

<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

---

## The Mental Life of a Telephone Pole and Other Trifles : Affective Practices in the Context of Research Funding

Olsson, Pia

2022

---

Olsson , P 2022 , ' The Mental Life of a Telephone Pole and Other Trifles : Affective Practices in the Context of Research Funding ' , Journal of Contemporary Ethnography , vol. 52 , no. 1 , pp. 84-107 . <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912416221085713>

---

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/353535>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/08912416221085713>

---

cc\_by

publishedVersion

---

*Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.*

*This is an electronic reprint of the original article.*

*This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.*

*Please cite the original version.*

# The Mental Life of a Telephone Pole and Other Trifles: Affective Practices in the Context of Research Funding

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography  
2023, Vol. 52(1) 84–107  
© The Author(s) 2022



Article reuse guidelines:  
[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](https://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)  
DOI: 10.1177/08912416221085713  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/jce](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/jce)



Pia Olsson<sup>1</sup> 

## Abstract

This article uses ethnographic social media analysis to interpret affective practices concerning research funding. The analysis is based on Finnish Twitter discussions both within academia and between researchers and those outside academia. Different kinds of affective practices, both sharing and othering, are present in the discussions that guide the ways we make sense of the role of science in our individual lives, as well as in society more generally. We need to see these emotions at work as signals of negotiations of values in the context of neoliberal universities and freedom of science.

## Keywords

research funding, neoliberal university, digital ethnography, Twitter, affective practices

## Introduction

Who, what, and why to fund are topical questions in the current politics of science. Research funding has come to play an important role not only in the

---

<sup>1</sup>Department of Cultures, European Ethnology, University of Helsinki, Helsingin Yliopisto, Finland

### Corresponding Author:

Pia Olsson, Department of Cultures, European Ethnology, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 59, Helsingin Yliopisto 00014, Finland.  
Email: [pia.olsson@helsinki.fi](mailto:pia.olsson@helsinki.fi)

survival of individual researchers but also in that of individual disciplines and research institutions, as a growing part of the funding is based on competition and short-term projects. Furthermore, these questions are not only discussed by politicians or experts but have become topics that arouse emotions both among those outside academia and those involved in academic work at a grassroots level, namely researchers. These discussions reflect the affective practices that people connect to research funding and, as such, show the way they give meaning to research in general and individual research fields in particular. Through the following ethnographic social media analysis, I interpret the different kinds of affective practices concerning research funding, and the ways they work in our research community and society in general. This happens in a situation where economic applicability and the “knowledge economy” are highlighted (Brown 2011; Davies and Petersen 2005; Olssen and Peters 2005), and where research has to defend its right to exist in a new way.

I understand *affective practice* as described by Margaret Wetherell (2014, 22–4). For Wetherell, McConville, and McCreanor, neural firing, cognitive action, narratives, and intersubjective negotiation compose a “patchwork” defined as affective practice. This understanding allows us to see both the forms of order but also the different possibilities—the dynamism—that affective processes may incorporate. Affective practices are constructed of patterns operating differently with one another in different processes. The nature of these patterns is wide-ranging, including somatic, neural, phenomenological, discursive, relational, cultural, economic, developmental, and historical patterns (Wetherell 2014, 4, 13–4; Wetherell, McConville, and McCreanor 2019, 15).

My focus in this patchwork is on narratives, with whose help I also aim to understand the intersubjective negotiations. In this line of thought, affect is “never owned, always intersecting and interacting.” It is a way of doing things not only based on improvisation and training but also on discipline and control. Looking at affective practices means focusing on the different elements—the patterns—behind them and their potential (Wetherell 2014, 22–4). Wetherell et al. (2019, 15) define these patterns as psycho-discursive, meaning that they are a form of human sensemaking. Through the narratives in social media, I analyze the ways that affective practices shape our understanding concerning research funding, which forms the basis for individual researchers to do what they are trained for. To this end, I look for the human sensemaking and routines of emotional regulations within these narratives.

Furthermore, I seek to emphasize the active role that emotions play in the way we understand our everyday life, as this everydayness also has an effect on the way we understand the world and our own role in it. Like Wetherell, Sara Ahmed (2014) also highlights the social nature of emotions. Emotionality is connected with power; it is a way to give others “meaning and value.” She

argues that “emotions become attributes of collectives”: it is the “feeling” that constructs the “being.” This is why it is more important to ask what emotions do rather than what they are (Ahmed 2014, 2, 4). Recognizing expressions of affect within the narratives is an important lead in understanding the work they are doing. The texts I am using sometimes name or perform emotions (Ahmed 2014, 12–3), but not always. Ahmed argues that “figures of speech”—metonymies and metaphors—are essential to the emotionality of a text. In my analysis, I have followed these leads to open up what I have defined as affective practices of othering and sharing.

In order to examine the meaning-making processes around research funding, I have analyzed Finnish Twitter discussions reflecting the drastic changes that have occurred in recent decades within research funding. In Finland, the expenditure on educational institutions has decreased during the last decade, standing at 1.85% of GDP in 2011, and 1.57% in 2017 (<https://stats.oecd.org/>: Expenditure on Educational Institutions as a Percentage of GDP). Since 2016, the amount of government core funding for universities has decreased (Tieteen tila 2018, 9), which has resulted in considerable change in the everyday infrastructure of academic life.

After presenting my research field and methods, I will focus on the ways in which emotions work in the affective interplay between othering and sharing. These processes take shape both in the narratives between the research community and those outside academia on one hand, and within the academic community on the other. These two points of view open up the affective landscape of neoliberal academia, where individual researchers aim to respond to the expectations of both the academic structures and society in general.

## Twitter as an Ethnographic Field

This article is part of the *Academic Affects* project, in which we focus on research strategies producing affective practices in academia. Our project, involving five researchers, is aimed at what can be defined as team ethnography (Hine 2015, 189–90), focusing both individually and jointly on specific platforms reflecting academic life, and ultimately producing a shared and reflexive understanding of the ways that affective practices work within it. To this end, we have conducted interviews, organized focus group discussions based on the learning café method, actively observed the academic life we are all a part of, and engaged in social media. The process can be defined as a junction of “multi-sited team ethnography” and “being in the field together.” Although focusing here only on online narrations, the interpretations presented are based on the *fieldwork* of our team, emphasizing the multiple

ways that fields are produced in an ethnographic process (Beneito-Montagut, Begueria, and Cassián 2017, 667–8, 674).

