

“This can’t happen here!” Community Reactions to School Shootings in Finland

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The recent school shootings in Jokela and in Kauhajoki received immediate worldwide media coverage on mass violence in a welfare society. This article examines community response to these incidents. We have gathered comparable survey data from the local communities Jokela (N=330) and Kauhajoki (N=319). Both surveys were conducted approximately six months after the shootings, and they represent local adult populations. With these data, we analyse the reactions of local residents to the shootings. We focus on questions such as whether the shootings were considered isolated tragedies or not, and whether they could have been prevented or not. The article considers what implications these recent critical incidents may have for Finland as a Nordic welfare society.

Keywords: violence, school shootings, insecurity, Finland

Introduction

In November 2007, an 18-year-old man opened fire at the Jokela upper secondary school in Tuusula, Finland, and shot dead six of his fellow students and two members of staff before committing suicide. The small town of Jokela was quickly in the headlines around the world. The shock value of the incident was enormous, partly because the tragedy took place in a Nordic welfare society. The act raised serious concern, and different accounts in media addressed the question of how this kind of act could ever happen in Finland. Only ten months after the first incident, in September 2008, another rampage school shooting took place in Finland. This time the shootings happened in Kauhajoki, which is a small town located far from big cities. A 22-year-old male student of hospitality management killed nine fellow students and a teacher before turning the gun on himself. The act was portrayed as a copycat of Jokela (Oksanen, 2009, 156).

Random acts of violence have not been totally unexpected in the Finnish context. In the autumn of 2002, a bomb built by a young man exploded at the Myyrmanni shopping cen-

tre in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Seven people died and almost 200 were injured in the explosion (Levä et al., 2003; Poijula, 2004). More recently 6 people died in the case that involved targeted shooting in the Sello shopping centre in the Helsinki metropolitan area on New Year’s Eve 2009. Besides this, smaller-scale acts of murder-suicide often end in the news in Finland (Nikunen, 2005). Especially murders committed by young middle-class Finns have caused grave concern in the media (Aitamurto, 2005).

Unlike many other unexpected murders, the Finnish school shooting cases of 2007 and 2008 have had more impact on general debate on welfare and risks. The school shooters expressed their intense hate towards people and society, leaving manifestos and media packages for the press. Both the Jokela and Kauhajoki school shooters idolized their American forerunners, especially the school shooters of the Columbine high school and Virginia Tech. The acts were not random, but involved careful and long planning (National Bureau of Investigation, 2008, 2009). The school shooters in Jokela and Kauhajoki targeted their acts against local people and the whole society. In this sense, these rampages are comparable to terrorist attacks.

Before the 2000s school shooting rampages were mostly known as an American phenomenon, although there have been a few European cases, too, such as the Aarhus University shootings in Denmark in 1994. Finland, too, had a small-scale school shooting in Rauma as early as in 1989. It was not, however, before the Columbine rampage that the phenomenon of school shootings began to attract copycats all around the world (Larkin, 2009, 1316). Germany, in particular, has witnessed several shootings in the 2000s, the most fatal being the Erfurt case in 2002 (Scheithauer et al., 2008). School shootings have usually caused intensive public de-

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bate on mental disorders, the lack of therapeutic treatment, school bullying and the dangers of the Internet (Newman et al., 2004, 14).

In Finland, the Jokela and Kauhajoki communities have been under the constant surveillance of both media and welfare authorities. Both communities have received considerable amounts (between one and two million Euros per year) of public funding for the aftercare of the tragedies. In Jokela, for example, two years after the incident, 40 additional municipal workers were still working in the aftercare of the crisis. Especially the resources of youth work in Jokela were multiplied after the shootings, which created expectations among the general public for quick results in terms of the wellbeing of the young in Jokela.

