

# We are IntechOpen, the world's leading publisher of Open Access books Built by scientists, for scientists

5,200

Open access books available

129,000

International authors and editors

155M

Downloads

Our authors are among the

154

Countries delivered to

TOP 1%

most cited scientists

12.2%

Contributors from top 500 universities



WEB OF SCIENCE™

Selection of our books indexed in the Book Citation Index  
in Web of Science™ Core Collection (BKCI)

Interested in publishing with us?  
Contact [book.department@intechopen.com](mailto:book.department@intechopen.com)

Numbers displayed above are based on latest data collected.  
For more information visit [www.intechopen.com](http://www.intechopen.com)



# The Conceptualising of Insecurity from the Perspective of Young People

Riitta Vornanen, Maritta Törrönen, Janissa Miettinen and Pauli Niemelä  
*University of Eastern Finland/University of Helsinki,  
Finland*

## 1. Introduction

Security is one of the basic needs; it can also be seen as a basic value in Western societies (Niemelä, 2000), where more and more systems are developed to guarantee security. Security is a highly valued goal, which may be difficult to reach because of different threats and risks in personal lives and in near and global environments. One indicator of the collective quest for security is evident in the literature and studies on different risks. Over a decade ago, Furedi (1997) wrote about the increase in the use of the word “risk” in literature and scientific research. This article participates in the discussion of insecurity and risks by focusing on the experiences of young people.

In order to understand young people’s perspectives, we need to focus on their experiences; we need to ask how they relate to society and how distant and global issues influence their world. This article argues that young people are key persons in reflecting the world and the changes in societies. Instead of reacting to the extreme examples of social problems or crimes involving young people, we try to understand how young people experience their personal and social lives, and the more societal and global issues. There is a need to develop social sciences empirical research among young people. It is important to know the role of security in young people’s lives and the sources and dimensions of their insecurity.

Empirical research on insecurity needs a theoretical and conceptual understanding of different approaches to security and insecurity. This article makes an explorative contribution to the concepts of insecurity and security from the perspectives of young people. Insecurity is a multidisciplinary concept; understanding of the concept demands different approaches. In addition, the article gives two empirical examples of research on insecurity among young people. By using both theory and empirical findings from quantitative and qualitative research, it is possible to explore the dimensions of the concept and its relevance in research.

## 2. The concepts of security and insecurity in social sciences

Insecurity and the experiences of young people in a changing society are relevant in social science research but security and insecurity are not simple as scientific concepts. Different fields of science address the topics. Psychology, social psychology and psychiatry provide

the earliest debates and notions about the need to develop these concepts. For example, Erich Fromm (2000) was one of the scholars who wrote about feelings of inferiority. He emphasized security as a need to belong and avoid loneliness. Alfred Adler (1964; 1971) analysed security as a basic need. A human being tries to choose goals so that they guarantee a niche, prevent feelings of inferiority, support self-esteem, and bring security.

One of the first efforts to bring these concepts into the realm of the social sciences was the critical analysis of the concepts of security and insecurity by Cameron and Mc Cormick (1954) who concluded that there was a lack of consistent definitions, theory development, and prerequisite empirical testing of the hypotheses. Cameron and Mc Cormick found previous research on security and insecurity vague and tendentious. They suggested concept development and empirical research.

It was almost two decades before the next analysis for these concepts appeared. One of the most profound analyses came from Kaufmann (1970) who wrote a comprehensive book about security as a sociological and social-political problem. The interesting feature of his analysis was that it presented security not only as a system or societal-level concept, but also as a subjective experience or as the relationship between subjective experiences and objective conditions. According to Kaufmann, the core problem of security was in the broken connection between inner experiences and outer conditions. The need for security manifested in efforts to defend and protect oneself against dangers, in needs for order and continuity, and in aspirations for inner, mental balance (Kaufmann, 1970, 24-27). Kaufmann's concept of security included both personal security of the "self" and orientation to an outer world.

Theorizing about the concept of insecurity has produced a wide variety of insecurity dimensions. One interesting question concerns the dynamics of this phenomenon. How does insecurity influence people and their relations in society? Berki (1986) provided a careful and holistic analysis of security and its creation and maintenance in society. He claimed that, in its deepest meaning, the desire for security was an existential drive. Berki (1986, 39) wrote, *"By wanting security, therefore, in order ostensibly (and consciously) to protect and prolong our lives, we are really courting insecurity, nay actually engaging in the quest after insecurity"*.

According to Berki (1986), personal security was closely connected to society and to personal, reciprocal relationships as well as to those people who we do not know. The social paradox of security means that people are vulnerable in their relationships, but in its extreme form, people may also see each other as threats and enemies. Security issues also present moral questions on how society is organized and how laws and rules govern security. Thus, security demands political decisions to alleviate insecurity in society and to guarantee security. The amount of legislation resulting from these demands can be huge in different spheres of life - in the areas of protection against crime and child protection, for example.

Berki's approach is fruitful for studying young people's insecurity because it focuses on the relationships and dynamics of security in communities and in societies. As previously mentioned, young people may be seen as threats or risks in a society, or as a protected group that is vulnerable to insecurity, but they can also be seen as active citizens who create and develop personal relationships and try to find their place in society. At the same time,

young people are challenged to develop personal security, to trust their close relationships, and to orient their lives to an outer world. This outer world or global world does not necessarily become more complicated; the complexity of life and the challenges just gradually unveil (Lahikainen et al. 1995, 42).

