

Alasuutari, Pertti (1986) Alcoholism in Its Cultural Context: The Case of Blue-collar Men. *Contemporary Drug Problems* 13, 641-686.

# Alcoholism in its cultural context: the case of blue-collar men

BY PERTTI ALASUUTARI

*A sociologist at the University of Tampere (Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, P.O. Box 607, 33101 Tampere, Finland), the author is currently a Fulbright visiting scholar at the Alcohol Research Group, Berkeley. He is coauthor of a Finnish book reporting observational studies of the suburban pub.*

The research on drinking habits and changes in the level of alcohol consumption shows that attitudes toward as well as meanings of drinking reflect people's way of life and their overall view of life (Sulkunen et al. 1985; Kortteinen 1983; Sulkunen 1979; Mäkelä 1976). Alcoholics, with their elevated level of consumption, have on the other hand been treated as a distinct case; the focus has been on the differences between

*AUTHOR'S NOTE: This article is based on my study, "Työmiehen elämäntarina ja alkoholismi" [The Male Worker's Life Story and Alcoholism] (Alasuutari 1985). This version was prepared in the inspiring atmosphere of the Alcohol Research Group, Berkeley. Jon Cruz, Mike Hilton, Ron Roizen, and Robin Room provided helpful comments.*

them and the general population as the basis of explanations. What is shared among them and non-alcoholics, and how the very form of a personal problem called alcoholism stems from the world view and self-concept in a culture, have been unduly neglected. The present article, a study of male manual workers, concentrates on these issues—on the relation between the view of life and alcoholism.

I will show that the concepts of gender and wage labor are central in the reproduction of the cultural forms of blue-collar men and in explaining the form of alcoholism in them. Drinking is a symbol and realization of personal freedom. Among both alcoholic and non-alcoholic blue-collar men, drinking reflects the tension between the desires of an individual on the one hand and the constraints of society on the other. In the everyday life of the workers this contradiction is manifested as a tension between the family sphere and the public sphere on the one hand, and the instrumental attitude needed in wage labor as opposed to one's own desires on the other. The men's self-concept contains the same duality: they recognize in themselves two sides, their self-discipline and their own desires. In the light of this analysis, the phenomenon called "loss of control" is shown to be the result of a particular way of solving the cognitive dissonance between a man's will to preserve both his personal freedom and a peaceable relation to his significant others. This contradictory situation is resolved by reinterpreting the man's desire to drink as an uncontrolled, physical and senseless craving.

### **The data and the research design**

The study is based on the analysis of life stories. The main point of departure, often employed by the students of Alcoholics Anonymous (Thune 1977; Denzin 1986a and 1986b), along with some other studies dealing with a "life

---

history approach,"<sup>1</sup> is to analyze the life stories as *narratives*, as subjective and intersubjective reconstructions of the past. Compared to the studies dealing with A.A., there are two distinctive features in this study. First, whereas the students of A.A. have concentrated on the relation between the stories of active and recovering alcoholics, this study relates the life stories told by alcoholics to those of non-alcoholics. Second, the alcoholics of the data are clients of a clinic where the A.A. ideology does not prevail or have any footing whatsoever in the treatment routine.

The main data consist of 54 life stories told by married or divorced male manual workers. Of them, 12 have come to search for help with their alcohol problems at an A-clinic and 7 at a detoxication clinic operating as a part of the clinic.<sup>2</sup> Five of the men are members of an A-guild, a society founded by recovering and ex-alcoholics. The remaining 30 interviewees are metalworkers, recruited for the study at their labor union's training center. The study was conducted in Tampere, Finland.

The interview was open-ended but not an in-depth interview—it usually lasted less than 45 minutes per interviewee. The men were asked to tell their life story in their own words, and the interviewer's task was only to ask for more details by posing further questions about the episodes already taken up by the interviewee.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the life story interviews, a group of alcoholics' wives was also interviewed by a female research assistant. These in-depth, unstructured interviews will be used as additional data in the last section of the article.

In the case of A.A., Thune (1977) argues that the life story has provided the most effective means for transmission of its values and assumptions. Even though the stories are remarkably narrow and stereotyped, an individual's ability to adjust his past to the format is not merely an external mark of a "well-socialized" member which new members pursue as they

seek group acceptance. According to Thune, through stories a member comes to understand his life in a new way; he views it with a different structure and logic than he had previously. The way members discuss and define the "right" way of seeing one's own biography is the practical and concrete way of conveying and adopting the treatment ideology. Such an ideology is much more than an external dogma to be learnt by heart. The overall format structuring the individual stories reflects the members' new, shared way of perceiving the world. "The life history in fact has become the idiom, in many ways the metalanguage, through which members discuss and redefine the structure of reality" (p. 87).