In this process, one of my research fields has been the narratives present in Twitter. Based on Wetherell's idea of affective patterns as psycho-discursive, I define my work as discourse analytically oriented digital ethnography (Caliandro 2014; see also Caliandro 2018, 558). In order to interpret the narratives reflecting affective practices and observe the interlinking cultural connections between them (Caliandro 2014), I have used both my offline and online experiences of academia.

One of the focal points of conducting “traditional” ethnographic research is the interaction between the researcher and the field. However, Alessandro Caliandro (2018, 571) has suggested that rather than aiming to apply traditional methods to social media environments, we should find new ways of conducting fieldwork within them. Although it cannot be regarded as “proper” ethnography, having no direct contact with the participants, he argues that new methods can nonetheless incorporate an ethnographic attitude aimed at an understanding of “social formations, systems of meaning, and strategies of self-presentation.” As my presence in the actual discussions I have analyzed is nonexistent, I have adapted Caliandro's idea of *following* (2018, 559).

My understanding of the shared topics on Twitter has come about via my presence there and by following the ongoing discussions. This period of observation was a way of becoming acquainted with the field and of finding a way to capture the myriad of emotions connected with academic life—to find the *thing to follow* (Caliandro 2018; Hine 2011). Focusing solely on online communication is a focused point of view compared, for example, with the extended ethnography of social interaction online (Beneito-Montagut 2011). However, it allows concentration on affective practices of communication among and between individuals and groups that otherwise might not correspond with each other. After a period of following, I chose one search word—research funding [*tutkimusrahoitus*])—to guide my analysis as I had come across the word in many different contexts in my Twitter feeds. I focused the search on tweets posted during 2019 and 2020, in order to understand the current meaning-makings around research funding, and saved the search in my Twitter account on January 8, 2021 to ensure that the collection of tweets would not vary between different searches. The original tweets were mostly in Finnish and have been translated into English for this article. This means that they will not be traceable as such on Twitter, and is also a way of preserving the anonymity of the tweeters.

In my analysis, I have reconstructed my research field via the collection of tweets: I have only followed the tweeters, *the natives* (Caliandro 2018), to a limited extent, from the viewpoint of their understanding of research funding.

Christine Hine (2015, 3) has pointed out that mediated communication can be troubling for ethnographers, as it does not allow us to fully capture all the meanings shared among those involved. Bearing this limitation in mind, I have found Twitter to be a rewarding crystallization of affective practices in academia: even as a conscious form of self-presentation, the tweets are fleeting moments and casual reflections of the lives of tweeters.

The tweeters are not active participants in my ethnographic process and as their social formations have specific features compared to those taking place offline, they are not necessarily as persistent and dense. For these reasons, I have chosen to call my groups of tweeters online publics, who are nonetheless still intent upon sharing ideas and emotions (Caliandro 2018, 564–6). During the analyzing process, I paid attention to two online publics formed through social discourse: those outside academia criticizing the processes of research funding, and those within academia, both defending it but also sharing their emotions with one another. The two publics were both discussing with one another but also talking past each other. Furthermore, they were discussing research funding at two different levels: the justification for research at the principled level, and the everyday challenges posed by research funding for those working in academia. I have called these affective practices othering and sharing, based on the ways in which I have interpreted them as provoking discussion within and between the online publics.

A search word sometimes takes the reader to a thread, or rather to a mesh of tweets. I have done my best to follow the threads that open when finding a tweet with the search word in question. This means that the collection of tweets also includes texts where the word “research funding” is not visible as such, but is part of the ongoing discussion. This process reflects the nature of social media, which has been described as an “assemblage of geodata, motif, text, emojis, likes, shares, and networks,” and also as a messy, instant, and unruly archive with a multimodal logic. There is always a specific social context and practice in which the items shared should be interpreted (Geismar 2017, 333–6; Hartig et al. 2018; Uimonen 2020, 41–4). For this reason, I have chosen to use the collection of tweets in order to see the various linkages between different tweets and multimodal assemblages, and not for example a collection of web-scraped posts where the linkages easily disappear. There are approximately 1,000 tweets in the assemblage altogether, from which I have chosen about 150 for closer analysis, and within which I have recognized the two practices under study. From these, approximately two-thirds represent the practice of othering, and one-third the practice of sharing. Sometimes both practices were present in one tweet. The analysis is not quantitative in nature, however, but is based on close reading of the tweets from the viewpoint of affective expressions. This means that these tweets are

the ones in which emotions and affective practices are visible in some form. The theoretical starting points suggested by Ahmed and Wetherell have guided the analysis.

The number of Twitter users is relatively low in Finland. In 2020, only 13% of Finnish people aged 16–89 used Twitter. Furthermore, those with higher education are more active in using social media than those with less education (Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT): Väestön tieto- ja viestintätekniikan käyttö [verkkojulkaisu]). This is in line with other statistics providing background information on Twitter users (e.g., Wojcik and Hughes 2019). In my assemblage of tweets, the discussants are either researchers, members of the general public, or research institutions with their official Twitter accounts. What makes Twitter interesting in the context of academia is the way the universities have highlighted the social media visibility of research and researchers, providing special guidelines for social media activity (see, e.g., University of Helsinki Social Media Guidelines 2021; also, Väliverron 2021, 7). Twitter is also basically an open media, and as such is a good way to communicate with the wider public.

The cultures of using social media platforms can vary even within one such platform. These cultures are defined, for example, by the different ways of communicating, by manners and style of speaking, or by the ways in which the conversationalists are identifiable (Laaksonen and Matikainen 2013, 199). The tweets generating discussion in my assemblage of tweets are often provocative, and hence the discussion bias can be questioned: How well does this material represent the myriad of affective practices people are involved in concerning research and how it is funded? Addressing this particular question is beyond the scope of my material. What the tweets can reveal, however, is how the affective practices work in order to shape our understanding about the role of research in contemporary society. This is part of the ongoing discussion on the role of scientific knowledge on one hand, and antiscience and especially science-related populism on the other (see, e.g., Hotez 2020; Mede and Schäfer 2020), but it is also very much connected with discussions on the neoliberal university (see, e.g., Ergül and Coşar 2017; Zawadzki and Jensen 2020).

In general, the tweets concerning research funding have many functions: They are a way of letting people know about funding opportunities and of informing others about funding received or not received. They are interwoven with people's research careers, in terms of their employment or unemployment. They can be highly institutional or very personal. Tweets with an emotional context are the focus of my analysis, however. This means that the texts analyzed here involve a myriad of emotions, ranging from contempt, anger, frustration, and despair to happiness and contentment.