In Finland, Pauli Niemelä developed a research project on insecurity, its causes, and methods of coping; he analyzed the concept and clarified the different meanings for it. Niemelä (2000) developed a frame of reference for research on insecurity based on empirical findings in an extensive empirical study of the Finnish population. In his theoretical model, Niemelä differentiated six areas of security: 1) existence and health, 2) social relationships and community, 3) social security at the level of social security systems, 4) cultural and humanistic issues, 5) traditional security (inner security in a country and national security) and 6) modern, ecological security related to natural and manufactured environments.

It seems that these concepts of security and insecurity are important indicators to describe a person's relation to his or her community and to the world. They contain meanings regarding a person's orientation to society and to a changing world. Experiences of security or insecurity are not easy to explain but they can be connected to a variety of issues. According to McDonald (2002), security is not just ontological; it may change dramatically depending on the actor and the specific political and cultural contexts. This is in common ground with Pauli Niemelä's theoretical model of security.

Many approaches recognize the personal level of security as well as its connections to community, societal, and global issues. Discovering how the distant issues influence personal experiences of insecurity is a challenge.

### 3. Young people, insecurity and risks

When we focus on discussions about insecurity among young people, we find social scientific research on risks and risk societies, which give an interpretative frame of reference for understanding the experiences of people in a changing and unpredictable world.

The theories of risk society explain the societal and global contexts of security. Ulrich Beck (1986; 1992) is one of the most well known academics who started discussions in Europe and launched the concept a risk society. He criticized beliefs in progress and warned about new technological risks that cannot be controlled by old concepts and directives. Another well-known scientist, Anthony Giddens (1990), wrote about the new risks in modernity, which included threat of nuclear war, other military conflicts, and technological risks. He argued that these risk environments influenced all people; risks were globalized and people were aware of the risks as well as the deficiencies of experts in governing those risks (Giddens 1990, 124-125).

The most interesting issues in these approaches to a risk society are notions about the process through which a person becomes aware of and vulnerable to modern institutions and global issues. The development of identity is a reflexive project, from which close communities and traditions do not shelter an individual. People are vulnerable in their close personal relationships, and at the same time, they are aware of the threat in global issues. Giddens referred to Ulrich Beck's statement: "*The most intimate – say, nursing a child – and the*

*most distant, most general – say a reactor accident in the Ukraine, energy politics – are now suddenly directly connected”* (Beck 1986; Giddens 1991, 121).

The analyses of risks and risk society viewed this challenge not only as a person’s rational analysis of the world but also as risk consciousness, which meant living under the threat of hazardous uncertainty in a new cultural dynamic of anxiety (Wilkinson 2001, 4-5). Some of the interpretations of risk saw that risk itself meant feelings of fear, uncertainty, and anxiety (Lupton 1999).

Anthony Giddens (1991, 39-40) wrote about an individual’s quest for security in the risk society. He used the concept of trust to illustrate the relation between an individual and society. He argued that post-modern society challenged trust in many ways. He believed that trust and security were created in close relationships with caregivers and that, ideally, children trusted their caregivers and developed basic trust in a so-called protective cocoon, which protected a developing person’s integrity.

These sociological and other discourses on risks are not restricted to the experiences of younger generations. The strains of living with insecurity and impermanence, and the loss of personal control over life events are felt by most people to some degree (Abbott, 2000, 2; Wilkinson, 2001, 3). The perspective of risks and fears in young peoples’ lives, however, is the focus of the current research. Risks and fears are concepts closely related to insecurity and they help to understand the content, characteristics, and experiences of insecurity.

Quite often young people are mentioned as one of the most sensitive and vulnerable groups in society. Traditionally, this view is based on developmental approaches to adolescence and descriptions of youth as a transition period. The risk society approaches partly share these traditional and psychological views. Youth and adolescence are synonymous with transitions from childhood to adulthood, from school to work, or from dependence to independence (Cebulla 2009, 39-40). The core in these approaches assumes that young people are less likely to have common biographies and that everyday uncertainties are met individually, not with the support of community or tradition (Furlong & Cartmel 1997; Abbott 2000; Green et al. 2000; Miles 2007; Cebulla 2009).

Young people confront uncharted pathways into the future and they have to make decisions concerning their lives in circumstances where they cannot predict the consequences of their decisions. Young people must face the challenge to evaluate both: their environments and the global situation, as well as their own ability to cope in changing circumstances. Many scholars argue that self-assessment and reflection is more important now than ever before because of individualization and personal challenges to make decisions in an unpredictable world (Abbott 2000; Giddens 1991; Beck 2001). Individuals have the challenge to try to protect themselves from an increasing “matrix of risks” such as loneliness, personal relationships, crime, health problems, terrorism, and ecological disaster, as well as physical imperfections and personality defects (see Threagold & Nilan 2009, 49-50).

Under the conditions of globalised uncertainty, young people may feel themselves pressured, and try to avoid long-term life projects because of contradictory forces of responsibility and autonomy while not knowing the consequences of their decisions (Cebulla 2009, 40). For example, commitment in a close relationship to another person may

not last forever, and you never know when you are going to be replaced by someone else (Giddens, 1990, 142-144; Lupton, 1999, 80).

Discourses on risk offer one frame of reference for the insecurity among young people. It gives a context in which to understand the challenges that young people face in late modern society and their task of making sense of the world. Risk society is not a static description of the state of the world. Instead, it describes the dynamics where people have to be reflexive in coping with uncertainty (Threadgold & Nilan 2009, 50). Abbott (2000, 6) asked the following questions: Are we providing young people with sufficient opportunities which enable young people to build up their psychological success and personal inner security? Are there enough collective "safe heavens", private spaces in time or in states of mind, which help to reflect and to find a foothold in our dynamic world?

