Chapter 13
Everyday Life in Schools in Disadvantaged Areas

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Abstract In Finland, urban segregation has been identified as a new and increasing challenge for pursuing the ideal of the egalitarian comprehensive school. Yet very little is known of particular school contexts, and public concern over school segregation runs a risk of reproducing segregation by focusing in a stigmatising manner on schools in less advantaged areas. In this chapter, we draw on interview data from five comprehensive schools in the metropolitan area of Helsinki to examine how students of schools located in areas that may be considered disadvantaged talk about their everyday life in the school and residential area. We build on the idea that young people represent their lives as ordinary rather than adopting 'in-risk' positions, and examine ways in which the schools and residential areas are discussed. We argue that despite their awareness of local problems and racialised and social class-based inequalities, young people are attached to their schools and residential areas, and tend to describe the problems encountered as manageable. While there are statistical similarities between disadvantaged residential areas, the particular local contexts and their effects for young people's everyday lives vary from one area to another and according to the young people's social class and racialised background. This highlights the need to understand the particularities and connections between schools and residential areas in discussions of segregation and in attempts to address it.

Over the last couple of decades, urban segregation has been identified as a new and increasing challenge to pursuing the egalitarian ideal in Finnish schooling. Urban segregation has consequences for schools by shaping the socioeconomic and ethnic composition of their student bodies which, in turn, influences everyday life in schools

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and produces cumulative challenges for some schools.[1] Urban segregation is also related to schools' reputations and parental school choice strategies. School choice is one of the mechanisms maintaining and exacerbating the phenomena of school segregation.[2]

Despite public concerns about the issue, there is relatively little research on everyday life in schools in less advantaged areas in the Finnish context. In international studies, schools in disadvantaged areas have been found to face challenges related to material poverty, pupils' varying skills and competencies, and parents' resources to engage with their children's schoolwork. These may also relate to inadequate resourcing and higher teacher turnover rates.[3] Public and media discussions over school segregation run a risk of reproducing and strengthening the phenomenon. They often focus on schools in disadvantaged areas in a homogenising manner and assume that they share similar challenges related to socioeconomic disadvantage and ethnic diversity. However, despite some common features, there are always local variations and specificities related to geography, demography and school practices in how disadvantage manifests in schools.[4] Furthermore, the experiences of children and young people in schools and areas considered disadvantaged are often more nuanced than the "disadvantage" label suggests.[5]

Overall, there is a need to recognise greater complexity when thinking about disadvantaged schools. This perspective is examined here through pupil interviews drawn from ethnographic studies in five comprehensive schools in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, all located in areas that can be considered disadvantaged. We argue that young people's experiences are more varied than the public problem-oriented discourses about such areas suggest.

Reproduction of Inequality in Education, Place Attachment and Ordinariness

Research literature shows that egalitarian ideals of schooling in Finland have always been only partially achieved, and education continues to reproduce inequalities related to social class, racialisation and gender. Internationally, the research tradition drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu has been influential in showing that the education system tends to normalise and favour middle-class life styles and pupils attached to them, and correspondingly, that it is easier for families with middle-class resources to navigate the education system and capitalise their resources in order to reproduce their privilege in the younger generation.[6] There is a myth of Finland as a "classless" society,[7] which may explain why the effects of social class and poverty remain largely unrecognised in Finnish schools.[8] However, the same mechanisms of reproduction found in other countries have been found working in the Finnish context too.[9] There is also a tendency to understand white majority status and middle classness as interconnected and normalise them in educational institutions.[10]

With urban segregation, the issues of reproduction of inequality appear differently in schools located in different residential areas. In schools located at areas with low socio-economic status—such as those studied in this chapter—an increasing share of pupils do not embody the capitals and characteristics attached to white middle-classness. However, public and political discussions rarely take into account the specificities of local contexts or the agency and place attachments of local residents, children and young people in particular. Previous studies have shown that there are differences between schools that are recognised as "advantaged" or "disadvantaged", but there are also significant differences between "disadvantaged" schools.[11] Thus, the disadvantage label or the statistical characteristics are not adequate in recognising the qualitative differences between schools' everyday challenges and strengths. School contexts should therefore be understood as rather specific, consisting of the combination of national and local policies, location, history and practices within the school and characteristics of the pupil body.[12]

