Female Licentiousness versus Male Escape?

Essays on Intoxicating Substance Use, Sexuality and Gender

Alexandra Bogren
List of studies

Study I
The Rational and the Capricious: An Analysis of an Alcohol and Drug Information Campaign for Teenagers’ Parents.

Study II
The Competent Drinker, the Authentic Person and the Strong Person: Lines of Reasoning in Young People’s Discussions About Alcohol.

Study III
Under consideration, Acta Sociologica.

Study IV (with Arlinda Kristjanson and Sharon Wilsnack)
The Relationship Between Sexuality-Related Alcohol Expectancies and Drinking Across Cultures.
Submitted.

Study I has earlier been published in Swedish in Nordisk Alkohol- och narkotikatidskrift and is reprinted with kind permission of the editor of Nordisk Alkohol- och narkotikatidskrift.
Contents

Introduction ................................................................. 9
  Intoxicating substance use in social context .................. 10
  Purpose of the thesis ................................................. 13
Gender ........................................................................ 13
  Gender in the field of alcohol and drug studies .......... 14
  Gender: categorization and identity ......................... 15
  Gender as a product? ................................................. 16
  Heinämaa on Beauvoir’s concept of the living body .... 19
  Gender and the nature – culture link ....................... 22
Methodology ................................................................ 38
  Meaning and interpretation ...................................... 38
  Culture .................................................................... 42
  Constructionism ...................................................... 44
  Language and power ................................................ 47
Summary of studies .................................................... 51
Conclusions ................................................................ 58
Acknowledgements .................................................... 64
References .................................................................. 66
Study I ........................................................................ 75
Study II ....................................................................... 101
Study III ..................................................................... 125
Study IV ...................................................................... 145
Introduction

Drunkenness at the beginning is being caught up with the world. At the core of drunkenness, a dream of participation and union. [...] Sobriety at the beginning is the secret self, alone in the world. At the core of sobriety, a sovereignty and a freedom, a dream of separateness. To be sober is to stand within oneself, moderate, temperate, restrained. [...] The field of drunkenness and sobriety is relationship: bond and separation (Douglas, 2003: 320).¹

In Swedish, intoxication (‘rus’) is a word used for describing the experience of being intoxicated, inebriated or ‘tipsy’. Its closest etymological parallel in English seems to be the word (to) rouse, which is used as a verb and means to stir up; to arouse from or as if from sleep, repose² or slumber; from apathy or depression; to excite, as to anger or action; to stir up; to awaken; to become active³. In Swedish, it is a noun, describing a state in which the person finds her-/himself. According to the dictionary of The Swedish Academy⁴, the word ‘rus’ refers to a state of intoxication caused by (excessive) consumption of alcoholic beverage(s) and normally characterized by exhilaration or drowsiness. This state may also – in more serious cases – be characterized by increased irritability and confusion or bewilderment and unconsciousness. In older versions, the word sometimes referred to an activity, such as party(ing) or feast(ing). There is also the negative connotation of the word in ‘pathological intoxication’ (‘patologiskt rus’): to be in a state of pathological intoxication or elation is to be in a state characterized by feelings of anxiety, hallucinations and blind rage with an urge to destroy. Furthermore, according to the dictionary of The Swedish Academy⁵, the word ‘rus’ may also mean, in a more or less figurative sense, ‘rapture’ or ‘enthusiasm’. The same is true for the English word ‘intoxication’, which in a figurative sense implies: “The action or power of exhilarating or highly exciting

---

¹ Douglas uses no explicit reference/s for this paragraph, but acknowledges Lévinas, Taoism, Sufism, the Bible, and the Beatles as general references.
⁴ Dictionary of The Swedish Academy (http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob, 2004-12-06).
⁵ Dictionary of The Swedish Academy (http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob, 2005-12-12).
the mind; elation or excitement beyond the bounds of sobriety”⁶, as contrasted to meanings 1 and 2, which also imply the “agent” responsible for the intoxication (‘poison’, ‘drug’ or ‘alcoholic liquor’)⁷.

When trying to translate one of the central concepts of this thesis, the word ‘rus’ (intoxication) into English, it becomes obvious that this experience has both positive and negative overtones, implying awareness (in both Swedish and Anglo-American societies) of alcohol’s – and to some extent, drugs’ – complex qualities. Studying the above definitions more closely, intoxication appears as a very physical experience, firmly ‘rooted’ in the body. Darin Weinberg says about addiction: “While the ostensible symptoms of addiction overwhelmingly consist in social or cultural transgressions, its underlying nature is generally located in one or another sort of bodily pathology, deficit or vulnerability” (Weinberg, 2002: 1; emphasis in original). While this concerns addiction rather than intoxication, similar observations have been made about intoxication as well. The sociologist Pekka Sulkunen argues, e.g., that “intoxication is one of the areas of human experience where culture and nature overlap and form a relationship of tension” (Sulkunen, 2002: 266). This section’s opening citation from Douglas’ (2003) paper implies a duality united by ‘relationship’; drunkenness and sobriety, nature and culture, separateness and participation, self and world are all in a relationship to one another, therefore implying dependence rather than a dualist picture – such dependence is a general theme of this thesis.

Intoxicating substance use in social context

Above, I argued that the meanings and connotations of the Swedish word ‘rus’ and the English word intoxication imply awareness of above all alcohol’s complex qualities. But alcohol is also, and perhaps in part due to this complexity, a controversial subject in these societies.

As Room and Mäkelä (2000) point out, the fact that societies differ with regard to drinking practices and with regard to the cultural position of drinking is a fact that has long been recognized. In social alcohol research, a more recent trend – recent, that is, in light of the much earlier recognition of differences between societies – has been to try to systematize cultural differences and similarities by sorting countries into typologies. Such theoretical efforts date back to around the 1940s or 1950s (Room & Mäkelä, op. cit.). One well-known such typology is the distinction between ‘wet’ and ‘dry’ societies and the related distinction between beer, wine and spirits cultures.

⁷ Oxford English Dictionary Online; main entry: intoxication, meaning 1 and 2 (http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50120002?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=intoxication&first=1&max_to_show=10; 2005-12-12).
Sweden, together with the other Scandinavian countries (perhaps with Denmark as an exception), has been known to be closer to the ‘dry’ end of the continuum and has been characterized as a spirits country. Today, placing Sweden in this category is problematic due to a trend towards convergence of per capita consumption levels in Europe (Room & Mäkelä, op. cit.). Such ongoing cultural changes have been described by suggesting that the southern European pattern of everyday drinking and drinking with meals has now been added to the traditional Swedish pattern of drinking (heavily) only on weekends. Similarly, it has been underlined that young people in southern Europe, e.g., in Spain and Italy, have increased their consumption of beer in a way that indicates that binge drinking has now become part of alcohol culture in those countries (Tigerstedt & Törrönen, 2005).

The beverage types mostly consumed in Sweden today are wine and beer (Rehm et al., 2003; Trolldal, Boman & Gustafsson, 2005). This Sweden has in common with most Western European countries, while in many Eastern European countries including Russia, spirits is the beverage type mostly consumed (Rehm et al., op. cit.). However, average volume of drinking is highest in established market economies in Western Europe, in the former Socialist economies in the Eastern part of Europe and in North America and lowest in the Eastern Mediterranean region and in parts of Southeast Asia including India (Rehm et al., op. cit.). In studying alcohol as a risk factor related to the global burden of disease, Rehm et al. (op. cit.) argue that although the exposure to alcohol varies considerably between regions, in general consumption patterns are relatively detrimental. Thus, drinking patterns, and the change that they go through in different parts of the world, are not only of local but also of global concern to policymakers’ prevention efforts.

As regards alcohol policy, it is safe to say that the traditional Swedish model, based on restrictions and a state monopoly over the distribution and sale of alcohol, has been weakened over recent years, particularly subsequent to Sweden’s entry into the EU. Alcohol policy appears to be moving towards a more public health focused model, in which the provision of information on risks constitutes the central element (Bergmark, 2004). Sweden also faces intricate policy issues on this arena in the future, e.g., with regard to the sale of alcohol via Internet web sites, private import and demands for (additional) lowering of taxes.

With regard to drugs, patterns of use have not been studied as extensively as drinking patterns. In 2002, 10% of the respondents in a Swedish nationally representative sample had ever used narcotics (Leifman et al., 2003). In Europe, the use of cannabis varies considerably between countries with Sweden, Finland, Greece and Malta as examples of countries with low prevalence of use and the United Kingdom as a country with high prevalence of use (EMCDDA, 2005). According to the 2005 EMCDDA report, the Czech Republic, Spain and France tend to approach the United Kingdom in prevalence of cannabis use and it appears as though ecstasy is now the sec-
ond most used drug in Europe, after cannabis and before amphetamine (EMCDDA, 2005). While drug use is still less common in Europe than in the United States, the report concludes that in some European countries ecstasy use among young adults is more common than it is in the US. Further, it is concluded that in Europe, it is mostly young people, and particularly young men, who use drugs (EMCDDA, 2005).

Drugs that are classed as narcotics are even more controversial than alcohol in Swedish society. Sweden’s official drug policy line is explicitly restrictive in relation to drugs. The political objectives are a narcotics-free society, zero-tolerance in relation to narcotics, and also a general distrust of measures that are associated with what is commonly referred to as the harm-reduction approach, such as needle exchange programmes for intravenous drug users.

In Sweden, prevention efforts are considered important with regard to both alcohol and drugs. In general, such prevention efforts target groups thought to be of special concern, particularly young people (see, e.g., recent campaigns by Alkoholkommittén and FMN), but also women. Women’s drinking patterns have changed during the past years (Bergmark, 2001), but in general, women still drink less than men do (Holmila & Raitasalo, 2005). Despite this, societal concern about women’s drinking is common (e.g., Alkoholkommittén’s 2004 campaign against drinking during pregnancy) and intoxication on the part of a woman victim is still an issue in court cases on rape.

Historically, with regard to young people, prevention efforts have taken parents’ or adults’ understandings as their point of departure. However, these efforts have been largely unsuccessful (Paglia & Room, 1999). Prevention efforts in general also seem to give comparatively one-dimensional accounts of why people drink and use drugs and of how drinking and drug use are understood and interpreted. To the extent that alcohol culture has become more international and fragmented, this one-dimensionality, this uniform picture, might create problems for prevention work.

---

8 Referring to use during the last 12 months.
9 There may, however, be a trend towards a softening of this attitude towards harm-reduction measures. Needle exchange programmes have been underway on a trial basis in Malmö and Lund since the 1980s. These remain in place, but will now be covered by the Swedish Government’s view on measures for the control of communicable diseases.
10 A governmental committee with the mandate to co-ordinate national efforts to prevent harm caused by alcohol.
11 Föräldraföreningen Mot Narkotika (Parents Against Drugs), a support organization for parents or families in which children or other family members are substance abusers; but the work of the organization also involves the dissemination of information and attempts to mould public opinion.
Purpose of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to study cultural aspects of alcohol and drug use in Sweden, and also to some extent in other countries. In the context of changing patterns of drinking and drug use in Sweden and in the rest of the world, such studies are increasingly important. In using earlier studies as a basis for prevention campaigns, prevention work runs the risk of reaching only a small number of those it was designed to reach because older patterns of use might have been replaced and because understandings of drinking and drug use are multiple rather than uniform.

The thesis addresses this new picture in four self-contained but interrelated studies focusing on theoretical and empirical issues in the field of studies of intoxicating substance use. Each study, in different ways, addresses the question of cultural variation (within and between cultures) and the cultural position of intoxicating substances, primarily in Sweden but also in other countries. Acknowledging that young people’s use of intoxicating substances as well as women’s and men’s use of such substances are important social policy issues, each of the four studies also discusses either the position of young people or the position of gender with regard to intoxicating substance use. Study 1 establishes a background of Swedish drug policy by investigating what it means to drink, take drugs and become intoxicated as understood from the official-organizational perspective of Föräldraföreningen Mot Narkotika’s (Parents Against Drugs’) 2003 campaign directed towards teenager’s parents. As a contrast to the hegemonic perspective presented by the organization in Study 1, Study 2 explicitly tries to find and describe different lines of reasoning with regard to alcohol use and intoxication among young people. Study 3 investigates the link – so commonly referred to in the Western world – between drinking, drug use and intoxication, on the one hand, and sexuality and gender, on the other. Study 4 turns its focus towards the rest of the world in studying whether this link exists in other parts of the world including outside Europe and North America.

This introductory section aims at offering a more general frame of reference for the four studies in discussing theoretical and methodological issues. I will return to the included studies throughout the introductory essay, in order to link them to the theoretical and methodological discussions. The introductory section is concluded with a summary of the four studies and relevant findings.

Gender

In this section, I briefly present how gender – since the feminist critique of the 1970s and 1980s – has been incorporated into social research on intoxicating substance use, and relate this to my own studies. I present the theo-
retical points of departure for how gender is understood in this thesis and then discuss gender in the four studies.

Gender in the field of alcohol and drug studies

Up until the 1970s or 1980s, the vast body of social research on intoxicating substance use and abuse in the Scandinavian countries (as well as in other parts of the Western world) focused primarily on men (e.g., Knoblock, 1995; and cf. Gefou-Madianou, 2002, on the absence of gender in anthropological studies on intoxicating substance use). Studies were used as a basis for constructing general (i.e., gender-neutral) and universal theories of alcohol and drug use and abuse. There was also a tendency to include ‘sex’ (kön) as one among many socio-demographic variables. However, feminist scholars in the field challenged the legitimacy of this approach. According to one critic, Margaretha Järvinen, this way of using the concept of ‘sex’ frequently resulted in a mechanical comparison between the sexes, the conclusion being that women generally drink less than men do. Moreover, such approaches included no effort to further analyse this result through, for example, a discussion of the power differences between women and men (Järvinen, 1983). Another area of debate related to the discussion around gender in alcohol and drug research was whether women’s drinking – considering the social changes leading to increased formal gender equality – would change to become more like men’s. The hypothesis that this would be the case is usually called the convergence hypothesis (see, e.g., Hammer & Vaglum, 1989, arguing that there is convergence, and Neve et al., 1996, arguing that gender differences still persist).

In several areas of the alcohol and drug research field, feminist critique gave rise to studies focusing on women (e.g., Bjerrum Nielsen & Rudberg, 1990; Ettorre, 1992; Holmila, 1991; Järvinen, 1991; Trulsson, 2003) and to discussions of gender roles and gender and power in women and men’s use of intoxicants (see, e.g., Ettorre & Riska, 1995, for a feminist perspective on the use of psychotropics). This shifting of focus – in that feminist or gender-sensitive research called attention to women – illustrated the feminist objection that the presumed gender neutrality was based in effect (only or mostly) on men’s experience. Influenced by more recent developments in gender theory, some contemporary studies in the alcohol, drugs and gender research field see gender as an ongoing accomplishment, as something that we do (cf. West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1999), and employ the concept of femininity in studying women categorized as addicts (Laanemets, 2002; Lander, 2003; Measham, 2002), while the concept of masculinity is used, e.g., in reference to male football supporters’ drinking (Estrada & Tryggvesson, 2001) and young men’s drinking in general (Gough & Edwards, 1998; Lander, 2000).
My interest in gender is both different from and similar to the above-mentioned studies. It is similar to those studies that share the point of departure that gender is not an inner essence or stable identity reducible to, or determined by, biology. But at the same time, I find it fundamentally impossible to do without a concept of gender that is somehow linked to human bodies. What, then, does such a perspective look like? This is what I try to explain below.

**Gender: categorization and identity**

The drawing of category boundaries is, according to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), “often an exercise of social power” and, e.g., gender categories (man and woman, girl and boy) play an important role “in the social practices that sustain a gender order in which male/female is seen as a sharp dichotomy separating two fundamentally different kinds of human being and in which gender categorization is viewed as always relevant” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, op. cit.: 228).

In poststructuralist and postmodernist discussions, categorization is related to the concept of identity. Sexuality and gender, e.g., are considered identity categories (see, e.g., Lindholm, 1996, for a discussion). Identity categories like sexuality and gender are presumably natural, stable and innate, something essentially *there* inside the individual, and not subject to social processes of definition and categorization. While Foucault ([1976] 1990) criticized sexuality as identity, Judith Butler (1999) is a prominent critic of gender as identity. She claims that the very idea that external and internal must correspond to one another and form a whole – as in the external gender-role being an expression of an internal (gender) identity – is in fact the result of a discourse on primary and stable identity. According to Butler, there is no ‘doer behind the deed’, only “acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires [that] create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality” (Butler, op. cit.: 173).