The call for security in an insecure world is quite a difficult task, and in the ultimate sense, absolute security is an illusion. Security, which is one of the most important values in the Western world, has become a paradox. The more security is guaranteed, the less insecurity is tolerated (Evers and Nowotny, 1987, 61; Vornanen et al., 2009, 403; Mau et al., 2011, 178-179). More and more information about risks in different spheres of life is available and young people receive this information on the internet and through an ever-expanding variety of different channels.

The theories of risk society cannot explain, exhaustively, how young people experience close and distal risks. Kaufmann (1970) wrote about security related to orientation and security related to systems. According to Kaufman, security related to orientation to the world means how conscious people perceive threats and demands from the outside world. If people's experiences indicate that they cannot influence these issues, they feel insecurity; theories of anomie and social change relate closely to this interpretation of security related to orientation. Security related to systems includes technical security and political security, which implicates systems of governing the risks and threats in society.

#### **4. The personal and social context of security and insecurity**

In the literature on risks, there is a sense of breaking traditions in young people's lives (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1996; Beck, 2001; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997) but there are still some persisting issues that have not changed and have no substitute in the development of security. Personal relationships, especially family and friends are difficult to challenge in the creation of security (Abbott, 2000, 5; Vornanen, 2000). Close relationships are the basic pillars of security in childhood. These relationships are the ones that offer young people some kind of "safe heaven" and private "space" in time (Abbott-Chapman, 2000, 4), where they may be free of stress and pressure to succeed.

One of the paradoxes in security is that the more secure childhood is, the more insecurity is tolerated later in life. This means that a person who has had a secure base (Bowlby, 1988) has the trust in others, the self-confidence, and the coping skills needed to handle threats, troubles, and risks in life.

The other interesting paradox lies in the implicit beliefs that young people are either risks or troublemakers, or conversely, at risk of something and in need of protection from evils.

Young people or children are often seen as a group of people that should be better protected, policed from the evils of the world, or better controlled, as Roche (1999, 477) has critically described. This perspective may lead to situations where young people present as passive objects more than active citizens who participate, observe, and try to influence society. This theoretical division may exist, for example, in child protection where a child can be the victim of family violence or the perpetrator of violence in the home or in a gang. The more insecurity a person has experienced, the more he or she may cause insecurity for others because of trauma and anxiety, fears and trust difficulties. Moreover, the more security the person has gained, the more she or he can offer to other people. In the area of cultural geography, interesting research investigated young people's perceptions of others as insiders or outsiders. This research highlighted how individuals and social groups tend to territorialize spaces and people by including some and excluding others (Green et al., 2000, 117-118). These processes are evident in young people's lives in schools and in other areas of life and may be related to bullying or processes of exclusion (Törrönen & Vornanen 2002), which, in turn, may cause insecurity.

The development of security in childhood belongs to the area of developmental psychology. Discourses on risk also analyse the personal and social contexts of security. It is interesting that approaches to risks combine psychological theories with sociological ones in order to understand the person in a changing society. Anthony Giddens (1991, 39-40), for example, wrote about ontological security, which helps a person to cope in a complicated world. He used the concept of trust and argued that trust was challenged many ways in post-modern society.

One important concept related to risks, then, is trust, which develops in close relationships, but ultimately influences how a person orients to the world and to distant issues. Jones (2004, 225) wrote about "relations of trust" in her study on how young people place trust in experts in risk issues. Threadgold and Nilan (2009, 54) argued that successful or unsuccessful negotiation of risk through the generative disposition of reflexivity was reliant on the socioeconomic or class position of young people. They claimed that young people had to have access to socio-economic resources and opportunities in order to be successful in finding and fulfilling the trajectory of self. For those who had a more materially and ontologically stable habitus, the process of reflexivity could be normal and easy, even routine.

Despite of the risky trajectories to the future, it seems that young people need to have a stable and secure context (family and communities) to develop their identities in a changing world. This means challenges for educational systems to support creative learning processes where young people can participate in holistic processes and have a degree of agency and trust, providing resources to deal with uncertainties they may face in the future (Miles, 2007, 281). It is not just a challenge for learning environments but for environments of cultural citizenship where young people can develop citizenship that focuses on identity, belonging, participation, and mutual responsibility (Hart 2009).

Threadgold and Nilan (2009, 51) emphasized how the new, intensified risks constructed reflexivity as a form of cultural capital. They argued the importance of focusing on socioeconomic status, which shaped young people's perceptions of life's chances and opportunities as opposed to a lack of real choices. Therefore, we can ask, are some groups of

young people in more insecure positions in society regarding their experiences in community and society and their life trajectories. Are young people unequal in terms of security and insecurity? Can there be deficiencies and experiences that either block or enable the possibilities to feel security and freedom of choice? There are challenges for empirical research to study different groups of young people in different contexts; one such group, for example, might be the clients in child protection.

The messages from youth research suggest that close personal relationships in a family and socio-economic resources and capital provide a security base. These issues may be seen as profound prerequisites, which appear to equip young people for the future but do not guarantee total protection from personal and societal risks. They do appear to improve the ability to cope with failures, to increase courage, and to seek solutions and help if needed.

## 5. Dimensions of the concepts of security and insecurity

Security and insecurity are broad concepts that include a variety of contexts (from close relationships to global issues). Previous studies have showed that insecurity may be either context dependent or universal (Taimalu et al., 2006, 72), local-everyday or global (Pain et al., 2010), or a somehow polarized phenomenon where some perceive either close issues or global and distant issues positively while others view them as negatives. In studies of young people's future expectations, results show that personal future expectations may be mainly positive while expectations regarding the future of the world may be mainly negative. Brunstad's (1998) study described this polarization using the terms 'near optimism' and 'far pessimism'.