I joined Twitter in February 2020 as a result of our research project. I have introduced myself to the Twitter community as a researcher of affect in academia, and I have published and tweeted a blog text concerning my own affective experiences in academia. I have also occasionally published tweets about our project and about my own research within it. Sometimes I have also initiated a discussion about a certain theme concerning affective practices, but these have not proved particularly popular. In June 2021, my Twitter account had around 350 followers. However, many of them started to follow me right after I announced my research theme, which I interpret as a sign of personal interest toward questions of affective practices in academia.

I have sought to be as open as possible about my reasons and aims when it comes to being part of Twitter. John Postill and Sarah Pink (2012, 124, 134) have underlined the importance of understanding online/offline relationships, but at the same time have emphasized the researcher's online movement and becoming part of the digital (and offline) crowds in experiential ways. This is also the way in which I have entered my ethnographic field. I have learned to navigate in the world of social media and investigate the way that interaction takes place there. My offline interaction with my research field comes from my own experiences in academia and via the group discussions we have organized for the project. This means that I can say that I know the academic field in which I am conducting my research, but I do not necessarily interact offline with the specific people I get to know online. Concerning this article in particular, this is most problematic in the case of tweeters who come from outside academia, as the topic is both personal, emotional, and political. As such, my ethnographic presence and ability to interpret the various nuances among the online publics is not balanced. However, my aim is not to prove one side of the argumentative dual the winner, but rather to focus on the affective practices and the ways they may reshape our understanding of knowledge, science, and research, and their role in contemporary Western society.

At first sight, questions of research funding might sound neutral and non-personal and, as such, a theme that would not be sensitive in the sense that it could hurt those whose tweets are analyzed here for research purposes. However, such tweets can be very personal (receiving funding/not receiving funding) and reveal something profound about the life of the tweeter. Moreover, tweets are often powerful descriptions of fleeting moments with different kinds of affective practices. Specific ethical questions arise when it comes to social media as a research field, also when using Twitter, where the messages are open to all (unless you specifically prevent this) and where the Privacy Policy mentions the possibility of the academic use of tweets (Fiesler and Proferes 2018, 1–2; Zimmer and Proferes 2014, 256, 258). This does not suffice from the point of view of research ethics, however, as we cannot be



sure that the users have read or understood the meaning of the policy. Questions about informing the field and the need for anonymization also need to be considered in the case of Twitter. According to Fiesler and Proferes (2018, 1–2; see also Buchanan 2017, 4), consent is rarely requested by researchers when using Twitter. In my material, I have contacted those individuals whose tweets have either been quoted in full or who have been the focus of a tweet, if I have considered the text to be sensitive or insulting. Otherwise, I have largely anonymized the tweeters, regarding this as a sufficient measure to protect them. In the case of institutions or people with a public profile, I have included the name or status of the tweeter in the text.

Turning now to othering and sharing, the two affective practices around research funding, I want to emphasize the nature of the interplay between them. Even though I have separated them analytically, these practices interact with one another, affecting each other differently in different compositions.

### **“Remove the Freedom of Science and You Remove the Science” —Affective Practices of Othering**

According to our knowledge, [Oula] Silvennoinen is specialised in the history of Finnish wars and extremist movements. His recognised research has been financed among others by @SuomenAkademia [Academy of Finland], where competitive research funding is based on elaborative evaluation by experts. (@helsinki March 21, 2020)

The tweet above was published on the official Twitter site of the University of Helsinki in April 2020. It is a direct response to a tweet by a Finnish right-wing populist politician and member of parliament claiming that the researcher in question would be carrying out “subversion” financed by the University of Helsinki for the “neighbour,” namely Russia.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the tweet is clear: to question the integrity of the researcher and his research institution and to connect a specific research theme as such with questions of national loyalties.

This specific case received considerable attention among the two Twitter publics I recognized in the narratives. It was not one of a kind thematically but raised my awareness of the way that research funding was used as a means of drawing dividing lines between what is research-worthy and what is not. Sara Ahmed (2014, 1–2) writes about emotions working “to shape the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies.” She has focused on textual narratives that do othering. These narratives invite the reader to develop certain emotions in order to be able to identify themselves as a member of the party

in question—in Ahmed’s case, the national body for example. This identifying is carried out in relation to “others,” who are seen as inflicting our feelings.

Here, in the case of research funding, I see this othering happening between those inside and outside the academic community. This othering is about what constitutes “real science,” and what kind of science is significant enough to be funded, namely significant enough to exist. It is based on narratives that hierarchize disciplines and research topics and, as such, it affects the research community and ultimately society in its entirety. At the same time, this othering is experienced at the most personal level: it is a process whereby one’s capabilities, and the impact and value of one’s work, are evaluated in a profound way. Following Sara Ahmed’s (2014) conceptualizing, I have identified the affective practices criticizing and defending the freedom of science as the practice of othering. Here, the origins of affect can be traced to “the other”: either those doing unworthy research or those not understanding the essence of science; those outside and those inside academia.

The pronouncedly neutral reply by the University of Helsinki is a response to a wider discussion that had already been going on for some months on Twitter around the same issue. Reading only this one tweet without those preceding or following it, the message seems largely unbiased and mainly biographical. However, when considering the context, the message takes on quite different meanings: it is a statement by a research community defending one of its members, a historian who had been targeted by tweeters outside of academia. The emphasis in this message is on the competitive nature of research funding, on the evaluation process, and on the expertise this evaluation is based on—all establishing the credibility of the researcher. The over-competitiveness of the academic environment has received criticism (see, e.g., Carson, Bartneck, and Voges 2013; Davies and Petersen 2005), but here the competitiveness is used as a tool to argue for quality and credibility—and to provide communal support for an individual in the research community.

I have chosen this months-long Twitter discussion as my point of entry to analyze the ways in which emotions become stuck or attached to the narratives about research funding in the dialogue between the two publics, those outside and inside academia (Ahmed 2014). It was a discussion involving both researchers and people outside of academia but also research institutions and financiers, and as such provided a sphere for different opinions to meet. However, as is frequently the case in social media, the discussion was often aggressive, offensive, and *ad hominem*.

“A leech” (January 7, 2020), “a bedbug” (January 7, 2020), “a nuisance researcher” (May 16, 2020), “a fake researcher” (January 7, 2020), and “a parasite” (January 7, 2020) were all depictions of a researcher doing his work

by those outside of academia. The funder is the “taxpayer” (January 8, 2020, January 9, 2020), “everyman’s pocket” (January 7, 2020), and “the pay office of society” (January 7, 2020). Parasites, leeches, and bedbugs are animals that arouse fear and perhaps disgust in some of us. However, there is more to these words. The “parasite” and “leech” metaphors have an internationally long history in political discourse and are used for both racial and sociopolitical stigmatization (Musolff 2014). The Finnish word for parasite [*loinen*] also has a long history in its metaphorical use: the first meaning of the word in a Finnish dictionary is “a rural person belonging to the landless population who lives in other people’s homes” (*Nykysuomen sanakirja* 1992). The word was also used in historical research and, as such, was long considered part of the standard language for describing this rural socioeconomic group. The internet dictionary defines a “parasite” in a somewhat more disparaging manner as someone who lives at other people’s expense and who uses resources but gives nothing back (<https://www.suomisanakirja.fi/loinen>, February 8, 2020).