Another problem with the disadvantage label is that it does not grasp the heterogeneity of lived experiences in the residential areas considered disadvantaged. According to Fenne Pinkster, the notion of "neighbourhood attachment acknowledges that residents' lives over time become intertwined with or embedded in their residential surroundings".[13] The concept refers to residents' social, economic and institutional ties to the residential area that may take emotional or more practical forms. Disadvantaged urban residential areas are usually associated with low attachment and social problems, and the media often give a homogeneous picture of them. However, studies on young people living in disadvantaged residential areas have found that although young people are aware of the negative aspects of an area, they often think positively about it, and the area also provides them with resources, such as social relationships, activities and attachments to institutions such as schools.[14] At the same time, residents living in such areas also have to use different strategies to avoid unwanted phenomena in the area[15]; something Kirsten Visser and colleagues call the "environmental competence" of the young participants in their study.[16]

Given the contradiction between "in-risk" discourses on residential areas and schools seen as disadvantaged and the more nuanced experiences of the residents and young people in these areas and schools, we are attracted to John Smyth and Peter McInerney's claim—drawing from Thomas Popkewitz—that "notions of space and place as they relate to young people are never innocent".[17] By this is meant that defining an area or a school as "disadvantaged" functions as attaching disadvantaging attributes to the children and young people in this area or school, in ways that demarcate their agency and participation. Smyth and McInerney show that young people themselves, rather than adopting "in-risk" positions, represent themselves as *ordinary* young people who struggle to make the best of the possibilities available for them, in the circumstances they are in and navigating the cultural scripts known to them.[18] This led us to examine our pupil interviews from the viewpoint of ordinariness and how both positive and negative aspects attached to the residential area and the school were present in their narratives of their everyday lives.

Ethnographic Interviews in Five Schools in Metropolitan Helsinki

The interview data reported here is part of wider ethnographic studies of five comprehensive schools located in different residential areas in Helsinki metropolitan area, drawn from two recent projects, *Well-Functioning Local Schools* and *Local Educational Ethos*.[19] These projects have both examined the interrelationship between schools and their social and societal context.

The choice of areas and schools were guided by our overarching interest in how schools seek to answer the challenges posed by urban segregation. The schools were all located in residential areas whose residents' socioeconomic backgrounds remain statistically below the mean of the city. The residential areas share similar socioeconomic characteristics, in three different cities in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The schools also achieve higher learning results than what could be statistically predicted based on their socioeconomic contexts. They share the national context and some demographic characteristics of catchment areas, however, their local contexts and school cultures (history and practices) differ, and so do local politics and policies, given that the cities act as municipal providers of education. Since they are located in different cities in the metropolitan area, the socioeconomic mean that they are compared to is different in each city.

The "disadvantaged" position of these residential areas and schools must be understood as relative: in the Finnish context, disadvantage is concentrated in small (but potentially growing) clusters *inside* residential areas, which therefore remain socioeconomically heterogeneous.[20] What is common to the residential areas in this study is that they comprise smaller areas with distinctive characteristics in terms of residents' social class and ethnic and racialised backgrounds, and include middle class areas. We interviewed a total of 117 students in Grades 6–9 (aged 11–15 years) as summarised in Table 13.1.

For each school we went through the interview narratives and separated the parts where the discussion contents related to the school (what kind of school is this?) and

Table 13.1 Interviews across the five schools

			Interviewees		
School (pseudonym)	Number of school class groups studied	Grades studied	Girls	Boys	Total
Eider primary	1	5–6	8	3	11
Whistler primary	1	5–6	10	4	14
Whistler lower secondary	3	7–8	25	21	46
Penelope lower secondary	2	7[21]	17	7	24
Gavia lower secondary	2	7–8	17	5	22

the area (what kind of area is this?), and the interrelationship of the school and the area (what is it like going to school in this particular area?). We then brought these sections together to analyse commonalities and differences between the different schools and residential areas. We identified two broad themes. Firstly, the participants had positive local identities and they represented their lives both at school and in the residential area as "ordinary" and good. Secondly, they described events and phenomena in the residential area and in the school that they considered problematic or inequitable, and how they managed these issues. Local differences are significant in shaping the experiences.

Our study did collect information related to the ethnicity of the specific students interviewed, including migrant backgrounds and racialised minorities, but they are often difficult to characterise briefly (see also the chapters by Mikander and by Helakorpi, Holm and Liu in this book). In this chapter we mention ethnic backgrounds in a general way and only in the section that discusses students' experiences of racism.