Butler’s critique of the idea of necessary correspondence between external and internal, between gender role and gender identity, is similar to the critique that sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) raises against equating character, or role, with self. He argues that, in Western society, the character (cf., role) one performs and one’s self “are somewhat equated” (op. cit.: 252) and that this understanding is implicit in our presentation of self. However, this makes the understanding less well suited as an analytical tool. Goffman (ibid.) instead prefers to see the self as an image that the individual, acting his role and performing on stage, tries to convey, or give off, to others. If a scene is properly enacted and performed, the audience attributes a self to a performed character, but this attribution, and hence the self, is a product of
the scene performed and not the cause of it. There is no one true self behind the masks, but only masks at every level. Neither Butler nor Goffman denies that there are physical differences between women and men, but rather than studying those, in Goffman’s words:

It is not, then, the social consequences of innate sex differences that must be explained, but the way in which these differences were (and are) put forward as a warrant for our social arrangements, and, most important of all, the way in which the institutional workings of society ensured that this accounting would seem sound (Goffman, 1977: 302).

In a similar vein, Butler rhetorically asks, “Are the ostensibly natural facts of sex discursively produced by various scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests?” (Butler, op. cit.: 10). For Butler, gender is best understood as repeated acts and she argues concerning the sex/gender distinction that “Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established” (Butler, op. cit.: 11).

Gender as a product?

In discussing the sex/gender distinction in feminist theory, Sara Heinämaa (1997a) criticizes Butler’s use of the metaphor of production. The use of this term implies the idea of raw material: “a natural substance that is prior to and independent of the process of production” (Heinämaa, op. cit.: 299). Despite Butler’s own wish to do away with all distinctions between nature and culture, her use of the metaphor of production brings such distinctions back into the discussion, Heinämaa argues.

Soper’s (1995) discussion of different understandings of ‘construction’ might make things clearer. She argues that there is a difference between talking about a watch as something produced or constructed and talking about the human body as produced or constructed. According to Soper, it is difficult to see the body as constructed in the literal sense of the word – as produced or constructed in the same sense as a watch is produced, as a watch is an artificial construct. If one takes ‘construction’ instead in a more rhetorical sense to mean that “what is being denied is not the existence of a natural body in the realist sense, but the assumption that the phenomenally experienced body – the body of ‘lived experience’ – is natural” (op. cit.: 134), one has to ask oneself what exactly is being argued, Soper claims.

Why should we not refer to the body of lived experience as a “natural” (albeit culturally conditioned) entity in order to distinguish it from those objects that are “products” or “constructions” out of realist nature (watches, nappies, computers, etc.), unless it is being assumed that bodies are no less artefactual
than such articles, and that cultural forces construct them in the same manner in which watches etc. are put together? But if this is what the Foucaultians intend by their anti-naturalist rhetoric, then they are surely inviting us to make an extremely mistaken comparison, since what differentiates the body as it is lived from any artificially constructed object is precisely the fact that it is a vital organism that is experienced subjectively (Soper, op. cit.: 134-135).

We need, therefore, what Soper calls a realist point of departure in which both watches and bodies can be said to be objects in the sense that they both occupy space, and in which they can both be said to be “natural entities in the realist sense”, both being composed of physical matter. Soper further argues that what distinguishes watches from bodies is that “[…] the body is natural in the further sense that it is not an artificial construct but a subject-object, a being that is the source and site of its own experience of itself as entity” (op. cit.: 135). At the same time, this does not mean that the body is outside culture or outside the social, or that the body is unaffected by human culture. The real in the sense of ‘the biologically real’ does limit what is possible for humans to do – e.g., as is very commonly stated, we cannot fly\(^1\) – but biology can also be understood as empowering: “[…] human beings have developed quite exceptional powers to intervene and deflect the course of nature” (Soper, op. cit.: 139)\(^1\).

Few gender theorists (if any) deny that in an ontological sense, women’s and men’s bodies differ, although they often point out that the classification into two mutually exclusive types is not necessarily as simple in light of the existence of children who are born with ambiguous genitalia (see, e.g., Heinämaa’s, 1997a, discussion of such studies). It seems to me, then, that it becomes a question of choosing an approach that explicitly aims to produce new insights through an estrangement (through which what we see as natural categories do not seem as natural after all; e.g., Butler’s, 1993, discussion of the process of materialization, whereby (gendered) bodies are produced and Haraway’s, 1991, discussion of the cyborg) or an approach that tries to start with people’s everyday subjective experiences (though, importantly, not finishing there). Because of the everyday or common sense character of the phenomena that I study, and because of the problems with the metaphor of production noted by Soper, I choose the latter approach.

Soper indicates that there is a “phenomenally”\(^1\) experienced body, a body of ‘lived experience’ (Soper, op. cit.: 134), and this, too, is Heinämaa’s alternative to Butler’s thesis that gender is a process that creates its own raw material. Contrary to what Heinämaa sees as Butler’s (and other feminists

\(^1\) Unaided, Soper adds (op. cit.: 139).

\(^1\) And what is ‘natural’ is automatically neither stable (in the sense that it is unchangeable or has always been that way) nor inherently good (in the sense that it should be left as it is, that humans should not try to change it).

\(^1\) Soper uses the word “phenomenally” not to imply ‘extraordinary’ or ‘startling’, but to refer to the body as a phenomenon, the body of lived experience.
working with the Anglo-American version of the sex/gender distinction) understanding of de Beauvoir, she argues that

In Beauvoir’s phenomenological perspective, ‘sex’ (female/male) cannot be conceived as a natural basis for ‘gender’ construction, and ‘gender’ should not be viewed as the cultural interpretation of a pregiven ‘sex’. Both sex and gender must be seen as theoretical abstractions or idealizations, developed in specific practices of explaining and predicting human behavior and based on the feminine and masculine styles of lived experience (Heinämaa, 1997b: 32).

Heinämaa (1997b; 2003) suggests that Beauvoir’s purpose in *The Second Sex* was to study the meanings of woman, female and feminine, not to explain or find causal forces behind the subordination of women: “Thus, when Beauvoir asks how does one become a woman, she in fact asks how it is possible that a body, intertwined with the world and other bodies, can both repeat certain postures, gestures and expressions, and change and modify them” (Heinämaa, 1997b: 32).

Relating the above to the work presented in this thesis, one has to keep in mind that this is a sociological work. I do not primarily focus on finding causes or reasons\(^{15}\) for the phenomena under study; rather, I try to understand how intoxicating substance use and gender are linked together. Moreover, the studies presented here are not phenomenological inquiries\(^ {16}\). I choose to discuss Beauvoir and, above all, Heinämaa’s interpretation of her work, because it is an important contribution to feminist theory and because it can, as such, serve as a basis for and offer important critical insights into my work in sociology. Without denying that a real world exists and that we can know things about it (and that research from areas other than the social sciences can tell us something about this world; e.g., research on neurotransmitters and their importance for the reward system of the brain can tell us something about people’s drinking habits), my research focuses on the world that is socially and culturally real to people. This is the world indicated in Heinämaa’s reference to Beauvoir.

---

\(^{15}\) Heinämaa argues that the work of Simone de Beauvoir has often been misinterpreted as a sociological study, where sociological in Heinämaa’s understanding implies a focus on causes or reasons (cf. Alcoff, 2000a, who argues that calling a study sociological has been used as a devaluation of feminist work that could as well, according to Alcoff, have been called philosophical). Sociology is in its aims, I would argue, broader than only searching for causes or reasons. Parts of sociology involve methods and perspectives that are phenomenological in nature or at least close to phenomenology (e.g., the works of Schütz).

\(^{16}\) Neither in a philosophical sense nor in a more sociological sense.
Heinämaa on Beauvoir’s concept of the living body

According to Heinämaa, in *Le Deuxième Sexe (The Second Sex)*, Beauvoir treats the body as a “subject of experience” and not as a bioscientific object. With respect to Beauvoir’s understanding and use of the concept of the living body, Heinämaa proposes two possible interpretations, one more closely related to Sartre’s thinking and the other to Merleau-Ponty’s:

The basic existentialist doctrine that Beauvoir emphasizes in her early essays is that human beings do not exist in the same way as things exist: human existence affirms itself against the inertia of the things. It is not given or fixed but constantly molded by our acts. This idea can be formulated in terms of Sartre’s ontology, but it can also be interpreted within Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological framework. In the first case, the existentialist doctrine comes down to the thesis that consciousness has no inner core and that the self is merely one of its objects. In the second case, the claim is that the human body is able to transcend itself and has a radically open structure different from that of material things (Heinämaa, 2003: 60).

In fact, according to Heinämaa, Beauvoir took on an intermediate position as regards femininity and criticized both the idea of a stable and unchanging essence and the perspectives of particularism or nominalism. She cites Beauvoir17:

In truth, to go for a walk with one’s eyes open is enough to note [constater] that humanity is divided into two categories of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, smiles, gaits, interests, and occupations are manifestly different. Perhaps these differences are superficial, perhaps they are destined to disappear. What is certain is that they exist with clear evidence (Heinämaa, op. cit.: 83, cf. de Beauvoir [1949] 1993: 13).

So, there seems to exist two categories of individuals, but their experiences and their lives are not determined by biology. This appears to be close to what Francis proposes as an adequate understanding of gender: young children understand from early on that “the taking up of gender is vital for their social competence” and that gender therefore can be thought as “wholly socially constructed, yet emanates from the sex which has been assigned to the child” (Francis, 2002: 41-42), and to Goffman’s and Butler’s ideas. But as we have seen, Heinämaa wants to avoid Butler’s metaphorical use of the notion of production and argues that Beauvoir’s idea that woman is a becom-

---

17 I present Heinämaa’s translation into English because of the problems with the traditional English translation that she and others have underlined. In Swedish, this paragraph reads: “I själva verket räcker det att se sig omkring för att konstatera att mänskligheten delar sig i två kategorier av individer, vars kläder, ansikten, kroppar, leenden, uppträdande, intressen och sysselsättningar är uppenbart olika. Kanske är dessa skillnader ytliga, kanske är de förutbestämmande att försvinna. Ett är säkert: för ögonblicket finns de och de är häpnadsväckande tydliga” (de Beauvoir, [1949] 2002: 24).
ing is, further, not to be interpreted as a sociopsychological or historical becoming nor as a question of socialization: “Beauvoir tries to think about women and men, not as two kinds of historical entities, but as two ways of relating to entities” (Heinämaa, 2003: 84; emphasis added). It is neither a question of socialization, if socialization is taken in a traditional sense to mean learning or internalization of societal values and ways of acting, nor that women and men are two separate entities differently pictured or understood throughout history, but that there are two ways of relating to the world. As I interpret Heinämaa’s comments, relating is what is important, and relating is always embodied.

In this way, I understand gender as embodied ways of relating to the world. But to study the “feminine” and “masculine” ways of relating to the world, one has to study the totality of life. To understand women’s erotic life, Heinämaa (2003) points out, it is not enough to compare it to men’s, but one should instead study the relations women have to their erotic objects and compare them to the relations women have to other sorts of objects. For this reason, gender understood as ‘embodied ways of relating to the world’ is a perspective on the basis of which I draw conclusions from my studies, rather than an understanding that has guided my research design. By applying the concept of gender presented above to Study 1, 2 and 4, I expand the discussion about gender in these studies.

The drug abuser is male. Or isn’t he?

In Study 1 and 2, I examine discussions about gender insofar as gender is implicitly or explicitly discussed by FMN or by the young people. Because the research focus for Study 1 is on how the subject positions young person/teenager, on the one hand, and parent, on the other, are described, I was primarily looking for gendered descriptions or references to girls and boys or women and men in this study. It turned out that explicit discussions of gender were very rare in the brochures, The Book on Drugs and FMN’s website. However, there were some subtler references to gender. When reading more closely, the substance abuser is primarily presented as a man, by means of the text including the words he, his or him in connection with the word abuser, and through the fact that the medical-pharmacological presentation implicitly focuses on a male subject.

However, in some places where the text was more or less the same, the words he, his or him had been replaced by the (supposedly) gender-neutral formulation he/she. I use the word ‘replaced’ because I would argue that it is likely that the gender-neutral formulations have been added at a later time,

---

18 This, that sentences and paragraphs recurred in different brochures or at the web site and in a brochure, was characteristic of the data as a whole. The texts were far from identical, and at times very different, but the message that the organization was trying to convey appeared similarly across texts.
mirroring the discussion of gender in the field of alcohol and drug research that questioned that men were the “points of departure” for all, or most, studies of alcohol and drug use and abuse. Alternatively, it might mirror greater societal concerns about gender equality. The general impression is that the text’s relationship to gender appears ambivalent. Clearly, in the medical-pharmacological presentation, bodies appear as objects of biological processes induced or caused by a drug. The male body seems to be the general case – the typical ‘substance abuser as patient’ is a man – and, if widespread, this construction, in line with what feminist researchers in medicine have underlined19, might make it more difficult for women drug users or abusers to perceive and get help with possible physical problems caused by drug use (these could, e.g., differ from the problems that men have). On the other hand, there are some small indications that the gender difference is not just related to women’s and men’s bodies, but to the process of teenage development as well, in that the enticement of becoming an adult is associated with growing breasts for girls/women, but with acquiring a vehicle (a moped) for boys/men.

‘Ok, so you got pregnant’?

One may have expected gender to be of more explicit concern in Study 2, considering the importance that gender is said to have among young people. But, the results from Study 2 are similar to those from Study 1 in this respect; explicit discussions about gender are rare among the young people. Such discussions are not completely absent, but only just implied. When talking about drinking and control, reference to diffuse ‘problems’ or ‘things’ that may happen when one is drinking or drunk sometimes indicates that these ‘things’ have to do with sexuality or sexual acts: Being drunk and, hence, not being in control over oneself, might lead to the occurrence of unwanted ‘things’. For girls, such a ‘thing’ might be pregnancy. In one of the three lines of reasoning, the teetotaller argument, alcohol use and sexuality are linked together through the concept of judgement: unsafe sex and even sexual violence are constructed as effects of impaired judgement, in turn caused by drinking alcohol.20 Although the young people do not explic-

---

19 See, e.g., the 2002 issue of Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift (no 2-3, 2002) for discussions of gender in medicine.

20 Such discussions signal an awareness of the possible dangers associated with intoxication, indicating that the worries expressed by Camille Paglia (referred to in Pedersen, 2006: 260, 272) – that young women, inspired by modern feminist ideas, fail to understand that intoxication might put them at risk of (some) men’s sexual assault – are not warranted. Pedersen says that it is probably not that difficult to both embrace feminist ideals and be aware of the existence of dominance, power and violence in the world. Apart from this fact, I think that we are quite far from experiencing the situation that Paglia points to. Furthermore, there are dangers involved with becoming intoxicated for young men too. These dangers are no less related to violence – but violence of another kind (physical fights, robbery, etc). We might just as well say that a boy who gets himself drunk at a restaurant or a club is a fool (because of the risk that he will end up being attacked and beaten down in a fight) and that a boy who parts com-
itly discuss cases of sexual violence (other than occasional subtle hints), these discussions are on the societal agenda, e.g., in cases of rape.

**Sexuality-related expectancies across countries**

The purpose of Study 4 is to compare women’s and men’s expectancies about alcohol’s effect on sexual feelings in different Western and non-Western countries. For descriptive purposes, we also study the relation between expectancies about alcohol’s effect on sexual feelings and drinking volume in the same countries. In this paper, we do not study gender as specific ways of relating to the world or how gender is talked about. Gender is rather a biological category represented by the two types of human embodiment discussed by Beauvoir. In analogy with what Heinämaa argues, such a more traditional sociological study is not irrelevant to understanding feminine and masculine ways of relating to alcohol, but it is not sufficient. Study 4 has an explorative purpose, and the important thing about the data is that the preliminary identification of differences and similarities between countries might indicate interesting countries for further study and comparison. In expectancies about alcohol’s effect on sexual feelings, we found indications of both similarities between women and men within several countries and indications of differences between women and men within several countries. To understand more about the differences and similarities indicated in this study, more research on the cultural connections between sexuality, drinking and gender is needed.

**Gender and the nature – culture link**

Finally, in Study 3, I try to understand theoretically the links between intoxication, sexuality and gender so often referred to in the West. In Study 1, the FMN suggests a link between intoxication and sexuality, although problematized – adult sexuality is maturely sober and the sexual debut should not take place in a state of ‘grogginess’ – and in the teetotaller line of reasoning in Study 2, a similar link between intoxication and sexuality is suggested, via the discussion of ‘things’ that can happen and the concept of (impaired) judgement.