Research on terrorist acts shows that the effects of a terrorist act are not only limited to those directly exposed to it (Silver et al. 2002, 1243, Schlenger et al. 2002; Schuster et al. 2001). Unexpected acts of violence and terror change societies (U. Beck, 2002). Needless to say, in Finland the impact of the school shootings has been widespread and has brought up new questions and concerns (Oksanen & Räsänen, 2008). The awareness of risks is manifest, as regards the phenomenon of school threats, for example. In the aftermath of the shootings, hundreds of pupils have tried to seek public attention by making false threats and leaving messages on Internet bulletin boards and discussion forums (Puustinen, 2008; Heikkinen, 2009). Similar waves of school threats are also familiar from the US (e.g. Kostinsky et al., 2001).

Fewer academic studies have been conducted on the Finnish school shooting cases, although the killings have been widely discussed in the press. Media coverage usually concentrates on the shooters' psychological profile and a variety of cultural phenomena, such as the antisocial behaviour of youth, family disintegration or a decline in culturally shared values (cf. Newman et al., 2004, 20). Internationally most studies in both psychology and sociology, on the other hand, have concentrated on explaining why school shootings happen. Very few studies have addressed the question of how the local communities react to the cases. (Muschert, 2007, 68-9, 71, 75).

In this article, we examine the local residents' reactions to school shootings in Finland. In 2008 and 2009, we collected comparable survey data from the local communities of Jokela (N=330) and Kauhajoki (N=319). Both data sets were collected approximately six months after the shootings, and they represent local Finnish-Speaking populations aged 18-74. In addition to the surveys, we have a set of interview data on eleven professional experts, who were working in Jokela and Kauhajoki during the crisis. We use the interviews as additional data enabling us to understand the local communities more profoundly.

In general, the article asks what implications the shooting incidents may have for Finland as a Nordic welfare society. It is important to know how the people who were near the tragedy, but perhaps not personally involved, reacted to the shootings. We will first briefly discuss Finland's role as a Nordic welfare society, especially in terms of violence. Then we will describe Jokela and Kauhajoki as local communities

on the basis of our interview data. In the quantitative analysis, we concentrate on questions such as whether the shootings were considered isolated tragedies or not, and whether they could have been prevented or not. These questions highlight not only the issue of whether it could have been expected that school shootings would take place in Finland, but also society's role in preventing similar cases.

Unexpected violence in welfare society

European societies differ from each other in terms of their economic and social-political situations. In comparative studies, it is considered that the institutional basis of a society has a significant influence on structural conditions in that society. The Nordic welfare states, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, have traditionally been associated with a high-quality education system, low rates of poverty and small income inequalities (e.g., Esping-Andersen, 1990; Erikson et al., 1987). These features of Nordic welfare states have been persistent in the 2000s, especially when compared to other European societies (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Timonen, 2004). Indeed, the Nordic countries can still be characterised by a commitment to full employment for men and women, equality in terms of free participation in higher education, and a promise of universal social benefits for all citizens. It is often noticed that in comparison with other societies, the Nordic countries include a high degree of state involvement, a high degree of equality, a high level of taxes and a high level of public spending on welfare (Kautto et al., 2001; Greve, 2007). Also in other respects, the Nordic countries are often considered to be examples of societies where attitudes towards the state and social policy programmes are supportive.

The trust in police and other state institutions is high in Finland and the other Nordic countries (Kääriäinen, 2008). The Nordic countries also do very well when it comes to questions of safety. In a recent survey, fear of crime and feelings of insecurity in the streets after dark were lowest in Finland among all European Union countries (Dijk et al., 2005, 64-8). General trust towards other people has been the basis of the Nordic welfare states. Wellbeing is often equated with the feeling of being safe and secure. Hence, social conflicts and violence are often discussed as problems related to welfare and social integration. In other words, when the feeling of security is shattered, different efforts to reduce the risks come into play. The Nordic welfare states usually react quickly to various new welfare risks and try to minimize them (Taylor-Gooby, 2004).

