work and personal life, and again had both negative and positive implications. Respondents discussed the negative effect of early-career stages when typically they had put all their efforts into succeeding at work and building their careers.
I have probably a more transatlantical or somehow capitalistic morale for work. And it has been very much my own decision to work too hard. I’ve now realized that it is not worthwhile killing oneself with work. (Female, 39, entrepreneur)

Positive Dynamics
The positive aspects of global careers may be easier for men as well. Men generally saw themselves achieving a better balance between work and personal life, and, moreover, they saw themselves as being more able to be in charge of these issues:

The most important [goal for me] at the moment is to find a balance between work and personal life. Work has dominated my life in the recent years, and now I need to find a better balance. (Male, 31, controller)

Generally, the individual’s own values and personality appeared to have a positive role in global careerists’ experiences concerning work and personal life interactions, and many of our participants explained that working and living in an international atmosphere was very important for them. They are people who like to see new places and to live in new environments and who enjoy being in contact with people from other cultures. Earlier international work experience was found to impact these experiences, because both the managers and their families had become used to frequent relocations and because they had identified ways to achieve better work/non-work balance.

The Importance of Context
Human resource management, in general, and international HRM in particular, is increasingly conscious of the relevance of context (Brewster 1999; Paauwe and Boselie 2003). The fact that the experiences of these Finnish global careerists seem to be different from much of the reported literature is one indication of the relevance of the context in this case. In addition, contexts-related explanations—both conflictual and enriching—were often mentioned as factors in the work/non-work interface.

Negative Dynamics
In some countries, it is difficult to create social connections with locals, and that affected global careerists’ perceptions of work/personal life dynamics negatively. This was a particular problem if the global careerists did not have their families living with them abroad.

In New York, it really feels sometimes that there is nothing else but work.
(Female, 39, entrepreneur)

The working culture in certain countries created pressure and made it hard to integrate work and family lives:
I try to keep regular working hours—though here that means much longer days than weekly working hours in Finland. (Male, 53, finance director)

Moreover, the quality of the general living environment (e.g., schools, healthcare, and climate) in the host country context inevitably had an impact on the extent of challenges faced by these Finnish assignees and their families, and thus caused different levels of stressors for the work/life balance. In addition, the physical distance between the host country and the home country affected experiences of work and non-work interactions by impacting possibilities for visits home, meeting friends, and supporting elderly family at home. This created negative dynamics between work and private life, both for the global careerists themselves and for the family:

You saw your relatives once a year or less, you became quite distant. And those relatively short periods in host countries did not enable you to develop the same kind of friend or family relations as in Finland [. . .]. That was a bit scary. (Female, 46, EU officer)

Positive Dynamics
On the other hand, the nature of the host culture was also mentioned as a source of positive dynamics between different life spheres:

The life here in Asia is much more social than in Finland or in other parts in Europe. As I said, very often you think, “Is this work or free time?” All the time something is going on: you invite people to your home and people invite you to their homes. (Male, 48, area manager)

Many of the global careerists said that interaction with a diverse group of people both at work and outside of work strongly influenced their own attitudes and behavior and enriched their lives and those of their families:

You have to see the world and different people. In this way your own worldview widens, and you can understand diversity in a totally different way. That is the same with me and my whole family, axiomatically. (Male, 53, finance director)

In addition, some of the global careerists whom we interviewed also noted that working in certain environments enabled better opportunities for cultivating certain hobbies:

Well, [with] certain outdoor hobbies that you have, here, summer is longer, and therefore you can cultivate those differently. (Male, 64, marketing manager)
In a similar vein, another interviewee explained:

I have a very strong interest in downhill skiing and mountaineering, and I thought that it would be much easier to work in a country where I can cultivate my hobbies without a need for travelling abroad. (Female, 39, entrepreneur)

In addition, as the context from which all our participants originated, Finland had an effect on their experiences as well; coming from a country with equal opportunity for high quality education and a strong emphasis on equality between genders was often reflected in the interviews.

