

The European Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences
EJSBS Volume VII, Issue IV (e-ISSN: 2301-2218)

KARAOKE – THE CHANCE TO BE A STAR

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Abstract

This research focuses on the experiences of people who sing karaoke and the significance they find it has in their lives. The participants (N=54) were part of the Finnish try-out competition for the 2010 Karaoke World Championship. The research explores the meaning of karaoke singing in their lives, their “star moments” and background factors. The respondents to the research questionnaire saw karaoke singing as a positive achievement. Karaoke singing produces power and relaxation, but it also means social contact. “Star moments” for singers mean being in “dialogue with the audience” and “getting the message through”. Success in competitions, feedback from the audience and applause after singing also bring enjoyment to karaoke singers.

Keywords: Karaoke, karaoke singing, karaoke competitions, meaning, significance

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doi: 10.15405/ejsbs.102



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1. Introduction

1.1. The Origins of Karaoke

The word karaoke comes from the Japanese language and it means singing without a live orchestra. In karaoke, the performer gives his/her energy and expresses his/her feelings through singing before a peer group audience or in a public situation (Fung, 2009). Karaoke is sung with a recorded background while the text is shown on a TV or video screen. The phenomenon is rather recent: It started to spread from Japan all over the world in the early 1970s. It reached Finland in about 1991 (Ritosalmi, 1993, p. 13). In karaoke, each singer is a performing artist for a moment, which may explain its popularity. Typically karaoke is sung in pubs or restaurants, in centres of cities, in suburbs and villages, at holiday destinations and on cruise ships, and increasingly at home using personal equipment. The required equipment includes a DVD player and sound reproduction equipment which are connected to a TV set. In restaurants, singing is guided by a karaoke host or hostess, who invites the singers to the stage one by one. He/she also takes care of the mixing of the music and singing, and the equipment also allows transposing the key to a higher or lower octave. Karaoke can also be sung in a car. In 2003 a Chinese car manufacturer added karaoke equipment to one of its models. In Finland there are karaoke taxis. The idea came from Japan, where karaoke is seen as one of the most significant cultural hobbies.

In Finland karaoke has been a commercial success since the beginning, including audience karaoke in restaurants, home karaoke and karaoke programmes on TV (Kenttämies, 1993, p. 3). Television programmes can be divided into those that emphasise singing and those that focus on the recollection of words. Karaoke is also similar to the type of singing that is done in the Idol singing competitions where background music is heard from recordings although the lyrics are not displayed. Apparently, karaoke singing expresses the Finnish soul landscape well in many ways (Helin & Westerlund, 2007). All around the world mobile karaoke, Internet and virtual karaoke continue to rapidly spread (Sul, Lee & Wong, 1998).

In addition to singing karaoke using DVDs, a person can also sing it using computer games. The most famous computer game is SingStar from 2004. It compares the level of the singer's voice to the right melody and scores the achievement. The game also allows people to sing a duet. In addition, there is a version for the PC, called UltraStar and the same idea is used in an online version called KaraokeParty (from 2008). All these games have many Finnish songs available. The most famous are Finnkaraoke, Power and Melplay. The expansion of supply together with lowered prices, have made home karaoke more popular,

especially since the beginning of the new millennium. Since karaoke came to Finland, the restaurant audience has moved from sing-along to solo singing. The sing-along evenings were very popular in the 1970s and even in the 2000s; the popular television programme, Tammerkosken sillalla is one example.

1.2. Karaoke competitions

In karaoke there are many different levels and styles of competition. The most common are solo competitions, but pair- and group-singing karaoke competitions also exist. Local competitions are popular, but since 1990 there have been Finnish championships in karaoke competitions. Some of the Finnish pop artists of today have participated in these competitions. In 2003, Finland began to arrange annual Karaoke World Championship competitions. The prizes are not exceptional, but the joy of singing and being together has been stated to be an important factor in their popularity. In 2011 Finnish competitors won both the Men's and Women's series in this competition which took place in Moscow. Some successful karaoke competitors have been able to launch real careers as artists, but more likely they are quite soon forgotten.