This vocabulary and the use of it are surprisingly close to what Sara Ahmed (2014) writes about the narratives of the national body and the way othering is carried out by making the distinction between them and us. In this case, it is a specific group of researchers who pose a threat to us, the taxpayers. It is the researchers who do not give anything back in return for what they get. On the contrary, they deplete the taxpayers, endangering their well-being. It is the taxpayers who uphold society, and it is the researchers who endanger that selfsame society by squandering money on “overpriced pointless research” (January 9, 2020), on “all kinds of s\*it” (September 11, 2020), and on “research based on false scientific premises” (January 9, 2020).

What I see happening here is the transformation of the others, the researchers, into “objects of feeling” (Ahmed 2014, 11), into objects of contempt and even hate. Contempt works to align and to divide subjects into different groups. Also here, the history of the figures of speech adds to the reader’s understanding of the emotions at work (Ahmed 2014, 12–3, 42–4). The group of “parasites” is the group that we have been taught to regard as being on the lowest rung of the social order. Now it is the academic “elite” that have been positioned in this social class, turning the social order upside down. In this line of argumentation, being a taxpayer also confers the right to define what is worth financing:

Does it come as any surprise that a #taxpayer wants to get some benefit for their money and work? Do you support an elitist and class society where a citizen must pay whatever, like a slave? That is Nazism. 🇩🇪 (January 9, 2020)

The juxtaposition between the “funder” and what ought to be funded is an integral part of the discussion focusing on the point of entry presented at the beginning of this section. However, it is a theme that also comes up in other threads concerning research funding. Topics considered trifles or pointless research are circulated in the threads, one being the fictitious example of the mental life of a telephone pole (March 24, 2020, see also January 25, 2020). A research project is described as a “research project,” in inverted commas, insinuating that it cannot be considered research at all (March 24, 2020), or is balderdash, as another tweet put it (January 9, 2020). It seems that the idea of the neoliberal university is also embraced among those tweeters who highlight their role as taxpayers: universities exist to advance the national economy in an entrepreneurial way with their academic products (Davies and Petersen 2005). This makes us—the taxpayers—clients or investors who have the right to have a say in what and why something should be funded.

One of the tweets argued that funding had centered on topics that emphasize disagreements, oppression, and discrimination. The logic of the tweet was that the more the research community focuses on these topics, the more you obtain funding—gender studies being an example. According to the tweeter, this is problematic because research focusing on disagreements just produces more juxtapositions (January 7, 2020). In these tweets, it is not the researchers in general that are transformed into objects of emotion, but a specific kind of research and the system that funds this kind of research. A well-known television and radio host, Ivan Puopolo, argued about the differences within “science”:

There is this difference, though, that under the topic of “Science” you can find all kinds of research from cancer research to a study where a researcher reports about his/her emotions when playing the cello. It’s perfectly justified to ask questions about the right amount to be allocated to this or that [research] using money obtained from others. (January 25, 2020)

In a later tweet, he goes on to argue: “If you say to the funder, give us one hundred million for education, what does that actually mean?” (January 25, 2020). His point about the amount of funding is emphasized with a ridiculous sum for any researcher. Another problem with regard to the research funding concerns the quality guarantee that is considered to be missing (see also January 8, 2020; March 24, 2020): there is no one verifying whether the research results are adequate and credible. Although not using the figures of speech dealt with above, the same idea of living at someone else’s expense for something that is not seen as useful for society is in evidence here as well. Conducting research on the mental life of a telephone pole or emotions when

playing the cello is mentioned in the tweets in order to ridicule research regarded as a waste of (a huge amount of) money. The examples are as far-fetched as the tweeters' imagination allows. In a comparison with what else could be done with the money, many better targets are also listed, such as health, employment, and education (January 9, 2020).

What is noteworthy, however, are the things that go unsaid in these threads. Even though the hardships and feelings of frustration connected to the competitiveness of research funding are factors that come up in many ways in other contexts, here—it seems—the research community remains united. There are hardly any comments on the topics, disciplines, or theoretical orientations that should not be funded—or on those topics that should perhaps be funded more than others—from tweeters representing academia. In this respect, academia seems to stand united, reflecting what Ahmed (2014, 74) calls “fellow feeling.” This is visible, for example, in the title of this section, which is a quotation from a response to the abovementioned tweet by Ivan Puopolo. Here, the emphasis is on the freedom of science. One aspect of this freedom is that it is up to the universities and funders to decide what to fund (January 25, 2020). This can be interpreted as a statement against the neoliberal idea of a regulated university (Olssen and Peters 2005, 314).

All in all, the response from the individual researchers and research communities to the criticism coming from outside academia is mostly based on the idea of educating the Twitter audience. This response is pronouncedly businesslike without any notable emotional signs, such as anger, or feeling wounded or discredited. It includes, for example, a thread of messages by well-known researcher on terrorism Leena Malkki, opening up the research funding procedure along with its different stages (January 8, 2020), and following up with a similar kind of thread from the Academy of Finland a couple of days later (January 10, 2020; February 25, 2020). Moreover, one of the research funding experts from the Academy published her own thread on the subject (January 18, 2020). She started her thread with questions summing up the topics that had been circulating in the Twitter feeds:

Why is a particular researcher given half a million [euros] of taxpayers' money?  
Does the money end up in the researcher's own pocket on top of his salary, like prize money? Why is it necessary for science to be supported by everyone?  
Why isn't this money used for the care of the elderly?

In her thread, she argues that the salaries researchers receive are not something to be envied. She also highlights the fact that the use of money is always a political decision, but a civilized society is supposed to take care both of its elderly people and of research. However, in general, efforts to explain the

meanings or importance of those research topics that are labelled as useless are almost nonexistent. One reason for this may be that in many tweets the discussion was considered to be political on both sides of the divide: the researchers were agitators, and those criticizing them right-wing enthusiasts (e.g., January 7, 2020; January 8, 2020; January 9, 2020). From the opposing point of view, the right-wing solutions were considered irrelevant or unrealistic (January 8, 2020; January 9, 2020).