The relationship between context-dependent and universal issues is interesting and methodologically challenging. There are many hypotheses about the relationships between the insecurity experienced by close and context-related issues and more distant, society-level or global level issues. DeMuth (1994) studied how people are able to minimize distant threats and concentrate on everyday issues. There might be many reasons for this but one possible reason is that if young people do not believe there is any chance to influence global issues, they just ignore them and deny the value of the threats. If everyday troubles and worries are extremely overwhelming and life is constantly pressing, another possible explanation may be that young people have no interest in global or societal issues under those conditions (Solantaus 1987; 1990).

We can also hypothesize that young people may feel their personal lives are secure and they may not see any insecurity in distant, societal, or global issues. This situation seems ideal when we think about it in terms of fears. There can also be situations where personal lives have and are felt to be secure, but young people express insecurity in societal or global issues. This situation is similar to the concept of orientation-security (Kaufmann 1970), where young people are conscious of societal and world situations. This hypothesis is opposite to the situation where young people are so deeply involved with their own lives that they ignore societal and global threats. The previous situation could characterize young people's orientation into societal and global issues as citizens who are worried about the risks. If they have enough personal security, they have resources to orient towards society, and as citizens, to be politically conscious of what is happening in the world.



## 6. Empirical research on security and insecurity: two examples of data and methods

### 6.1 The qualitative inquiry of insecurity

The empirical results from the qualitative inquiry provide an analysis of how young people define insecurity. The results were previously reported internationally in an article in the journal *Young* (see Vornanen et al. 2009). This article uses the results as an example of research on the insecurity dimensions of young people's definitions.

The data were collected as part of a project entitled *Insecurity, Its Causes, and Methods of Coping*. The Department of Social Sciences, University of Kuopio conducted the research and the Academy of Finland supported the project (Niemelä et al., 1997; Vornanen, 2000). The aim of the project was to study insecurity in different age groups and in a wide variety of life spheres. Respondents selection was by random sample in five regions in Finland (Kuopio, Vaasa, Helsinki, Lahti, and Kemi). The data were collected from 1991 through 1995 (inclusive). The original sample consisted of 1010 young people, and the age range was 13 to 17 years. The response rate was high, 91% of the original sample. In total, 922 young people participated in the study, 431 girls (47%) and 491 boys (53%). This matched the distribution of sex in the same age population in Finland. The data were collected from schools. Respondents completed a questionnaire in classroom settings. The questionnaire comprised structured and open-ended questions concerning security and insecurity. (Vornanen et al. 2009.)

The question, "*In your own opinion, what is insecurity?*", (Write a few words) elicited young people's definitions of insecurity. The Finnish term for insecurity (*turvattomuus*) carries the meaning 'lack of safety' or 'lack of security', inferring that something is missing. The connotations of the word are also close to the concept of fear. The Finnish term for insecurity is common in everyday language; so, we can safely assume that young people are familiar with this word. (Vornanen et al. 2009.)

The purpose of an open-ended question was to collect data on the meanings of the concept of insecurity among young people. The structured questions in the questionnaire focused on gathering information on the degree of insecurity in different spheres of life, whereas the open-ended question aimed at eliciting data on the personal meanings of the concept. The different sections of the questionnaire (spheres of life) were human relations, school, health, society, environment, and global issues. This article will report only on the results elicited through the open-ended question. The questionnaire was rather extensive, comprised of 108 questions. For this reason, this analysis is limited to only the qualitative part of the study. (Vornanen et al. 2009.)

Nine hundred and twenty-two (922) respondents filled in the questionnaire, and 74% of this group answered the open-ended question concerning the definition of insecurity (683 young people, 339 girls, and 344 boys) (Vornanen, 2000; Vornanen et al. 2009). Almost equal numbers of girls and boys answered the open-ended question, even though the number of boys was greater among all the respondents.

Given that the questionnaire was so extensive, it is not surprising that not all of the respondents answered the open-ended question. The respondents might have been too tired or unwilling to write answers in their own words. Perhaps some of the young people felt

that the question was difficult. We can only presume that the more linguistically oriented young people were more likely to answer this question. However, the qualitative data from almost 700 young people were sufficient and represented randomly selected participants and their views for this age group.

The method used in this qualitative part of the study was content analysis (Kvale, 1996). To reach young people's own constructions of security, this databased method of analysis was relevant. At the beginning of the analysis, the data of open questions were reviewed several times in order to get an overview of the content. While reading, the researcher made preliminary notes. In the next phase of the analysis, data were classified quantitatively by the young people's definitions of insecurity divided into groups or categories by their main themes (see Table 1).

Insecurity	Girls %	Boys %	All %
Fear and anxiety	18.0	20.0	19
Loneliness	23.6	10.2	16.8
Lack of family or difficulties in family relations	10.0	9.6	9.8
Violence, fear of crime	5.3	10.5	7.9
Deficiencies in well-being and financial situation	6.2	5.5	5.9
Feelings of having no place in the world or personal space, feeling of not belonging anywhere	6.2	4.9	5.5
War	3.8	6.1	5
Others (together, smaller % than earlier mentioned)	21.4	38.7	29
Total (n) %	100 (344)	100 (339)	100 (683)

Table 1. 'Insecurity' defined by 13-17-year-old Finns (percentage, the most often mentioned). Source: Vornanen (2000, 259) and Vornanen et al. (2009, 407)

The differences between girls and boys have not been tested using statistical procedures, and we cannot comment on significant differences in the youth population. The results show only slight differences between girls and boys in percentages - how many defined insecurity as fear and anxiety, for example, or the most general theme among boys or girls. Every fifth boy defined insecurity as fear and anxiety while the biggest insecurity category among girls was loneliness or lack of support.