1.3. Bandoke

The model of karaoke has also been used in a version for musicians, called bandoke. On a bandoke recording there are several tracks so that musicians can also practise or perform using the recording as a background. The words and the chords for the song appear on the TV screen. Bandoke publications have been produced by Pocket Songs (Music Minus One) and Panorama Records from the USA, the British music journal, Kerrang! and the Finnish company, Edel Records (heavy metal karaoke) and a karaoke service in Finland called HeavyKaraoke. The latter also brought the name 'bandoke' to the market. Bandoke might open new visions for the future of music education, but it may also affect the practice habits of young musicians and contribute to the development of musicians. Bandoke applications in classical music are also very interesting, because they offer advanced musicians an opportunity to play as a soloist (instrumental or voice) with a symphony orchestra. Such opportunities are usually rare for an amateur.

1.4. Karoke research to date

Karaoke divides opinions very strongly: some love it; others understate or make fun of it. Still, there has been some serious research done on the subject. After his visit to Japan in the early 1980s, the American ethnomusicologist, Charles Keil published, an article,

“Music mediated-and-live in Japan”, in which karaoke is presented as one of the activities in recorded music and live music performances (Mitsui & Hosokava, 1998). In their research article, “Karaoke around the world” Mitsui and Hosokava collected the results of karaoke research up to the end of the 1990s. In these research papers, karaoke is focused on from historical, social, geographic and cultural points of view (see also Arora, 2010). Karaoke has also been explored as a noise productive factor (cf. Brown, 2009; Park, 2003a; 2003b), and as a physical phenomenon in some articles (Yiu & Chan, 2003). Virtual karaoke also offers a new point of view. The viewpoints have varied as some research has also been done about the connection between karaoke bars and the spread of HIV in Asian countries (Lin et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2002; Safika et al., 2010).

Karaoke research in Finland began in the beginning of the 1990s from ethno musicological and music therapy points of view in seminar writings and Master’s thesis level research (Kilpiö, 1992; Vanhanen, 1996; Salovaara, 2001.) Salovaara’s Master’s thesis was one of the first real karaoke research directions in Finland. He found interesting factors from his data: karaoke was shown to be a deeper phenomenon than was thought earlier; many of the participants made a substantial effort for their performances and especially avoided singing while drunk. Many respondents said that they sang songs which were important to them and through which they could handle difficulties and their inner emotions in the flow of life. The research showed that karaoke singing produces enjoyment and helps people to find new friends. It showed that karaoke singing responds widely to a human being’s psycho-social needs. The phenomenon has also brought a new component to restaurant culture and behaviour, as the audience is strongly involved in producing the evening’s programme.

Karaoke applications have also been successfully used in many pedagogical connections. They offer pupils an opportunity to move while they are singing thus adding a kinaesthetic element to learning while also developing reading abilities. In different articles (e.g., Patton, 2010) many proposals have been made on how to choose different karaoke songs on different subjects to use in school teaching. Self-education advances have also been widely discussed. Dickson and Grant (2003) describe how songs with words about physical substance promote learning in a joyful way when people sing familiar songs. According to Watanabe (2010), karaoke uses playfulness, freedom and simplicity in learning, and is much cheaper than the traditional methods used to study singing. It is simple, flexible and equal in substance and inner structure. These ideas are well-suited to a modern Japanese adult’s interest and make karaoke very popular.

The potential of karaoke is interesting and it may also effect change in school music education, or at least bring it to more modern level (Wagner & Brick, 1993). In the article,

“Karaoke: A Tool for Promoting Reading” (Gupta, 2006) the writer highlights the notion that children do not perceive karaoke as a practice for reading, but they concentrate on the joy of the music in it. To children who have problems in reading, karaoke offers a way to practice by motivating them in an untraditional way which promotes smoothness in reading. When a child tries to solve the karaoke song’s words, the whole reading process begins to develop new dimensions that promote fluency in reading. Gupta has also used karaoke to motivate dyslexic children. There the playful challenge comes from trying to sing along with the text running on the bottom of the screen. The action has a simple logic of playing, which makes failure not overwhelming and the main task (reading) can be learned through repeating the action. The reading ability gained and strengthened through karaoke simultaneously develops self confidence which can then be transferred to other academic school subjects. The children who hate reading aloud while the others are listening often see karaoke singing in a small group as much less frightening. One troubled beginning reader said after a karaoke reading session: “Reading is fun!” (Gupta, 2006).