When explaining the process from the researcher's point of view, the competitive nature of the research funding is emphasized. In the thread posted by Leena Malkki, the funding process is explained in detail. The complexity of the funding is also highlighted. The Academy of Finland funding is "very strictly peer-reviewed," and the "grant percentages are really low and the competition really tough." In this thread, the fact that the research community is multivoiced and that critical discussions also take place among academics is acknowledged, even though a wide consensus on the principles of evaluating research is also pointed out (January 8, 2020). This tweet provoked a discussion that positioned science against populism (January 8, 2020; January 9, 2020) but also about the autonomy of science (January 8, 2020) and the mechanisms of research funding (January 9, 2020).

In addition, tweeters outside of academia gave their support to the individual researcher in question and the academic community. Among these were a journalist and the Minister of the Interior (January 9, 2020), having a research background herself. The Minister argued for education, science, research, and the need to defend these. In some tweets, when defending the autonomy of research, the "merits" of those criticizing were questioned (January 9, 2020), and the fact that "research funding is not simple" was emphasized (January 10, 2020), the idea being that only those within the academic community are able to evaluate the value of the research and understand the processes behind it.

The practice approach in the study of affect emphasizes the importance of understanding how people "make sense of their circumstances and negotiate and initiate patterns of activity in concert with others." Wetherell et al. (2019, 20–1) have focused on the way in which affect is present in "everyday activism and in quiet acts of resistance." These acts do not need to challenge the status quo, but they can facilitate affective bonds among a group of people. I identify two separate affective practices of othering here. The first actually challenges the status quo of the academic realm by questioning the researchers, the role of research and the mechanisms of research funding. There is nothing quiet about this affective practice: it is loud and strident, using figures of speech in order to undermine the "others." This affective

practice is not only about research, it is also about social order and challenging the assumed elite. Niels Mede and Mike Schäfer (2020, 484) have defined this kind of science-based populism as an antagonism that is due to the idea of the “elite illegitimately claiming and the people legitimately demanding science-related decision-making sovereignty and truth-speaking sovereignty.” This discursive pattern consists of rhetorical figures of speech drawing on history and specific cultural ways of communicating on social media. It is connected to the neoliberal understanding of the role of universities, looking at research from the viewpoint of its economic utility. For the online public outside of academia, it is also a form of self-presentation adapting affective practices that aim to change the social formations around academia and academic work.

On the other hand, there is the affective practice of the research community, where the affective signs are almost non-readable. In this respect, the narrative is rational and educational, and it does not involve specific disciplines, research topics, or persons. With this distancing from the critical voices, the academic community is actually strengthening its community cohesion. However, this is also a means of othering. There is no actual interplay regarding questions of what constitutes good and important science, and the two publics seem to speak past each other—which of course is not unusual in social media. The pattern behind this affective practice can be interpreted from the viewpoint of emotional capital, in which the idea is that a certain kind of affective style can offer an advantage to those applying it (Wetherell 2014, 112–4). These affective styles and their value as “capital” can change in terms of time and context. The academic response to the critique on Twitter is based on managing emotions and calmly responding to the critique with facts. The pattern arises from the academic tradition and the way that researchers have adopted it via their training, namely self-presentation in a form of order. At the same time, as this is the only acceptable way to argue in the academic community, it can also be seen as a way of othering those questioning the freedom of research.

From the point of view of affective practices, the social formation that these two publics jointly construct is an example of the way in which the object of emotion circulates within and between them, becoming “sticky” and “saturated with affect” (Ahmed 2014, 11). The distinct affective practices highlight the different modes of responding to the object of emotion, simultaneously reflecting and strengthening them within the online publics. Here, the circulation of emotions instills and strengthens togetherness within one public, and othering toward the other. Via social media, these affective practices interact but do not intertwine.

## Research Funding as a Lottery—Affective Practices of Sharing

13th time lucky perhaps? 😊

Sometimes I wonder why I keep applying for this [research funding] when 90% of the cases are rejected.

And then again, sometimes I wonder—often in a weak autumn moment—why not though.

#profjob #researchfunding (September 7, 2020)

September is always a busy time for researchers in Finland. This is the deadline for Academy of Finland applications but also for some private foundations. This means that both during September and in the late spring when funding decisions arrive, questions regarding research funding, researchers' livelihoods, and the use of time are very visible in Twitter feeds. These tweets aim to describe the everyday life of those working in academia but also require some pre-understanding of academic life, namely an online public sharing temporary emotional intensity (Caliandro 2018, 564; Warner 2002). I have referred to this way of circulating recognizable emotional experiences within academia as affective practices of sharing.

In these tweets, various emotions ranging from stress, hope, disappointment, and resignation, to gratitude, happiness, and success are shared within the research community. Reading the possible feedback on the application makes one nervous and tense (March 14, 2019), and researchers point out that it is "difficult to express oneself in a civilised manner" (April 1, 2020). Tweeting about expected, previous or current failures, for example, seems to be a natural way of sharing the emotional load. When looking at emotional sharing as an affective practice, emotions can be seen working in many possible directions, as in the following tweet sharing the disappointments in the everyday life of a researcher:

2/6 of the submitted applications have been rejected this spring. But more than half are still pending. I've become thick-skinned during the last 10 years or so, and some euros have always turned up somewhere. #everydaylifeofaresearcher #research #researchfunding (April 15, 2020)

Despite the disappointments, there is still hope for the future as long as some applications are still pending, or if a new opportunity to apply is upcoming. At the same time, much of this work is seen as "wasted" and as time taken away from actual research. According to Lauren Berlant (2011, 1–2), "a



relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing.” This is also easily applicable to the relations between researchers and research funding: for many, applying for funding to research what they desire impedes the actual research, as they are not able to concentrate on their studies because of the lack of money or time.

The optimism concerning research funding becomes even crueler for those wholly dependent on project funding. The life of the academic precariat and its relationship to the institutional structures is a topic that has been widely discussed within research on the neoliberal university. The “misery narrative” connected with the changes brought about by the New Management Doctrine in universities is also often the one emphasized in research (Ylijoki 2019, 107, cf. 116).