Ordinary Schools in Ordinary Neighbourhoods

> Leona: When you get used to [a place], then you like that place and know all the spots. I don't know, I couldn't imagine, if I went to live somewhere else, how I'd get used to that. And if we speak about school, if I changed schools, I wouldn't even like, because here I really have my loveliest friends whom I couldn't leave. (*Penelope Lower Secondary School, girl, 13 years*)

> Interviewer: Could you imagine living [in Whistler] for your whole life (…)?

> Sakari: I can't think of another [possible] place in Finland. (*Whistler Primary School, boy, 12 years*)

Kirsten Visser and colleagues found that although young people were aware of the negative aspects of disadvantaged areas, most of them thought positively about it.[22] As illustrated in the extracts from interviews with Leona and Sakari, we found a shared theme that could be named as "an ethos of ordinariness". By this, we refer to the ways those interviewed identified positively with their residential area and school through describing their everyday local lives as "ordinary" and good. Like Sakari above, many of them thought it was a place they belonged to and did not consider they would want to live elsewhere.[23] The residential areas were described as "nice", "quite ordinary" and "tranquil", and social networks (friends and relatives), proximity of services, leisure activities and nature sites were referred to as things which the children and young people appreciated in the area. As is illustrated in the extract from Leona's interview above, the positive attachments to the school and the area often had a temporal element in them—the attachment derived from long histories and social and other resources accumulated locally over time, which would be lost if one moved to another area.[24] This was not, however, an equally shared narrative in all schools or by all children and young people. While in all datasets the interviewees participated in constructing the residential area as ordinary and "good",

the positive descriptions were the most pronounced in Whistler (in both schools) while the narratives were more mixed in Eider, Gavia and Penelope.

School was a central social hub for all participants, and generally, the schools were described in positive ways. The positive attachments with the schools were even stronger than the neighbourhood attachments; even those pupils in Gavia, Eider and Penelope, who described the residential area in more problem-oriented ways, talked about the local schools in positive ways. They constructed the school as "nice" and "good",[25] and emphasised the importance of friends, good teachers—by which they meant that the teachers had the pedagogical skills needed, were empathic and strict enough—and a friendly and inclusive atmosphere. Practical issues related to the school building, the yard and school meals were also relevant for the participants.

The emphasis on ordinariness in narratives on attachment to both school and the residential area may be understood as resonating with the Bourdieusian idea of habituality and the tendency to take the social world as granted.[26] However, the narratives of an ordinary and "good" school and residential area may also be understood as a way to cope with some of the negative assumptions publicly attached to disadvantaged areas and their schools, and to "develop counter-spaces of representation".[27] Yet another angle to narratives of "good" school is that of distinction: while the participants acknowledged that there were "better" schools locating in more reputable areas of the city, in comparisons between the local schools in similar ways in Whistler, Penelope and Gavia, they constructed their own school as better than the other local schools. These narratives mostly drew from rumours, and it was assumed that the other schools had nastier teachers, a less favourable atmosphere or more "problems", which often referred to pupils' misbehaviour such as substance use and violent behaviour, and general unrest.

> Mikael: If I had gone [to another school] I would have gone to the same class with my friends. (…) And I would've remained as far as possible from all the other guys, because those others are always fighting about who is who and who gets to be this and that and. (…) Those two friends of mine [who go to the other school] they try to speak to them and they say that it's hard for them to adjust to the group although they have been there already almost a year. (*Whistler Lower Secondary School, boy, 13 years*)

According to Keith Kintrea and colleagues,[28] living in disadvantaged settings is often associated with low educational aspirations by both policy makers and researchers; an assumption they prove wrong in their study, in which young people in three disadvantaged localities show locally patterned but generally high educational aspirations. Throughout our interviews, too, the participants generally valued the school and considered it important for their futures.

At the same time, differentiations related to school and school success manifested differently across the schools.[29] The primary school pupils in Eider and Whistler were about to enter lower secondary schools, and the discussions on educational aspirations largely revolved around this upcoming change and the school choice attached. While these younger pupils were generally not worried about the reputation of their own, current school, some of the pupils, particularly in Eider, worried about ending up in the local lower secondary school, which was considered to have a bad reputation, even potentially harming its pupils' future employment possibilities.