**Conclusion and Implications**

We believe that this study increases our understanding of the work/life balance issues faced by global careerists, and the factors contributing to such balance. In line with the literature (e.g., Forster 2000; Shaffer et al. 2001; Mäkelä and Suutari 2011), the results of the study indicate that work/life balance was considered a challenging issue for global careerists because of the frequent relocations and related adjustment challenges that they and their families face, and because of the nature of the jobs they had. The identified conflicts were mainly related to the allocation of time and the strain caused by demands of both life spheres. Mobile life was also related to the experience of conflicts. On the other hand, we also noted significant enrichment of the relationship between work and life domains in many cases. Instrumental enrichment occurred in both ways, from the work domain to the non-work domain, and vice versa. These Finnish global careerists talked about affective enrichment especially from the non-work domain perspective, highlighting, in many cases, how important it was that they had a family, interesting hobbies, or other non-work-related important activities. Enrichment was also seen to occur when they were talking about the development and skills of their children and the different opportunities they have had because of their global careers.

At the same time, there were contextual factors within these domains that reflected issues specific to this group of respondents. Work-related factors included the number of relocations, the types of international assignments, levels of autonomy, and levels of compensation. The organizational policies of the company and the organizational experience with international HRM were also significant, reflecting the importance of organizational support found in previous research (Kraimer, Wayne, and Jaworski 2001; Shaffer, Harrison, and Gilley 1999). Within the non-work domain, family-related factors dominated, and the role of the partner was the key one. Other family-related factors included the number and age of children and the age and health of the participants’ elderly parents.
Contextually, the host culture had a substantial relationship to work/non-work experiences: some cultures create conflicts and some enhance the work/non-work interface. The quality of the institutional context (e.g., housekeeping, daycare, schools, and healthcare) clearly impacted the challenges that these families faced and, thus, also impacted work/personal life interactions. Finally, the physical distance between the host country and the home country was significant, with elderly parents and friends in the home country taking a central position. Some factors noted in previous research, such as co-worker support, and supervisor support (see Eby et al. 2005), did not appear in our data—probably because of the global careerists’ senior positions and the distance to supervisors who are often located in another country. On the other hand, corporate policies that supported the family during relocations and the flexibility offered during the assignment appeared as very important. Overall, it became clear that, from a perspective of work and non-work interactions, the global career is not a choice made solely by these Finnish global careerists but is a family decision.

There are several limitations that need to be taken into account when interpreting our results, including our qualitative approach and the limited number of interviewees. Clearly, more large-scale research is needed to validate our findings. Secondly, all the global careerists were Finns, coming from a small but increasingly internationally oriented economy. Future research is needed with more international samples. Third, the data were collected from the global careerists, and partners and other family members were not interviewed. In future studies, it would be beneficial to include their comments in order to get more balanced views and to focus on the effects of gender (see Foulkes, this volume). However, the evidence is clear that global careerists had both negative and positive perceptions of the relationship between their work and personal life. They stressed the need for active efforts to stay in balance. In most cases, conflict between the two life spheres was more common from work to non-work than from non-work to work, even though both directions appeared to be important. Positive dynamics, or enrichment, was related to the different kinds of opportunities offered to the individual or the family by living and working abroad. Additionally, the family was often seen as a valuable counter-weight to work.
REFERENCES


Lauri Anderson has previously published eight books of fiction about the experiences of Finnish Americans. In his first work of published nonfiction, *From Moosehead to Misery Bay*, Lauri Anderson brings his talents for the poetics of the short story to a spectrum of autobiographical episodes from his own life. These episodes grow from his childhood in the unorganized territories of Maine, through his experiences working in the Peace Corps in Nigeria and at a mission school in Turkey, to his eventual return to the United States and settlement in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. As in many of his previous works, Anderson uses these episodic sketches to explore humor and humanism within dark and dire circumstances; yet Anderson’s attention has increasingly turned to exploring the implacable passing of time and the process of aging. The mistakes of the past have left scars on both Anderson’s mind and body—a car accident recently mangled Anderson’s legs, leaving him debilitated and stricken with pain-induced insomnia. Repeating the refrain “we need to be forgiven,” Anderson’s work reads like a waking dream in the insomnia-stricken night, outside of time, in the flashes of memory behind our closed eyelids in the instant between sleep and wake. These memories surface in the night, unearthing themselves like his mother’s coffin, which somehow is pushed upward in a birch-forest cemetery in rural Maine.