However, Hartung et al. (2017), for example, have criticized the way in which research focusing on the neoliberal university has omitted the viewpoints of individuals within the academic community: how they understand themselves and how they see their lives as academic subjects. Among other things (see also Burford 2017), they want to highlight the possibility of a hopeful reading of the academic affects. This emphasis—perhaps even surprisingly—is something that is also readable in tweets. This can be a sign of Twitter being a medium popular among those who still feel involvement with—and hopefulness in—the academic community. This means that tweets as such do not paint a complete picture of the different emotions and ways of negotiating about them within academia. However, I understand these tweets as signaling togetherness and shared experiences within a profession. They can be seen as reflecting emotions that are fully understandable only among peers. The aspect of hope is emphasized with humor—sometimes with sarcasm and sometimes with self-irony—in order to deal with the misfortunes:

I don't need a flower for Women's day although research funding would be nice 🌸. (March 8, 2019)

This is one small step for humankind but not for me. I feel like I have run a marathon and swum across the equator. To the lap of the gods! And just in the nick of time. #profjobb #researchfunding (September 29, 2020)

On one hand, the humor and hope present in the tweets can be interpreted as a way of normalizing the emotions connected with the competitive nature of the neoliberal university and, as such, as a way of upholding the unrealistic individual hopes that are increasingly difficult to fulfil. On the other hand, the small everyday acts and emotions in the tweets are a way of meaning-making with regard to “what is felt, how it is articulated, and how social forces

assemble, register, and have effects” (Wetherell et al. 2019, 28). As such, these can be seen as a means of silent resistance and affective activism, namely as ways of challenging the structures of the neoliberal university. Either way, they are a means of presenting the experienced unfairness in the academic community.

The specific rhythm in the funding process is also visible in the emotional annual cycle that researchers go through: the application period with excitement about new ideas and the stress of deadlines, the anxious waiting period, and the processing of feelings aroused by the outcome. Before long, it is time to start a new application round. The Academy of Finland call for applications was retweeted with a comment: “Well, I just had time to sigh and get a grip on myself 😊. Now it’s time to go back to square one and here we go again” (June 3, 2020). In these tweets, despite the humor, the neoliberal nature of the contemporary university—the competitiveness of the field and the uncertainty surrounding the profession—is underlined (see, e.g., Hartung et al. 2017). This competitiveness and the way it affects researchers was also recognized in a tweet that referred to a journal article asking how to implement the foundation funding for research in a way that would not encourage competition and divisiveness in the research community (Sorainen and Ruuska 2020). This aspect was also highlighted in another tweet: “The world of research is inspiring and supportive at its best, at its worst the opposite of these” (February 25, 2020).

There is both a systemic and a very personal critique evident in the tweets on the competitive nature of the research funding. During the period under study, the role of applied research is visible. Research is seen as a way to support the competitiveness and economic growth of the nation while, at the same time, concern about decreasing research and development investment is also highlighted (January 20, 2019). The idea of research funding as a lottery-like activity was highlighted in some tweets reflecting the unpredictability of the funding decisions (e.g., July 31, 2019): no matter how hard you work for it, you can never be sure of its success. Furthermore, the principles of research funding were seen as fluctuating and the bureaucracy as something that detracted from the research funding and results (March 22, 2019). The time that is lost when “knocking out” the applications was also part of this critique (May 5, 2019; October 5, 2019; August 21, 2019; January 20, 2020). The Finnish word “hankehumppa” (e.g., January 16, 2019; January 26, 2019)—“project polka”—used in the tweets refers to the extra work that applying for short-term funding causes for all parties concerned. Here the basic question is whether there is any time left for actual research (January 16, 2019). In one tweet, one can detect enthusiasm, frustration but also perseverance:

The everyday life of a professor: notice an interesting EU H2020 call for proposals, gather 7 partner consortia from 5 countries, hold a workshop and crystallise the fundamental idea, write an 80-page-long application, wait three months, receive a negative response. Take a deep breath and repeat. Well, perhaps we can use this for something else. (July 30, 2019; see also July 31, 2019)

The negative effects of the competitiveness were experienced at the most personal level:

The motivation hole is deep and dark. Writing a time-consuming application that will probably not receive funding, knowing that with the planned budget you could not implement the plan anyway, but that a more “realistic” plan would never succeed. You can only lose in this. I don’t blame the Academy, I blame the government. (September 14, 2020)

The unrealistic expectations are the cause of a lack of motivation. Furthermore, being funded, not being funded or the way one is funded affects the way in which researchers are situated in the academic community, with one example being the removal of one’s academic profile from the university webpages when funding has ended:

Oh, my alma mater @helsinkiuni. I would so much like to love you, but you make it so difficult when you hit me in the face with a dirty, wet flannel. Why do you want to treat your researchers like this? #takingfromthosewhohave andgivingtothosewithnothing (August 10, 2020)

The tweets underline the many everyday effects that research funding is a part of: An uncertain future in academia affects young female researchers’ family life in particular (September 27, 2019), and the difficulties involved in obtaining funding create bitterness as “passion does not put food on the table” (April 18, 2019). A negative response to a funding application makes one consider plan B, namely giving up an academic career. Imagining leaving is a way to react to the disappointment and, if not now, the final step of quitting academia is seen as a possible scenario in the future (April 17, 2020). This uncertain way of life is exhausting: “I don’t know if I can do this for the next 20 years” (April 17, 2020). The arguments coming from outside academia, claiming that researchers and research groups are not assessed, is experienced as an insult (April 23, 2020).

These emotions are all well recognized in studies on academic life: stress, shame, and exhaustion are general outcomes of the neoliberal university (Caretta et al. 2018, 262; Gill 2012). In analyzing the way different kinds of

feelings work as political potential, James Burford (2017, 70–71) has differentiated between strong (e.g., hope and optimism) and weak feelings (e.g., depression and anxiety). He argues that we are used to seeing political potential in strong feelings, whereas weak feelings are more of a political liability. Also emphasizing the role of weak feelings, he sees complex emotional experiences as not only a consequence of political phenomena but also as playing a role in steering political decision-making and practice. In social media, these affective voices are at least recognized and made visible.

Even if we do not differentiate between strong and weak emotions, we can ask what kind of function this emotional burden-sharing might perform for the academic community—or more widely for people’s understanding of academic life. The Twitter feeds can be interpreted as a form of cruel optimism (Berlant 2011), silent resistance (Wetherell et al. 2019), and even unintentional affective activism as the emotions circulate within the academic community (Niccolini 2018, 104–5, 111), namely among researchers, research institutes, and those funding the research, generating discussion and making visible the effects of the neoliberal university.

In these affective practices, emotions become stuck to the narratives of researchers’ everyday work and life but also to the institutions structuring this work. The pattern underlying the affective practice of sharing is based on self-presentation, in a form of confessionalism and openness, in which emotions are seen both as shared and as relational. As a strategy, self-presentation is a way to become a part of the “collectively built and shared cultural construct” (Caliandro 2018, 566), and as such can reveal the shared values within the academic community. Here, I interpret the passionate and committed researcher as the torchbearer of the academic prototype. However, by depicting the vulnerable, hopeless, and powerless academic, I see the academic online public also circulating emotions that are downplayed or even hidden in the offline academic community. Circulating these emotions can create community cohesion among those experiencing the same academic preconditions, and the emotions stuck to the narratives also make visible the different hierarchies within the academic community. As such, the othering of oneself from success in the neoliberal university can be seen as an attempt to steer political decision-making and the shared values within academia in the context of research funding.