1.5. Karaoke affects both individuals and society

Although some singers take karaoke (and karaoke competitions) very seriously, it still is primarily an activity that builds on spontaneity, a positive attitude, fun, playfulness, humour and an atmosphere of approval (see Daido et al., 2012). Karaoke's mimetic character can provide a conduit for personal growth and interpersonal empathy (Drew, 2005). What makes karaoke special is that not even the weakest singers are made fun of: Everyone who dares to sing is a winner. Usually the audience cheers the singers and applauds after each performance. This has a significant meaning to singers who would not love to be a target for applause and cheering. At its best, karaoke may help overcome traumatic music memories from school or elsewhere that might have stopped an individual from singing for years. Even among adults, a positive experience may change a musical self-conception and increase self-confidence. However, karaoke might also have negative effects if an individual loses his or her self-criticism and gets so carried away with the applause and feelings of success that he/she is no longer able to estimate his/her own abilities realistically. This may lead to bitter disappointments when the reality is slowly revealed and perceived. Some successful karaoke competitors have become performing artists; however, it still seems difficult to move from recorded backgrounds to a live orchestra. Professional singing is not as easy as it might seem.

Karaoke offers an opportunity for people to sing together; thus, individuals who dare not sing alone can sing along with others. Such cases are somewhere between sing-along and

karaoke. Singing together to a microphone often causes problems with singing techniques, microphone techniques, voice differences, and singing polyphonically, as well as with sound reproduction.

2. Problem Statement and research questions

In this article we report on research that was carried out using a questionnaire that was given to all participants in the Karaoke World Championship try-out competition round in Finland in autumn 2010. In this article we focus on the following questions:

- 1) What does karaoke singing mean in your life?
- 2) What made you begin singing karaoke?
- 3) What, if any, positive effects do you find karaoke singing has on you?

We chose these questions from many others because we wanted to inquire about the beginning of karaoke singing and its meaning and significance in the lives of those who have karaoke singing as a hobby. Responses were voluntary. The questions were open-ended and the responses were made without any guidance. Using a competition situation in data collection caused some limitations in the reliability of our data. The weakest singers did not participate in competitions on this level, which caused some distortion in our data. Furthermore, our respondent group probably consisted of individuals who have received only positive experiences from karaoke singing; this is evident in the data as we did not receive any negative comments or criticism against karaoke. This, of course, does not mean that karaoke does not have any negative elements, and among general karaoke singers there are probably more negative aspects reported than we received from our discretionary sample. On the other hand, our intention was to gain as much depth in our research of the phenomenon as possible; this research required a target group that takes karaoke singing seriously. Thus, our target group improves the reliability of our research results as the individuals in this group were participating in the world championship in karaoke singing. Among the respondents there was no one under the influence of alcohol or any other drugs; their sobriety also improves the reliability of the data. Compared to a normal traditional karaoke evening in a pub, the championship event has a different atmosphere; thus, this factor in our research is probably more reliable.

3. Research Methods and target group

Our research method is qualitative and based on open-ended questions that the respondents wrote in essay responses. In this respect, we may discuss the narrative research approach. The written stories often digressed in many directions as the respondents became

excited as they wrote about their experiences. Our qualitative research is based on the analyses made by two independent researchers who thoroughly explored the data and analysed, classified, categorized, and collected the classes. After this the results were compared to each other and a summing up was conducted and inspected.

The target group (n=54) forms a discretionary sample from the basic group formed by all karaoke singers in Finland. The response percentage from the participants of the Finnish karaoke singing championship competition can be considered high (72%). Our aim was to ask the respondents to consider the reasons for beginning to sing, and the effect, meaning and significance of karaoke singing in their lives. We hold to qualitative analytical methods, but still we mention the number of answers in each classified group to show readers openly the focus on each of the research areas.