Anderson’s stories from his childhood in Maine dominate the first half of the book. A frequent reader of Anderson will find that many of his most striking moments in his earlier fiction are based upon his own life experiences, whether using a chainsaw to quarter a moose (*Hunting Hemingway’s Trout*), or the tragic episodes of the reclusive Uncle Lenni and the silent Sámi Grandmother Loviisa (from “Erkki from Ahti Lemminkäinen,” in *Children of the Kalevala*). Many of these stories involve his own Finnish-American family, which over four generations endured continued displacement and relocation from the places that they have called home. The sense of home that Anderson carries with him on his travels is intertwined with his admiration for his father, a Democrat with socialist leanings, who bore a deep and natural goodness. His father raised Anderson’s cousin Carl after his Aunt Aina’s mental breakdown, cared for Uncle Lenni who could not care for himself, and even supported families of troubled miners, whose children were suffering for their fathers’ vices of alcohol and irresponsibility.

Most of Anderson’s stories from Maine delve into the absurdist and dark humor that he brings to the desperate circumstances of the rural poor. Anderson’s collection of moose-poaching stories are both comic and tragic, where individuals
risk arrest—and even their lives—for the promise of 1,500 pounds of meat (one neighbor drowned after trying to transport a poached moose in a canoe). Anderson paints warm and humanistic character portraits of flawed but likable individuals who make their best out of life’s hardships. Memorable stories detailing his junior-high and high-school basketball circuit in the unorganized territories fondly recall the poor conditions of the schools, as he played on courts with irregular dimensions, with ceilings barely above the rim (requiring one to master a “flat shot”), and even upon outdoor courts during January blizzards (where the ball is too cold to bounce). Anderson carries an affection for the creative variation of these rural communities, perhaps less a sense of nostalgia than a dissatisfaction with the bland spoils of the mass and consumer culture that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Amongst the stories focused on local oral tradition and his own family folklore, Anderson develops his sense of wanderlust and love of great writers, like Melville, Thoreau, Hemingway, and Kerouac. Anderson too followed in their footsteps, and after earning his degree from the University of Maine, he joined the Peace Corps and traveled to Nigeria in the late 1960s, amidst genocide and a kindling civil war. The instability of the country was most apparent in his travels. The task of attending his own wedding on the other side of the country sprawls into a dangerous plot, involving a Lebanese lorry owner on a bender, a broken truck axle, and subsequent difficulties finding food and water, a night in a colonial-era mansion where he watched Gunsmoke on a massive television, and a priest who allows the marriage only because Anderson (who self-identified as pagan for the priest) was American and therefore adequately Christian by default. After facing cobras in the outhouse, priests who beat children for holding traditional beliefs (one boy, stricken by paralysis from juju, is beaten for letting the juju affect him), and barreling down a pothole-filled highway at night with no headlights to avoid bandits, Anderson’s time in Nigeria comes to an abrupt end as civil war erupts. Despite pleas of the local Ibo people that the Peace Corps presence ensured they would not be slaughtered, all of the volunteers drove away forever.

Anderson’s final section glosses over a brief return to the United States to teach and attend graduate school. Resettling in Turkey from 1972 to 1976, Anderson and his wife taught English and literature in a girls’ college, where he observed the curious pedagogical techniques of the Turkish history teacher (demanding rote memorization of hundreds of pages of text), was berated by a number of ideologues, and wound up swimming in the sea next to Turkish troops as they invaded Cyprus. Eventually, Anderson returned to the U.S., finding permanent employment at Suomi College (now Finlandia University), where he documents his peculiar encounters with more unusual characters: a Holocaust-denying teacher of Western Civilization, a business teacher who drove a rickshaw after class for extra income, or students who robbed a bank, only to leave fresh snowmobile tracks leading to their dorm.
Facing new struggles—for instance, challenging an ill-conceived plan by administrators to survive a nuclear winter in Jeffers High School by eating hard candies stored in cardboard boxes in the hallways—Anderson brings the resolve of his father to these challenges, making good and finding levity in the darkest of situations.