The common sense understanding that women are in fact closer to nature appears to play a role in the fact that women who drink are considered “bad” both because of their drinking and because their drinking is supposed to lead to sexual promiscuity or licentiousness. As argued in Study 3, discussing such understandings can therefore help us interpret the links between intoxication, sexuality and gender. In the following section, I develop the theoretical discussion in Study 3 by first giving a background to the discussion.
within feminist theory of whether women are closer to nature. Next, Bologh’s perspective – that in Study 3 is suggested as a better alternative to the one-sided views of both Weber’s and Maffesoli’s discussions of ecstasy – is presented in more detail.

‘Woman as nature’ and ‘Nature as woman’

In feminist theory, the association of femininity with naturality or the association of women with nature is considered a specific instance of the criticized mind – body dualism (Soper, op. cit.; Alcoff, op. cit.). Woman is a more corporeal being than man, because of her role in reproduction, that is, because it is she who becomes pregnant and gives birth to the child.

In a well-known essay, anthropologist Sherry Ortner (1974) argues that women, in every known culture, are considered “in some degree” inferior to men. In rejecting biological determinism21 as an explanation for this, she argues instead that common to every culture is that woman is identified with, or is a symbol of, nature “in the most generalized sense” of the word. Nature is “something that every society devalues…that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself” (op. cit.: 72). In short, Ortner’s thesis is that women’s greater closeness to nature can explain the universal oppression of women in all known cultures. Interestingly, Ortner bases large parts of her discussion of woman’s closeness to nature and nature’s status as “lower” or less valued than culture on the work of Simone de Beauvoir. Although she finds Beauvoir’s book (The Second Sex) “ideological”22, she argues that Beauvoir accurately described woman’s physiological situation. According to Ortner, it is “simply a fact that proportionately more of woman’s body space, for greater percentage of her lifetime, and at some – sometimes great – cost to her personal health, strength, and general stability, is taken up with the natural processes surrounding the reproduction of the species” (op. cit.: 75). But this does not make people conflate women with nature, as it is realized that woman too is a “full-fledged human being endowed with human consciousness” (op. cit.: 75-76). Further, woman’s bodily processes locate her in a social situation: she is seen as the natural caretaker of children (the bodily process of nursing an infant is thought to create a special bond between mother and child), and this in turn confines her to the domestic sphere. This social role of woman – the caretaker role – is also seen

---

21 Biological determinism is defined by Ortner as the idea that “There is something genetically inherent in the male of the species… that makes them the naturally dominant sex; that ‘something’ is lacking in females, and as a result women are not only naturally subordinate but in general quite satisfied with their position, since it affords them protection and the opportunity to maximize maternal pleasures, which to them are the most satisfying experiences of life” (Ortner, op. cit.: 71).

22 Exactly in what sense it is ideological is not something that Ortner discusses.
as closer to nature, Ortner argues\textsuperscript{23}. And, following the argumentation of Chodorow, Ortner argues that woman “probably does have a different psychic structure, but...that her psychic structure need not be assumed to be innate; it can be accounted for, as Chodorow convincingly shows, by the facts of the probably universal female socialization experience” (op. cit.: 81).

Ortner’s conclusion is that women are seen\textsuperscript{24} as closer to nature than men – women are not conflated with nature but are seen to occupy an intermediate position between culture and nature. Greater restrictions were placed on women’s activities and women’s participation in culture because of these ideas or associations, hence reproducing and reinforcing the position of women as closer to nature, and as inferior to men. Thus, according to Ortner’s (1974) view in this early paper, the emergence of male dominance was “a kind of side effect, an unintended consequence of social arrangements designed for other purposes” (Ortner, 1996: 176), rather than a product of male intentionality or will to power resulting from natural aggressiveness.

Soper (op. cit.) points out that nature – in a parallel sense – has been downgraded by its association with woman, its representation as female. In this way, “nature is allegorized as either a powerful maternal force, the womb of all human production, or as the site of sexual enticement and ultimate seduction” (Soper, op. cit.: 103). When nature is conceived as spatial territory in female terms, in the perception of the colonizer the metaphor of the land as female is most insistent, according to Soper. For the colonizer, then, “nature is both a nurturant force – a replenished bosom or womb of renewal – and a ‘virgin’ terrain ripe for penetration” (op. cit.: 104-105). This allegorization of nature as ambivalently female – both powerful, maternal force and passive object of seduction or conquest – is similar to the description Camille Paglia (1990) gives of nature, and of woman (see Study 3).

 '\textit{Why Paglia?}'

In Study 3, I describe some of Paglia’s theoretical points of departure and recount her understanding of gender relations and life in sexual space. There are several, interconnected reasons why I choose Camille Paglia. To avoid misunderstandings, I will begin by explaining them and then return to the discussion of woman as nature.

\textsuperscript{23} She specifies several reasons why this is so, e.g., that the home or the domestic sphere provides for “a constant association with children” who “might themselves be considered part of nature” (op. cit.: 77) and the “domestic/public opposition” (op. cit.: 78).

\textsuperscript{24} Given that I have mentioned that Ortner does not believe in biological determinist explanations for women’s position, there is perhaps no need to further underline the importance of her use of the word ‘seen’ in this context. For risk of stating the obvious, I would still like to point out that she does not consider the position of woman as closer to nature to be a fact of nature. Rather, it is a construct of culture: “Woman is not ‘in reality’ any closer to (or further from) nature than man – both have consciousness, both are mortal” (Ortner, 1974: 87).
First, Paglia’s work has been discussed quite recently by scholars interested in the (sociological) study of sexuality and gender. Her views have been both criticized and accepted. In a short paper on discourses on rape, Burr (2001) compares Paglia’s understanding of sexuality to that of Thornhill and Palmer (2000). Burr (op. cit.) concludes that although Paglia’s rejection of patriarchy is a limitation, her focus on women as those in power – because women have what men want, namely ‘the secret of life’ – highlights “how the victim ideology of rape results in a downgrading of women’s sexual identity and autonomy” (Burr, op. cit.: 105). This is contrasted to the evolutionary perspective of Thornhill and Palmer, in which women are seen as passive givers and victims in the sexual act. And, in an article about the status of sexuality in contemporary sociology, Pedersen (2003) argues that Paglia’s interest in the ‘dark sides’ of sexuality brings important issues to sociology, which it – due to its focus on equality/equal value – hasn’t previously been capable of completely understanding. He also refers to the feminist theorist Toril Moi, saying that she credits Paglia with being a feminist and gives her “fairly unreserved praise” (Pedersen, op. cit.: 32, note 36; cf. Moi, 2001).

On the other hand, other feminists have criticized Paglia for taking part in a conservative backlash discourse that undercuts feminism (Bloom, 1997). According to bell hooks (1994), Paglia chooses easy targets26, and therefore the real basis for her critique of feminism is not totally absent, but small. hooks also criticizes that Paglia, in making the female body “the site of her insistence on a binary structure of gender difference”, also implies “the naturalness of these distinctions with statements that affirm hierarchy” (hooks, op. cit.: 88).

Given that Paglia has been so discussed, and that it has been proposed that her perspective gives new insights, I choose to look more closely at her theories. Her perspective is relevant to this thesis insofar as she discusses nature and culture, and because it represents an account of women as closer to nature. I choose to discuss her not in order to repeat old and long-ago buried ideas (though I do not think they are buried – see below) of women as nature, but to show the reader the basis of her arguments in order to be able to discuss them in building up a further argument on how experiences of intoxication are related to sexuality and gender (via the idea of transcendence, and that this, according to some common sense views, is not something that women desire). The most important reason for including a discussion of Paglia is that I maintain that her theory – because of its reliance on

25 In the English version of the essay (I am a woman), Moi (1999) notes that Paglia, together with Catharine MacKinnon and Elaine Showalter, does not write theory in a traditional “male” way, but with wit and sharpness.

26 “She [Paglia] calls out the conservative crowd, the antimale, antisex, close-your-skirts-and-cross-your-legs, gender-equality-with-men-of-their-class, reformist, professional girls she knew up close and personal” (hooks, op. cit.: 86).
ideas of biological gender difference and Freudian ideas of gender identity that are widespread at least in Europe and North America\textsuperscript{27} – can be seen as representing an important contemporary, common sense understanding: that women are in fact, in reality, closer to nature.

According to Paglia herself, this is how it is in reality; hers is an ontological statement. It is therefore contrary to Paglia’s own claims that I suggest that her understanding of women as closer to nature can be read as an important common sense understanding of the relationship between women and men in today’s (Western) society.\textsuperscript{28} Now, as I argue in Study 3, these understandings – if they are indeed common as I propose – are relevant to people’s everyday lives – no matter how false and problematic they are as ontological statements – \textit{if people believe them to be}. If people believe such understandings to be true, and hence act in accordance with them, these understandings are sociologically important.

\textbf{‘Women are closer to nature – and they should be’}

As mentioned above, Paglia (op. cit.) argues that the identification of woman with nature is reality. In her view:

\begin{quote}
All the genres of philosophy, science, high art, athletics, and politics were invented by men. But by the Promethean law of conflict and capture, woman has a right to seize what she will and to vie with man on his own terms. Yet there is a limit to what she can alter in herself and in man’s relation to her. Every human being must wrestle with nature. But nature’s burden falls more heavily on one sex. With luck, this will not limit woman’s achievement, that is, her action in male created social space. But it must limit eroticism, that is, our imaginative lives in sexual space, which may overlap social space but is not identical with it (Paglia, op. cit.: 9).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} The Moroccan feminist Fatima Mernissi argues that, in Muslim societies, the implicit concept of female sexuality is active, while in the Western countries inspired by Freudian ideas, the concept of female sexuality is passive (Mernissi, 2001). Mernissi contends that “For Freud the female’s aggression, in accordance with her sexual passivity, is turned inward. She is masochistic” (op. cit.: 222), while “in the actively sexual Muslim female aggressiveness is seen as turned outward. The nature of her aggression is precisely sexual. The Muslim woman is endowed with a fatal attraction which erodes the male’s will to resist her and reduces him to a passive acquiescent role” (op. cit.: 223). It seems to me, though, that the view of women as sexually active in the sense that they are sexually aggressive is present in Western cultures as well, and that this view is in a tension with the Freudian idea of women as passive. It is part of the either-or perspective in which women are either sexually powerful and dangerous devourers or asexual passive objects.

\textsuperscript{28} Paglia’s description of the heavier burden that biology places on women is similar to de Beauvoir’s discussion in the part of \textit{The Second Sex} that is devoted to a description of facts and myths about women. See, above all, the sections on biology and psychoanalysis (de Beauvoir [1949] 2002, part 1: Fakta och myter/Facts and Myths). As pointed out above, Beauvoir’s \textit{The Second Sex} has been read by some as reducing woman to her biological functions, something that others have seriously questioned (see Heinämaa, 2003).
Paglia states that woman is more tied to biology than is man and that this limits or stands in woman’s way, above all as a sexual being. The limit before eroticism is not, in Paglia’s view, a limit that human’s draw, but something deeper or more profound than this – a biological limit or a limit of nature. On the one hand, Paglia seems to think that women do not need (sexual) transcendence as do men, because of their naturally stable gender identity. On the other hand, she argues that following current feminist ideas, women in the West are trying to “rebel” against, or surpass, nature in wanting “free sex” and sexual conquest as was earlier reserved for men only. Women do not need transcendence, but still, more women try to transcend their traditional sexual roles, Paglia seems to say. To understand this, we have to conclude that women can after all transcend nature, or otherwise Paglia wouldn’t be concerned about current feminist ideas. Her argument only makes sense in combination with her idea about new and perhaps worse hierarchies that lurk in nature, and that may – if women start to “behave like men” sexually and hence acquire “equality” in the erotic sphere – replace the old ones. To Paglia, women are closer to nature, and they should be as well.

If we compare Paglia’s perspective to the intermediate position of Beauvoir, we find that although they both talk about the female body from a biological perspective, Beauvoir, as pointed out by Heinämaa (2003), saw no specific reasons why sexual relations should be more animal or natural than other human relations. Hence, from this perspective, it is difficult to understand why Paglia argues that life in sexual space but not life in social space must be specifically limited by woman’s biology.

In Paglia’s argumentation, gender identity appears stable. Gender identity is stable because women and men have different bodies. She arrives at this conclusion by presuming that it is a matter of fact that women want and have few sex partners, while men want and have many sex partners. As I point out in Study 3, I consider this a hasty conclusion. A classical sociological objection would be that if it is a fact that women (All women? Or women in what society? Of what age? Etc.) report less interest in no-strings-attached sex and less interest in having many sexual partners than do men, one would have to consider the alternative explanation that women’s sexual expressions are surrounded by greater social control and disapproval than are men’s, and that women, because of this, adjust their answers to what is socially desirable.  

But Paglia does not consider this alternative explanation. She proceeds to conclude that the explanation for this “fact” must be that women’s gender identity is stable in itself and that this stability has to do with woman’s biology: the ‘lunar phases’ and ‘circular returns’ of, e.g., menstruation guarantee her stability as a sexual being. Paglia’s conclusion is problematic because

---

29 One might also ask who the men have sex with – if it is the case that men generally report many more sexual partners than women, while still maintaining that they are exclusively heterosexual, there is something genuinely unclear about their answers.
her presumptions are problematic. At each stage of her argumentation, I would argue that she presumes stability, while at the same time using stability as a metaphor for femininity, such that all stages become entangled with one another. That women can bear children does not necessarily imply that women think that the mystery of life is inside them and that their gender identity is therefore more stable (or secure) than men’s, or that men must necessarily understand it this way – one might equally plausibly propose that the mystery of life is inside the man, because ‘the whole person’ is already there in the sperm and woman is just a ‘tank’ in which it is ‘deposited’ (cf. the eighteenth century understanding of reproduction implying that the sperm, or the unfertilized embryo, was a homunculus; see, e.g., Harrison, 1971). As Heinämaa (2003) underlined, to study ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ ways of relating to the world, one has to study the totality of life. If one wants to understand women’s erotic life, it is not enough to compare it to men’s, but one should instead study the relations women have to their erotic objects and compare them to the relations women have to other sorts of objects.

Arguing against Paglia does not mean that one ‘disregards nature’ or that one thinks that nature or biology does not set up any limits whatsoever on human behaviour. Biology does set up some limits, but these limits are not stable once and for all. Insofar as humans are aware of some of the (instable) limits that society places upon human (in this case, women’s) action, we would do better not to presume that people (women) always do what they say they do. Different human embodiment might very well be related to gender identity and to the experience of eroticism in specific ways, but such relationships are culturally and historically specific. That is, such interpretations are not biologically given; although perhaps somehow related to biology/biological differences, they are understood within a social and cultural context (see also, e.g., Collins, 2004, for more critique of ideas from evolutionary biology).

To return to Paglia’s fear of women becoming “like men”: I hold that this fear is based on a mistaken understanding of what (sexual) transcendence or sexual freedom might mean. Paglia takes her point of departure in a “male” way of seeing the world and then criticizes women for taking up this “male” ideal. But transcendence, or sexual promiscuity, or sexual “freedom”, does not necessarily imply such a stable subject-object relationship – in which women only switch places with men – as Paglia seems to suggest. Her view

30 If this understanding seems problematic because it is outdated, one might – again equally plausibly – suggest that ‘the mystery of life’ is between women and men, because the foetus is the result of a fusion or merging of the egg and the sperm.

31 To paraphrase Soper (op. cit.), humans can now fly – aided. In a sense, it is not much use to say that they “really” cannot, because the ability to fly aided, no matter whether it is “socially constructed” or not, has changed the human world. The changing of biological limits through “culture’s” interference with “nature” is not necessarily something negative.
implies that if one does not understand oneself as an object (as women typically do, according to Paglia), one must be a subject and, hence, one must necessarily see the other as an object (for a similar line of reasoning, see Bataille, [1962] 2001). With seeing the other as an object follows automatically the male way of relating to the world that for Paglia is delusional. However, having sexual relations with many people does not necessarily mean that one treats them as objects of one’s own desire, as “things”, nor does it mean that romantic love is necessary for sexual relations. One might relate to another person as a subject – that is, be in a relationship with this someone – without this relationship being a relationship built on traditional romantic love as we conceive of it. Arguing against Paglia does not constitute a plea for total sexual freedom – in fact, feminists are among those who have questioned this very ideal. In this case, Paglia seems to think that all feminists are liberalists – she presumes that the freedom that feminists talk about is negative freedom, that is, freedom from the social, from all social “restraints”.

Paglia’s observation that (some) women try to act “like men” might just as well be read as a sign of change in psychological gender identity in contemporary society. If we argue that women start to “need” transcendence (e.g., through sex or through drinking and intoxication) in the same way that men do, this looks like a classical convergence-hypothesis (see, e.g., Hammer & Vaglum, op. cit.; Neve et al., op. cit.). But, again, transcendence is not necessarily “male”. It might mean other things to women – and to men – to seek transcendence through sex and drinking, it might not – this is a question for further study.