4. Findings

4.1. Meanings of karaoke singing

We present the results in the order of the research questions. When analysing the respondents' stories, we cut each sentence as an independent statement marking the background information of the respondent after each statement. This means that statements from the same respondent may appear in several response classes.

Our first research question was "What does karaoke singing mean in your life?" The analysis resulted in seven different groups of statements. The groups were integrated to each other on some level. The groups were:

1. Joy, emancipation, having fun, away from everyday life (18 mentions)
2. Throwing oneself into singing, challenge, finding something new, ambition for publicity (14 mentions)
3. Hobby, spending time nicely, way to relax (11 mentions)
4. Being together, cheering, sharing (9 mentions)
5. Feelings and expressing them (7 mentions)
6. Love of music and singing (7 mentions)
7. Way of life (7 mentions)

Most answers (18) were in the first group: "Joy, emancipation, having fun, away from everyday life". They express a good feeling and the great joy of being together and getting away from everyday situations and troubles. A social aspect was also strongly present in the

responses; many respondents mentioned their own joy and good feelings, but also the opportunity to produce joy in the lives of others:

- Good feeling, having a good time together
- Emancipation, freedom from daily life
- Power and stimulation in everyday life
- Everything: stress relief, brings feelings of joy and happiness to my life and often also to lives of others.

In this response group there were as many men and women, between the ages of 23-58, which shows that this class does not separate karaoke singers by gender or age.

The category, “Throwing oneself into singing, challenge, finding something new, ambition for publicity” included 14 responses. The focus is on the desire to perform and be in front of an audience. The will to show one’s skills was the aim of many respondents, as was the ambition to find oneself: throwing oneself into singing offers excitement. A regular individual has the opportunity to feel the sweetness of performing. Respondents described their feelings about singing karaoke with the following terms and expressions:

- An opportunity to throw oneself into singing
- A chance to perform and show abilities
- Finding myself
- The sweetness of performing
- Experiencing the excitement
- A chance for a lowbrow to glitter for one moment
- Possibly a stepping stone to publicity, exercise, a good way to spend time
- A favourite hobby, maybe to aim even higher.

The responses also show an ambition to achieve something higher, for more publicity as a singer. Both genders have the same sorts of thoughts, with women hoping for such success a little more often than men. Karaoke offers the chance to throw oneself into singing in a positive atmosphere, and to have enjoyable experiences and experiences of success.

The third class of answers, “Hobby, spending time nicely, a way to relax” included 11 answers. Karaoke is an important hobby, not a side effect of a celebration. Many respondents said that they spend more and more time and money on karaoke; thus, it is similar to instrument playing as a hobby. To some people it also is a way to keep up singing interest. This is easily understandable, because for an individual who cannot play a musical

instrument and who does not take singing lessons, it is very difficult to find other opportunities to sing with good background music. If one sings with a record the feeling is not the same as when singing karaoke, where one sings before a real audience. Some respondents relaxed through karaoke, and some engaged in karaoke singing in addition to their band playing hobby. To a beginner it might be difficult to play an instrument and sing at the same time, and that is why it is natural for some people to sing karaoke. Some of these respondents explained their reasons for singing in the following descriptions:

- A good hobby and a way to relax
- A pleasing hobby which nicely completes band playing
- A hobby in which I invest more and more time and money
- It is a hobby and keeps my singing abilities up and develops them further.

The fourth class of responses, “Being together, cheering, sharing” (9 mentions) concentrates on one of the most important elements in karaoke: joining together in cooperation and sharing the good feeling. Being together with good mates, cheering the others and blowing into the same coal together with like-minded people create the most important part of the attraction of karaoke. One of the respondents used the words “sharing of the joy” which concentrates on the nuclear theme of karaoke: Everyone can enjoy together. Implicit in this thought is the fact that everyone is on the same side, which makes it unnecessary to be nervous or frightened. It is a matter of sharing joy and good feeling with friends who are like-minded. There were no differences between gender or age in the responses as can be seen here:

- Sharing joy, cheering others
- Everyone is on the same side, good spirit
- Being together with friends and relaxing with a favourite hobby
- Meeting like-minded people.

