

## Editorial:

### Does national publishing pay off?

Welcome to the second issue of *Research on Finnish Society*. This issue offers four articles dealing with interesting issues. Our opening article, by *Tomi Kankainen*, examines how engagement with an association affects interpersonal trust in Finland. The main finding is that the number of association memberships correlates with a high level of trust. Kankainen's article makes a substantial contribution to the Finnish research literature on trust and social capital. The second article is written by *Fred Dervin*. He examines the experiences of exchange students in Finland. By using a qualitative approach, Dervin offers interesting interpretations of how foreign students encounter Finnish culture.

In the third article, *Satu Merenluoto* explores the interdependence between cultural capital and success in higher education in Finland. Merenluoto applies Bourdieu's model of cultural capital as the explanatory frame of reference. Her main finding is that cultural capital has a clear, but multidimensional, impact on educational attainment.

This issue concludes with an article by *Semi Purhonen, Jukka Gronow and Keijo Rahkonen*. The authors take a look at the socio-demographic differentiation of cultural taste patterns in Finnish society. The article is based on nationally representative survey data, and it offers important findings regarding structural determination of music and literature tastes.

In addition to these articles, the editorial staff of the journal wishes to start with a comment on an ongoing debate over scientific publishing.

At the moment, the debate over a variety of publishing activities is heated in Finland. Some universities already use the amount and impact of research publishing as a criterion to distribute funds. However, this approach is not adhered by the Finnish Ministry of Education, which decides on public funding to universities solely on the basis of the produced degrees, and intends to keep this system more or less intact also in the future. From the point of view of an academic career, however, the amount and quality of publications are the key criteria to succeed. While it may be true that some of the senior professors have managed to act in their respectable academic posts with only a few or sometimes even without peer-reviewed articles, it now seems impossible to assign anyone to a respectable position without a solid track-record of peer-reviewed publications. Furthermore, it is not just any peer-review publications that will do. International publishing appears to be the key criterion, which means distinguished journal articles published in English.

The situation appears particularly biased in the social

sciences, in which several national peer-reviewed journals have a long tradition. In Finnish academia, national journals continue to enjoy a considerable amount of respect. This is of course a good thing for several reasons. For example, there are many culturally-bounded phenomena that can attract only national interest. It is also important that Finnish researchers disseminate their findings in their mother tongue with broader audiences. Simultaneously, however, this means that many interesting results are being published only in Finnish.

Perhaps the most obvious implication from this is that our foreign colleagues are beyond the reach of many important results. The situation is even more unfortunate if one considers the impact of research. Let us illustrate this argument with few comparative examples.

It is well known that the average number of citations to articles published in Finnish social-scientific journals tends to be very modest. For instance, articles in traditional journals such as *Kasvatus*, *Psykologia* and *Sosiologia* are referred to only few times since their publication. Many of the articles may not be cited at all. For example, the average number of citations that one full yearly volume of *Sosiologia* published in 2004–2008 received was 1.2 at the time this editorial was written (April 2009). Respectively, material published in a volume of *Psykologia* was referred to 4.8 times, and material in *Kasvatus* 5.3 times.<sup>1</sup> While publishing in *Psykologia* and *Kasvatus* appears to receive clearly more academic attention than publishing in *Sosiologia*, none of them receive much attention. This is evident when Finnish journals are compared with international ones.

In most cases, international journals receive tens of times as much attention as Finnish journals. For example, material published in a Nordic journal, *Acta Sociologica*, was cited on the average 49.3 times. Material in a volume of a distinguished international economics journal *Econometrica*, on the other hand, received more than 1 700 hits!

As one can calculate, the differences in total citations are massive. Naturally, there are many differences between the journals. *Econometrica*'s quality is widely acknowledged by the multinational academic community, and this probably applies to *Acta Sociologica*, too. In our opinion, however, the biggest difference between the national and international journals is the potential audience. Finnish language articles

<sup>1</sup> All numbers presented here were acquired with *Harzig's Publish or Perish* –program, which analyses Google Scholar's raw citations. Frequencies mentioned in the text indicate the average citations to journals per year.

will be cited merely in other domestic articles. This is also why even the best articles among these cannot attract much attention. It is often the case that an important article published in Finnish may go without recognition even from fellow Finnish scholars.

The aim of *Research on Finnish Society* is, therefore, to provide with a partial remedy to the problem mentioned above. Our simple strategy to meet this aim is to publish high-quality articles dealing with a variety social, economic and cultural phenomena. We believe that each article

published in our journal is worth reading – not only for a Finnish scholar, but for any scholar who is looking for original Finnish research.

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