In conclusion, my main objection against Paglia’s arguments lies not first and foremost in the fact that she talks about biology and the human body, or that she proposes that different embodiment – women’s and men’s – may somehow be related to our experiences as human beings in the world. The problem is the presumed stability inherent in her view. In opposition to Paglia’s quest, Beauvoir proposes, according to Heinämaa (2003), that we should not try to explain why women are other, but try to understand why women are defined as other. “The answer to this latter question is that the reciprocity of the self – other relationship is somehow compromised or confounded in the case of man perceiving a woman” (Heinämaa, op. cit.: 125). In the case of Paglia’s perspective, a woman perceiving a woman does not guarantee that the reciprocity of the self – other relationship is not confounded. In Study 3, I further argue that Weber’s and Maffesoli’s theorizing on ecstasy – that might otherwise have helped us understand the link be-

---

32 For example, by arguing that complete sexual freedom, in which everyone may do what he or she pleases, would mean a men’s world where the most (physically) powerful would reign (for a short discussion of the feminist critique of sexual freedom and sexual liberalism, see Bogren, 2003).
between intoxication and sexuality – are both one-sided. I suggest that Bologh’s alternative is preferable because she emphasizes that ecstasy and rationality, and subject and object, are mutually dependent and related to one another. I will now present Bologh’s perspective in more detail.

**Erotic love as imposition**

Writing about Weber’s conception of erotic love, Bologh (1990; see also Bologh, 1987) notes that Weber sees the erotic love relationship as involving brutality, coercion and conflict. This is a “veiled and sublimated” brutality (Weber, [1915] 1970: 355), a notion that Bologh takes to mean “brutality that is elevated from the base, material level of physical violence to a higher level of spiritual violence” (Bologh, 1990: 199). She also notes the resemblance between this notion of the inevitable brutality of sexual love and certain feminist analyses of “heterosexual ‘love’ relationships”. The conflict does not primarily have to do with jealousy or “the will to possession” (Weber, op. cit.: 348); instead “it is far more the most intimate coercion of the soul of the less brutal partner” (ibid.: 348). The coercion “exists because it is never noticed by the partners themselves. Pretending to be the most humane devotion, it is a sophisticated enjoyment of oneself in the other” (ibid.: 348). Bologh explains that the ethical problem associated with this, from the perspective of the ethic of brotherly love, has to do with “treating the other as a means for one’s own enjoyment and not as an end” (Bologh, op. cit.: 200). To understand what this means, one has to discuss the notion of desire, Bologh contends.

Erotic love can be seen as an expression of one’s own desire and “treating the other as a means to one’s pleasure involves imposing one’s will or desire on the other” (Bologh, op. cit.: 200). Therefore, if one expresses one’s desire for the other (e.g., one’s desire for the other’s presence) and it is “matched by the other’s desire to please”, the “less brutal partner” (according to Bologh, e.g., the less imposing or more accommodating partner) has been coerced. Weber’s analysis is similar to contemporary feminist analyses because he argues that this coercion exists by virtue of the fact that neither of the partners notices it. According to Bologh, Weber implies that had the partners seen or recognized the coercion, this, in line with his emphasis on the conflictual nature of social life, would lead to open conflict.

Eventually, the question of whether desire is inherently a coercive element in a relationship, presents itself. To Bologh it is not, insofar as inherent coercion is not noticed by the partners. Bologh’s example may clarify her argument: “Take the example of a stereotypical heterosexual relationship. The one who desires to please will see her action as voluntary. She will not necessarily see the action as compliance, but may identify the other’s wishes as her own. In this way she denies that she has a soul with any self-defined desires of its own other than the desire to please. The particular content of the act is defined by the other. Hence precisely because neither she nor he realize that she is denying her own soul, the love is a ‘coercion of the soul’” (op. cit.: 201).

33 Bologh’s example may clarify her argument: “Take the example of a stereotypical heterosexual relationship. The one who desires to please will see her action as voluntary. She will not necessarily see the action as compliance, but may identify the other’s wishes as her own. In this way she denies that she has a soul with any self-defined desires of its own other than the desire to please. The particular content of the act is defined by the other. Hence precisely because neither she nor he realize that she is denying her own soul, the love is a ‘coercion of the soul’” (op. cit.: 201).
means biologically inherent. To sort this out, one has to pose a further question, i.e.: is the expression of desire identical to the imposition of desire? This question is not as easily answered as one might think:

To express oneself to another is to impose oneself, and to impose oneself is a form of coercion. We can use the analogy with communication and speech. Any time I attempt to speak or express myself, verbally or otherwise, I am imposing on another. […] The other has not invited my speech act, and if she has, then in doing so she has imposed on me, assaulted my senses. Cultures implicitly recognize in the various interaction rituals and patterns of etiquette the offensive character of self-expression\(^{34}\) (Bologh, op. cit.: 207).

Considered from this perspective, the expression of desire involves imposition, but while Weber sees this one-sidedly, Bologh stresses that there is also another side to sociable action, a side that involves concern for and receptiveness to the other’s response. Referring to Simmel (1950), Bologh sees sociability as “necessary for and prior to any particular form of society” (op. cit.: 215). However:

Even Simmel considered sociability a thing apart from practical life, a separate sphere. He acknowledges that the pleasure of being with others can emerge in any social activity. Nevertheless, he seems to believe that individual interests precede the social interest; that is, individual interests bring people into contact which they may then find desirable in itself. He does not treat the pleasure of relating to others, sociability, as the essential core of social life […] Just as purposive association involves some sociability, some consideration of the other, a sociable gathering such as a party also involves some purposive, instrumental behaviour. A party that excludes all self-interest must be a highly formal one. That seems to be the kind that Simmel has in mind when he discusses sociable gatherings and notices the emphasis on form and the exclusion of anything too personal (op. cit.: 216).

As noted in Study 3, Bologh’s feminist conception of social life and erotic love as sociability involves seeing each person as both the subject and object of desire. This is what makes for “the playfulness of sociable interactions” (op. cit.: 219) and for new understandings and humour, but also for “serious tensions, misunderstandings and resentments” (op. cit.: 221). However, the “threatening nature” of the relationship is never totally absent. One of the partners may feel relatively more vulnerable than powerful in relation to the other, and this is the reason why sociable relationships require that the parties “not only […] make a show of surrendering and deferring to the other, but […] actively draw out the other, […] recover the subjectivity of the other, in order that the more fearful or threatened one can be encouraged to express his or her feelings and desires and have them respected” (op. cit.: 223). And, furthermore, Bologh underlines that the feminist model she

\(^{34}\) For example, in phrases like "Excuse me" or "Pardon me" (Bologh, op. cit.).
sketches is not a “utopian model of love and good feeling” and that violence can occur within a relationship of erotic love “when one betrays the trust of another and destroys the grounds of the relationship” (op. cit.: 235).

It is at times somewhat difficult to know whether Bologh is talking about a future possible society or a society that already exists. Her critique of Weber implies that his perspective is one-sided and that, in reality, rationality is dependent on love, and the public world dependent on the private. But she also maintains that women have been denied their subjectivity, or that women’s subjectivity is more repressed, in patriarchal (and, one assumes, contemporary) society. In the end, Bologh acknowledges both change and stability: “Already today with more women participating equally with men in the public world the very terms ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ seem outdated. Nevertheless, they continue in force, particularly with regard to sexual attractiveness” (op. cit.: 286). But I also think that the one-sided perspective of Weber is problematic in the further sense that it is not a good description of social relations. They are not only characterized by inherent violence and conflict, but also by understanding and sympathy. In this sense, I see Bologh’s perspective as a better description of what is.

In Study 3, I focus on the stability of how gender relations – as concerns intoxication and sexuality – are understood. But this is neither an absolute nor natural or “biological” stability. I agree with Bologh’s contention that the terms ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ do not denote the same characteristics today that they did in Weber’s time and, as I argue in Study 3, the pattern of a general persistence of gender differences in drinking and frequency of intoxication (Wilsnack et al., 2000; Holmila & Raitasalo, 2005) is complemented by changing drinking habits among women (for Sweden, see, e.g., Bergmark, 2001). However, following the model proposed in Study 3 might help us understand why reactions to women’s drinking and intoxication are harsher than reactions to men’s drinking and intoxication. Resistance to the social norms that stipulate that women are “bad” both because of their drinking and because their drinking is supposed to lead to sexual promiscuity or licentiousness, also threatens the idea that women are closer to nature and, thereby, the distinction between nature and culture, a distinction that remains important in our society and especially so, it seems, in relation to gender.

**Dual licentiousness**

The main argument of Study 3 is that fear of intoxicated women or intoxication in women constitutes fear of ‘dual licentiousness’. I try to integrate cultural alcohol research and feminist studies on gender and sexuality by discussing the fact that, in cultural alcohol research, it has been suggested that men are closer to nature through their drinking and, in feminist studies on gender and sexuality, it has been argued that women are perceived to be closer to nature through their (sexual) bodies. The understanding of how these ideas – that at first seemed contradictory – can exist together is facili-
tated by separating them into different levels: the level of what is (perceived to be) and the level of what should be. In conclusion: it is more dangerous if women ‘let themselves go’ through intoxication (using an alcoholic beverage) than if men do the same, because women are expected to be controllers, to stand for respectable culture (normative level; how things should be). At the same time, there is the understanding of women as in fact being closer to nature through their sexuality. Given this understanding, it becomes even more important that women stay where they are, in culture, and do not come any closer to nature than they already are perceived to be. When women drink and become intoxicated, a discrepancy between what is and what should be appears. As pointed out above, my point in Study 3 is that this discrepancy threatens the very distinction between nature and culture. In a way then, my argument is similar to Ortner’s (1974) thesis, which argues that women are seen as closer to nature. I try to elaborate on how bodily differences come to mean and imply social divisions between women and men as concerns their drinking and drug use. But there are also differences between my argument and Ortner’s (1974). Because a common theme for this thesis is cultural variation, the following section discusses some issues raised by previous research on culture, gender relations, nature and intoxicating substance use.

Cultural differences?
Unlike Ortner (1974), I do not discuss the universality of male dominance. However, Ortner herself, in a later text (Ortner, 1996), briefly discusses the criticism that her early paper was met with. One objection was whether or not male dominance was universal. Ortner (ibid.) argues that, in her early paper, her view on culture was perhaps too influenced by a systems perspective, underemphasizing inconsistency, contradiction and disjunction. With this new insight, one would do better to talk about to what degree cultures are egalitarian or male dominant (cf. Thurén, 2000, for a proposition of such a method for studying gender orders in different societies). However, talking about egalitarianism, one must be careful to note that this egalitarianism is “complex, inconsistent, and – to some extent – fragile” (Ortner, op. cit.: 175). In the context of this thesis, this observation – that male dominance is better conceived of as a matter of degree rather than kind – can only be noted and acknowledged. Unfortunately, none of the data for my four studies permit such a detailed discussion of different gender orders. Study 4, however, contributes to future studies in this area by pointing to countries that could be of particular interest for more detailed case studies.

Another objection to Ortner’s 1974 paper had to do with the emergence of male dominance, as referred to above (in the section ‘Woman as nature’ and ‘Nature as woman’). Still leaning towards her position in the 1974 paper (that is, that male dominance is more a side effect or an “unintended consequence of social arrangements designed for other purposes”), Ortner (1996)
argues that, in understanding the emergence of male dominance, it is also important to take into consideration male power relations linked to the use and threat of violence against women. On this matter (although it is not necessarily a question that has to be answered here), my position is similar to Ortner’s – I don’t think that we can find some biologically innate will to power among men that, consciously or unconsciously, compels the development of male dominance. On the other hand, this does not mean that I consider power relations unimportant or non-existent. Ortner points out that greater restrictions were placed on women’s activities and women’s participation in culture because of the association of women with nature, hence reproducing and reinforcing the position of women as closer to nature, and as inferior to men. In this way, power relations are in fact incorporated into her perspective.

Finally, there was the question of the universality of the nature – culture opposition. Ortner (1996) underlines that this relationship is not always or everywhere constructed as a relationship of cultural dominance or superiority over nature and that nature can be “a category of peace and beauty, or of violence and destruction, or of inertia and unresponsiveness, and so on” in the same way as understandings of culture vary (op. cit.: 178; see also Soper, op. cit.). In Ortner’s words:

Nature/culture in one or another specifically Western sense – as a ‘struggle’ in which ‘man’ tries to ‘dominate’ nature, as a confrontation with a system that obeys ‘natural laws’, and so forth – is certainly not universal. Even the idea that ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are two relatively distinct kinds of objects is probably not universal. But the problem of the relationship between what humanity can do, and that which sets limits upon those possibilities, must be a universal problem – to which of course the solutions will vary enormously, both cross-culturally and historically” (Ortner, 1996: 179).

The Swedish anthropologist Gunilla Bjerén (1987) has argued that, in Värmland, Sweden, in the last half of the 20th century, men and masculinity were linked to nature (men hunted and took care of butchery) and women and femininity to culture (women cooked and refined foodstuff). According to Bjerén, Ortner’s thesis that woman is in an intermediary position is not the only possible way of interpreting women’s activities of raising children and cooking food. Woman could just as well be thought of as symbolically superior, because it is she who brings about the transition or change (turns children into adults and the raw into the cooked). If Ortner’s thesis that women are seen as closer to nature is still correct, Bjerén’s point implies that differences in power in men’s favour could have contributed to the positioning of women as closer to nature. Bjerén further argues that the relationship between women and men and nature and culture must have to do with the roles that men have as well as those that women have: “In northern Värmland, both men and women were out in the lands, in outhouses and the patches,
but it was still above all men who were associated with outdoor life in the woods and lands and who had closest contact with ‘raw’ nature” (Bjerén, op. cit.: 210, my translation). This could be a question of cultural difference. For example, Jacobson-Widding (2002) suggests that one explanation is that nature in Scandinavia is more highly valued and esteemed than culture and that there is a cultural border or boundary on a level with Paris, marking the turning-on-its-head of this valuation. Again, however, such a question cannot be answered here. It would involve, among other things, exploring how the concept of nature is used and understood in different cultures (is the concept of ‘nature’ that Ortner talks about the same concept of ‘nature’ that people in Värmland used in the 1980s?) and trying to disentangle whether the concept of nature as used and understood in Värmland is common to Sweden as a whole as well as to the other Scandinavian countries.

The image of women as controllers is recurrent in research on cultural understandings of drinking and intoxication. Women are associated with social order, home and family, on the one hand, while men are associated with disorder or wildness, on the other. According to McDonald (1994a), in rural Brittany, France, women are “the moral architects and guardians of social order” as matters of home and family are traditionally women’s territory, while men are seen as introducing disorder into the home through “their drinking and dirt” (McDonald, op. cit.: 112). She further argues that, in northern Europe, women’s attributed sensitivity gives them the responsibility for social propriety, while in southern Europe men have responsibility for social order and suffer dishonour when proprieties are breached (McDonald, 1994b). This does not necessarily contradict her observation that, in rural France, women are the guardians of social order. As I understand her, the difference concerns intoxication and masculinity (although she also argues that there are restrictions on this general tendency). A man in northern Europe may find manliness and heavy drinking (to intoxication, supposedly) compatible or synonymous, while a man in southern Europe tends to find manliness synonymous with “the propriety of constraint” (McDonald, 1994b: 21). This means that in northern Europe a woman who is drunk or labelled an alcoholic is assigned a particularly low status, while a man in the same situation is not assigned an equally low status. In southern Europe, a man who is visibly drunk would suffer more dishonour than would a man in northern Europe, while a woman in southern Europe who is drunk would have the same low status as a woman in northern Europe in the same situation.

The notion that home and family, as opposed to bars, are, or at least were not so long ago, women’s territory is also indicated in studies on Spain and Greece, where women today are engaging in “conquering the bars” as a way of gaining access to public spaces (Thurén, 1998, on Spain; Papagaroufali, 1992, on Greece) and thereby access to a wider (sexual) space of their own (Thurén, 1998). With respect to the Nordic countries, Sulkunen (2002) talks...
about how, in a Finnish beer advertisement, nature is associated with wilderness, youth, drinking and men, while culture is associated with respectable culture, adulthood and women. He argues that this tension between wild masculinity and orderly femininity has also appeared in other studies of Finnish drinking images (see Falk & Sulkunen, 1983; Sulkunen et al., 1997a; Tigerstedt, 1997). Likewise, Knobbloch (op. cit.) describes the period of rationing of alcohol in Sweden (1922-1955) as a period characterized by a gender contract drawn up between the state and the citizen. Rights to buy alcohol and demands on the citizen from the state were different dependent on the sex of the applicant. 35 Knobbloch argues that the informal demands that this contract expressed were linked to notions and expectations about the nature of women and men at the time:

The woman herself was expected to refrain from imbibing and to urge her spouse to do the same. This was based on the perception of the woman as neither having any need nor finding any enjoyment in liquor, and that her natural inclination was instead towards sobriety and conscientiousness (Knobbloch, op. cit., 254).