Though the telling of life stories does not have a similar position in the treatment model of the A-clinic, it is obvious that the world view of the teller is reflected in all life stories. They are never only views of the past; the picture of the life history an individual translates into speaking terms, into a story, reflects his present way of thinking and behaving. "Suddenly and momentarily to see oneself as 'aggressive', 'poetic', or 'male', for example, might seem mere whimsy unless such concepts could be secured to a series of earlier events" (Gergen and Gergen 1984, p. 173). But the selection of particular past events to be told is not the main thing in this respect; it is the way they are connected to each other to compose the narrative. The structure of reality as it is perceived by people in a culture, it was argued, is reflected in the overall format of the story. Thus the task required developing methodological tools capable of analyzing the collective consciousness inherent in the stories. The tools were offered by the method of narrative analysis: if several men, while telling their particular stories, used the same narrative structure, it was interpreted to reflect the collective subjectivity (Willis 1977) common to them all, consisting of the shared world view and self-concept of the men.<sup>4</sup>

A common narrative structure of the life stories was indeed found, existing in the stories of both alcoholic and other workers. Its definition and content will be presented below. How it was “translated” into a picture of the men’s collective subjectivity and the conclusions drawn from its content are discussed thereafter.

Then, to get a grasp on the special characteristics of the alcoholics on the basis of the men’s shared collective subjectivity, the focus of inquiry is shifted to another aspect of the stories, the men’s forms of identity. The concept of identity is here defined as one’s strategy of life, the way he “makes sense” of his life in the social reality perceived in a certain way. This strategy, or script, of a man’s way of life is reflected in the particular way he tells his story in terms of the overall narrative structure.<sup>5</sup> The forms of identity are also reflected in the way men comment on the personal sense of the events taken up in the narrative and in their evaluations of the reasons and rationales for their behavior.

At the level of identity, the life model of the alcoholics was found to be a slight mutation of that of other workers, deriving from the shared cultural forms. Finally, after discussing the forms of identity, the process leading into “loss of control” is reconstructed on the basis of the previous phases of the study.

The study is entirely based on qualitative, interpretative method, on understanding (*Verstehen*) in the Weberian sense. Instead of treating the data as a stone, measuring its dimensions from outside, the student of an interpretative method acknowledges in the first place that he or she *understands* the meaning of the sentences of which the data are composed. This taken-for-granted understanding, enabled by the intersubjective nature of language, is the object of research (viewed “from inside”) to be analyzed by employing certain methodological rules. The epistemological status of these

rules can be likened to those of grammar: in order to define the “object” or “subject” of a sentence, one has to understand the language.

### **The narrative structure**

Before presenting the results of narrative analysis of the life stories, the methodological decisions made and the whole concept of narrative structure will be briefly discussed.

From the mid-1970s onward, a great deal of research has appeared dealing at first with story grammars (Prince 1973; Rumelhart 1975) and later with cognitive structures which guide one's perception and understanding of texts, episodes, and scenes, as well as structure one's speech and behavior (for an overview, see Mandler 1984; Beaugrande 1980; van Dijk 1980). The careful, empirical research in “schema theory” supports the argument made above that there is indeed a linkage between the narrative structure of a life story and the cognitive structure guiding one's perception of the world. On the other hand, most of the research has been focused on abstract intracultural features of cognitive structures, neglecting their social and cultural boundedness in the name of psychologists' search for universal human characteristics.<sup>6</sup> This is why the method applied in this study draws on that of Vladimir Propp (1975, originally 1928). As the most important inspiration for later students, his treatment of the structure of a plot is in essence shared by later researchers and supported by their findings. But the task fulfilled by his study, the classification of tales into types in a more precise way, makes his approach particularly appropriate for the purposes of this study. In classifying the tales, he paid much attention to the content of the stories.<sup>7</sup>

In the present study, explanations were based on a common form or structure inherent in several otherwise unique stories. This kind of approach is usually employed in case

studies dealing with a group whose members are known to share the same world view and view of life. As informants they are then asked to tell about their culture. But because the interviewees of this study do not belong to any cultural group, such a procedure was not satisfactory. Even though the interviewees can be classified as belonging to the same social class—manual workers—it cannot be simply assumed that their life stories are structured by the same narrative structure, reflecting a shared collective subjectivity. Neither could the stories be classified into types according to an impression of the main “theme” in them.<sup>2</sup> Some kind of coding according to words, symbols, or phrases used in a story would not work either. For people not belonging to a local group the same signs may carry different meanings even if the overall pattern of their thinking and behavior is similar. Propp showed a way out of these problems of classification by focusing on the overall pattern or “morphological” form of a story, studying its plot at a level abstracted from its particular content. In analyzing the tales he paid attention to the chronological order of the sequences in a story. According to Propp, the component part of a story, a function, must be defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of action. If several stories are composed of the same functions in the same chronological order, they belong to the same type.