In the lower secondary schools of Penelope, Whistler and Gavia, educational aspirations were discussed as related to both current school work and future education plans. In Penelope, nearly all interviewees had a positive attitude towards studying and were interested in marks they received. With a few exceptions, in Penelope, pupils with minoritised ethnic backgrounds appeared more school-oriented than their ethnic Finnish peers, and often had concrete and ambitious educational plans. In Whistler Lower Secondary and Gavia, there were more marked differences between pupils who considered themselves and were considered by others as academically oriented and aspirational, and those who were not, and school success formed one element in the complex school hierarchies. In Whistler, this difference also intertwined with the differentiation between selective and non-selective classes, with selective classes described as more academically oriented, while non-selective classes were considered (and considered themselves) as "wilder" and less attached to school regulations.[30] However, such constructions were simplistic and ignored the inner heterogeneity of those groups constructed as "caring less" about the school. In Whistler and Gavia, there were also pupils who considered school as "boring" or "hard". It was, however, not that they saw school insignificant as such, but that they had to struggle with challenges in learning or difficult life situations which did not support their school-going, or both. In many ways, the latter resembled the pupils Smyth and McInerney described as struggling "to make the best of the possibilities available for them, in the circumstances they are in".[31]

Local Challenges Recognised: Social Problems, Racism and Socioeconomic Differences

Despite positive descriptions of both the schools and their residential areas, local everyday life included elements the pupils considered unpleasant or unfair. In this section, we discuss these narratives through three themes: social problems in the residential area, encounters with racism, and poverty and socioeconomic differences amongst pupils. These were relevant for all the pupils in the residential areas; however, they influenced them in different ways and were amongst the mechanisms that produced cumulating inequalities in the young people's lives.

In public space, pupils in all schools encountered phenomena and people considered disturbing or even scary. Encountering intoxicated adults was mentioned in all the schools.[32] Each of the following were mentioned in at least two schools: experiences of threats or harassment, encountering groups of young people who behaved in disturbing ways, and rumours and facts concerning local crimes, such as illegal drug trade. These descriptions intertwined with the otherwise favourable descriptions of the residential area; they were considered as characteristic to the area, but often spatially concentrated and therefore relatively predictable and manageable.

Many of our study participants were highly aware of which places to avoid at particular times of day, and reported choosing their walking routes accordingly, especially after dark. This shows their "environmental competence"[33]:

> Mona: Every once in a while, next to the [local Mall], if I come home very late from the training, I rather take a bus or walk [a different route], because there may be those people who have drunk more, so it's like, a bit of fear [laughs] to walk pass them. (*Mona, 13 years, Whistler Lower Secondary School*)

Discursive strategies to render the negative local experiences as manageable included describing them as "not serious"; and they were used together with other strategies, such as avoiding certain routes or places. This is illustrated in the extract from an interview with three girls (below), who are balancing defending their residential area against the stigmatising assumptions and acknowledging some of the problematic characteristics of the area. While identifying certain spots they consider "rough" and wish to avoid, they still claim the area is safe. This illustrates the intertwinement of constructions of the area as ordinary and the narratives about encounters with social problems—it is, for instance, familiarity that makes the intoxicated adults appear not as threatening:

> Silja: These public transport stations are like that [rough]. (…).
>
> Interviewer: What makes them rough?
>
> Linnea: Well, because there are those (…) drunkards and some dealers. Yesterday I saw that someone sold drugs. (…) But it is still, even if ... I told [a friend living another area] that we have drunkards here and like that. So, she was like "oh terrible" and wondered how I dare live here or how I dare walk here in the evenings. But it's not somehow, they are not the kind of drunkards who would somehow attack us. They are there and they are sitting somewhere on the bench, like passed out, but they are not doing any harm to you. (…).
>
> Silja: But I don't even often go to that public transport station area. (…).
>
> Linnea: It's pretty safe here. It feels weird to say safe when you know what you can find here, but it's still safe. (*Gavia Lower Secondary School, three girls aged 14)*

To some extent, age shaped the pupils' relationships with local public spaces. As the lower secondary school pupils were allowed to move more independently in and between the areas, and at later hours, they were more often exposed to encounters with social problems than the primary school pupils. However, between the primary school pupils in Whistler and Eider, there were marked differences, since unlike in Whistler, in Eider, the school, services and transportation were located very close to the 'hot-spots' where the social problems concentrated, and thus the Eider primary school pupils also frequently encountered people and situations which they would have preferred to avoid:

> Elisa: [We were at a public transport station] and a man came there and started to act like a madman.
>
> Jessika: It was disgusting, extremely distressful and gross.
>
> Elisa: I was really afraid of him…

Jessika: I took my cell phone out, because it was very scary (…). (*Eider primary school, two girls, aged 12*)

Residential areas considered disadvantaged, and schools located in them, generally are represented in the media in homogenising and problem-oriented ways,[34] however, there is temporal variety in how often certain areas are named and discussed in the media. We found media representations having pronounced influence for the place attachments in one of the residential areas, which had at the time of the interviews been a focus of a series of media reports on local crimes. This negative attention was referred to by the pupils, who said that the area felt more unsafe than before. Both rumours and media representations of the residential area's problems caused clear discomfort to some of them.