## **Conclusions**

On Twitter, affective practices concerning research funding circulate both within and outside the academic community. The affective practices function at two levels at least. Firstly, they are a way of negotiating the meanings of

science and research. Here, the affective practices are used both to question the justification for research funding and to safeguard the freedom of science. It is a negotiation where arguments are based on the usefulness and importance of knowledge and the right to define these. Secondly, the affective practice of sharing emotions within the academic community is not only a way to strengthen academic cohesion but also to make the experienced unfairness visible and to challenge the hierarchies both within the community and in the neoliberal university. From the viewpoint of the academic community, the emotions stuck on these two levels of narrative also work for the principles of research funding in two very different ways, the first positively emphasizing and the other challenging the competitive nature of the funding mechanism.

Following Sara Ahmed (2014), the emotions stuck to the narratives also serve to add value to the scientific community and research—and to challenge this value. For the online public outside academia, science, and research are commodities whose value can be estimated for the common good. For the academic online public, the freedom of science is a basic value that is to be defended at all costs—also for the common good. However, this meta-level narrative does not recognize the individual suffering that these value definitions are implicitly connected with. The powerless in these narratives do not seem to be those outside academia demanding the right to have a say in the science-based decision-making (Mede and Schäfer 2020). Instead, the powerless are the individual researchers competing with one another to obtain funding in order to do their work. However, in the Twitter narratives, this status quo of power relations is challenged, but for different reasons, either by challenging the basis for the social order or by making visible the individual circumstances.

Here, the different forms of emotional capital are at play. Although othering happens on both sides, the dividing line is between those inside and those outside academia. For a researcher coming from the public within academia, the emotional capital of the public outside academia seems to be based on stigmatization, ridicule, contempt, and hate. For the public inside academia, it is about controlling one's emotions but also about humor, openness, and sharing. They are affective patterns that guide the ways we understand our roles in the world and make sense of the role of science in our individual lives but also in society more generally. There is a profound difference in the narratives both in respect of the role of science and in the ways conducting research is made possible.

In my digital ethnography focusing on narratives, I have been offered a view of the ways in which research funding is a part of the meaning-making processes and self-presentation of people both within and outside academia, and how these processes are emotionally laden. As complex, fluid and

fragmented environments (Caliandro 2018, 570), social media—in this case Twitter—can make visible how affective practices are interwoven with social formations. *Following the thing*—emotions stuck or attached to research funding—reveals affective practices that otherwise might not interact with one another. The different online publics are at least reachable and sometimes tangential with one another. Perhaps we cannot actively guide these emotions in order to steer political decision-making (Burford 2017), but we need to understand the ways in which these emotions that are stuck to narratives may affect our lives—both for better and for worse. We need to see the emotions at work as signals of negotiations of values—both within the academic community and in society at large.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The research project Academic Affects is funded by Kone Foundation.

### ORCID iD

Pia Olsson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1736-8333>

### Note

1. @JaniMakelaFi April 20, 2020: “Oula on naapurin asian erikoismies. Ja @helsinki sinkiuni kustantaa myyräntyönsä.”

### References

- Ahmed, Sara. 2014. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Beneito-Montagut, Roser, Arantza Begueria, and Nizaiá Cassián. 2017. “Doing Digital Team Ethnography: Being There Together and Digital Social Data.” *Qualitative Research* 17 (6): 664–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794117724500>
- Beneito-Montagut, Roser. 2011. “Ethnography Goes Online: Towards a User-Centred Methodology to Research Interpersonal Communication on the Internet.” *Qualitative Research* 11 (6): 716–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794111413368>
- Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham (N.C.): Duke University Press.
- Brown, Wendy. 2011. “Neoliberalized Knowledge.” *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History* 1 (1): 113–29.

- Buchanan, Elizabeth. 2017. "Considering the Ethics of Big Data Research: A Case of Twitter and ISIS/ISIL." *PLoS ONE* 12 (12). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0187155>
- Burford, James. 2017. "What Might 'Bad Feelings' Be Good for? Some Queer-Feminist Thoughts on Academic Activism." *Australian Universities' Review* 59 (2): 70–78.
- Caliandro, Alessandro. 2014. "Ethnography in Digital Spaces: Ethnography of Virtual Worlds, Netnography, and Digital Ethnography." In *Handbook of Business Anthropology*, edited by Patricia Sunderland and Rita Denny, 738–61. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.
- Caliandro, Alessandro. 2018. "Digital Methods for Ethnography: Analytical Concepts for Ethnographers Exploring Social Media Environments." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 47 (5): 551–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241617702960>
- Caretta, Martina Angela, Danielle Drozdowski, Johanna Carolina Jokinen, and Emily Falconer. 2018. "'Who can Play This Game?' The Lived Experiences of Doctoral Candidates and Early Career Women in the Neoliberal University." *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 42 (2): 261–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2018.1434762>
- Carson, Lydia, Christoph Bartneck, and Kevin Voges. 2013. "Over-Competitiveness in Academia: A Literature Review." *Disruptive Science and Technology* 1 (4), 183–90. <https://doi.org/10.1089/dst.2013.0013>
- Davies, Bronwyn, and Eva Bendix Petersen. 2005. "Neo-Liberal Discourse in the Academy: The Forestalling of (Collective) Resistance." *LATISS—Learning and Teaching in The Social Sciences* 2 (2): 77–98. <https://doi.org/10.1386/lts.2.2.77/1>
- Ergül, Hakan, and Simten Coşar, eds. 2017. *Universities in the Neoliberal Era: Academic Cultures and Critical Perspectives*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fiesler, Casey, and Nicholas Proferes. 2018. "'Participant' Perceptions of Twitter Research Ethics." *Social Media + Society* 4 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118763366>
- Geismar, Haidy. 2017. "Instant Archives?" In *The Routledge Companion to Digital Ethnography*, edited by Larissa Hjorth, Heather Horst, Anne Galloway, and Genevieve Bell, 331–43. New York and London: Routledge.
- Gill, Rosalind. 2012. "Breaking the Silence: The Hidden Injuries of the Neoliberal University." In *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process. Feminist reflections*, edited by Róisín Ryan-Flood and Rosalind Gill, 228–44. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hartig, Kajsa, Bente Jensen, Anni Wallenius, and Elisabeth Boogh. 2018. "Collecting the Ephemeral Social Media Photograph for the Future: Why Museums and Archives Need to Embrace New Work Practices for Photography Collections." Paper Presented at: Museums and the Web 2018, Vancouver, Canada; 2018 April 18–21. <https://mw18.mwconf.org/paper/collecting-the-ephemeral-social-media->