When the life stories were analyzed, it turned out that the narratives could be divided into two types. The great majority of the stories, 53 of 54, represented the same narrative structure, which will be analyzed here. The divergent type will be discussed later on in this article.

The dominant story type consists of nine phases of the narrative, which by turns describe a life situation and an event which changes the situation (see Prince 1973; Brémond 1970; Dundes 1964). I have given every phase a name that reflects the way men characterize it in their stories. The phases are:

- A. childhood;
- B. the man becomes independent;
- C. the wild youth;
- D. the man settles down;
- E. the settled life;
- F. the man breaks the rules of decent life;
- G. the crisis;
- H. the man mends his ways;
- I. the man is divorced.

The narrative structure characterized in this way does not describe any “typical” or average story. Rather, it takes into account all the stories of the type and the details within any of the stories. All the men did not, naturally, tell about a divorce and neither does a divorced man necessarily *end* his story after telling he has had one. Men do remarry or cohabitate, for instance, or experience other things that are worth telling in a life story. But these kinds of differences are allowed in terms of the method. The general idea is that the list of phases includes all incidents mentioned in any story. All stories do not show evidence of all phases, but those mentioned always appear in the same order (*cf.* Propp 1975).<sup>9</sup> If, for instance, a man does not give any description about his youth as a meaningful phase of life, the story will in any case continue with a description of settling down. On the other hand, some phases may appear many times in a story. After a divorce, say, the story may reiterate and continue from Phase C), the wild youth, onward. The reason for this lies in the way the narrative structure and its component parts—that is, phases, as I here call them<sup>10</sup>—are defined. A phase of a story is defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of action (see Propp 1975). When, for instance, a man says:

Well I think it was in the army that it became clear to me that I’ll make up my mind and leave [home] as well

it is obvious that the story moves over to the next phase, the wild youth. Before the decision, the man is at home, dependent on his parents, but afterwards he is independent both mentally and economically. The phases in different stories are of course not characterized in the same way. Rather, the differences between the ways the same phase is expressed in particular stories are often remarkable. This can be illustrated by excerpts from life stories of two men.

At the age of sixteen the curve took a downturn. I left school for music. First we did a few gigs, and then we were hired by a restaurant for a couple of months. And that's what I've done since.

Another man said:

I had a fight with my father on Christmas eve. . . . I finished my school all right but then I left and didn't see my parents for many years. My mother did come to see me.

In terms of the common narrative structure, stories differ from each other in their overall contents and emphasis. Grossly characterized, it can be said that the men who had alcohol problems described the key events in their lives by speaking about the human relations, while others—having the same structural component parts in their stories—paid attention to the changes in living conditions.

To translate his life history into a story, a typical man without alcohol problems continues by describing how he got along in his life, managing to acquire some property as well as a family of his own:

I bought an old car and got married—and we have three boys.

In this kind of a story the man might mention some occasional hardships, like illnesses or unemployment, but usually the stories of these men—who were born during or shortly after World War II—end up in a description of the settled life:

We got married in 1978. I got a job and I have stayed there for seven years. A room with a kitchen has changed into two rooms

and then into a house of our own, which I built by myself. A couple of sons were born.

A typical story told by a man having alcohol problems is a bit different. When describing his childhood he might pay attention to happiness and factors that have an effect on it:

Childhood was the happiest time of my whole life; I never had more fun, even with alcohol.

Similarly, another man paid attention to the atmosphere at home:

My father abused alcohol, and the discipline was too strict.

Also the alcoholics' stories emphasize the dimension of independence in the phase of "wild youth," during which they get rid of parental control. But the "wild youth" typically turns out to be a "downturn" because of inordinate freedom. Finding a wife and settling down in this perspective suggest the meaning of finding a new safe harbor:

My drinking had become what you call excessive. I noticed that the only way [to get it under control] was to get a very bitchy wife, otherwise I was just as good as dead. It was the only possibility.

But the hardships do not end up here. Even though the wife is useful in keeping order, she is on the other hand restrictive. The man does not have composure enough to lead a decent life; rather, he breaks its rules. Many crises might be solved by his mending his ways, but in the end divorce is inevitable. As a result he again achieves freedom and independence—with the old problems.

(Interviewer: You have marked the divorce as a downturn?)

Well that's what it was—or after it I began to drink like hell because I felt free, I kind of thought I could drink more.