Finland, however, is different from the other Nordic countries in terms of homicide rates. In fact, the Finnish homicide rate per population is two to three times as high as those in other Western European countries. Typically, the parties involved in a Finnish homicide are middle-aged, marginalised men. In 76% of the cases, both the victim and the perpetrator are drunk, and the most common murder weapon is a knife and not, for example, a gun, despite the fact that guns are fairly prevalent in Finland. However, the number of homicides by young Finns is no higher than in other parts

of Western Europe (Savolainen et al., 2008). Against this background it is easier to understand the deep shock that the school killings have caused in Finland. Homicides today mostly occur at the margins of Finnish society. In contrast, the school killings brought violence into the midst of middle-class reality.

In Finland, school shootings may have revealed weak spots inside a Nordic welfare society. This is to say that while Finland has succeeded in dealing with many traditional problems, such as social marginalisation or poverty, the system is less effective when it comes to the new threats of the digital era. In this sense, the school shooting rampages have started a new phase of violence, which could turn out to have a long-lasting impact – even on the Finns' interpersonal trust and feelings of security. The school shootings also give a reason to ask whether the Nordic welfare societies are capable of reacting to new risks involving totally unexpected violence that resembles terrorism. The point is not that everyday life would have become more dangerous; rather, there is an increase of different risk scenarios and risks that are uncontrollable (U. Beck, 2002, 41).

Research questions, data and methods

The empirical part of this article examines how local residents reacted to the shootings in Jokela and Kauhajoki. Naturally, there are many alternative possibilities to explore community reactions. We approach our research problem from the point of view of insecurity and uncertainty. Our aim is to describe some of the key characteristics of the communities in the aftermath of the shootings. We believe this will help us to understand our observations in the two communities more profoundly. Our approach may be summarised as the following two research questions:

1. *How did the local residents of Jokela and Kauhajoki react to the shootings?*

2. *Were there socio-demographic differences in the reactions between Jokela and Kauhajoki?*

We shall base our interpretations on two types of data. The first type, consisting of two sets of data was derived from two mail surveys of the Finnish-Speaking adult population in the Jokela (N=330) and the Kauhajoki (N=319) areas. These data were collected in May–June 2008 and March–April 2009, approximately six months after the shooting incidents. The surveys used simple random sampling and they gave the response rates of 47 (Jokela) and 46 (Kauhajoki) percent.

Despite the fact that the response rates remained below 50 percent, comparing the age and gender structure of the data to that of the Tuusula and Kauhajoki municipalities indicates that the samples represent the areas relatively well (Statistics Finland, 2010). In our samples, the gender distributions are somewhat biased, however (54% male in Jokela and 45% male in Kauhajoki). In addition, we should emphasise that the representativeness of the Jokela data can only be evaluated against the larger municipality of Tuusula. The Kauhajoki data, for its part, can only be compared against both Finnish- and Swedish-speakers in the region. In this

sense the official statistics available are not directly applicable here.

The survey questions focused on the local residents' subjective perceptions of the shootings, their evaluations of their community and their experiences of social solidarity in the neighbourhood. In this article, we examine the local respondents' reactions by means of two dependent measures. These items were elicited with the questions 'Do you think that the incident was just an isolated tragedy?', and 'Do you think that the incident could have been prevented?'. Both questions were answered using the options 'Yes' or 'No'.

The respondents' gender, age, residential history and depressive mood are used as the independent variables. Residential history measures the number of years the respondent has lived in his/her current residence in the Jokela or Kauhajoki area. Depressive mood was measured by means of the Finnish version of Beck's 13-item depression inventory that has been used before in surveys of normal population (see Raitasalo, 2007; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999). The reliability of the depression scale was found to be high in both Jokela (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$) and Kauhajoki (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). The purpose of using Beck's depression inventory relates to the fact that some people are more vulnerable when facing dramatic incidents such as the school shootings in Jokela and Kauhajoki. Examining depressiveness is a standard procedure in trauma-related studies, since signs of depression are strongly linked to post-traumatic stress disorders (Bonanno et al., 2007). Our intention, however, is not to analyse whether people are traumatized or depressed, but rather to analyse how different groups of people reacted to the incidents. People with previous experiences of violence or trauma are usually more vulnerable when facing dramatic incidents. Some population groups are more resilient than others to such incidents. A secure socioeconomic background, male gender and old age, for example, relate to resilience (Bonanno et al., 2007; Silver et al., 2002; Galea et al., 2005; Schlenger et al., 2002).