In trying to understand cultural differences in the position of drinking, drug use and intoxication, Guðmundsson (1999) argues that the Nordic societies 36 were too quick in “getting rid of the devil”, i.e. the Nordic societies have been secularized, but the cultural influence of Protestantism still lingers on outside the sphere of religion. The opposition between good and evil or God and the devil has now been transposed onto other phenomena in society; Guðmundsson’s thesis is that alcohol and drugs may be examples of this. He argues that, in the Nordic countries, which are influenced by Protestantism, sin has tended to be associated with intoxication – intoxication was assigned the role of evil in the Nordic countries when common wage-earners gained access to the means to buy alcohol/intoxicants. In the Catholic countries in southern Europe, on the other hand, sin has tended to be associated with sexuality 37. But if gender is taken into account, what we are talking about becomes a triangle (with ‘sin’ at its ‘peak’), where intoxication among women in its turn is linked to sexual licentiousness, i.e. what I call ‘dual

35 During this period, one had to apply for a ration book and it was through this book that the state controlled and regulated the purchase of alcohol.
36 He argues that, besides Iceland, the discussion also indicates a broader Nordic Protestant frame of reference.
37 Referring to earlier research, Guðmundsson argues that, in Iceland, sin was earlier associated with sexuality and that these ideas were, in turn, closely related to social structure; those who were not property owners were kept in check through control or repression of their sexuality. Intoxication was not as great a problem, because access to alcohol and other intoxicants was monopolized by the wealthy. With wage labour, common people gained access to the means to buy alcohol/intoxicants, and then intoxication assumed the primary role of evil (Guðmundsson, op. cit.).
licentiousness”. Specifying and clarifying the cultural differences and similarities linked to gender – e.g., those between the Nordic and the southern European countries as alluded to in the present text – would be helpful for future studies. An analytical model useful for these purposes might be that of Thurén (2000), who uses the concepts of force and scope (and hierarchy) to describe gender orders in different societies.

Heinämaa underlines that: “The values and meanings that are crucial here are not the ones forced on us by others – the society – but those that we realize in our own actions” (Heinämaa, 1997a: 302). Whether (most) women and men hold the understanding that women are closer to nature through their (sexual) bodies and that women therefore should stay where they are and avoid intoxication, and whether they realize this understanding in their actions, is an empirical question. It can be addressed using, e.g., interview methods, or perhaps biographical or diary accounts, or court documents and protocols.

My proposition that women’s drinking is seen – and feared – as ‘dual licentiousness’, and that social control over women’s drinking is therefore harsher, is not proposed as an explanation that specifies cause and effect. It can be brought together with, e.g., Warner’s (1997) suggestion that economic circumstances play a role in the emergence of “temperance as a feminine virtue” in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, women enjoyed – similarly to men – “considerable freedom” with regard to where and when they could drink alcohol. When times became economically harsher – Warner talks about economic and social crises – the idea that sobriety was a ‘feminine virtue’ appeared. Men’s consumption of alcohol increased at the expense of their wives and children. But Warner also argues that in and around the home “moral authority was [now] gradually shifting from husbands to their longsuffering wives” (op. cit.: 106). On the other hand,

It is clear that the campaign to enforce temperance on women also belonged to a larger campaign designed to ensure submissive behaviour among women in particular and among the lower classes in general. […] Quite clearly, attempts to restrict when and where women might drink effectively sanctioned a redistribution of income within a household; they also served to limit women’s social access, relegating wives and mothers to the dubious status of presiding over the sanctuary of sobriety (Warner, op. cit.: 106).

---

38 It is possible that, for men, sexuality in this model would be replaced by violence, or violence would have to be added to the picture.
39 Thurén’s model would tell us that in the southern European region, gender has great force and wide scope, i.e. gender organizes a great many things and organizes them in a rather strict manner, while Sweden is characterized by great force and narrow scope. Neither force nor scope has any automatic connection with hierarchy. Furthermore, differences between women and men do not automatically imply hierarchy.
Warner’s study and my proposition are two sociological ways of explaining (the economic circumstances) and understanding (women are seen as closer to nature) the differing social reactions to women’s and men’s drinking. In the next section, I explain more closely what I mean by ‘understanding’ in the context of this thesis and how the methods I have used relate to this understanding of ‘understanding’.

Methodology

The four studies in this thesis are characterized by varying methods of analysis. Two of them (Study 1 and 2) can be considered qualitative analyses, one is a theoretical analysis (Study 3) and one is a quantitative analysis (Study 4). There have been long discussions in social science and sociology about the appropriateness of using one or the other kind of method, whether or not they can be combined and whether the use of any one of them automatically implies certain positions in the theory of science. The sections below discuss the general perspective from which I have worked, and it is relevant to all four studies.

Meaning and interpretation

In this thesis, I am trying to understand what alcohol and drug use and intoxication mean from the perspective of an agent for the official Swedish drug policy position (FMN) and from the perspective of Swedish young people. I am also trying to understand what the link between alcohol and drug use and intoxication, on the one hand, and sexual acts and gender, on the other, mean to people, primarily in Sweden but also in other countries. As Fay (1996) argues, understanding is sometimes equated with empathy, psychological closeness or transcultural identification. This is, however, a mistaken assumption: “[…] we understand others not when we become them (something we cannot do in any case), but only when we are able to translate what they are experiencing or doing into terms which render them intelligible” (Fay, op. cit.: 25; emphasis in original). Fay compares the interpretation of meaning to “the process of trying to decipher a difficult poem rather than trying to achieve some inner mental union with its author (which may or may not help in such deciphering)” (op. cit.: 25). His argument is built up as a critique of insider epistemology, which posits that ‘you have to be one to know one’ (if you want to know or understand women, you have to be a woman yourself, and so on for other categories). This is a false assumption if ‘know’ is defined as ‘having the same experiences as’, Fay argues.

There is one basic criterion for understanding to be possible, however, and it is the following: “To grasp the meaning of an action interpreters must assume that its agent is like the interpreter in being able to have experiences,
to think rationally, to feel, to intend, and so forth. Put succinctly, both inter-
preters and interpreted must be persons” (op. cit.: 26). Whether we think that
a strict opposition between nature and culture is useful or not in most in-
stances, this special case of an opposition between them is a distinction be-
tween humans and non-humans (notably, animals and plants) that we cannot
dispense with in the social sciences, Soper (op. cit.) argues. This opposition
corns the fact that only humans interpret and use language and symbols
in any meaningful sense of those words. While it is not necessary to have the same experience as those one is try-
ing to understand, in trying to understand or render intelligible what people
experience, do or talk about, one cannot, on the other hand, completely ig-
nore their views and impose any interpretations on their activities. In Fay’s
words “[…] you surely must be sensitive to them to know what their lives
are all about” (op. cit.: 28). For the concerns of this thesis, what I am trying
to do is understand or render intelligible people’s understandings of alcohol
and drug use and intoxication in starting from what they say about these
phenomena. This does not mean that my trying to understand ends with re-
stating their understandings, but that this is the starting point for further
analysis (cf. Wylie’s, 1994, discussion of problems encountered in the col-
lectivist model for feminist research: when researchers tried to involve re-
search subjects as coparticipants in analyzing their data, sometimes taking
their subjects’ experiences at face value precluded trying to understand pos-
sible underlying relations, e.g., relations of power). In Study 1 and 2, this
further analysis involves interpreting agents’ interpretations. This can be
described – as done by Fay (op. cit.) or by Sulkunen (2002) – as a translation
of the agents’ terms into those of the interpreter. In Study 3 and 4, further
layers of interpretation are added. Study 3 involves a theoretical discussion
of one of the ways that intoxication was understood in Study 1 and 2 (intoxi-
cation as escape), through the perspectives of three theorists or scholars
(Weber, Maffesoli and Bologh). Study 4 involves interpretation on the part
of the survey respondents (their interpretation of the questions asked), on the
part of the interviewers (in those cases where surveys were conducted as
face-to-face interviews, the interviewers had to interpret the respondents’
answers) and again on the part of myself as the interpreter who is trying to
make sense of these answers by putting them in theoretical terms.

While the FMN (Study 1) and the young people (Study 2) say or imply
that escape is a reason for drinking, i.e. that some people (themselves or
others) drink in order to escape, I would not argue that the escape theme is a
reason for drinking in the way ‘reason’ is commonly understood. That is: 1.
People say they drink because they want to escape (for a while). 2. Alcohol
consumption or intoxication therefore fulfils the role of escape for people,
i.e. alcohol use or intoxication functions as an escape. As I argue in Study 2, the main problem with this understanding of ‘reason’ is that it restricts or reduces the possible meanings of alcohol consumption and intoxication. When drinking, drug use and intoxication serve the purpose of escape, it implies that escape, or pleasure-seeking, is a psychological or biological need inherent in humans, the expression of which in rituals of drinking and drug use, serves the purpose of integrating the social group or stabilizing the “normal” social order. Perhaps drinking, drug use and intoxication are especially prone to being interpreted in such psychological and functionalist ways because of their perceived qualities as mind altering. As Melechi (1998) underlines, it is difficult to observe changes that we perceive to be taking place on the level of individual consciousness and perception. But despite the difficulties involved, I would argue that it is unnecessary to reduce these phenomena to being “really” only about pleasure-seeking. Instead, I would argue that escape is a common theme in people’s understandings of alcohol use and intoxication; intoxication is (under certain circumstances) understood as escape, it is escape. I think that there is an interesting and important difference between saying, e.g., that ‘drinking is escape’ and ‘drinking serves the purpose of an escape’, and between saying that ‘drinking is an adventure’ and saying that ‘drinking serves the purpose of an adventure’.

Bias?
One might argue that Study 1, 2 and 3 differ from Study 4, in that the survey design of Study 4 involved a group of researchers who put together questions and who, hence, decided what aspects of drinking and sexual feelings and relations were relevant. Questions, as I argue in Study 2, might lead the respondent’s attention in a certain direction that the researcher intends, but that the respondent perhaps wouldn’t have taken up if she hadn’t been asked, whereas an approach in which questions are more unstructured or conversational or in which one observes rather than asks does not impose the researchers view. I would argue that this is a question of degree, however. In the survey design of the studies in Study 4, the respondents’ attention is directed towards factors that the researcher (in this case, the group of researchers that initiated the study) considers relevant and important. In observation, or in interviewing, this is the case as well. The researcher will be attentive to such factors and events that she considers important. Study 1 and 2 involve more detailed analyses of texts. Here, my attention was initially guided by general themes (teenager, parent, drinking, ‘boozing’) and later by more specific topics of discussion (normal teenage development, the family as a unit, the immature drinkers, the ‘fjortises’41). The general themes were of course inspired by discussions in previous re-

41 The word ‘fjortis’ literally refers to a person’s age, 14 years old (fjorton in Swedish).
search, but not by such specific questions as those that were used in the analysis in Study 4. The analysis in Study 4 represents one way of conducting an explorative study – because most previous studies on the relationship between expectancies about alcohol’s effect on sexual feelings and drinking had been done in Western countries, a large comparative study with surveys from many different countries would be one step in the direction of exploring such links outside the West. Instead of more detailed analyses, we have comparable data from a broad variety of countries. Therefore, we face a trade-off between detail and broad patterns. But these – detail and broad patterns – are in no way mutually exclusive approaches. In fact, we argue that the results from Study 4 might help in choosing countries that would offer interesting results based on more detailed analyses.

**Objectivity as procedural adequacy**

Furthermore, this does not mean that “bias” is inevitable. If “bias” is taken to mean that the researcher is not objective, not disinterested in the sense of “an unemotional affect; a non-committal attitude; a cool, detached, dispassionate style” (Fay, op. cit.: 202), “bias” would be inevitable. But, as Fay suggests, objectivity need not refer to the outcome of research. Instead, objectivity can be considered a property of the process of inquiry itself: “To fallibilists the method of scientific analysis, not its conclusions, is what is or is not objective” (Fay, op. cit.: 212). This means, among other things, that the researcher must be responsive to other possible interpretations of her evidence, and “follow the lead of these facts even if it goes against accepted preconceptions or commitments” (Fay, op. cit.: 212). One could say that, in such a fallibilist perspective, the interpretation stands for itself in the sense that it is the researcher’s interpretation that is being critically discussed and not the researcher as a person. In this perspective, objectivity is a matter of intersubjective discussion and not a trait inherent in the researcher. Fay calls this critical intersubjectivity, and emphasizes dialogue between scientists, a dialogue that is critical in both the positive and negative sense of the word; that is, a dialogue in which scientists “attempt[s] to understand the others in a manner genuinely open to the possibility that [the others’] views may have merits” (Fay, op. cit.: 213).

Fay’s ‘procedural adequacy’ – that it is the process of inquiry that is objective – places more importance on specifying and making explicit the methods of inquiry. Qualitative analyses are sometimes considered more vague in this respect. In Study 1 and 2, I aim at making the methods of inquiry as explicit as possible, e.g., by specifying the questions I have worked with in analysing the data. In general, reading through the material – here called the texts (whether they are brochures, books or excerpts from Internet chat) – several times is required. After reading several times, certain themes or topics appear as most important. Of course, these vary according to the interest of the researcher. If we take Study 2 as an example, my interest in
how drinking alcohol is meaningful to the young people renders my focus in reading the chat text different from that of someone whose interest is in young people’s use of pictures, symbols and icons in Internet chat activities. Acknowledging this sometimes causes worry about whether one advocates a completely relativist perspective – this is not the case. Although one might conceive that there are no limits to how a text could be interpreted, this does not mean that all interpretations appear equally reasonable (cf. Fay, op. cit.). Returning to the example of Study 2, a less reasonable interpretation of what the young people were talking about could be to say that they are “really” not talking about drinking and intoxication, but speaking in codes so that ‘intoxication’ in fact refers to ‘spirit possession’. Though less reasonable, such an interpretation cannot be excluded as ipso facto impossible. Had such an interpretation been suggested, the researcher would have had to point to the passages of the text that specifically made her interpretation plausible, and to those that contradict it. In Study 1 and 2, I use citations from the data in order to facilitate an initial intersubjective assessment. These citations illustrate and support my argument – these are the parts of the texts that make my interpretations plausible – but this does not mean that I haven’t considered alternative interpretations. Alternative interpretations are suggested, e.g., in previous research: in Study 2, I shortly discuss one such alternative interpretation of the use of irony. But alternative interpretations are also considered along the way – in the research process – when reading the texts. On the other hand, compared to qualitative analyses, quantitative analyses are sometimes considered as involving less interpretation on the part of the researcher, perhaps because figures – as opposed to words – are used to represent theoretical constructs. As argued above, I do not consider this to be the case. The discussion of variables and how to define them (sometimes referred to as operational definitions) in quantitative analyses show this, as well as the interpretation necessary to make sense of results in tables and matrices. The process of considering alternative explanations is therefore the same here – consulting previous research and one’s imagination during the research process.

Because language and symbols are central in trying to understand and interpret people’s understandings (whether in qualitative or quantitative analyses), the concept of culture is important.

**Culture**

According to Fay, a standard view of culture describes it as “a complex set of shared beliefs, values, and concepts which enables a group to make sense of its life and which provides it with directions for how to live” (op. cit.: 55). As a further variation or specification of this understanding, culture is often pictured or metaphorically described as text. Fay does not consider this a good metaphor if it only focuses on people as passively receiving or reading
this text. As underlined by, e.g., media researchers and conversation analysts, media messages are not just taken up by people as they are (see, e.g., Hall, 1980), but are interpreted by them (e.g., Scannell, 1998). In Fay’s words “[w]e do not just absorb; we transmute and extend and reinterpret. In this process language users change language even as it molds them” (op. cit.: 55). Fay prefers to compare culture to a conversation, because a conversation is generally understood as a process rather than a thing, although he proposes that this understanding has to be somewhat modified to take account of, among other things, power differentials among the participants in the conversation.