The categories of insecurity found in the data were analyzed and divided according to three headings or circles:

- the inner circle, i.e. insecurity related to personal emotions and experiences: fear and anxiety, low self-esteem, instability, lack of safety
- the social circle, i.e. insecurity related to social interaction: loneliness, lack of support, lack of trust, lack of family relations, lack of privacy, feeling of no place in the world or personal space, feeling of not belonging anywhere, discrimination, bullying
- the outer circle, i.e. insecurity related to external realities: threat, uncertainty regarding the future, deficiencies in well-being and financial situation, violence, fear of crime, war.

Girls and boys gave slightly different meanings to insecurity (Vornanen et al. 2009). Girls seemed to define insecurity more in social terms while boys defined it in outer terms such as threats to their integrity. The feminine interpretation connected to socio-economic features such as loneliness, low self-esteem, lack of support and trust and bad family relationships, and to lack of health. The masculine interpretation showed that boys, more often than girls, combined insecurity with fear, anxiety, lack of safety, violence, fear of crime, discrimination, and bullying, or with lack of privacy. For both sexes, personal issues and social relationships constituted the main themes. Distant issues stayed more behind the scenes.

## 6.2 The quantitative inquiry of insecurity

The other empirical example of research on young people's insecurity came from quantitative research on insecurity, studied as part of a national survey used as a youth barometer (2010, N 1900, see Myllyniemi 2010). The nationally representative sample (made in Population Register Centre, Finland) consisted of young people, aged between 15 and 29 years. According to some definitions, the term 'young people' includes all under the age of 29 (Youth Act 2006/72; Youth work and Youth Policy 2011). The study was carried out by telephone interviews (Myllyniemi 2010b, 10).

Here we report young people's answers regarding how much they experience insecurity related to each of the issues mentioned in the questionnaire, based on the article published in Youth Barometer, 2010 (Vornanen & Miettinen, 2010). We then analyze the results in relation to the empirical findings presented earlier, in order to reach a holistic view of insecurity, as experienced by young people.

In Youth Barometer, the questionnaire consisted of different dimensions of insecurity related to personal life and to societal and global issues. Two questions contained 27 dimensions. Subjects rated each dimension on a five-point Likert scale from 1 "very little or not at all" to 5 "very much"; an option of "cannot answer" was included separate from the scale.

Statistics included factor analysis for the group of young people who did not answer for any single insecurity item that they did not know. Altogether, 1537 (listwise) youngsters were included in the analysis; 696 of the respondents were women and 841 were men, with 831 of them being students. The factor analysis used the maximum likelihood extraction method and promax rotation, which produces factors that can correlate with each other. Factor analysis was based on correlation matrixes. The result of this analysis was the solution of six

factors that exceeded the eigenvalue 1, which, cumulatively, explained 47,4% (coefficient of determination) of variation (see Table 2).

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	Communality
<b>Victimization</b>							
Victimization of sexual violence	,903	-,145	-,012	,003	-,004	-,065	,65
Victimization of physical violence	,862	-,105	,075	-,121	,040	-,063	,61
Victimization of mental violence	,834	-,003	,036	-,097	,049	-,092	,63
Own risk to exclude	,677	,111	-,001	-,107	-,097	,089	,49
Loneliness	,642	,057	,021	,021	-,103	,040	,44
Security of neighbourhood	,547	,024	-,015	,040	-,040	,138	,39
Own health	,360	,209	-,071	-,036	-,018	,246	,37
<b>Human unethical behaviour</b>							
Values and attitudes in society	-,076	,924	,010	-,023	-,195	-,048	,53
Global economy	-,061	,770	,053	-,043	,048	-,022	,58
World politics	,050	,624	,066	,039	-,123	,080	,46
Climate change because human activities	-,075	,595	,120	-,070	,065	,013	,40
International terrorism	,102	,538	-,051	,030	,151	-,022	,50
Epidemias and pandemias	,149	,520	-,073	-,036	,152	-,044	,43
Sufficiency of Energy	-,058	,484	-,128	-,056	,397	-,026	,47
Future of welfare services	-,007	,442	,109	,126	,151	,007	,53
Crimes against information network	,044	,373	,089	,187	,165	-,043	,52
<b>Polarization and declining joint responsibility</b>							
Inequality of Finnish people	,032	-,042	,795	-,028	,028	,002	,60
Weakening communities	-,010	-,042	,766	,031	,066	-,023	,61
Aging population	,007	,121	,671	-,057	-,033	,029	,50
Racist violence	,104	-,014	,553	,117	,015	,006	,46
Exclusion of young people	-,008	,174	,499	,041	-,072	,039	,39