The second major theme in narratives of negative local experiences was racism. Racism has been found to be a part of children's and young people's everyday life in Finland, as elsewhere.[35] Reproduction of racialising assumptions and racism in school context is not a phenomenon characterising only or especially schools in disadvantaged residential areas. However, it is one of the elements producing potentially cumulating inequalities in the school. School is also not detached from the experiences of racism outside of the school. Indeed, racist behaviour that takes place in public spaces may even be intertwined with the school day. This was exemplified in Salman's and Daniel's narrative (both had minoritised backgrounds):

Interviewer: Have you encountered [racism]?

Salman: We have, I have. Not in the school, but when we went to a (school) trip. A man just came, and pushed me. (…) I was with these guys. [refers to Daniel]

Daniel: Oh right. I remember. (…)

Salman: When we were [at public transport stop], talking with these guys, he just came and pushed me.

Interviewer: That's outrageous. I mean, did he say, or, did the teacher do something?

Salman: No, he, the teacher didn't do anything.

Interviewer. Does that sort of things happen, is it like often or seldom or how?

Salman: A lot. (*Whistler Lower Secondary School, two boys aged 13 and 15*)

In Eider, some pupils experienced racist bullying, which seemed to be part of their everyday life.[36] The narratives reveal—following earlier studies—that in many cases, the school and teachers do not see or recognise racism. Lack of intervention normalises racist behaviour and discourages those who face it from disclosing their experiences. Furthermore, teachers sometimes maintained racialising assumptions or even acted in racist ways. In both Whistler Lower Secondary and Penelope, several pupils with both majoritised and minoritised backgrounds talked consistently about incidents where a teacher had either talked in an offensive way about pupils with minoritised backgrounds or treated them unjustly. According to Tilda, who was from a minoritised background, one teacher favoured (white) Finnish pupils when grading:

Tilda: We have noticed that the teacher takes off points [when grading tests], in general she doesn't mark incorrect answers for those who are completely Finnish, but she takes off points from those who are partly foreigners or completely foreigners. (*Penelope Lower Secondary School, girl, 13 years*)

The ways in which the school misrecognises racism, thus allowing it to continue, or even reproduces racialised inequalities in its own practices are a powerful mechanism of racialising social class.[37]

The socioeconomic heterogeneity of the residential areas manifested inside the schools in socioeconomic differences between pupils. These were talked about in different ways in different schools. In Penelope, pupils were aware that families had different economic positions, but emphasised that money did not play a role in social relationships. In Whistler lower secondary, too, this was a common discourse; however, school hierarchies intertwined with valuations of pupils' appearances and lifestyles in a way that had classed connotations. For instance, active participation in organised leisure time activities, together with exclusive brand clothes, were commonly associated with a group of more well-off pupils in the school. In Gavia in turn, socioeconomic differences were rather openly discussed. Certain parts of Gavia (particular apartment building areas) were described as "looking poor" and those living in the more reputable and middle class areas detached themselves from these areas.[38] While it was hard for pupils to verbalise exactly how the socioeconomic differences between pupils manifest in their appearances and everyday life, the extract with Viktor stating that he "can recognise people of his kind"—people less well-off—is telling of the importance that having or not having money made for social relationships:

Interviewer: Does it matter if someone has money, or can it be noticed in any way? (…).

Nikolas: At times like, someone, [Boy], he tries to brag every day, that he has a tenner in his cell phone case when he goes to [a grocery store].

Viktor: Yeah, and then he tries to brag about him being rich and me being poor, yeah, yeah, bum, bum.

Interviewer: Can you see it in the school if someone doesn't have money or someone has? (…) How does it show?

Nikolas: Well, I don't really know.

Viktor: Yeah, I can't say. I recognise people of my kind, when I see them, but I cannot say [how], I think.

Interviewer: … and by "your kind" you mean?

Viktor: Myself. [laughs] (…) I don't have any rich family. (…)

Interviewer: How do you recognise people like you?