To the extent that this version of what culture is focuses on culture as symbolic, it could go together with Geertz’s (1973) semiotic concept of culture. For Geertz, culture is not just in people’s heads, but it is ideational. As underlined by Fay, Geertz considers that culture is not a system of abstract rules, and the study, or thick description, of culture hence cannot be “[…] the writing out of systematic rules, an ethnographic algorithm, which, if followed, would make it possible so to operate, to pass (physical appearance aside) for a native” (Geertz, op. cit.: 11). And, as implied in Fay’s discussion of whether one has to be one to know one, meaning is not private; rather, in Geertz account, “[c]ulture is public because meaning is” (op. cit.: 12). Further, there is the importance of social action. One should not, in Geertz’s view, study culture purely as a symbolic system without taking an interest in what people do: “Behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behaviour – or, more precisely, social action – that cultural forms find articulation” (op. cit.: 17). I take this to mean that ideas are related to people’s actions, but that culture cannot adequately be understood as only those ideas – culture is also actions guided by ideas. Geertz therefore seems to distinguish between discourse and practice, or social action. As an anthropologist, he emphasizes studying and interpreting what people do and not only studying, e.g., texts or other cultural documents or artefacts.

**Doing and saying**

In a similar way, but with ‘text’ as its point of departure, critical discourse analysis (CDA) distinguishes analytically between text, discursive practice and social practice (Fairclough, 1992). This means that, for Fairclough, it is possible to say that discourse is one mode of social practice among others. It also involves a distinction between talk and text, or “spoken and written language use” (Fairclough, op. cit.: 62) as discourse, on the one hand, and discursive practice, which is a particular form of social practice, on the other. Fairclough argues that the relationship between social practice and social structure is dialectical: “[o]n the one hand, discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure in the widest sense and at all levels […]. On the other hand, discourse is socially constitutive” (op. cit.: 64). The distinctions
between text, discursive practice and social practice are analytical distinctions; in practice, Fairclough argues, when talking about features of a text, “one never really [does this] without some reference to text production and/or interpretation” (op. cit.: 73).

Fairclough’s version of discourse analysis, because of its analytical separation between text and discursive practice and because of its emphasis on text as spoken and written language, is problematic from the point of view of a discourse theorist such as Ernesto Laclau. In a debate with Roy Bhaskar (critical realist), Laclau argues that the concept of discourse does not involve only spoken and written language, but is to be understood as “a totality of words and actions”. He further says that

In the third place, what we have insisted on is that the pluralization of objects on which discursive practice operates means that we cannot remain at a purely constative level, for the performative dimension is inherent to any linguistic operation. So that action is something which is entirely inherent to discourse. The notion of discourse could, if you prefer, be replaced by that of practice (Laclau & Bhaskar, 1998: 9).

In a discussion of this debate, Brante (2005) argues that, in discourse theory, the question of extra-discursive reality is not properly solved. Brante wishes to distinguish between objects based on the degree to which they are discursively constituted. Some objects, like ‘social welfare recipient’, ‘ADHD’ or ‘depressed person’, are strongly or totally dependent on societal discourses, while others – like ‘planet’ or ‘mountain’ – are not discursively constituted. At the same time, he argues that had Laclau discussed more interesting examples such as gender or mental illness, the problem of the relationship between language (in this case, discourse) and reality would have become more complicated. The problem for this thesis is that the phenomena my research revolves around are just such complicated phenomena. From the perspective of the relationship between language and reality, constructionism and realism offer different answers.

**Constructionism**

In the debate between Bhaskar and Laclau, they both insist on the importance of ontology – that is, they do seem to agree that the distinction between ontology and epistemology should be kept in place. They both seem to reject what Fay calls ontological relativism, namely the proposition that “reality itself is [also] conceptually scheme-dependent” (Fay, op. cit.: 79). They also both object to an empiricist understanding of scientific knowledge in which

---

42 I use the term ’constructionism’ because it indicates that something is a social construction. Hence, I do not by constructionism mean to imply (only) the discussion in the sociology of knowledge or social study of science. See, e.g., Järvinen (1998), for a discussion.
scientists can neutrally describe or mirror reality as it is, without theory ‘interfering’.

Laclau argues that:

Scientific discourses, as critical realism accepts, are changing all the time, and there is no way of anchoring the change in something that is beyond this world of discursive variation. This is not relativism, because the plurality of discourses constituting or organizing my experience is a plurality which is simply the elaboration of my relation to the world, it is not a mental product, discourses are simply anchoring institutions organizing a set of experiences, and in a sense meaning is the most material of the dimensions of reality.’ (Laclau & Bhaskar, op. cit.: 10).

Here, Laclau seems to say that relativism is the understanding that the world, meaning and discourses are in people’s heads. And, because discourse in discourse theory also includes action or practice, this is not a good description of discourse theory. Bhaskar says that he “[…] accept[s] of course that all extra-discursive realities are constituted within discursive practice, from the point of view of their intelligibility. But that’s not to say that they’re constituted in discursive practice from the point of view of their causal impact” (op. cit.: 13). So Bhaskar distinguishes meaning from causality or causal impact. Both Laclau and Bhaskar want to avoid the idea that reality is only in people’s heads; they want to talk about a reality that is somehow ‘real’ or ‘material’ (or whatever word one could possibly use without getting into trouble). Both also build their ideas of a shared basis on language (or ‘language as practice’ for Laclau) and on existence in this material world. However, Bhaskar talks about this material world as a world of causal forces and argues that we can (scientifically) know something about these, while Laclau seems to think that we can only know the material world through the discourses available to us, and none of these is closer to the truth than the other; which discourse is dominant or hegemonic at any given time is determined by power struggles.

**Perspectivism and contextual constructionism**

According to Fay, to be able to argue from a perspectivist epistemological orientation – in view of which “knowledge claims and their assessment always take place within a framework that provides the conceptual resources in and through which the world is described” (Fay, op. cit.: 72) – and, therefore, to acknowledge differences in how people perceive the world, one needs to build on an assumption of similarity or “a background of sharing” (op. cit.: 88). Fay is somewhat vague about whether or not the abilities included in the ‘background of sharing’ are ‘natural’ (in the biological sense),
but at least we can infer that the ‘basic epistemic capacities’ he considers necessary for intelligibility are universal.\(^{43}\)

To be intelligible we must assume that other creatures feel pain and normally wish to avoid it; that they can for the most part perceive large obstacles in their path; that they can usually detect when others are present and can sort them into categories; that they want to live; that they can communicate with one another; that they have attractions and repulsions; that their interactions are rule-governed and intentional; and a host of other abilities and dispositions (Fay, op. cit.: 87).

From a rather different point of view, Joel Best (1995) argues – when discussing strong and contextual constructionism in the study of social problems – that, in practice, it becomes impossible for the social scientist not to make any assumptions about reality (such were the initial recommendations from the strong constructionist side of the debate). The debate between strong and contextual constructionism ended up in constructionists seeing it as a matter of degree rather than kind, so that some tend towards the strong position, while not embracing it altogether (because of the impossibility of not assuming, e.g., even the existence of a society), while others tend to the more contextual side (those scientists argue that, e.g., statistics relating to a phenomenon under study could be referred to as facts, or as telling us something about reality, however imperfect this information – due to the social construction of statistics as facts – may be). Because of these problems with strong constructionism – and, by way of extension, with discourse theory – I find a perspectivist and contextual position more convincing. As Alcoff points out, it is problematic to claim that experience and language are co-extensive: “Experience sometimes exceeds language; it is at times inarticulate” (Alcoff, 2000b: 47).

Laclau further argues that the notion of discourse could be replaced by that of practice, because of the performative dimension inherent “to any linguistic operation” (op. cit.: 9). While this idea – that language or discourse is a social practice, that you can do things with words and that words do not only exist in a sphere of their own – is important to critical discourse analysis as well, I find the equation between discourse and action somewhat problematic. Are all linguistic operations really performative in the same way (compare, e.g., the statements ‘I now pronounce you husband and wife’, ‘Jimmy, open that door’ and ‘I drink wine because it is social’)? I think that an analytical distinction between discourse and a wider social practice, as suggested by Fairclough, is illuminating because it takes account of the active or transformative aspect of interpretation (e.g., that people do not always do what they say they do).

\(^{43}\) At least to human beings; but perhaps some of them also to animals?
When reading Study 1 and Study 2, one might get the impression that my distinction between people’s ideas and their actions implies that discourse is only “in people’s heads”, while their actions are a completely different matter. That is not the case. None of the studies included in this thesis is an ethnography. I haven’t been there with the FMN’s members or the young people, watching them relate to their relatives/children, party or have a nice dinner with friends, nor have I been there with the people in the 11 countries in Study 4, observing how some of them felt more sexually attractive when drinking. But I mean to imply that the way they talk about drinking and drug use can tell us something about how they practically relate to these phenomena. I agree with Scannell who writes that:

[In initiating, sustaining and disengaging from talk human beings are in the business (the busyness, the concern, the care) of talking into being that of which they speak in the ways in which they speak of the matter(s) to hand, whatever they may be. [Language] brings into being the common world that is between the participants in the interaction. This world may be one that is literally talked into being (e.g. the news interview), or it may be that the talk produced is of a particular world (an event, a person, a place) (Scannell, op. cit.: 263; emphasis in original).

This means that, while I think it is important to remember that people do not always do what they say they do, their talk still relates to the common world that they talk about, the world that they create by talking about it. In Study 1, this is the world of family relations between parents and drug using teenagers, and in Study 2, it is the world of drinking and drug using teenagers’ relations to each other. In Study 3, I suggest that people in Sweden (and perhaps other parts of the West, mainly Scandinavia and North America) create a world of work and everyday life from which they desire to escape into ecstasy. And in Study 4, we begin to try to understand whether the world of drinking and sexual feelings exists in other countries within and outside the West, and if it does, whether it is similarly structured across cultures. The caution that I note in Study 1 and 2, against equating what people say with what they do, has to do with the problems involved in assuming a simple and automatic relation between what is said and what is done. What this relation looks like is a question for further study (see Study 1 for suggestions), but as I propose in Study 1, it is still possible to argue that a certain way of seeing and talking about things makes certain ways of acting more probable or likely.

Language and power

The relationship between language and power is sometimes discussed on the basis of the notion that language “allows us to label categories, making it easier for them to figure in our shared social life, to help guide us as we...
make our way in the world” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, op. cit.: 228). As noted, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet argue that the drawing of category boundaries is often an exercise of social power and that gender categories are important in sustaining the gender order. They further point out that categories can be marked. This is close to what feminist researchers in several fields have pointed out when arguing that studies of men have resulted in the construction of general theories, while studies of women are just studies of women. That is, marked categories are categories marked out against a general background that is not specified. If women and children are seen as marked categories – as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet suggest they are – it is because female sex and youth are considered special properties that the generic human lacks (see also Järvinen, 1998, for a discussion of deconstruction in gender studies).

Carleheden (1997) argues that, in “philosophical postmodernism”, identity is an epistemological concept dealing with the relation between signifier and signified. Conceptions of identity therefore always imply disciplining, normalization, repression and exclusion of the other. This poses a problem in defining categories such as ‘woman’, for example: to be able to define the category woman, it is necessary to assume that those who are included in the category have something in common, that they share an identity. However, that implies an exclusion of all that is not shared or common, an exclusion of differences between women (Butler, 1999).

Against the understanding that the very concepts of woman and man are therefore “false” and that language somehow always distorts reality – an understanding that he attributes to philosophical postmodernism – Carleheden proposes to treat truth as a problem within language and hence, the concepts woman and man are not false as general concepts, but certain ways of using them as general concepts might be wrong or false (Carleheden, op. cit.: 60). Although I am not totally convinced that this isn’t what some poststructuralist and postmodernist gender theorists are in fact trying to say (see also discussion in Carlson, 2001, who criticizes those that argue that Butler’s project is one of radical or extreme social constructionism), I agree that it is problematic if every use of the concept woman or man is considered unacceptable “violence” or bias. From another perspective, in Bologh’s words: “Every identity, however, creates an ‘other’ that it excludes and denies. Hence, every identity is simultaneously repressive, even as it is also liberating and empowering” (Bologh, 1990: 315). This is linked to Bologh’s relational perspective – every person is a “subject-object” – which involved criticism of Weber’s one-sided focus on power and struggle. Carleheden also criticizes philosophical postmodernism’s one-sidedness – in it, history and the social are seen as something inherently “inhuman, anonymous and violent” (op. cit.: 62) – and refers to several theorists who, in contrast, do not see a necessary opposition between sociality and freedom.
Apart from my use of Bologh’s relational perspective in Study 3, the relational perspective is further relevant to this thesis via the concept of otherness (see, e.g., Ajagán-Lester et al., 2003). According to Bakhtin (Volosinov/Bakhtin, 1994), the self is dialogic, a relation to others: “By its very existential nature, the subjective psyche is to be localized somewhere between the organism and the outside world, on the borderline separating these two spheres of reality” (op. cit.: 56, emphasis in original). That humans have a self at all is because of otherness, because there are others for us to relate to. For Bakhtin, this does not only concern face-to-face interaction:

But dialogue can also be understood in a broader sense, meaning not only direct, face-to-face, vocalized verbal communication between persons, but also verbal communication of any type whatsoever. A book, i.e., a verbal performance in print, is also an element of verbal communication (op. cit.: 58, emphasis in original).

In Study 1 and 2, I use the concept of otherness or the Other as a methodological tool in order to study social relations. To Fairclough (op. cit.), subject positions are important in a discourse analysis that studies face-to-face interaction. When people interact with each other, their subject positions are created in the ongoing interaction and in relation to the people interacting. People may also come to occupy or hold differing subject positions in interaction, i.e., their positions are not stable and given once and for all. As I underline in Study 1, the concept of subject position in the present context does not primarily refer to “the death of the subject” as in some poststructuralist and postmodernist theorizing (see further discussion in Study 1). Subject positions are not necessarily or always made up by so-called binary oppositions, but one may view the construction or representation of Self and Other/s as a special case of subject positions.

In the sense underlined by Bakhtin (Volosinov/Bakhtin, op. cit.), the Other is a relational concept and therefore, similarly to what poststructuralists and postmodernists have said about gender and sexuality, always refers to what the Self or the subject is not. However, in line with Bologh’s (op. cit.) and Carleheden’s (op. cit.) objections, I do not consider this categorization automatically “violent” or only involving acts of (negative or oppressive) social power. But, in combining the study of who is designated as the Other with the study of how the Other is described, such conclusions can be drawn (see van Dijk, 1998, on negative Other presentation). In Study 1 and 2, the Others are young people (adults and parents are the subjects) and immature persons (‘fjortisar’; mature persons or adults are the subjects), respectively. The young people in Study 1 are described as emotionally unstable teenagers specifically susceptible to the dangers of drugs. In discussing this understanding, presented from the perspective of the organization FMN (Parents Against Drugs), I wish to underline that young people are described
on the basis of characteristics seen by adults (and society at large) as undesirable or unwanted and, furthermore, that these characteristics are seen as specific to young people, or rather to the teenage period itself, when this understanding in no way is necessary (adults go through periods of personal or psychological “crisis” as well; in fact, one would not be totally wrong in seeing crises as a basic human experience). The reasons young people themselves could have or give for using drugs are not discussed by listening to young people’s own voices – they are attributed to them. In an important sense, one would therefore be justified in saying that young people in this text are treated more as objects of parents’ social control and less as subjects with their own identity. If parents choose to follow by these guidelines or advice, this would have real consequences for young people. The immature persons in Study 2 are likewise described as lacking socially valued characteristics. Here, an ongoing discussion, struggle or conflict between perspectives is more evident, however 44.

The purpose of Study 3 is to add to the understanding of women’s position as “doubly bad” – bad both because of their drinking and because their drinking is supposed to lead to sexual promiscuity or licentiousness. In the sense discussed above, Study 3 suggests that women are defined as Other because women’s drinking – to intoxication – takes them even closer to nature than they – due to their sexual bodies – are perceived to be. This perceived closeness to nature is seen as dangerous, and, hence, if women come even closer to nature through drinking, the danger increases (women might transform into sexually licentious devourers – man-eaters).

In Study 4, the relational perspective is not of the same character as in Study 1, 2 and 3. Here, we are dealing with comparing links between expectancies of alcohol’s effects on sexual feelings and drinking across countries. The concept of the Other is therefore not relevant in the same way. Rather, the analyses in Study 4 – because they have gender as a biological category as their point of departure – tell us about differences and similarities between the two types of human embodiment discussed by Beauvoir. Importantly, previous research has pointed out that differences between women and men as concerns the consumption of alcohol cannot be explained by biological differences only, so we build on the idea that the differences and similarities

44 Of course, this is one of the reasons for choosing such a text. I do not mean to imply that the parental perspective is unified, while young people’s perspectives are multiple and diverse. What I mean to say is that from the perspective of the FMN, it appears as though young people relate to drinking and drug use in a unified manner. Considering the extensive distribution of The Book on Drugs, this idea (of young people’s unified way of relating to drinking and drug use) can become quite important to parents and others. Study 2 aims to show that this unified picture is not necessarily completely correct. According to the FMN, people use drugs because they strive after intoxication, and intoxication in turn distorts reality and creates a feeling of inner calm; one wants to use drugs to attain “release”. Following the discussion among the young people in Study 2, this is one category of reasons for wanting to become intoxicated. Still, it does not cover them all.
we find have to do with how social relations between women and men are structured, in each country. A relation between two types of human embodiment is therefore also a social relation between women and men. It could be the case that, in countries where women’s drinking is relatively accepted, women may use alcohol as a means to enable them to act in a more sexually liberal manner. But because this pattern in our results seems to make sense only for Sweden, the cultural connections between sexuality and drinking in the other countries have to be more closely studied. This has to be done in the context of studying gender relations in these countries. Scannell points out that “A hermeneutics of distrust [in this case, an approach to language that sees it as ideological] must always already presuppose, as the condition of its possibility, a taken-for-granted trust in the world in which it operates” (Scannell, op. cit.: 261). Following this suggestion means studying both the world that is taken for granted by people – women and men – in these countries, their everyday world and their everyday conversations, and ideological language (e.g., in the mass media and other official publications such as treatment guidelines, etc.).