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	Communality
<b>International relations, religion and politics</b>							
Russia	-,175	-,045	,030	,752	-,064	,008	,44
Islam	-,161	-,105	,060	,737	-,074	,030	,41
Expanding European Union	,063	,111	,005	,618	-,086	,036	,49
Globalizing economy	,104	,105	-,054	,577	,121	-,031	,56
Growth of population in globe	,021	,217	-,039	,526	,064	,027	,54
Conflicts between religions	,007	-,087	,392	,458	-,022	-,022	,49
Increasing amount of immigrants	,030	,330	,035	,373	-,063	-,036	,40
Weapons of mass destruction (e.g. nuclear weapons)	,147	,032	,029	,359	,327	-,051	,51
<b>Environmental catastrophes</b>							
Nature catastrophes	-,107	-,090	,005	-,068	,802	,114	,50
Pollution of environment	-,108	,081	,113	-,097	,678	,046	,50
Military attack to Finland	,198	-,012	-,057	,016	,541	-,038	,39
<b>Risks in personal life</b>							
Own livelihood	-,121	-,002	,024	-,048	,086	,737	,51
Own security	,135	,032	,006	-,105	,012	,598	,43
Employment opportunities	-,073	-,045	,055	-,005	,080	,543	,30
Security of family members	,106	-,078	-,070	,205	-,013	,491	,32
Studies	,147	-,100	,000	,183	-,027	,313	,18
<b>Eigen value</b>	11,1	2,7	1,3	1,2	0,7	0,5	
The cumulative coefficient of determination 47,4 (%)							

Table 2. Dimensions of insecurity (factor analysis, maximum likelihood, promax, listwise).  
Source: Vornanen & Miettinen (2010, 208)

The factors were labelled by using all the variables that were loaded into factors, which was in line with the original idea of factor analysis; the names of the new factors were not those of the original variables (see Eskola 1995, 253). The first factor, related to personal insecurity and one's intimate social sphere, was *Victimization*. The second factor depicted global risks and insecurity related to them; it was *Human unethical behaviour*, because the point variable

reflected the values and attitudes in society. The third factor clearly indicated the dilemmas in Finnish society and was *Polarization and declining joint responsibility*. Factor number four related to issues of international policy and religions and was *International relations, religion, and politics*. Three items loaded to a fifth factor that was *Environmental catastrophes*. Since the sixth factor covered items related to personal life and insecurity issues, it was *Risks in personal life*. (Vornanen & Miettinen 2010.)

The factors represented the dimensions of insecurity in youth aged 15–29 years. We then studied the relations among different dimensions of youth's insecurity and the correlations between different factors. We noticed that factors seemed to be in relation to each other and there were quite strong connections between some factors (see Table 3).

Factors as insecurity dimensions	Victimization	Human unethical behaviour	Polarization and declining joint responsibility	International relations, religion and politics	Environmental catastrophes	Risks in personal life
Victimization	1,000					
Human unethical behaviour	,573	1,000				
Polarization and declining joint responsibility	,306	,579	1,000			
International relations, religion and politics	,411	,722	,674	1,000		
Environmental catastrophes	,479	,733	,430	,562	1,000	
Risks in personal life	,417	,444	,350	,332	,348	1,000

Table 3. The correlations between insecurity dimensions. Source: Vornanen & Miettinen (2010, 209)

The correlations between factors showed that there was a relationship between personal and more distant dimensions of insecurity (see Table 3). The strongest correlations (by the criteria  $>0,6$ ) were detected between environmental catastrophes and human unethical behaviour (.733) and between international relations, religion and politics and human unethical behaviour (.722). International relations, religion and politics and polarization and declining joint responsibility also had strong correlation (.674). The loaded variables for those factors were quite similar, which might explain the strong correlation.

There were also strong correlations ( $>0,5$ ) between human unethical behaviour and victimization (.573), as well as between polarization and declining joint responsibility and human unethical behaviour (.579).

## 7. Conclusions, implications, and discussion

Qualitative results show a wide array of dimensions of insecurity in young people's own definitions. Young people are conscious of the personal, social, societal, and global threats.

The world and environment do not necessarily become more complicated for young people, but as the results show, life's complexities and challenges gradually unveil and become clearer to them (Lahikainen et al., 1995, 42). The open-ended questions gave young people more freedom to define and describe the content of the insecurity concept. The following table compares the two studies and analyzes the content of the concept:

<b>Qualitative inquiry: dimensions</b>	<b>Content of the concept</b>	<b>Quantitative inquiry: dimensions (factors)</b>
The inner circle, i.e. insecurity related to personal emotions and experiences: fear and anxiety, low self-esteem, instability, lack of safety	<b>Personal risks</b> <b>Inner feelings, fear and anxiety</b> <b>Threat to identity</b>	The threats of personal life The risks of victimisation
The social circle, i.e. insecurity related to social interaction: loneliness, lack of support, lack of trust, lack of family relations, lack of privacy, feeling of no place in the world or personal space, feeling of not belonging anywhere, discrimination, bullying	<b>Social risks</b> <b>Loneliness</b> <b>Distrust, lack of trust</b> <b>Discrimination</b> <b>Difficulties in participation</b>	Unethical behaviour of human beings  Polarisation of the population and the weakening of solidarity
The outer circle, i.e. insecurity related to external realities: threat, uncertainty regarding the future, deficiencies in well-being and financial situation, violence, fear of crime, war	<b>Societal and global risks</b> <b>Economic, political and cultural risks</b> <b>Violence</b> <b>Environmental risks</b>	International relationships, religion and politics  Natural catastrophes

Table 4. Comparison of insecurity dimensions based on qualitative and quantitative inquiry

This table shows the three categories of insecurity described by young people and analysed from the literature. The content of the personal level concept comes from insecurity as an emotional experience of fear and anxiety and threats to identity. Insecurity in social issues relates to personal relationships and risks in social life such as exclusion from participation. This level of security also has an emotional content of loneliness, distrust, or being rejected or discriminated by others. Young people may also be worried about the behaviour of others (unethical behaviour) or loosening social bonds in society, which may manifest in decreasing solidarity and polarization in a society. At the societal and global level, the content of security related to violence, environmental risks, and the unpredictability of economic and political decisions. Young people seem to be very aware of global risks.