The fifth response class, “Feelings and expressing them” collected seven responses. Expressing feelings through speech has traditionally been very difficult for Finns. Perhaps singing forms a channel, which suits the Finnish mental structure better than speech in expressing feelings. The song selection, the atmosphere in the song, ways of singing expression, intonations and non verbal expressions express the emotions of the performer. This is one of the nuclear areas in karaoke, although the number of responses to this query

was not the largest. Finnish men find it difficult to express their feelings and the same shows in thinking about the meanings of karaoke singing. One respondent stated that she goes through things and emotions using music. It was an indirect implication of working out personal difficulties through music. Others used the following expressions to describe their attitudes toward karaoke:

- Expressing emotions through music
- Transferring emotions to listeners
- Spending time, going through changes.

“Love of music and singing” became the title of the sixth class of responses (7 mentions). The responses show a love of music and singing, the joy of singing and the general importance of music:

- Love of music
- Passion for music and singing
- Importance of singing and music.

The last class of responses, “Way of life” (7 mentions) described the respondents’ devotion to karaoke singing. To some of them it was “everything” in life. Many respondents saw it as an important part of their everyday life, a hobby which defined their way of life. Some connected it to work and some saw it as a source of energy and a lifeline, as can be seen in these sample quotations:

- Everything
- A way of life
- Karaoke has been a part of everyday life, both as a hobby and work (I work in a restaurant)
- A very important lifeline
- It forms a great part of my life. I go to sing karaoke about three times every week because I get power from the singing and the cheering of the audience!

4.2. Beginning karaoke singing

Our second research question was: “What made you begin singing karaoke?” After the analysis, we formed four response classes and one separate response. This separate

response was from one respondent who had begun singing karaoke because of singing studies. She did not tell more and therefore we cannot draw further conclusions about the task. The formed classes of the reasons for beginning karaoke became:

1. A desire to sing and perform (21 mentions)
2. Occasional event or influence of a certain person/friend (14 mentions)
3. Positive experiences on the first try (10 mentions)
4. Work (3 mentions)

“A desire to sing and perform” was the most important reason for beginning karaoke singing. The respondents underlined their desire, dedication, love of and need for singing. Some were interested in their own voices, which they thought were pleasant. One respondent saw that she had the gift of singing, and karaoke was the reason to use it. Another respondent saw karaoke as a safe way to realise a need to perform. A school background in special music classes was a reason for another respondent to begin karaoke singing. Both genders were represented in this class, where the ages were between 21 and 48. These respondents said:

- I have a burning desire to sing and perform
- I want to sing every day
- I want to use my own voice
- I have always been interested in singing; I also was on special music classes at school, and that is how it started
- I am just a beginner and I have stage fright. Singing karaoke is an easy and safe way to express myself.

“Occasional event or person” (14 mentions) was the reason for beginning karaoke for many respondents. One respondent stated that the reason for beginning karaoke was “the death of my dog”. Still, it is easy to understand that the death of a dear dog may have been a traumatic tragedy causing loneliness. In this case, karaoke might have therapeutic effects as it helped the singer to survive the situation. Another exotic sounding reason was “dark eyes”. This may refer to falling in love with someone’s eyes, which made the respondent begin singing and trying to express the love that way. Another explanation might be a well-known Finnish song called “Dark eyes and brown hair” which may have made the respondent want to sing it. Many respondents have begun singing karaoke because friends have encouraged

them to do it. More than one of the fathers of respondents has given birth to a karaoke hobby by bringing home the necessary equipment. This has made the children or sometimes the whole family begin to sing karaoke. A coincidence, curiosity, a will to try something new as well as the cheering from friends or other people has been a reason to begin karaoke. In this respect the reasons to begin karaoke do not differ from reasons to begin a traditional music hobby. These respondents gave their reasons in the following:

- My dog died
- My friend encouraged me on my 18th birthday
- My father brought home karaoke equipment and that is how it began six years ago
- Brown eyes
- Our whole family sings together
- I completed my other music hobbies.