Summary of studies

Study I: The Rational and The Capricious: An analysis of an Alcohol and Drug Information Campaign for Teenagers’ Parents

This study examines the Swedish organization Föräldraföreningen Mot Narkotika – FMN’s (Parents Against Drugs’) campaign undertaken during spring 2003. This campaign was directed towards all parents in Sweden with children born in 1991 and aimed at informing parents – through distribution of the Book on Drugs – about teenagers and drug use. The Book on Drugs is the only informational material on drugs that has been distributed so widely – according to FMN, it was distributed to approximately 125,000 households – and, e.g., as a result of the comprehensive nationwide distribution of this book, FMN has assumed a special significance in relation to the moulding of Swedish opinion in this area.

The purpose of the study is to analyse how FMN as an important actor in Swedish drug policy talks about youth, alcohol and drugs through their campaign and how the subject positions ‘teenager’ and ‘parent’ are established through this talk. I use methods from critical discourse analysis to study the Book on Drugs and other brochures and booklets that FMN distributes, including text on their website. The analysis of the campaign material centres on discussing what properties are linked to the subject positions of teenager and parent – how parents and youth/teenagers are described – but also on the ways in which the different key concepts of teenage development, parenting, family and substance abuse are described. The analysis of the ways in which
FMN talk about youths, alcohol and drugs, also involves an attempt to reach and problematize underlying assumptions and factors that are taken for granted in the context of this speech.

The analysis shows that normal adolescence or teenage development tends to be seen as never involving drug use and there is a tendency to see the relationship between teenagers and their parents as one characterized by inherent conflict and hostility, sometimes manifested in metaphorical terms suggestive of war. Linked to teenage development in FMN’s material is the first experience of sexual intercourse. In part through the link to intoxication, but also through being perceived as an attempt to “take a short-cut” to adulthood, the sexual debut becomes something problematic. Sexual activity in general and the act of sexual intercourse in particular are demarcated as phenomena that belong to the adult world, and that should not take place in a state of ‘grogginess’. Mature adult sexuality is controlled and sober.

‘The family’ is an important concept in the speech about youths, alcohol and drugs, and through use of the metaphor THE FAMILY IS A CONTAINER, the family is viewed as a well-defined unit with clear boundaries in relation to the outside world. Furthermore, substance use is pictured as the result of an individual’s choice and the substance abuser is a pleasure-seeker who will do anything to avoid difficulties. Finally, by commonly presenting the ‘substance abuser’ as a man, but sometimes as a gender-neutral person, FMN’s approach to gender appears ambivalent. A general characteristic of a certain way of viewing things (whether it may be) is that it leads one to see certain things, but to fail to see (or to avoid seeing) others. In the concluding section, I discuss the consequences that these ways of describing and understanding these phenomena and processes may have, and present alternative ways of understanding or describing them.

**Study II: The Competent Drinker, the Authentic Person and the Strong Person: Lines of Reasoning in Young People’s Discussions About Alcohol**

As a contrast to FMN’s hegemonic perspective analysed in Study 1, in Study 2 I examine young people’s own discussions about alcohol in a Swedish Internet chat site. I am interested in how alcohol is meaningful to them, and what relations of power are constructed among them. Because the subject of alcohol is controversial in Sweden, and particularly with regard to young people’s drinking, one may expect relations of power to be involved in the young people’s discussions. In previous studies, it has been more common to study one group of young people or separate groups of young people. Relations of power between groups are then implied when comparing the groups. In Study 2, I examine how relations of power are present, or are shaped, in an interaction where a broader register of different opinions ‘meet’. In previous research, some issues have been specifically highlighted as central to young people’s understandings of alcohol: conscientiousness, control/loss of
control and maturity, or the process of ‘growing up’. In studying how relations of power are shaped among young people, I specifically focus how these aspects are related to the construction of the Other.

As in Study 1, I use methods from critical discourse analysis. In order to study relations of power and how they are constituted among young people in their discussions about alcohol, I use the concept of the Other. This concept implies a study of subject positions as binary oppositions, as indicated in ‘We’ are ‘Good’ and ‘They’ are ‘Bad’. In Study 2, I ask who ‘They’ are and how/why ‘They’ are ‘Bad’. The various views on drinking represented in the data mean that there are different ways of defining who ‘They’ are and how/why ‘They’ are ‘Bad’. I summarize these views in four lines of reasoning: the teetotaller argument, the age-distinction argument, the moderate drinking argument and the getting drunk argument. They all generally agree that ‘They’ are those who are immature, the so-called ‘fjortises’\(^\text{45}\), but in the four lines of reasoning, the term ‘fjortis’ also denoted several other characteristics that were not agreed on. In three of the lines of reasoning, the young people describe the characteristics of what for them appears as an ideal person with ideal views on alcohol consumption and intoxication. In the teetotaller argument, the ‘strong person’ is the ideal, in the moderate drinking argument the ‘competent drinker’ is the ideal and in the getting drunk argument the ‘authentic person’ is the ideal.

The analysis shows that, in the moderate drinking argument, maturity implies being in control of oneself and one’s actions. Control is related to the ideal of ‘the competent drinker’: someone who knows her ‘limits’ and stops drinking when these are reached, someone who can hold her alcohol and does not get drunk, ‘pass out’ or vomit. A competent drinker is someone who listens to scientific reports about physical dangers and the harm caused by alcohol and who makes a rational decision based on this knowledge, i.e. someone who drinks moderately to avoid these risks. A competent drinker is further someone who drinks because it is social or because it tastes good. This is related to young people’s drinking in that, in the moderate drinking argument, the ideal of maturity comprises young people as well. The ideal is constructed as not related to age (in years), but to action, i.e. if you act according to the ideal of the competent drinker, you are mature.

In the getting drunk argument, maturity implies authenticity. An authentic person is modest, does not brag (about having been or being drunk), does not try to be something she is not, and is truthful (as to her motivations to drink). This ideal person is not always rational in the sense implied by the moderate drinking rationality above, but may weigh risks (sometimes benefits and risks) against each other or focus on the here-and-now instead of on the future. The here-and-now focus may involve a pragmatic point of view (‘you won’t need those brain cells in 60 years anyway’). When weighing benefits

\(^{45}\) The word ‘fjortis’ literally refers to a person’s age, 14 years old (fjorton in Swedish).
and risks, control may be introduced, in this case as more prolonged in duration (control implies avoiding becoming ‘dependent’, avoiding ‘drinking as a lifestyle’). Control is less important to the authentic person when referring to separate events, in which it is instead more important to be true or authentic about your ‘real’ motivations to drink (i.e., that you drink in order to get drunk). The authentic person wants to get drunk for a variety of reasons: to become ‘social’ (more talkative and less shy; as a way of interacting), to escape (from problems, rules, reality, the everyday; or to something, such as a good feeling, a nice emptiness), to experience adventure or excitement. Peer-pressure is not constructed as a reason for the authentic person to drink, because authenticity implies that the individual makes autonomous decisions that are not adjusted to what others think or do (the ideal authentic person does not want to be like others, she only wants to be herself). This is related to young people’s drinking in that authenticity implies maturity, i.e., if you are authentic, you are mature, and both authenticity and maturity indicate that you can make your own decisions, independent of others.

In the teetotaller argument, drinking is closely related to problems and to drunkenness. People may drink for various reasons, but these are all framed negatively. Like the moderate drinking argument, maturity implies being in control of oneself and one’s actions. Where these lines of reasoning differ is in the conclusions drawn on the basis of information about risks: according to the teetotaller argument, a rational decision implies avoiding alcohol completely because of these risks. In the teetotaller argument, a person in control is also self-confident and strong (able to resist peer pressure), competent (does not make a fool of herself in different social situations) and loyal (shows solidarity with those who suffer due to others’ drinking). This mentally strong person shows good judgement when in ‘risky’ social situations (does not make a fool of herself when approaching a girl or boy that she is interested in; does not fail to practice safe sex). Like in the getting drunk argument, a reference is made to how the person really is, to a person’s real or true self. A strong person is also a genuine or authentic person, a person who has no need to be someone else or to mask herself, a person who is not false.

In the concluding section, I discuss and compare these different lines of reasoning to each other and to previous research on young people and drinking.

Study III: ‘Out-of-the-ordinary’: An Exploration of the Concepts of Sexuality and Intoxication

The purpose of Study 3 is to contribute to our understanding of why women who drink are considered “bad” both because of their drinking and because their drinking is supposed to lead to sexual promiscuity or licentiousness. When studying the literature in cultural alcohol research and feminist studies on gender and sexuality, I found that, in feminist studies on gender and
sexuality, researchers have argued (and criticized) that women are seen as closer to nature through their (sexual) bodies (implying that women lack control and are irrational), while men or masculinity is associated with mind and culture (implying control and rationality). In cultural alcohol research, on the other hand, researchers have argued that men are seen as closer to nature through their wildness, drinking and intoxication.

In Study 3, I argue that, in order to better understand why women who drink are considered “doubly bad”, these two areas of study have to be integrated. As a step in the direction of such integration, Study 3 begins with a discussion of two sociological understandings of ecstasy. In this discussion, I argue that it is possible to link Weber’s description of the contrast between eroticism and the view of sexuality based in the religious brotherhood ethic to Maffesoli’s description of the contrast between the Dionysian and the Apollonian. Eroticism and intoxication can both be seen as instances of ecstasy. Common to them, in Western cultural understandings, is further that both may be seen as escapes, or salvations from rationality, out-of-the-ordinary spheres that offer a safe haven away from rationality. With the help of Bologh’s critique of Weber, I argue that Weber undertheorizes ecstasy in favour of rationality, while Maffesoli focuses on ecstasy at the expense of rationality.

Gender is linked to ecstasy through the idea that transcendence is a concern only for men. Some have argued that women do not “need” sexual transcendence as men do, because women are closer to nature than men are. This – that women do not need or want transcendence as men do – has been suggested as a possibility also in the field of alcohol studies. As a basis for further discussion, I relate a perspective in which women are seen as closer to nature through their (sexual) bodies, namely the perspective of Camille Paglia. Paglia’s perspective is included as an example and illustration of – rather than as a theoretical contribution to our understanding of – the common sense idea that women are closer to nature. It is included because such common sense understandings appear to play a role in the fact that women who drink are considered “doubly bad”. The argument made in Study 3 is that her account relates a cultural understanding of gender relations common in the West. Considering the fact that much of it is built on ideas from evolutionary biology and Freudian ideas, and considering the availability and popularity of such ideas in Europe and North America, one could conclude that such ideas are not as obsolete as one might first think. Therefore, I argue that what is important is whether people believe this understanding to be true and, hence, act in accordance with it.

In the concluding discussion about women’s and men’s intoxication, I argue that the need for control over women’s drinking could be motivated by some kind of concern, worry or fear and that fear of intoxicated women or intoxication in women constitutes fear of ‘dual licentiousness’. The theoretical model proposed in Study 3 indicates that when women drink and become
intoxicated, a discrepancy between what is and what should be appears. My point is that this discrepancy threatens established common sense ideas about women’s place as closer to nature, and thereby threatens the very distinction between nature and culture.

**Study IV: The Relationship Between Sexuality-Related Alcohol Expectancies and Drinking Across Cultures**

Study 4 aims to examine the link between positive expectancies about the effects of drinking on sexual feelings and drinking across countries. At least Western culture, or everyday life, is pervaded by images in which alcohol and sexual feelings and sexual interaction are linked together. Most earlier studies, however, have concentrated on studying this link in European and Northern American parts of the world, and because of this, we do not know as much about the existence of it outside the West. The balanced placebo design studies that are common in this area often involve only men, and often only male North American college students. Because of this, there is a need for studies of this link outside the West and for studies comparing women and men. Study 4 adds to previous research on the relationship between drinking and sexual expectancies by comparing data on this link from many different countries, including countries outside the West. The study further examines whether the link between expectancies of alcohol’s effects on sexual feelings and drinking is similar or different for women and men in these countries.

In this study, the fact that people generally view alcohol as enhancing and disinhibiting sexual feelings indicates an expectancy: if people hold this view of alcohol as disinhibiting sexual feelings, it is reasonable to think that they will also expect alcohol to have these effects. Because people in general see alcohol as a sexual disinhibitor, a woman’s as well as a man’s positive expectancies about alcohol’s effect on sexuality can be expected to be related to increased drinking on the part of those who have these views.

Study 4 is based on data from the GENACIS project (Gender, Alcohol and Culture: An International Study), a cross-national collaborative survey study focusing on drinking behaviour, drinking context and drinking consequences. Data from 11 countries from all parts of the world, except Oceania, were used. To study similarities among and differences between women and men as well as across countries, we used quantitative analyses. These involved, as a first explorative step, cross-country comparisons of frequencies of reporting three sex-expectancy items, and as a second step, explorative multiple regression analyses of the relationship between expectancies about the effect of drinking on sexual feelings and the natural logarithm of annual volume (grams 100% alcohol) consumed.

Within each country, we found both gender differences and gender similarities as concerns the sex-expectancy questions. In Sweden, the Czech Republic, Spain, Nigeria, Uganda, Costa Rica and Uruguay there were no sig-
significant gender differences in expecting to feel less inhibited about sex when drinking. In Japan, however, there were statistically significant differences. Slightly more than one-third (35.6%) of the Japanese men drinkers expect to feel less inhibited about sex, while 25.9% of the Japanese women expect this to be the case. Women and men in the Czech Republic, Spain, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Costa Rica and Uruguay do not differ in expecting sexual activity to be more pleasurable when drinking. In Sweden, significantly more women (29.2%) than men (24.3%) say that they sometimes or usually expect sexual activity to be more pleasurable when drinking. In Uganda and Japan, significantly more men than women say that they sometimes or usually expect sexual activity to be more pleasurable when drinking. For the last expectancy question, pertaining to whether one expects to feel more sexually attractive when drinking, we found significant gender differences only for Sweden – where more women (34.9%) than men (29.6%) say they sometimes or usually expect this. Furthermore, in overall levels of reporting the expectancies, we found country differences. The Czech Republic, Uganda and Nigeria are the countries with the highest levels of reporting all three expectancies, while Uruguay and Spain are the countries with the lowest levels of reporting all three expectancies.

Likewise, the multiple regression analyses showed varying patterns across countries. In Sweden, the Czech Republic, Spain, Nigeria, Japan, Costa Rica and Uruguay those who expect to feel less inhibited about sex when drinking drink more than those who do not. For Uganda, Sri Lanka and India, the results indicate that there are no significant differences in annual volume consumed between those who expect to feel less inhibited and those who do not. In the Czech Republic, Uganda and Costa Rica, those who expect sex to be more pleasurable when drinking, drink more than those who do not, while in the other countries there are no significant differences in annual volume consumed between those who expect sex to be more pleasurable and those who do not. Finally, in Sweden, the Czech Republic, India and Costa Rica, people who expect to feel more sexually attractive when drinking, drink more than those who do not. For Spain, Nigeria, Uganda, Sri Lanka, Japan and Uruguay, there are no significant differences in annual volume consumed between people who expect to feel more sexually attractive when drinking and people who do not.

In all countries, men drink more than women, when controlling for the other factors in the model. Our results imply that gender is more important than the expectancy items for understanding the volume of alcohol consumed.

In conclusion, we suggest that more research on the cultural connections between sexuality and drinking in these countries is needed. It could be the case that, in countries where women’s drinking is relatively accepted, women may use alcohol as a means to enable them to act in a more sexually liberal manner. But because this pattern in our results seems to make sense
only for Sweden, the cultural connections between sexuality and drinking in the other countries have to be more closely studied. Simple multiple regression models do not suffice to describe the relationship between expectancies about alcohol’s effects on sexual feelings and drinking. But, the study points to some countries that would be of particular interest and importance for case studies, such as the Czech Republic, Uganda, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and India.

