



School shootings in the context of the Finnish welfare state - the viewpoint of a youth researcher

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STATEMENT

- Unpredictable, complex phenomenon: not only scientifically and societally, but also in emotional and embodied terms
- A critical view vis-à-vis the understanding of school shootings in individual terms. Context matters!
- The level of analysis and responsibility must be collective rather than individual



YOUTH RESEARCHER'S APPROACH

1. *The dimension of life cycle*

- the growth of children and young people, both at the individual and at the social level; strategic transitions in the life course

2. *The dimension of youth culture*

- peer relationships: youth cultural belonging or feelings of loneliness and disconnectedness

• 3. *The dimension of culture*

- historical characteristics embedded in local, national and transnational culture; contemporary cultural dynamics, such as globalisation, individualisation, virtualization and commercialization; violence as a cultural way of solving problems

• 4. *The dimension of society*

- structural factors related to young people's living conditions; welfare state and its political priorities; functionality and sensitivity of the public and private services supporting the well-being of children and young people



I SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Violence as a socio-cultural part of young people's daily life

-> *identifiable vs. invisible forms of youth violence*

-> *gender-based experiences of violence*

- harsh masculinities; violence as a tool for solving problems; legitimization of violence as a tool for gaining group belonging and status; boys' fragile memberships in local communities (family, friends, school); experiences of school violence more common among boys than girls

-> *generational gap what comes to the meanings of violence*

- public vs. silent knowledge: a methodological challenge to make sense of young people's everyday life



II SCHOOL AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

- > school as the most important youth cultural arena
- > a contradiction between formal and informal school:
 - cognitive credits of pupils vs. social well-being of young people
- > (youth) cultural sensitivity and knowledge needed in teacher education
 - compulsory courses on youth cultural dialogue with young people; youth work as a resource



III YOUNG ADULT'S LIFE SITUATION

- > marginal position of young adults in the Finnish welfare structures
 - extension of adolescence, complicated transitions, tension between autonomy and dependency
 - current welfare services do not meet the needs of young adults
 - communal ties particularly weak among 20-24-old young males
 - Finnish culture encourages to intergenerational dialogue less than other Nordic countries
 - social trust is unequally distributed



CONCLUDING WORDS

- > code of silence: young people's unwillingness to share knowledge with adults -> cross-generational dialogue fragile and easily vulnerable
- > security plans at school are not enough -> a need for educational and structural changes
- > sensitive methods are needed to hear and see young people's silent knowledge
- > promoting welfare services at schools: comprehensive student health care; student associations and other structures for active youth participation; applying tools of youth work to enhance dialogue between youth and adults





THANK YOU!

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