The results of the qualitative study confirm that young people describe insecurity in a three-dimensional way; they argue that even young people do not feel safe from risks (Vornanen et al., 2009). They are mature enough to analyse three-dimensional risks at the same time. They connect insecurity first to their inner feelings and emotions as an inner experience with basic security and balance, second, to their social relationships, and third, to external circumstances, including socio-economic resources, violence, and war. Their social relationships give special significance to parents, to other relatives, and to friends. The external circumstances cover international relationships and global circumstances. At the societal level, insecurity connects with security resources, social support, and a secure environment.

The definitions of security by young people do contain both individualized and collective interpretations of insecurity. The visibility of individual interpretations points to the important meaning of social contacts for young people. This argument connects to the idea of social capital (Bourdieu 1984; Coleman 1991; Putnam 1994, 2000), which supports the well-being of an individual, and usually connects with good working life relations, wealth, and good health. For social capital, it is very important that people follow the norms of their social networks and that they are appreciated as important members of their networks. The networks or groups punish or exclude them if they do not obey the social rules or if they somehow cannot reach the level of their mates or of people close to them. Young people are afraid of exclusion from their social circles. They are not selfish because, if they have energy and time, they care not only about other people close to them but also about global situations. Sometimes the concerns of everyday life are so pressing that a young person might have no interest in global threats (Solantaus, 1987, 1990). However, young people point out the outer threats of insecurity and they are concerned about them.

Here we have to remind the reader that the insecurity studied with quantitative measures has been analyzed by factor analysis, which condenses the meaning of a variety of different factors. The strong correlations between factors allow us to assume that there is a connection between more personal and more distant issues of insecurity.

Insecurity is a concept that includes many dimensions and levels depending on the interpreter of the concept and on a person's own experiences. The various dimensions also change according to time and place. One restriction to these kinds of empirical studies is that, when trying to get a general picture or overview of insecurity, they may lose the context of and the connection to young people's real-life events and real experiences. Therefore, it is important to develop context-related insecurity studies. This question of context is highly important in comparative studies (see for example Taimalu et al. 2007). We need further studies to develop and to validate more measures for insecurity at each level: personal, social, societal, and global.

It seems that insecurity is somehow a very holistic, even "amoeba-like" phenomenon, which may have different content at different times and under different circumstances. We can compare this phenomenon, from this perspective, with happiness, which may also be experienced joyously or be severely curtailed, depending as well on different times and circumstances.

According to many approaches to insecurity (see Kaufmann 1970 and other previous studies on the concept), it is not just a feeling. Our empirical results provide evidence for



developing the concept of insecurity as a multi-level experience, which has manifestations at a personal level as well as in young people's orientation to more distant issues.

## 8. References

- Abbott-Chapman, J. (2000). Time out spaced out. *Youth Studies Australia*, Vol.19, No.1, pp. 1-8.
- Adler, A. (1964). *Superiority and social interest*. London, Routledge.
- Adler, A. (1971). *The practice and theory of individual psychology*. Original in 1923. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Beck, U. (1986). *Risikogesellschaft: auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: towards a new modernity*. London, Sage.
- Beck, U. (1996). 'Politiikan uudelleen keksiminen: kohti refleksiivisen modernisaation teoriaa', In: *Nykyajan jäljillä*, Ulrich, Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott, Lash (Eds.), pp. 11-82, Tampere, Vastapaino.
- Beck, U. (2001). *The brave new world of work*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Berki, R. N. (1986). *Security and society: Reflections on law, order and politics*. London, Dent.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984/1979). *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base. Clinical applications of attachment theory*. London, Routledge.
- Brunstad, P. O. (1998). *Ungdom og livstolkning. En studie av unge menneskers tro og fremtidsforventninger*. Trondheim, Tapir.
- Cameron, W. B. & McCormick, T. C. (1954). Concepts of Security and Insecurity. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 59, No.6, pp. 556-564.
- Cebulla, A. (2009). Risk through the years – A statistical portrait of young people's risk perceptions and experiences relative to those of older generations. *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol.12, No.1, pp. 39-56.
- Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of Social Theory*. Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- DeMuth, D. H. (1994). A Global paradigm for Family Therapists in the 21st Century, In: *The Global Family Therapist. Integrating the Personal, Professional and Political*, B. Berger Gould and D. H. DeMuth (Eds.), pp. 3-21, Boston, Allyn and Bacon.
- Eskola, J. (1995). Faktorianalyysi ja diskursiiviset tulkinnat, In: *Ihmistieteiden 1990-luvun metodologiaa etsimässä*, J. Eskola, J. Mäkelä & J. Suoranta (Eds.), pp. 247-258, Lapin yliopiston kasvatustieteellisiä julkaisuja C8, Rovaniemi,
- Evers, A. & Nowotny, H. (1987). *Über den Umgang mit Unsicherheit*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Fromm, E. (2000). *To Have or to Be*. New York, Continuum.
- Furedi, F. (1997). *Culture of fear: risk taking and the morality of low expectation*. London, Cassell.
- Furlong, A. & Cartmel, F. (1997). *Young people and social change. Individualization and Risk in Late Modernity*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity. Self and society in the late modern age*. Polity Press, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers.