The original depression variable was dichotomised in order to separate those with even slight symptoms ('At least slight depressiveness') from those without ('No depressiveness') (Raitasalo, 2007, 61). In both survey data sets, approximately 85 percent of the respondents reported almost no symptoms at all. The age and residential history variables were also categorised into feasible categories. The data analysis is based on descriptive quantitative techniques only (namely, examinations of frequency distributions and cross tabulations).

The second type of data that we used consists of focused interviews with eleven professional or voluntary workers in the communities of Jokela (N=6) and Kauhajoki (N=5). Most of the interviewees were working and/or living in Jokela or Kauhajoki before, during and after the shootings, and were thus considered experts with significant information on the local reactions to the crises. The interviews were conducted in Jokela about fourteen months after the shootings and in Kauhajoki a year after the incident.

The group of experts interviewed included officials from social services and youth work, employees of the Finnish

Evangelical Lutheran Church, and voluntary workers from two non-governmental organizations which had also participated in the crisis work after the shootings. The main focus of each interview was on the experiences that the interviewees had of the local residents' reactions to the shootings and of their grieving strategies.

Although the interview data enable us to evaluate only the experts' views of the residents' reactions, they are an incomparable source for understanding the overall climate in Jokela and Kauhajoki. Thematic parsing is used as the analysis technique for the interview material. In the following, we indicate the interview(s) from which direct quotations and interpretations are derived (interviews J1–6 in Jokela and K1–5 in Kauhajoki).

Jokela and Kauhajoki as local communities

Jokela is a small town of 6,000 inhabitants. It is situated in the south of Finland, in the metropolitan area and commuter zone of Helsinki. Although Jokela is part of the municipality of Tuusula (with a population of 36,000), all the interviewees described it as a rather individual town having its own distinct character (J1–6). All the experts interviewed agreed that the residents of Jokela have a strong collective identity as Jokela inhabitants. Of the four population centres of Tuusula, Jokela was also reported by the experts to have the widest range of local activities and the highest level of community cohesion. It was considered a good and peaceful place to raise children in. (J1–6.)

Despite the image of a nice and quiet suburban neighbourhood, Jokela was also commonly known before the shootings for problems concerning young people in particular. As one of the interviewees put it:

“This is a peaceful and safe place. But if you look at it a little closer, you see that there are problems, it's worrying. . . . Quite a lot of drugs in here.” (J6)

Another interviewee stated that

“Jokela had its share of problems even before the school shootings. (. . .) The young have had problems and there has been bullying at schools and a lot of things like that.” (J4)

According to the experts interviewed, in the aftermath of the Jokela school shooting many people felt guilty for being from Jokela. The offender had lived in the town for over ten years, and some people felt responsible for the incident, according to the experts interviewed. One expert underlined the whole issue:

“I think that the school shooting concerns not only one community or one cause. It is a complex matter. In a way, it is the fault of every one of us. (. . .) In this sense, we all have to look in the mirror.” (J4)

Kauhajoki is situated in the Ostrobothnia region in Western Finland, 350 kilometres from Helsinki. With its population

of over 14,000 inhabitants, Kauhajoki is larger than Jokela both geographically and population-wise. Kauhajoki was described as a lively town with several surrounding villages. Although it is common that neighbours know each other, one interviewee from Kauhajoki notes that

“This place is big enough so that you don't know every single person you see on the street. (. . .) And of course, like everywhere, neighbours watch each other a bit, like ‘your kid was out there again doing this and that’. But there's not that much of it.” (K1)

Kauhajoki is a geographically decentralized community, and it also has a steady flow of students from all over the region coming to study in its vocational and polytechnic schools. These factors present challenges to the social cohesion of the town. One of the interviewees stated that it should be easy for every resident of Kauhajoki to find a leisure pursuit from the selection of different activities, but suspected that joining activity circles or clubs where everyone knows each other might not be easy for an “outsider” who is new to the town (K1).