According to Juvonen (2000), the positive experiences gained from first endeavours have an effect on the strength and direction of musical orientation. This also seems to be true in this research group. The first experiences have had an effect for 10 respondents in beginning karaoke singing. The positive feedback showed in every response class and to both research questions. Many respondents underlined that you can enjoy karaoke singing without being an especially good singer. Some also mentioned the ease of getting good background music and singing with ready-made music. Here are some typical responses:

- I was eight when I sang for the first time, and that is how it started
- I sang on the Silja line (a ferry line between Finland and Sweden) under-aged and I liked it very much
- Positive feedback, nice
- I was in a wedding where I was asked to sing
- It is so easy to sing with ready-made background music
- It is so easy to get the accompaniment.

Three respondents mentioned work as the reason for beginning karaoke singing. One reported that she went to sing karaoke in a bar and she ended up becoming a karaoke hostess in the bar. Two other respondents seemed to work in the same field.

4.3. Positive effects of karaoke singing for the respondents

Our third research question concentrated on the positive effects of karaoke singing for the respondents: “What positive effects does karaoke singing have for you?” The answers formed four classes:

1. Power (13 mentions)
2. Experiences of success (12 mentions)
3. Self-development (12 mentions)
4. Expression of emotions/social attitudes (11 mentions)

The first response class, “It gives power” proved that one of the most important elements in karaoke singing is the feeling of becoming stronger and greater: it breathes new life into a singer after a hard day’s work; it brings enjoyment, new positive energy and joy, brightening the greyness of everyday life. The respondents used an old Finnish proverb, which says “Singing lengthens your life”, but they also thought that it takes away the stress and offers enjoyment in life. Many respondents reported that they felt new energy in their lives from the positive feedback that they had from karaoke singing. One of them said that she alleviated her asthma condition by singing karaoke. Bringing joy to other people was also often mentioned in the responses. We did find large differences in the responses between men (4) and women (9) because there were fewer men in the whole respondent group. Age was not a factor in the answers either; the ages of the respondents in this group were between 21 and 68 years. Some of the responses were as follows:

- It cures, breathes new life after the working day; it brings positive energy
- It gives energy and experience to perform
- It refreshes my mind, gives me a feeling of joy, gives strong feelings of enjoyment
- Singing lengthens life and gives joy. The elders are refreshed when they sing
- I keep my asthma in check by singing; singing has a refreshing effect on me
- It brings me a good feeling.

The “experiences of success” (12 mentions) are a resource produced by karaoke. The opportunity to perform in a positive atmosphere which always leads to cheering and applause as a reward brings individuals experiences of success. By choosing a song everyone sets him- or herself a challenge, and it is easy to understand that overcoming the challenge raises a person’s self-conception and self-confidence. One respondent described how her fears

transformed into enjoyment in karaoke singing. Another respondent said that her singing experience allows her to forget everything else, which then becomes a flow experience. The feedback which friends and other singers give after singing is positive and encouraging; such positive feedback is not always guaranteed in the music business. For example, music school or conservatory students or even professional musicians often perform in a tense atmosphere that demands top performances. Here are some examples of what the respondents said about their performances:

- The performance brings the experience of success.
- My mood becomes good, I love the feeling when people like my singing and they come to tell me about it.
- Success strengthens my self-conception and encourages me to develop and proceed.
- I sing what I want and I usually get positive feedback.
- I experience a lovely unloading of excitement; the fear is transformed to enjoyment.
- It makes me forget everything else.
- It increases my self-respect.

Many respondents wrote about “Developing oneself” (12 mentions). To them karaoke is an important way to develop performance skills, and they see development in it as their self-confidence and performance certainty improves. Developing oneself not only as a performer, but also as a human being is an important aim for many respondents. Many of the respondents wish to develop as a singer and gain a performer’s confidence, which shows a secret will to someday become a real entertainer and singer. Furthermore, an ability to perform is needed in many forms of work today, not only in the entertainment business. The respondents described their experiences as follows:

- Certainty and self-confidence in performance has developed.
- It improves self-confidence and gives me the ability to perform.
- The voice and experience of performing develops enormously. The feedback, positive as well as negative, develops me as a human being and a performer.
- After a successful performance, the feeling is great and my confidence as a performer has improved
- I have also gained confidence in my performance in other areas than pop music.