Conclusions

In the beginning of this introductory text, I specified the general research question of this thesis as concerning how intoxicating substances are meaningful to people, primarily in Sweden, but also in other countries, today. Against the background of changing patterns of drinking and drug use, more detailed studies of the Swedish culture of intoxicating substance use and its relation to other cultures are important, not least for prevention work. The four studies in this thesis relate to certain aspects of the Swedish culture of intoxicating substance use. Taking the results from Study 1, it appears as though one aspect of the Swedish culture of intoxicating substance use can be described as a normative discourse on social order. From the official-organizational perspective of FMN, the individual is “a desiring and pleasure-seeking animal” (Sulkunen, 2002: 255) who will do anything to avoid difficulties. It is therefore the task of rational agents to try to control her/him. From the perspective of FMN, drinking, taking drugs and becoming intoxicated mean trying to achieve a feeling of inner calm and to attain “release”. Continuing with this after noticing the effects and after “the social network [has allowed] the individual to take the full consequences of his substance abuse and [tried] to influence him to choose a life without drugs” means making an irrational “decision”, means being irrational. From FMN’s point of view, young people are in need of parents’ social control. This is not just because humans in general are seen as desiring and pleasure-seeking animals – young people’s position as in need of control is reinforced by the way the teenage years are described and understood.

In the material analysed in Study 1, the teenage years are understood as a time of turbulence, upheaval, crises, emotional storms, but also protest and development, and I argue that this way of seeing the teenage years reflects our common Western (present day) conception of the period of youth. It is a stage of transition, an uncertain and diffuse period, in which teenagers are neither the one thing nor the other. The diffuse status of teenagers necessitates control, as they do not appear to be capable of self-control. In FMN’s account, teenagers and parents are presented as standing, in certain respects, in extreme opposition to one another, in that parenting is described in metaphorical terms as war.
In FMN’s understanding, maturing into an autonomous and independent individual takes time and requires work, work that one can “shirk” by using drugs, thereby obstructing “the natural teenage development”. If one “shirks” one’s “developmental work” in this way, however, one has made a choice to place oneself outside the integrated family unit, outside the inherently good family unit. The rational is associated with adults and adulthood, with the emphasis in this context being placed on maturity, sobriety, work and development, and an evolutionary, progressive conception of time.

In Study 2, I refer to the Swedish history of science and ideas scholar, Ronny Ambjörnsson (1988) who – in studying the Swedish working-class movement – has discussed the roots of the cultural ideal of conscientiousness from the point of view of Max Weber’s concept ‘the Protestant ethic’. Because in Sweden the working-class movement was closely linked to the temperance movement, alcohol researchers have further discussed the degree to which this Protestant ethic has also influenced Nordic views on alcohol. If the ideal of conscientiousness is central to alcohol consumption as well, this in turn may explain the fact that alcohol in Sweden is (or at least has been) relegated to special occasions (weekends, feasts, parties, celebrations), rather than consumed everyday with meals.

The ideal of conscientiousness seems to be close to the characteristics of rational adulthood in FMN’s understanding, where adulthood is characterized by maturity, sobriety, work and development. If the emphasis is placed on sobriety, the teetotaller argument of Study 2 appears to be closest to this ideal with its focus on total abstention, self-confidence and strength (ability to resist peer pressure), competence and loyalty. Insofar as the teetotaller argument also builds on the idea of a stable, authentic self that does not seek the ‘irrational’ – that is, the escape from itself or to something/’someone’ else, the excitement or the adventure, through the physically dangerous, i.e. through alcohol consumption or intoxication – it is possible to argue that the teetotaller argument builds on conscientiousness. On the other hand, conscientiousness does not necessarily demand total abstention, but rather a strict division of social time into weeks, characterized by work, and weekends, characterized by leave from work, or free time. Gusfield (1996) argues that alcohol is understood as a marker of the transition between these different understandings of social time. The Friday afternoon or evening drink marks the ‘entry into’ the weekend, and with it, the entry into another social time. The teetotaller argument of Study 2 therefore builds on a version of conscientiousness that is closer to the Protestant ethic of work and avoidance of pleasures, rather than the version of conscientiousness in which the week of work is distinguished from the weekend of free time and drinking (Gusfield, op. cit.). The results presented in Study 1 and Study 2 indicate that this – sober conscientiousness – is one aspect of the Swedish culture of intoxicant substance use. Sober conscientiousness is strong as an ideal in Swedish society, and with regard to young people’s use of intoxicating substances it ap-
pears dominant and hegemonic, hence obscuring other ways of understanding intoxicating substance use.

Importantly, however, this is not the only form of conscientiousness that exists in Swedish culture. Norell and Törnqvist’s (1995) study shows that their group of gainfully employed 20-year-olds follow the pattern of no drinking during the week, but drink and get drunk in the weekends. To this, Lalander (1998, 1999) added the idea of a ‘new’ conscientiousness implying ironic distance to others’ drinking habits. He was also talking about the ‘rebellious hedonists’ who saw drinking as a protest against conscientiousness. This aspect of ‘rebellion’ against other – or, rather, against what was considered old – drinking habits was expressed also by Norell and Törnqvist’s (op. cit.) other two groups, the students and the ‘avant-garde’. Neither those who are ‘rebellious’ in their drinking nor those who ironically distance themselves (in the ‘new’ conscientiousness) follow the traditional pattern of conscientiousness with its focus on weekend drinking.

The moderate drinking argument in Study 2 is close both to von Greiff’s (2000) interviewees, who drink because it tastes good and who see conscientiousness as incompatible with drunkenness, and to Lalander’s (1998) media students, who embrace the ideal of ‘new conscientiousness’. However, I argue that, in the moderate drinking argument, the distance to others’ drinking habits is not so much based on irony as it is on invoking taste and maturity. The conscientiousness of the moderate drinking argument (and the age-distinction argument) builds most clearly on the concept of maturity understood as moderation in drinking. Mature persons – adults – do not seek adventure, excitement, escape or to lose control by getting drunk, but seek to be social through drinking. In Study 2, I argue that one might call this ‘conscientiousness-in-sociality’.

And, finally, the results from Study 2 also indicate that it is possible to talk about conscientiousness even in relation to the getting drunk argument. Through the concept of ‘controlled loss of control’ (Measham, op. cit.), conscientiousness in the getting drunk argument could be understood as the ability to see oneself as in control while losing control just a bit.

If, from the perspective of FMN, young people are a dangerous group in need of control, who drink or take drugs in order to achieve a feeling of inner calm and to attain “release”, the young people’s own discussions show that it is more complicated than this (see also Törrönen, 2006, who argues that, contrary to what is sometimes argued in epidemiological studies, intoxication takes on multiple forms and meanings among young people in Finland). In the Internet chat discussions, young people related to drinking in different ways. From their perspectives, drinking and becoming intoxicated mean becoming (more) social and/or less shy; they mean escaping from something or to something – from problems, rules, reality, the everyday, or to a good feeling, a nice emptiness; they mean excitement and adventure; and they mean giving in to peer-pressure. If this is true only for those who
visited this Internet chat site (which I think it is not – this is suggested, e.g., by other research in this area) and took part in the discussions, it can still be considered relevant to prevention workers, parents and others. This is because it suggests that a too one-dimensional focus on the reasons for drinking – as only or mostly related to a wish for inner calm and “release” – might make prevention efforts irrelevant to some young people as concerns their use of alcohol (and narcotics). In relation to previous research, Study 2 also suggests that young people seem to agree about some things – the importance of maturity, of being mature, for example – but that it would be an unnecessarily superficial conclusion to think that maturity therefore implies the same thing for all young people, or for adults and young people. The most important contribution of Study 2 is, thus, that it shows that young people’s understandings of intoxicating substance use are multiple rather than uniform and that re-definitions of a concept – in this context, e.g., maturity or conscientiousness – are not necessarily only protests against old definitions. As I argue in Study 2, one could see all the lines of reasoning as ‘protests’ against each other, in the sense that one excludes aspects that are embraced by another. When saying that the ‘rebellious hedonists’ protest against conscientiousness, it might appear as though the protest was about turning the old ideals on their head – doing just the opposite – but from what the young people in Study 2 say, it appears to me that for them it is about re-definition. The important difference is that re-definition does not necessarily imply contradiction, turning things on their head and doing the opposite. Re-definition can also mean building on something and refining it.

As suggested previously in this introductory section, children and women are by some (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, op. cit.) considered to be marked categories. While FMN’s talk in Study 1 implied that teenagers are in need of parental control, previous research suggests that women’s drinking is more socially restrained than men’s and that women are expected to control others’ drinking – most often, men’s – as well. Most studies of this relate to the Western part of the world, but some anthropological studies point to the existence of such ideas also outside the West (see, e.g., the studies in McDonald, 1994c, and Gefou-Madianou, 2002).

In Study 3, I suggest that, to the extent that evolutionary biological ideas of gender difference and Freudian ideas of gender identity are available and accepted in the West, this could help us understand why women who drink are considered bad both because they violate the norms of feminine appearance and because they either want sex too much or have, by intoxication, incapacitated themselves, hence taking part in their own submission and exploitation. According to Study 3, when women drink and become intoxicated, a discrepancy between what is and what should be appears. This discrepancy threatens established common sense ideas about women’s place as closer to nature, and thereby threatens the very distinction between nature and culture, requiring a re-drawing of boundaries. Hence, both young people
(Study 1) and women (Study 3) appear to be seen as closer to nature and therefore as requiring strict social control.

In Study 3, I also suggest that, in the Western world, the link between drinking, drug use, intoxication and sexuality can be understood via ecstasy. The intoxication that results from drinking and using drugs can – in certain instances – be understood as a special case of ecstasy: ecstasy induced by drinking or taking drugs. Certain ways of having sex – certain erotic experiences – can likewise be seen as cases of (experiencing) ecstasy. Now, what intoxication and sexuality as eroticism have in common in the West is that they both – owing to this potential for ecstasy – can be interpreted as out-of-the-ordinary experiences, as safe-havens away from rationality. This implies that intoxication, for many people, is a positive experience, or at least an experience with positive aspects. About sex, Jackson and Scott (2004) argue that it has a status both as outside everyday life, as special, as an escape, and as superior to other forms of pleasure. One form of escape, that is, intoxication, might then be thought – through popular theories of disinhibition – to lead one into a “higher” form of escape: sexual pleasure. Again, restricting the reasons for using intoxicating substances to the single motive of achieving a feeling of inner calm and to attain “release”, or arguing that intoxication is “really” only about pleasure-seeking, is problematic from the point of view of preventive work.

The last question of this thesis is whether this link between drinking/drug use/intoxication and sexuality and gender exists in other parts of the world as well. In Study 4, the aspect of this link that was studied was the relationship between the expectancy that alcohol disinhibits sexual feelings and drinking. In general, it is only in Sweden that more women than men say they sometimes or usually expect sexual activity to be more pleasurable when drinking and expect to feel more sexually attractive when drinking. In Uganda and Japan, significantly more men than women say that they sometimes or usually expect sexual activity to be more pleasurable when drinking and in Japan more men than women expect to feel less inhibited about sex when drinking. Following this, we have some indications that there exists a link between expectancies about alcohol’s effects on sexual feelings and gender in non-Western countries as well.

In the Western countries Sweden, the Czech Republic and Spain, those who expect to feel less inhibited about sex when drinking drink more than those who do not. We also found this pattern in the non-Western countries Nigeria, Japan, Costa Rica and Uruguay. And for Uganda, we found no differences in annual volume consumed between those who expect to feel less inhibited and those who do not. For the other two expectancy questions, we found differences in annual volume consumed only in the Western countries Sweden and the Czech Republic, in the Central American country Costa Rica and in the Asian country India. We have, then, some indications of the existence of a link between expecting alcohol to be a disinhibitor of sexual
feelings and drinking more outside the West. Importantly, however, we do not know the details of such a link. In conclusion, we suggest that more research on the cultural connections between sexuality and drinking in these countries is needed, starting out, e.g., with the countries that Study 4 points out as particularly interesting and important for case studies.

Not surprisingly, people understand alcohol and drugs in many different ways. The understanding of alcohol as a sexual disinhibitor appears to be related to drinking in other parts of the world than the West, while its perceived potential to make sex more pleasurable or make one feel more sexually attractive is more limited. The understanding that drinking and intoxication are escapes from problems, rules, reality, the everyday, or to a good feeling or a nice emptiness is common to both FMN’s and the young people’s talk, although FMN restricts the escape to an escape from and frames it as negative. If, as suggested above, one form of escape – intoxication – might be thought to lead one into a “higher” form of escape – sexual pleasure – a reasonable question is whether such escape is only a male activity, experience or desire? As suggested here, escape – whether it is through drinking and intoxication or erotic activities – is more commonly male-marked – is more commonly seen as male – while women venturing into these areas are more commonly seen as dually licentious. But this is not necessarily a question of female licentiousness versus male escape in a dualist understanding of these associations, nor of essential female and male nature or gender identity. Bologh’s relational conception of social life and erotic love as sociability involves seeing each person as both subject and object of desire, and therefore as both actor and acted-upon in an ongoing interaction. In the same sense that Bologh contends that the terms ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ do not denote the same characteristics today that they did in Weber’s time, the association of maleness with drinking, intoxication and erotic activities as escape and the association of femaleness with drinking, intoxication and erotic activities as licentiousness will probably not look the same in 100 years.
Acknowledgements

It is customary in contexts such as these to say something, perhaps something more personal, about how the study came about, to explain why one has taken an interest in this specific topic of study. During my years as a doctoral student, I have received many comments on my choice, most of them jokingly presented, and some of them alluding to what C. Wright Mills termed a specific feature of the social scientist as scientist: social scientists do not separate work from life. I find these comments interesting in themselves, because they tell us something about the status of the topic – both drinking and drug use practices as well as sexual practices are considered central and important in most people’s lives, but they are still considered highly personal (or, when told about, considered capable of exposing or unmasking much of the strictly personal). A very basic and simple reason why I chose this topic was that I was in doubt about the state of things: I was curious to find out whether drinking and drug use practices as well as sexual practices were really only, or mostly, private matters, even in sociologists’ imaginations.

There are a number of people who have helped me in my work. The commitment to and interest in my work shown by my advisor, Karin Helmersson Bergmark, has been of primary importance to the development of my own imagination as well as to the completion of this book, and for that I owe her my greatest thanks. Karin has provided invaluable support, in all possible ways, during this time.

For taking time to read the whole manuscript and for his valuable and interesting comments at my final seminar, my sincere thanks to Thomas Johansson. Patrik Aspers’ more-than ordinary comments at my seminar on Study 3 helped me improve the structure of the article. Thank you Patrik, especially for your comments on Max Weber. Likewise, Per-Anders Lindén and Lars Udéhn provided important and much appreciated comments on Study 3.

Love Bohman’s good sense of humour and sense of perspective have been a relief. Love also deserves many thanks for discussing with me real rather than imaginary numbers in quantitative analysis. Other colleagues at the Department and elsewhere have encouraged, inspired and helped me in various ways. Thank you Göran Ahrne, Lasse Brännström, Jakob Demant, Rebecca Lawrence, Carina Mood Roman, Lambros Roumanis, Tiziana Sardiello, Mikaela Sundberg, Maria Törnqvist and Lisa Wallander. Lisa is
also a participant in Young ARG, and together with Ninive von Greiff, Patrik Karlsson, Jessica Palm, Lisa Skogens, Jessica Storbjörk and Kalle Tryggvesson, she deserves an extra thanks for her reading and encouragement. Further thanks are also due to my co-authors on Study 4, Arlinda Kristjanson and Sharon Wilsnack, and to other colleagues in GENACIS, for good collaboration.

It has been a privilege to work with Karen Williams, who translated the citations in Study 2 and proofread Study 2, Study 3 and the introductory essay. Her linguistic sensitivity is greatly appreciated. I am also grateful to David Shannon, who saved me valuable time by translating Study 1 into English. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the Majblomman foundation for providing early financial support.

Now, at the conclusion of this acknowledgements section, the reader might think that the more personal disclosures are still missing. In a sense, this is true. But, in the same way that I have implicitly drawn upon more personal experience in working with this project and in writing, I hope that the reader, in reading this thesis, will find points of contact with her or his own experience.
References


Törrönen, J. (2006) “Unga vuxnas berusningar: Analys av dryckesvanornas dynamik i kрог- och dryckesdagböcker” [Young Adults’ Experiences of Intoxication: An
Analysis of the Dynamics of Drinking Habits in Diary Material, Nordisk alkohol- och narkotikatidskrift 23(1): 17-44.


