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Pekka Räsänen, Dr.Soc.Sci. (pekka.rasanen@tse.fi)
Department of Economic Sociology, Turku School of Economics
Atte Oksanen, Dr.Soc.Sci. (atte.oksanen@uta.fi)
Department of Social Research, University of Tampere / Finnish Youth Research Network
Johanna Nurmi, M.Soc.Sci. (johnurm@utu.fi)
Department of Sociology, University of Turku
Kauri Lindström, M. Soc.Sci. (kauri.lindstrom@uta.fi)
Department of Social Research, University of Tampere

Insecurity, media preferences and the use of communication technology after school shootings in Jokela and Kauhajoki

In the light of homicide and suicide statistics, Finland is one of the most violent countries in Western Europe. Particularly the school shootings in Jokela in 2007 and in Kauhajoki in 2008 received worldwide media coverage on mass violence in Finnish society. Simultaneously, however, Finland scores high in many international surveys on happiness and subjective well-being. It is therefore not surprising that one of the main concerns surrounding recent mass violence incidents relate to social aspects of the phenomenon, namely the lack of communality among citizens.

Our *Everyday life and Insecurity* project (2008ó2011) analyses social relations and risk experiences after school shootings in local communities in Finland. In 2008 and 2009, we have collected comparable survey data from Jokela and Kauhajoki. Both of the data were collected six months after the shootings and they represent local populations aged 18ó75. Furthermore, the project has conducted thematic interviews of local residents and officials working for these communities. In the paper, we examine how media and communication technology preferences connect with the perceptions of risks and the feelings of insecurity after tragic incidents. Our investigation is based on sociological and psychological observations on how people make use of their social bonds after violent disasters.

In the analysis, we compare which media and communication technologies are considered useful and which are not when local residents try to recover from the tragedy. We utilise both attitudinal measures on different media and measures on actual use of communication technologies after the shootings. In general, we assume that a variety of media enabling intensive communication possibilities are considered as the most useful. However, we also expect socio-demographic variation in the responses.

We argue in the paper that citizens do not solely use media in their everyday life. On the contrary, citizens are continually affected by the media content dealing with violence. For example, mass violence incidents are typically portrayed in media as random and unexpected acts. This is one of the major reasons why mass violence provides with a stressful risk for citizens. With regard to killing sprees, we have witnessed a trend that one act tends to increase the likelihood of future acts. In the aftermath of Jokela and Kauhajoki shootings, for example, hundreds of pupils have managed to attract public attention by making false threats and leaving messages on Internet bulletin boards and chats. Recent incidents such as Winnenden in Germany have once again raised public debate on the role of the Internet in school shooting disasters. These issues point to the fact that the media experience is in the core of sociological analysis of mass violence.