Like his previous works, Anderson commands his powerful style, blending warm, minimalistic and Hemingway-esque portraits of humans with the biting and sardonic wit of Vonnegut in his critiques of humanity. His work explores the most important and fundamental aspects of human experience in Modernist literature (suffering, desire, compassion, reason, and madness), building upon the symbols and patterns of expressive culture found within northern peripheral communities. On first glance, this work seems a loose collection of short stories, centered mostly around an assemblage of varied but formative autobiographical experiences. In reality, the structure is much more complex, using thematic continuities to craft a vision of a global world caught in uncertainty, inexplicable tragedy, and moral ambiguity. In this landscape, political ideologues and religious zealots preach their dogmas of certainty as purported antidotes to the crises of the world, but they themselves are complicit in atrocities of their own design. With their desires for power masked as pleas for morality, the absurdity and hypocrisy of their own self-proclaimed moral superiority propels the work’s black humor, whether Anderson and his cohort are in conflict with game wardens, missionaries, Holocaust deniers, or hard-line Communists.

Yet it is the confrontation with mortality, aging, and deterioration that defines *From Moosehead to Misery Bay*. Anderson’s damaged legs now permanently prevent him from the delights of flying down a hill on skis, wandering through the backcountry to find a secret trout hole in a stream, or from ever returning to Nigeria to discover what happened to the village he abandoned. Forgiveness proves elusive, in particular the forgiveness of oneself amidst these hard choices in a dangerous world of moral complexity amongst legions of foolish but powerful men. The limitations of his own body further evoke Anderson’s inability to “go home again” and repair the broken past.

Ironically, Anderson suggests the struggle for goodness is no vain quest in this world of the dark and absurd. He willingly acts on his own convictions—sometimes dramatically—in the face of zealots, explaining to Nigerian priests and Pakistani Muslims that their religious books are not as good as *Moby Dick*. To much effect, these efforts are appeals for Kantian critical thinking, respectful discourse, and understanding amongst the world’s varied inhabitants. A better world is worth struggling for, and this is the white whale his harpoon has tethered him to, the impossible work tasked to humanity in the certainty of ultimate defeat.

Yet in the face of certain doom, the warmth of the kitchen oven and sauna *kivas* penetrate through our calloused skins in Anderson’s stories. Anderson closes
his book with a poem about pain and death, another poem about the joys of pie, and a brief reflection on the smells of cardamom and saffron in baked bread and the sauna with hot steam that smells of trees, earth, and rain: “The kitchen, the sauna—these are my work and my spirit.” With these generative forces, life somehow perseveres in the face of this deterioration, and Anderson learns to “sit and listen to the pain” as his forebears did before him when he was but a young child in Maine. It is now the nameless teenage driver who mangled Anderson’s legs who will face a lifetime seeking forgiveness for his own transgressions. One can only hope that the smells of pulla and birchleaf vihta will eventually waft to us all, and that we can have a coffee together before our time is at its end.

Tim Frandy
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The recently published book, Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations, edited by Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki, provides some sorely needed balance to earlier explorations of Finnish wartime experiences. Since the end of the Second World War, historians have waged a literary battle over the nature of Finland’s involvement with Nazi Germany. On one side of the debate are works such as John H. Wuorinen’s Finland and World War II: 1939–1944, Arvi Korhonen’s Planning Barbarossa and Finland: The Origins of the Continuation War, and Olli Vehviläinen’s Finland in the Second World War: Between Germany and Russia (Wuorinen 1948, Korhonen 1961, Vehviläinen 2002). These authors argued that Finland was a victim of Soviet aggression and had little choice in participating in the 1941 Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, that Finland fought as “co-belligerent” with Germany and not as an Axis satellite nation, and that Finland did not participate in the Holocaust. As a group, the arguments have formed the basis for conventional thinking about the war and have received widespread support among Finnish historians. Maintaining the conservative historiography of Finnish wartime activities has been increasingly difficult as scholars delve deeper into the archives and broaden the scope of inquiry beyond merely diplomatic or military histories of the Winter War, the Continuation War, and the Lapland War.