- Green, E., Mitchell, W. & Bunton, R. (2000). Contextualizing Risk and Danger: An analysis of Young People's Perceptions of Risk. *Journal of Youth Studies* Vol.3, No.2, pp. 109-126.
- Hart, S. (2009). The 'problem' with youth: young people, citizenship and the community. *Citizenship Studies*, Vol.13, No.6, pp. 641-657.
- Jones, V. (2004). Communicating environmental knowledge: young people and the risk society. *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 5, No.2, pp. 213-228.
- Kaufmann, F.-X. (1970). *Sicherheit als soziologisches und sozialpolitisches Problem. Untersuchungen zu einer Wertidee hochdifferenzierter Gesellschaften*, Neue Folge Nr. 31, Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews. An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks (Ca), Sage.
- Lahikainen, A. R., Kraav, I., Kirmanen, T. & Maijala, L. (1995). *Lasten turvattomuus Suomessa ja Virossa*, Kuopio University Publications E, Social Sciences 25, Kuopio.
- Lupton, D. (1999). *Risk*, London, Routledge.
- Mau, S., Mewes, J. & Schöneck, N. M. (2011). Die Produktion sozialer Sicherheit. Beschäftigungssicherheit, Einkommenssicherung und gesundheitliche Versorgung in ländervergleichender Perspektive. *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 21, pp. 175-202.
- McDonald, M. (2002). *Security, sovereignty and identity*. Refereed paper presented to the Jubilee conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association. Australian National University, Canberra, October 2002. Date of access 25.10.2011. Available from: <http://arts.anu.edu.au/sss/apsa/Papers/mcdonald.pdf>.
- Miles, S. (2007). Different journeys at different speeds: Young people, Risk and the Challenge of Creative Learning. *Journal of Youth Studies* Vol.10, No.3, pp. 271-284.
- Myllyniemi, S. (ed.) (2010). *Puolustuskannalla. Nuorisobarometri 2010*. (Youth Barometer 2010, original in Finnish). Helsinki, Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/ Nuorisotutkimusseura, julkaisu 107.
- Myllyniemi S. (2010b). Kyselyn toteutus ja taustamuuttajat. In: *Puolustuskannalla. Nuorisobarometri 2010*. Youth Barometer 2010, original in Finnish), S. Myllyniemi (ed.), pp. 10-24, Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/ Nuorisotutkimusseura, julkaisu 107.
- Niemelä, P., Kainulainen, S., Laitinen, H., Pääkkönen, J., Rusanen, T., Ryyänen, Ulla, Widgrén, Erja, Vornanen, Riitta, Väisänen, Raija and Ylinen, Satu (1997). *Suomalainen turvattomuus (Insecurity in Finland)*, Helsinki, Sosiaali- ja terveysturvan keskusliitto.
- Niemelä, P. (2000). Turvallisuuden käsite ja tarkastelukehikko, In: *Inhimillinen turvallisuus*. P. Niemelä, and Anja Riitta Lahikainen (Eds.), pp. 21-37, Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Pain, R., Panelli, R., Kindon, S. & Little, J. (2010). Moments in everyday/ distant geopolitics: Young people's fears and hopes. *Geoforum* 41, pp. 972-982.
- Putnam, R. D. & Leonardi, R. & Nanetti, R. Y. (1994). *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. New Jersey, Princeton University Press.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, Simon & Schuster.

- Roche, J. (1999). Children: Rights, participation and citizenship, *Childhood*, Vol. 6, No.4, pp. 475-493.
- Solantaus, T. (1987). Hopes and worries of young people in three European countries, *Health Promotion*, Vol. 2, No.1, pp.19-27.
- Solantaus, T. (1990). *Mental health of young people and the threat of nuclear war. Socioepidemiological and activity theoretical studies*. Department of Public Health, Helsinki: Helsinki University.
- Taimalu, M., Lahikainen A. R., Korhonen P. & Kraav, I. (2007). Self-reported fears as indicators of Young children's well-being in societal change: A cross-cultural perspective. *Social Indicators Research* 80, pp. 51-78.
- Threadgold, S. & Nilan, P. (2009). Reflexivity of Contemporary Youth, Risk and Cultural Capital. *Current Sociology*, Vol.57, No.1, pp. 47-68.
- Törrönen, M. & Vornanen, R. (2002). Emotionaalinen huono-osaisuus peruskoululaisten korostamana syrjäytymisenä, *Nuorisotutkimus*, Vol.20, No.4, pp. 33-42.
- Wilkinson, I. (2001). *Anxiety in a risk society*, London, Routledge.
- Vornanen, R. (2000). *Turvallisuus elämän kysymyksenä. 13–17-vuotiaiden nuorten turvallisuus ja turvattomuuden aiheet*. Kuopio, Kuopio University Publications E, Social Sciences 81.
- Vornanen, R. & Miettinen, J. (2010). Nuorten turvattomuus ja epävarmuus vuonna 2010. In: *Puolustuskannalla. Nuorisobarometri 2010* (Youth Barometer 2010, original in Finnish), S. Myllyniemi (ed.), pp. 205-220, Helsinki, Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/ Nuorisotutkimusseura, julkaisuja 107.
- Vornanen, R., Törrönen, M. & Niemelä, P. (2009). Insecurity of young people: The meaning of insecurity as defined by 13-17-year-old Finns. *Young*, Vol.17, No.4, pp. 399-419.
- Youth Act (2006/72). Nuorisolaki, (original in Finnish, English translation is found in the report: Youth work and Youth Policy).
- Youth work and Youth Policy (2010). Date of access 27.10.2011. Available from: [http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/Liitteet/YOUTH\\_WORK\\_AND\\_YOUTH\\_POLICY.pdf](http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/Liitteet/YOUTH_WORK_AND_YOUTH_POLICY.pdf).

© 2012 The Author(s). Licensee IntechOpen. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

IntechOpen

IntechOpen