The main difference between Jokela and Kauhajoki is that Jokela was seen essentially as a close-knit community, whereas Kauhajoki was not depicted as having such a strong collective identity. An interviewee from Kauhajoki remarks that

“there's more community spirit in these outlying villages [of Kauhajoki] than in the town centre, which is an extensive area in itself. In the centre it's not that close-knit.” (K3)

Also, Jokela was portrayed as a distinct area both socially and geographically, while belonging administratively to Tuusula. Kauhajoki, with its remote villages and students coming in from neighbouring towns, was characterized more by its connectedness and co-operation with other municipalities in the region.

The Kauhajoki shooter was a student who had moved to Kauhajoki only a year before the shootings, and the local people did not feel that the killing had that much to do with them. One interviewee also noted that there was a tendency to deny the fact that 10 people died in one of the bloodiest events of recent Finnish history:

“No one talks about the shooting. I have been thinking about that, since it has not been discussed, it has been swept under the carpet.” (K3)

In general, both Jokela and Kauhajoki were generally described as safe and peaceful small towns, where no one could ever have predicted or imagined a school shooting to take place. Both the Finnish cases have striking similarities to American school shootings that have usually taken place in rural and sub-urban settings, rather than inside the big cities (see Newman et al., 2004, 56). It is often repeated after school shootings that no one could ever have imagined a

thing like that happening. One of the interviewees underlined this aspect:

“This was supposed to be a garden-like suburb, a peaceful country town near Helsinki. Then something like this happens.” (J1)

As a form of social disaster, school shootings are very problematic for community life and not easy to cope with. This is because the offenders themselves are usually members of the community, and because the roots of the violence emerge from within the community. This might cause not only grief, but also fear, insecurity and collective guilt among the inhabitants of the communities. It has also been argued sometimes that the social causes of school shootings are actively denied. School shootings are difficult to cope with, since they are attacks on the core of Western culture (Ames, 2007, 241). According to one of the interviewees in Jokela, it was only after the Kauhajoki shootings that one had to admit that tragedies of this kind could happen again. (J1)

Local reactions to Jokela and Kauhajoki shootings

Since Jokela and Kauhajoki are relatively small communities, it is likely that many of the inhabitants knew at least one of the victims or the perpetrator, or at least their family members. We explored this issue in the surveys. As many as one third (34 percent) of the respondents in Jokela said they knew, someone who died in the shootings. On the other hand, only less than one fifth (18 percent) of the respondents in Kauhajoki gave similar responses. The difference observed can be explained by the fact that none of the victims of the shootings in Kauhajoki actually came from Kauhajoki, but were only going to school there and living in the school's own residential facility.

We must stress that the school shootings were crises with a dramatic impact on both communities. Indeed, in this sense the school shootings can be compared to other disasters that have often been handled by crisis and trauma psychologists (see Poijula, 2004). However, it is important to know how the local people, whether victims of the attacks or not, reacted to the shootings and whether these reactions were similar in both communities. Table 1 displays the percentages of our dependent measures for Jokela and Kauhajoki.

As the table shows, the proportion of the respondents who considered that the incident was just an isolated tragedy is considerably higher (60 percent) in Jokela compared to Kauhajoki (29 percent). This is not necessarily surprising, however. In 2007, the Jokela case represented in many ways the first school shooting in Finland. But what is more interesting is the fact that nearly one third of the local respondents also considered that the Kauhajoki shooting was just an isolated tragedy.

Naturally, with our survey data it is not possible to further elaborate why so many respondents answered this way. We can only assume, for example, that the term ‘isolated tragedy’ was understood as a local tragedy, which cannot happen again in the same community. Another possibility

Table 1
Respondents' reactions on Jokela/Kauhajoki shootings. Percentages (N).