In 1957, the publication of C. Leonard Lundin’s Finland in the Second World War marked the beginning of an opposition movement to official interpretations of the war (Lundin 1957). He pointed out that the Finnish government and military collaborated with Nazi Germany during the planning and implementation of the invasion of the Soviet Union. Another chapter in the debate emerged in 1979 with the
release of Elina Suominen’s *Death Ship S/S Hohenhörn: The Fate of Jewish Refugees in Finland*, which argued that the Finnish government deported eight Jewish refugees to Nazi death camps in Eastern Europe (Suominen 1979). The rancor caused by Lundin and Suominen’s allegations led to repudiations in the works by Korhonen and Vehviläinen. Finnish politicians also participated in public denunciations of similar books. For example, in 2006, Henrik Arnstad’s *The Player Christian Günther: Sweden in the Second World War* restated many of Lundin’s earlier interpretations of Finnish wartime activities (Arnstad 2006). Secretary of State Pertti Torstila of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave a scathing review of the work in a public speech where he called it, “a sad example of lack of historical perspective” (*Helsingin Sanomat* International Edition, December 4, 2006). Having Finnish ministerial level officials commenting on Swedish historical research, while rare, provides some insight into the level of opposition generated by any criticism of Finnish actions in the Second World War.

Kinnunen and Kivimäki’s *Finland in World War II* is a literary reconciliation of the two diametrically opposed interpretations of Finnish history. The book provides analysis that celebrates the patriotism of Finnish soldiers, while also addressing fascist-minded sections and territorial expansionists who also shaped political and military decisions. The editors break the book into the following four themes: Politics and Military; Social Frameworks, Cultural Meanings; Ideologies in Practice; and Wars of Memory. In the first section, Henrik Meinander sets the stage for the rest of the book by providing a very traditional narration of Finnish history and politics from independence in 1917 to 1955 and the onset of the Cold War. Each of the following authors then offers either new research on traditionally divisive topics or explorations of heretofore-neglected subjects. Michael Jonas takes a bold, counter-traditionalist stance by stating that after the conclusion of the Winter War, Finland planned a war of aggression against the Soviet Union through a military alliance with Nazi Germany (Jonas 2011, 112). He argues that even German officials were skeptical about Finnish statements of fighting a separate war. As the German military strength in the Soviet Union deteriorated, President Risto Ryti and Marshall C. G. Mannerheim grew disenchanted with the alliance as the war turned against the Germans, and eventually exited the conflict, thereby ending all collaboration with Nazi forces. Pasi Tuunainen’s article, while largely a celebration of Finnish military prowess, also discusses the social and religious motivation of soldiers.

In “Social Frameworks, Cultural Meanings,” Marianne Junila expands the idea of heroism to include the women’s organization *Lotta Svärd*, in addition to the wives and mothers who toiled relentlessly to support the war effort while also nurturing their families. Sonja Hagelstam continues with the home-front theme with an examination of soldiers’ letters sent home from the front to their families. She deconstructs the letters to illustrate the mutual support provided to both parties as they struggled to
cope with the difficulties encountered at home and the battlefield. Ville Kivimäki and Tuomas Tepora’s offering explores the vacillations of support for Finnish political and military decisions taken during the Second World War. They point out that nearly the entire population supported the defensive efforts of the Winter War. However, during the Continuation War, as the Finnish Army crossed into Soviet territory, support fractured as some soldiers embraced the idea of “Greater Finland,” while others refused to fight or just deserted from the army. The pendulum swung back to widespread support in the summer of 1944 during the final Soviet offensive that knocked Finland out of the war.

The section titled “Ideologies in Practice” presents some of the most controversial issues faced by modern Finnish historians. Oula Silvennoinen’s essay, “Limits of Intentionality: Soviet Prisoners-of-War and Civilian Internees in Finnish Custody,” provides English-language readers with some of the critical research that forced many Finns to reexamine deeply seated beliefs about the nation’s wartime conduct. His work uncovered the existence of Einsatzkommando Finnland, a joint formation comprised of Finnish and Nazi forces, which killed or arrested many Soviet civilians and soldiers in German-controlled Lapland. He also addresses the issues of Jewish prisoner exchanges, along with the large number of Soviet prisoners who starved to death in Finnish concentration camps. Tenho Pimiä explores the ideological underpinnings of the “Greater Finland” movement, which created a nationalistic argument for seizing Soviet territory during the Continuation War. Pimiä emphasizes the role Finnish academics played in the creation of the expansionistic policy, along with the historical studies conducted during the occupation of Eastern Karelia to justify Finnish foreign policy. Helene Laurent’s chapter deals with the implementation of governmental social policies to forestall the twin problems of widespread starvation and medical epidemics in the country.