Viktor: Based on clothes. Based on the character. (*Gavia Lower Secondary School, two boys aged 13*)

Their narrative about a boy boasting about having ten euros, and in this way representing himself as "rich" in comparison to Viktor, tells a story about the disadvantage of the residential area, where such an act may be considered a relevant way to establish a social hierarchy. Further, Viktor's defensive response to being targeted this way as "poor", and his statement that he can recognise "people of his kind" confirms that social class has not lost its affective power, nor its embodied markers, in young people's everyday lives.[39]

Conclusion: Particularity of School Contexts in Young Peoples' Everyday Lives

In this chapter, we have shown how young people living and going to school in residential areas considered disadvantaged talk about the everyday life in their school and the surrounding area. We wish to highlight two issues. First, the young people are mostly attached to their residential areas, and even more so, to their schools, and consider their lives as ordinary and good. Their narratives of ordinariness diversify and challenge the problem-oriented assumptions attached to less advantaged residential areas and the "in risk" positions assumed for young people living in these areas in public discussions. These narratives also do not exclude recognition and reflection about the local problems and inequities; rather, in the young people's everyday life, warm attachments to the school and the residential area, experience of ordinariness, and social problems and vulnerabilities exist side by side. Following Smyth and McInerney,[40] we see a risk of bypassing young people's agency in the problem-oriented discourses, and hope to contribute in showing how they use their local know-how, and how their local attachments provide emotional and social resources that help making the challenges encountered manageable.

Second, we wish to highlight that while there are shared themes across the pupil interviews in schools in different residential areas—the importance of local attachments, the challenges encountered—their local manifestations are always specific to one school and one area, and vary according to the young people's social class and racialised backgrounds. For instance, the sudden and intense media attention that one of the residential areas had received was one of the area-specific differences creeping into the narratives of the participants. In Eider, the local geography, including the concrete locations of different services, made it hard for the young people to avoid the social problems in the area, which in turn affected how they were able to form positive attachments to it. In terms of racialised backgrounds, young people with minoritised backgrounds were disproportionally exposed to racism in all schools, but there was local variation: in Eider, such encounters took place between peers and in public space, while the official school actors remained "outsiders" who didn't recognise the phenomenon.[41] In Whistler lower secondary school and Penelope in turn, individual school teachers were considered acting sometimes in racist ways. Different social class backgrounds and their influence to pupils' resources were

recognised in all three lower secondary schools; however, how they were verbalised and how starkly they generated differentiations amongst the pupils varied between Gavia, Whistler lower secondary and Penelope. Thus, when seeking to find ways how to manage the challenges encountered in schools located in residential areas considered disadvantaged, it is not enough to assume that certain phenomena form challenges for the schools; instead, the specificities of the school contexts need to be taken into account.[42]

Problem-centred public discourses about schools in disadvantaged areas run the risk of producing a homogenising image of not only the schools but the young people studying in them,[43] which does not capture the heterogeneity and local variation in the school context, or the heterogeneity and the ways how social class-based and racialised inequalities are lived in schools. This relates also to the Finnish particularities in urban segregation. As segregation remains moderate and so-called disadvantaged residential areas remain socioeconomically heterogeneous, the boundaries between privilege and disadvantage materialise not only between schools, but also inside them.[44] In Diane Reay's UK study on middle and working class children living in stigmatised residential areas, it was found that the middle class children largely shared the stigmatising understanding that the local schools were 'crap' and went to schools in other areas; yet the working class children who had to attend the local schools, were familiar with the stigmatising notions but worked hard to represent their schools as "good enough".[45] Our findings depart from Reay's since in our study schools there were both middle and working class children, who shared the narrative of a "ordinary" and "good" school—albeit maybe with different emphases. While this may be an advantage in the fight to mitigate the negative effects of urban segregation, it also highlights the need to understand the specific social contexts of each school. These include not only pupils' different backgrounds but also the social norms and practices that encourage or discourage crossing social class-based and racialised divides in the school's everyday life, and the specific position of the school in the local urban geography.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, in Finland, like elsewhere, we have seen periods of distance schooling and heated public discussions on how to balance between public health efforts and children's and young people's right to receive face-to-face teaching. While the thorough analyses on the effects of the pandemic are still on their way, we already know that the risks related were not equally shared geographically nor in terms of social class and ethnicity. It therefore seems possible that the pandemic is yet another factor producing cumulating challenges for certain areas and for certain groups of people. This highlights the need to understand schools' role not only in providing knowledge and teaching but in reproducing or combatting inequalities and enabling and securing well-being and normal everyday life for children and young people.

Notes

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5. E.g., Reay, D. 2007.'Unruly places' inner-city comprehensives, Middle-class imaginaries and working-class children. *Urban Studies*. 44(7): 1191–1201. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980701302965.

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