<i>Was the incident just an isolated tragedy?</i>		
	Jokela	Kauhajoki
<i>Yes</i>	60.2 (197)	28.7 (89)
<i>No</i>	39.8 (130)	71.3 (221)

<i>Could the incident have been prevented?</i>		
	Jokela	Kauhajoki
<i>Yes</i>	43.7 (136)	40.6 (128)
<i>No</i>	56.3 (175)	59.4 (187)

is that ‘isolated tragedy’ was understood as a synonym for a unique tragedy in terms of global disasters such as the 9/11. In other words, the school shooting is interpreted as a random terrorist act that just happens.

With regard to the second item, there are only small differences in the percentages between Jokela and Kauhajoki. Nearly 44 percent of the Jokela respondents believed that the incident could have been prevented. In Kauhajoki, the proportion of those believing so was 41 percent. This means that almost 60 percent in both communities considered that there were no possibilities to prevent the shootings. This is basically an interesting finding, in particular if we bear in mind that the Jokela incident was clearly more often experienced as an isolated tragedy than was the case in Kauhajoki. Although some groups have suggested that the actions of a single police officer could have prevented the incident in Kauhajoki, this is not reflected in our data. On the contrary, in Kauhajoki the respondents considered more often than in Jokela that nothing could have prevented the shootings.

Now, it is possible to argue that the respondents' reactions to the shootings were heavily influenced by the time of research. This explains particularly the results regarding the first item. Both survey data sets were collected within six months after the shootings took place. On the other hand, however, our second item reveals that the respondents are generally rather pessimistic about preventing school shooting rampages. This finding is interesting in the context of welfare state research.

Our results suggest that the majority of the local residents do not believe that the school shootings could have been prevented. In other words, trust towards the prevention of school shootings is generally rather low. This interpretation contradicts many of the basic beliefs regarding the general trust towards the Nordic welfare state institutions. Traditionally the Nordic welfare states have been active in finding solutions for social problems. Our finding, however, indicates that even the Nordic welfare states might be rather vulnerable in the face of unexpected violence that resembles terrorism.

Local reactions in different population groups While it is obvious that the shootings shocked the communities as a whole, it is also likely that personal evaluations of the shoot-

Table 2
Shootings as isolated tragedies. Percentages (N).

Was the incident just an isolated tragedy? (YES)	Jokela	Kauhajoki
Gender	χ^2 6,15**	χ^2 4,32*
Male	67.1 (112)	34.3 (47)
Female	53.5 (83)	24.5 (39)
Age	χ^2 3,33*	χ^2 1,21 (ns)
<45 years	53,4 (62)	24,8 (27)
45+ years	63,9 (129)	30,7 (59)
Residential history	χ^2 7,69**	χ^2 1,27 (ns)
<10 years	53,8 (105)	25,2 (31)
10+ years	69,2 (90)	31,1 (57)
Depressive mood	χ^2 6,72**	χ^2 0,03 (ns)
'No depressiveness'	62,6 (166)	28,2 (71)
'At least slight depressiveness'	42,9 (21)	28,6 (14)

Note: ** = $p < 0,01$, * = $p < 0,05$; (ns) = $p > 0,05$ (2-sided Pearson χ^2)

ings vary between individuals. We compare the reactions by the respondents' gender, age, residential history, and depressive mood. The effect of each variable is examined separately in the Jokela and Kauhajoki data. Our analysis starts from the item measuring whether the shooting incident was understood as an isolated tragedy or not. Table 2 displays the results.

Differences by gender were tested first. As the table shows, the effects are significant across the data sets (at $p < 0,05$ level). Men reported more often than women that the shootings were just an isolated tragedy. The magnitude of the difference is approximately 10 percent in Kauhajoki and 14 percent in Jokela. This finding is interesting, since the overall percentages vary considerably between Jokela and Kauhajoki. In general, this suggests that women are more likely than men to believe that similar tragedies can happen again.

An examination by age reveals significant differences in Jokela. The results indicate that the older age group (+45-year-olds) was less likely to consider that the shootings were an isolated tragedy. The difference to the younger age group is relatively small (about a magnitude of 10 percent). A similar pattern can be found in Kauhajoki, but the difference between the age groups is only six percent and insignificant. In this respect we can argue that age does have a notable impact on the respondents' reactions.