In the final section, “Wars of Memory,” Tiina Kinnunen and Markku Jokisipilä compiled a detailed narrative of how interpretations of the war, both social and historical, have changed over the past few generations. The section first addresses the inception of the nationalistic version of events, and then chronicles the protracted debates with those individuals who maintained that Finland played a much more sinister role in the war. Outi Fingerroos continues with the theme of extended debates in an essay on the attempted seizure of Soviet East Karelia in order to create “Greater Finland,” along with the eventual loss of most of Finnish West Karelia as a condition for peace. The work follows postwar Finnish relations with the Soviet Union and the continued desire to reclaim the lost 1939 border between the two countries. Antero Holmila concludes the book with a discussion of the protracted silence in Finland over its participation in the Holocaust. While academics acknowledged that Chief of the National Police Arno Anthony was convicted of sending eight Jewish refugees
to Nazi concentration camps, the Finnish general public has largely rejected any acknowledgement of participation in the Holocaust.

By illustrating both the positive and negative aspects of Finnish actions during the Second World War, the contributing authors have moved Finnish historiography into alignment with other Western nations. In all, the book provides a great deal of new information that will be of interest to academics and the general public. The chapters are well written and the information presented clearly, including the footnotes and bibliography. Now, English-reading populations will have access to a broad spectrum of information that will allow them to form their own opinion concerning Finland’s actions during the Second World War.

Paul Lubotina
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REFERENCES


In May of 2013, America stood back in horrific wonder as a strange story began to emerge from Cleveland, Ohio. Three young women escaped from an old house, having been kidnapped and held as prisoners for over ten years. Allegations of torture, sexual abuse, and degradation began to fill the files of the prosecuting attorney. Eventually, a conviction was obtained and the kidnapper, one Ariel Castro, was sentenced to life in prison plus one thousand years.

We’d heard this story before, the main variation being only the names. Jaycee Lee Dugard comes to mind, as does Elizabeth Smart. Whether snatched from the street or a bedroom or perhaps innocently accepting a ride from a stranger, or, as in Anja Snellman’s novel, *Pet Shop Girls*, engaging in some risky behavior, the scenario is always the same: an alert is issued, a search begins, a parent makes a tearful plea. Not often enough does a living victim emerge, but it does happen, sometimes, as in the Cleveland case, after many years.

The young woman as murder victim we can understand. The psychopath has done his work. It is always grisly, it is always very sad, and we wonder what drives someone to do such a thing.

The young woman as prisoner, however—sometimes for many years—is a much different story. We wonder how such captivity can be maintained for so long. Was escape truly not possible? Can threats and fear and abuse truly paralyze us for years and years?

Or, this is the discussion we don’t like to engage, might the victim have become complicit in her own captivity? Did she simply play the card that read, *This is survival. Don’t even think of anything else*?

Consider Jasmin Victoria Martin, Snellman’s main character. She is a teenager. She is lively and vibrant and occasionally goofy and wants nothing more than to be with her friends and to have enough money to finance all the necessities in a teen’s life. As teens will do, she takes just a brief walk on the wild side. That walk changes her life forever.

Consider the Baptist (as Jasmin calls him), one Bruno Max Huber. He is a noted scholar, a world traveler, an art historian, a lecturer on religion and sexual ethics, an inspiring teacher, a connoisseur of fine wine, and a noted benefactor for various causes devoted to fighting human trafficking.

Consider the two of them together, which you ultimately have to do since Bruno Max Huber—whose scientific and artistic works have been translated into
several languages, and who has received numerous honorary degrees—kidnaps Jasmin. Or so we think.

Thus do we get into the *Pet Shop Girls*, a gripping exploration of predation, power, and prostitution. It all starts out innocently enough when Jasmin and her best friend Linda get jobs in a pet shop. Innocence, of course, is easily discarded, especially when the girls find out that in the rear of the pet shop is the *Wet Pet Shop*, accessible by invitation only. Within is a world of young girls and old men bound together by pleasure and fantasy. Brothel, bordello, gentleman’s club, the name is nowhere near as important as the venue—a place where the most basic, and often the most base, desires can be fulfilled, can be bought.

