

PROLOGUE

This book will take you, the reader, directly to some of the greatest sexual mysteries in Finland and the West. It is thanks to the systematic surveys conducted in Finland over many decades on sexuality and the values related to it that I am able to illustrate these mysteries for you. Because sexuality is the most secret and intimate part of human life, the only way to reliably access information about it is through this type of long-term study.

This long journey into sexual patterns and values all the way from the 1940s up to the present is possible thanks to the first study on Finnish sex, conducted in the early 1970s by the three researchers Kai Sievers, Osmo Koskelainen, and Kimmo Leppo. At the time, their 1971 sex study was only the second in the world to be representative of an entire population. In the early 1990s, I took on the tradition started by those three researchers, working together with Elina Haavio-Mannila at the University of Helsinki. We gave the research project the name “FINSEX study”. The original financing came from the Academy of Finland.

I went on to study the sexual lives of Finns also in the later part of the 1990s at the Population Research Institute at Väestöliitto (Family Federation of Finland), again with Elina Haavio-Mannila. We compared our Finnish data to late-1990s data from Sweden, Estonia, and the city of St. Petersburg in Russia. This time, our project was financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The majority of the data applied in this book derive from the third phase of the FINSEX study. In 2007, I conducted a new, representative sex survey at Väestöliitto’s Population Research Institute. Once again, financial support came from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. This time also, I was able to compare Finnish data on number of sexuality issues to eight other European countries.

The main idea in this book is to provide comprehensive information about the changes that have taken place in the sexual lives of Finnish people in recent decades, and to compare Finland to other European countries. In addition to gathering the research materials, I have also reviewed a wealth of international research on the subject throughout the book’s chapters. I present the most important sexual theories to help explain people’s sexual motives and behavioural differences. These theories offer an international frame of reference for interpreting the Finnish findings and viewpoints.

I wish to thank those whose contributions to this book have been essential. My greatest gratitude is owed to the Population Research Institute of Väestöliitto and its Director Ismo Söderling. Without their support, it would not have been possible to write or publish this book.

I also want to give my heartfelt thanks to Statistics Finland for gathering the most recent data through a postal survey – and to their researchers Päivi Hokka and Outi

Stenbäck, who were the contact persons for this project. The survey data from different years were expertly combined by Édua Holmström at the Population Research Institute. In addition, I would like to thank Elina Haavio-Mannila for her earlier, wonderful co-operation.

Writing this book took me on a captivating journey through the basic challenges of human sexuality, and its most recent and in many ways surprising trends. I hope that readers will learn as much from reading this book as I did from writing it. Sexuality – even the study of it – is a fascinating subject.

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Osmo Kontula