5. Conclusions

Karaoke seems to be a permanent phenomenon in Finland, not just a temporary fad. This is not the case in all European countries. Karaoke singing appears to support some values which make it well-adapted to Finnish culture and society. The origin of karaoke in Japan raises questions. How could karaoke connect two cultures from two different parts of the world? What needs or expectations are answered in karaoke singing? Why would a Finnish citizen, who otherwise does not speak or perform in any way, experience karaoke singing as easy and positive? These questions are not easy to answer and they require thorough research. Still, there are some thoughts and conclusions which we can point out after our study.

Finnish society, like the Japanese, is performance-centred: school achievements as well as performances at work are measured and eagerly evaluated. This might be one connection between the two countries. There is also a certain responsibility for doing one's work properly in both countries. Finland and Japan have been compared to each other, noticing that Japan is a culture of shame and Finland is a culture of guilt; these factors constrain people. These phenomena lead to a strengthening of psychic pressures. In Finnish society these pressures have traditionally been eased with the use of alcohol. The same behaviour is also common in Japan after a hard work week. Maybe these refreshments have had an important meaning in the beginning of karaoke singing as a way to overcome stage fright, but since the early days their significance has surely decreased.

According to the data we have collected for this research, alcohol drinking is not part of the behaviour model of karaoke singers. Karaoke singing is rather a joyful way to spend time together. Karaoke has also changed Finnish restaurant culture, which earlier had a strong common singing tradition. Now it has changed into solo singing and it is more like a real performance achievement. If we compare solo singing to Finnish school music education, it is interesting to notice the drastic difference between these activities. When pupils are "pushed" at school to sing alone, it often still happens in a negative atmosphere, in a singing test or other situation which does not make pupils feel comfortable.

School choirs are still quite common in Finnish schools, and pupils like singing in them. Band playing and using amplifiers are popular at Finnish schools, and they also encourage pupils to sing alone. What is it that makes karaoke singing and classroom singing so different? According to our data, it seems to be the atmosphere. In almost every response, the respondents underlined the positive, encouraging, cooperative and supportive atmosphere which is connected to karaoke singing. School music education is still, unfortunately, strongly connected to giving numeric feedback and continuing evaluation and estimation of

pupils' abilities; an "anything you do may be used against you" mentality can pressure the pupils and increase their negative associations towards learning music at school. Many teachers defend and explain singing tests with the need to give scores. It is unpleasant to think that the need to give scores would spoil the music lessons' atmosphere in the majority of Finnish schools and that a Japanese format and restaurant environment are needed to make Finnish people enjoy and like singing.

The typical atmosphere of common encouragement and cheering, positive attitude and freedom from fear of failure makes it possible for anyone to go and begin singing karaoke, not only those who are already known for being good singers (see e.g. Baker, 2012). The philosopher, Daniel Bell notices (Fung, 2010) about the essence of karaoke: "The essential point in karaoke is not to sing well and correctly; it is in promoting harmony and mutual understanding". Of course there are individuals among karaoke singers, who wish to make a career in singing and make it to large stages with an orchestra. It seems that our research group included such individuals as they were chosen from attendees at a Finnish try-out competition for the Karaoke World Championship contest. We suppose that competitiveness, a will to develop oneself as a singer and a performer may have been emphasised in our research group more than in a general karaoke singer's group.

The desire to perform seems to be a strong factor in karaoke singing. Everyone has a chance to be a star during one song whether or not he or she has the ability to sing. The freedom from the fear of being estimated or criticised is one of the key factors in karaoke culture, and this is something that could be learned by the Finnish school music education system.

Love of music and singing, enjoyment of singing and getting away from everyday life are important in any discussion of karaoke. Getting away from everyday life becomes possible only by throwing oneself into the excitement of performance. The experience of this excitement comes from the transformation of fear to enjoyment, and that is the factor which lifts the individual to another world. The encouragement from others and the experience of bringing joy to others through singing also seemed important to the respondents in this research study.

Acknowledgements

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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