Residential history shows more interesting results, although the effect is not significant in the Kauhajoki data. In Jokela, however, we see that the respondents who have lived in the area for more than ten years are more likely to understand the shootings as an isolated tragedy. The percentage of these responses is nearly 70 percent in this category (+10 years), while in the other category the percentage remains below 54 percent. It is also possible to interpret the Kauhajoki data in a similar manner, even though there are no significant

Table 3
Shootings as incidents that could have been prevented. Percentages (N).

Could the incident have been prevented? (YES)	Jokela	Kauhajoki
Gender	χ^2 0,00 (ns)	χ^2 1,65 (ns)
Male	44.1 (71)	39.1 (54)
Female	44.1 (64)	41.4 (70)
Age	χ^2 0,00 (ns)	χ^2 4,18*
<45 years	44,1 (49)	48,2 (53)
45+ years	44,5 (85)	36,2 (71)
Residential history	χ^2 0,11 (ns)	χ^2 8,49**
<10	44,4 (84)	50,8 (63)
10+	42,5 (51)	34,2 (64)
Depressive mood	χ^2 5,71*	χ^2 1,76 (ns)
'No depressiveness'	39,8 (101)	42,1 (106)
'At least slight depressiveness'	58,7 (27)	32,0 (16)

Note: ** = $p < 0,01$; * = $p < 0,05$; (ns) = $p > 0,05$ (2-sided Pearson χ^2).

differences. Still, can we argue that those who have lived for a long period of time in the area prefer to regard unexpected incidents as particular? Perhaps, but what is more important is that there are many old respondents in the data who have long residential histories. This partly explains our observations here.

There is a body of research in psychological literature suggesting that people with depressive feelings are more likely to have traumatic experiences, and they tend to be sensitive to violent acts in general (see, e.g. A. T. Beck & Alford, 2009; Bonanno et al., 2007). In Jokela, those with at least slight depressive mood reported less often than others that the incident was just an isolated tragedy. The effect is clearly significant (at $p < 0,01$ level). We interpret this finding to be in line with earlier research on psychological depression and violence. However, in Kauhajoki depressiveness had no effect on reactions. It is possible that the reason why the depressive mood failed to be significant in Kauhajoki depends on the general distribution of the dependent variable (only 29 percent reported that the shootings were an isolated tragedy).

The second item examined was whether the shooting incident could have been prevented or not. The results are given in Table 3. With regard to gender, there are no significant effects. The percentages are nearly identical for both sexes. Age, on the other hand, does have some impact in the Kauhajoki data. It appears that the younger age group (<45-year-olds) are more likely than the older group to report that the incident could have been prevented. The difference is quite small, however. In addition, the Jokela data does not show a similar pattern. Regarding this, age does not represent a good explanatory source for this kind of examination.

Residential history appears to be significant (at $p < 0,01$ level) in Kauhajoki. Those who have dwelled for a shorter time in Kauhajoki are more likely than others to report that the shootings could have been prevented. Unfortunately, this

interpretation cannot be applied to the Jokela data. The results thus suggest that residential history does not play an important role when trying to understand the local residents' reactions. In other words, residential history may have an impact, but it varies from one context to another.

As the table indicates, depressive mood is the only significant variable in the Jokela data (at $p < 0.05$ level). When compared to those with depressiveness, the respondents without depressiveness report less often that the shootings could have been prevented. The percentages are close to 40 and 60, respectively. With regard to the Kauhajoki data, on the other hand, depressive mood does not have a significant effect. Furthermore, it is not possible to say that the reason why the depressive mood fails to be significant here depends on the general distribution of the dependent variable. This is because the overall percentages between Jokela and Kauhajoki are almost similar with regard to our second variable. We must conclude that depressiveness cannot predict the respondents' reactions in Kauhajoki even though it can do so in Jokela.

Conclusion: two incidents, several sources of uncertainty?