It is not off topic to say that Snellman gives us a fascinating compendium of the manners, mores, and mindset of the contemporary teenage girl. We learn where they stand online and offline, their devices, what they wear, what they read, their music, what they think about when thinking can’t be avoided, and, of course, their musings on all things sexual. This is not off topic because when the girls are offered jobs in the *Wet Pet Shop*, they are just teenage girls—not drug addicts, not street hookers, not call girls. In the *Wet Pet Shop*, they strip, they tease, they dance around poles and they dance on laps, they are photographed and videotaped for the Internet, they have sex, and they make money.

A lark, perhaps, it is not, but Jasmin and Linda don’t take it all too seriously because they’re at an age where they don’t take anything too seriously.

Before long, Jasmin finds herself in the throes of Bruno Max Huber—the Baptist—a man of evangelical bent, obsessed with her, who wants to cleanse Jasmin of her sins by way of possessing her and having her do things even the sex manuals have yet to cover. He kidnaps her.

There is mystery in the telling of Jasmin’s story. We’re never clear on just how she was kidnapped, and there’s always a sneaky suspicion that she’s a runaway, since a news report did mention a young girl of her age being seen with an older man on the night it probably happened—no signs of force or struggle. Nor do we know exactly where this all takes place, suggesting that the story is not about a particular crime, but much more about victimization and about the limits of depravity. In Snellman’s extensive epilogue, we receive a virtual history of prostitution with the reader left to wonder if that’s truly what Jasmin was all about. Her point is that men need the prostitute and they always have. Woman as possessed, then, as bought, as sold, as owned, as toy, has been with us since the dawn of history. Nothing new there, but it’s never clear just who holds the power in the relationship.

This is a stunning, if complex, page-turner, a very human story where we see more than just the predatory depravity of the brilliant Bruno Max Huber; where we learn the back story of the young men who function as security guards in the *Wet Pet Shop*, folks usually seen in this kind of story as just nameless, faceless thugs. Most
poignantly, we hear a great deal from Jasmin’s mother, Sara, a divorcee and gynecologist. What’s really going on behind those teary faces—usually mothers—we see so briefly on the news clips as they plead for the life of a daughter? It’s wrenching, if not heartbreaking, to see Sara periodically enter her daughter’s room fully confident Jasmin will be there, in good mood or foul, getting ready for school.

Above all, we encounter Jasmin’s own ambiguity with respect to her curious fate. She wanders through legends, fairy tales, and stories from her childhood in a desperate attempt to keep from going mad. She plots escapes, submits to the demands of Huber, even cares for him when he is ill, and then plots more escapes.

Michelle Knight, one of the Cleveland women mentioned above, says that her captor worked very hard to persuade her that her family just didn’t care and that they had long ago given up any hope of finding her. For Jasmin—kidnap victim or runaway—something of the opposite is true. She is no longer sure that there is anything in that “old” life worth caring about.

Never once, we learn, in those moments when a lock might have failed, a rope might have come undone, or the vigilance of Huber might have lapsed, did Jasmin even attempt to call her mother.

However, to paraphrase another victim, Elizabeth Smart, don’t ever question what I did or didn’t do, or why, unless you’ve been there.

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a novel by anja snellman 
translated by scott kaukonen & helena halmari

Twelve years ago, on a December night, Jasmin Martin disappeared. Despite the best efforts of the police, her trail quickly went cold. As time passed, her mother wrote a memoir, created a blog and formed support groups, appeared on the TV talk-show circuit, and struggled to continue her private medical practice. Jasmin Martin became just another statistic, another missing teenager. How could the child of a comfortable, middle-class family be swept into a world mothers and fathers fear deepest in their hearts, a global network of pornographers and drug smugglers, pedophiles and pimps? Where is she now and with whom? And how does a mother keep looking—where, and for how long?

Written by ANJA SNELLMAN, one of Finland’s leading contemporary authors, and translated by SCOTT KAUKONEN and HELENA HALMARI, Pet Shop Girls tells Jasmin’s story from a range of perspectives in this stunning and well-crafted novel. Halmari is the chair of the Department of English at Sam Houston State University, where Kaukonen directs the MFA Program in Creative Writing.

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