- photograph-for-the-future-why-museums-and-archives-need-embrace-new-work-practices-for-photography-collections/
- Hartung, Catherine, Nicoli Barnes, Rosie Welch, Gabrielle O'Flynn, Jonnell Uptin, and Samantha McMahon. 2017. "Beyond the Academic Precariat: A Collective Biography of Poetic Subjectivities in the Neoliberal University." *Sport, Education and Society* 22 (1): 40–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1202227>
- Hine, Christine. 2011. "Towards Ethnography of Television on the Internet: A Mobile Strategy for Exploring Mundane Interpretive Activities." *Media Culture & Society* 33 (4): 567–82.
- Hine, Christine. 2015. *Ethnography for the Internet. Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*. London, New Delhi, New York & Sydney: Bloomsbury.
- Hotez, Peter J. 2020. "Combating Antiscience: Are We Preparing for the 2020s." *PLoS Biology* 18 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3000683>
- Laaksonen, Salla-Maaria, and Janne Matikainen. 2013. "Tutkimuskohteena vuorovaikutus ja keskustelu verkossa" [Online Interaction and Discussion as Research Subjects]. In *Otteita verkosta. Verkon ja sosiaalisen median tutkimusmenetelmät* [Excerpts from the Web. Network and Social Media Research Methods], edited by Salla-Maaria Laaksonen, Janne Matikainen, and Minttu Tikka. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Mede, Niels G., and Mike S. Schäfer. 2020. "Science-Related Populism: Conceptualizing Populist Demands toward Science." *Public Understanding of Science* 29 (5): 473–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662520924259>
- Musolff, Andreas. 2014. "Metaphorical Parasites and 'Parasitic' Metaphors. Semantic Exchanges between Political and Scientific Vocabularies." *Journal of Language and Politics* 13 (2): 218–33.
- Niccolini, Alyssa D. 2018. "'The Rape Joke': Censorship, Affective Activisms, and Feeling Subjects." *Journal of Gender Studies* 27 (1): 102–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1202104>
- Nykysuomen sanakirja L–N* [Dictionary of modern Finnish L to N] 1992. Porvoo, Helsinki & Juva: WSOY.
- Olssen, Mark, and Michael A. Peters. 2005. "Neoliberalism, Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy: From the Free Market to Knowledge Capitalism." *Journal of Education Policy* 20 (3): 313–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930500108718>
- Postill, John, and Sarah Pink. 2012. "Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web." *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–34.
- Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT) [Official Statistics of Finland]: Väestön tieto- ja viestintätekniikan käyttö [verkkojulkaisu] [Use of Information and Communication Technologies by the Population]. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus. Accessed February 7, 2021, from [http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2020/sutivi\\_2020\\_2020-11-10\\_tau\\_025\\_fi.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2020/sutivi_2020_2020-11-10_tau_025_fi.html)
- Tieteen tila*. 2018. [The State of Science. 2018.] Toim. Otto Auranen, Paula Leskinen, Jussi Alho, Anu Nuutinen, and Samuli Hemming. Suomen Akatemia. [https://www.aka.fi/globalassets/2-suomen-akatemian-toiminta/2-tietoaaineistot/aka\\_tieteen\\_tila\\_2018\\_web.pdf](https://www.aka.fi/globalassets/2-suomen-akatemian-toiminta/2-tietoaaineistot/aka_tieteen_tila_2018_web.pdf)



- Uimonen, Paula. 2020. "Collecting Social Media Photography as Visual Digital Heritage." In *Connect to Collect. Approaches to Collecting Social Digital Photography in Museums and Archives*, edited by Elisabeth Boogh, Kajsa Hartig, Bente Jensen, Paula Uimonen, and Anni Wallenius, 41–53. Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag.
- Väliaverronen, Esa. 2021. Mediatization of Science and the Rise of Promotional Culture. In *Routledge Handbook of Public Communication of Science and Technology*, edited by Massimiano Bucchi and Brian Trench, 1–19. London and New York: Routledge.
- Warner, Michael. 2002. "Publics and Counterpublics." *Public Culture* 14 (1): 49–90.
- Wetherell, Margaret. 2014. *Affect and Emotion. New Social Science Understanding*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, & Washington DC: SAGE.
- Wetherell, Margaret, Alex McConville, and Tim McCreanor. 2019. "Defrosting the Freezer and Other Acts of Quiet Resistance: Affective Practice Theory, Everyday Activism and Affective Dilemmas." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 17 (1): 13–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2019.1581310>
- Ylijoki, Oili-Helena. 2019. Happy in Academia. The Perspective of the Academic Elite. In *The Social Structures of Global Academia*, edited by Fabian Cannizzo and Nick Osbaldiston, 107–121. London: Routledge.
- Zawadzki, Michał, and Tommy Jensen. 2020. "Bullying and the Neoliberal University: A Co-Authored Autoethnography." *Management Learning* 51 (4): 398–413. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507620920532>
- Zimmer, Michael, and Nicholas John Proferes. 2014. "A Topology of Twitter Research: Disciplines, Methods, and Ethics." *Aslib Journal of Information Management* 66 (3): 250–61. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJIM-09-2013-0083>

## Electronic Sources

- Expenditure on educational institutions as percentage of GDP. <https://stats.oecd.org/>
- Wojcik, Stefan, and Adam Hughes. 2019. *Sizing up Twitter Users*. Pew Research Center. Accessed April 3, 2021, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/inter-net/2019/04/24/sizing-up-twitter-users/>
- Sorainen, Antu, and Ruuska, Jaakko 2020. Mikä on säätiöiden tehtävä? [What is the Role of Foundations?]*—Politiikasta*, January 9, 2020. <https://politiikasta.fi/mika-on-saatioiden-tehtava/>
- University of Helsinki Social Media Guidelines—#wearehelsinki. 2021. Accessed March 3, 2021, from <https://www2.helsinki.fi/en/university/the-university-of-helsinki-in-brief/university-of-helsinki-on-social-media/university-of-helsinki-social-media-guidelines>

## Author Biography

**Pia Olsson**, PhD, is a University Lecturer in ethnology at the University of Helsinki. She has focused on the ways people experience, feel and make meaning of their lives and close environment. She has applied both ethnography and oral history methods in her work.