It is obvious that the school shootings had a dramatic impact on the local communities in both Jokela and Kauhajoki. A high proportion of the locals said they were acquainted, or at least knew by sight, someone who died in the shootings in both Jokela and Kauhajoki. Our analysis showed that the shootings were experienced differently depending on the respondents' gender, age, residential history, and depressive mood. In addition, the results above indicate that the socio-demographic profiles of the reactions did differ between Jokela and Kauhajoki. These communities are similar neither in community structure, nor in terms of the residents' reactions of the shootings.

What is noteworthy in the results is the general unresponsiveness in the face of violence in Finland. The problem with school shootings is that the offender usually comes from inside the community, as was also the case in Jokela. This makes it much more difficult for residents to cope with the situation. Questions such as whether the case was an isolated tragedy or not, and whether it could have been prevented or not reveal how the local community regarded the shootings. The majority of the respondents both in Jokela and Kauhajoki thought that the shootings could not have been prevented. It was most often younger people and people with a shorter residential history who thought the opposite. In Jokela, on the other hand, people with depressive disorders though more often than others that the shooting could have been prevented.

In both communities women were less likely to see the shootings as isolated tragedies. In Jokela, young residents, those with a shorter residential history and those who reported depressiveness considered more often that the case was not just an isolated tragedy. In other words, we found unresponsiveness and insensitiveness with residents who are more rooted to the community and do not report psycholog-

ical problems. In other studies these groups are sometimes thought to be resilient (i.e., having the ability to maintain stable and healthy levels of psychological and physiological functioning) (Bonanno et al., 2007). However, the very same resilient subjects who are not necessarily shaken by disasters might be the ones who do not act against them.

In the American context, in particular, it has been noted that the middle classes have not been active in recognizing the misery of their own everyday life. School shootings and murders at workplaces, for example, have been difficult to understand. As a consequence, public attention is often focused on the psychological characteristics of the killers, instead of profiling social contexts that are vulnerable to such actions (Ames, 2007). Our analysis of the survey data reveals that there is a lack of sensitive response to school shootings from the very people who might have the resources to solve local social problems.

What is more, some of the experts interviewed were concerned that social problems are not openly discussed in Finland. Society only takes action after tragic incidents. This was considered to be a problem especially in youth work and mental health care. One of the consequences of the school shootings was that the Jokela and Kauhajoki areas received additional government funding especially for youth work, since the young were at the centre of the crises. In Kauhajoki, where before the shootings two youth workers were supposed to cover the whole town, there are now five of them. After the shootings in Jokela, five more youth workers were recruited. At the same time, however, professionals of youth work and mental health care are arguing that on the national level, preventive measures are not adequate.

It is possible to argue that the recent school shootings have challenged our understanding of the welfare society's safety net – at least in terms of unexpected uncertainty. Traditionally, citizens of the Nordic countries rank high when trust towards state institutions is inquired about, which in turn might decrease their informal community activities. In other words, safety and security issues can easily be left to the police and state authorities. The citizens themselves are not accustomed to dealing with them. Despite this, some criminologists have argued that Finland has been quite unsuccessful even in coping with traditional homicides (Savolainen et al., 2008, 85).

In this sense the recent school shootings, as well as the subsequent threats, pose an additional problem of insecurity for Nordic welfare societies. We live in a world of uncontrollable risks where it is easy to be affected by various risky scenarios (U. Beck, 2002). Several studies indicate how strongly different man-made disasters are experienced (e.g., Galea et al., 2005). Unexpected violence is an issue that might be difficult to tackle, no matter how well Finland and Nordic societies may have adapted themselves to other risky scenarios of the 21st century (U. Beck, 2002).

It is also possible that people trust the welfare state up to a point where this no longer makes sense. Our finding of almost one third of Kauhajoki residents thinking that the shooting was just an isolated tragedy supports this. The Nordic welfare state that tries to actively seek solutions to different social welfare problems, might lead to a situation where peo-

ple do not actively look for ways to prevent social problems. This situation might also open the door for Anglo-American security policing that, so far, has not been seen in Finland or in the other Nordic countries.

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