In order to regain control over his overt drinking a divorced alcoholic typically gets himself a woman as a controller—whom he opposes by drinking when life has returned to its everyday trials. Some men have been involved with several

women in the course of these cycles. This is why successive relations and separations do not deserve to be called separate phases of the narrative structure. There is nothing new in them, compared to the first marriage. Naturally, this doesn't mean that the story cannot have a happy ending.

The story variants characterized here cannot be neatly separated from each other; rather, they are caricatures created by the researcher, meta-empirical ideal types which cannot be found in any of the stories in a pure form. Most stories are more or less mixed, including features of both ideal types.

How should one then explain the meaning of such variants? A special feature of the stories that most clearly violate the overall rule stated above—those concentrated on human relations even though told by non-alcoholics—suggested an interpretation. Namely, all these workers report some kind of problems in human relations, either during their childhood, youth, or marriage. Now it can be concluded that a shocking experience is enough to shift the emphasis of the whole story toward human relations. It can for instance deal with a girl during the years of youth:

A girl wanted to get married to me, and got herself pregnant. I left for Sweden and from there went to sea as a sailor.

But when the hardships are over and the man gets happily married, the interest in the story shifts to changes and goals in the living conditions. Another man, who told about personal problems connected with his parents' continuous quarrels, put it this way:

The age of 18 was a turning point. I met my wife-to-be. From then on, it has gone for the better.

(Interviewer: What are the expectations and plans for the future?)

Normal life, enlarging the apartment and the family.

Problems in human relationships seem to motivate the men to reflect on the role of human relations in general. Heavy drinking is one example of reasons for such problems. The fact that overcoming problems in human relations returns the focus of a life story to economic affairs, enables us to study the interrelatedness of different spheres of everyday life in the men's collective subjectivity. Moreover—because the overall narrative structure of the life stories was the same, despite the differences in content—it can be argued that the narrative structure reflects profound cultural patterns shared by all the men. It reflects their collective subjectivity, as will be shown.

### **The collective subjectivity**

In order to analyze the narrative structure as an expression of the men's world view and self-concept in a systematic fashion, a method "translating" the general plot into a picture of the men's collective subjectivity had to be developed. This will be presented first before a discussion of the results of the analysis.

There was no ready, paved way from the narrative structure to the analysis of a world view and self-concept, even though many solutions have been suggested (Dundes 1964; Wright 1975). Still, the connection between narrative structure and collective subjectivity seems to be quite obvious: the relations outlined above between the story variants and the common plot which structures them give a hint of the way that different spheres of life are connected to each other in the men's thinking and living. Preliminarily, it can be suggested that as soon as human relations are in good condition, the men willingly take care of the family economy. The story is accordingly made logical by referring to the changes and goals related to it. The methodological principle to follow is to study the relations of the contents of excerpts from

different stories which serve the same function for the course of the plot. This kind of method is in a systematic vein developed by Turner (1977).

According to Turner, the ability to understand a text as a narrative is based on the fact that one distinguishes the interrelated dimensions of opposition, the transformations of which make up the plot. We can reinterpret the concept of narrative structure from this point of view: a shift from a phase of the plot to another one means that a transformation in the structure of oppositions has taken place. Now, the fact that we were able to equate the overall narrative structure of a life story with another one was possible because the stories are composed of the same dimensions of meaning. These dimensions are interrelated, and the structure embedded in them can be seen in any phase of the narrative. This structure of the dimensions of meaning is the men's collective subjectivity in the sense that it provides the men with lenses through which concrete phenomena or events are perceived and interpreted. Analytically, there can be distinguished two aspects, the world view and the self-concept, in the collective subjectivity. The concept of world view will be discussed first.

**World view** Even the name given to the first event in the plot, "the man becomes independent," has to do with achieving personal freedom and independence. The economic independence which going to work facilitates is a precondition to it. In this way the authority of the family and especially of the father loses its ground. The wild youth means that the man grows also mentally away from home.

I had a job during the summers and leisure time from when I was twelve until fifteen when I finished my school. My upbringing was very religious on my father's side and I bought it until age fourteen, which was the time I began to go to dances secretly.

(Interviewer: How would you describe your childhood?)

I would have to say that I experienced my father as a very strong personality and authority. I have realized that I joined the labor

movement so late because I had to grow free from my religious rearing. It was only through work that I became conscious of my position.

This dimension of meaning, which is here entitled dependence, articulates the whole plot. From this point of view, the whole narrative consists of consecutive changes from dependence to independence and back again. To take an example, Phase B, the man becomes independent, can be equated with Phase I, the man is divorced, while the settled life can be equated with childhood:

At first my mother carried the responsibility, then my wife. Only little by little has it been turned over to me.

But the dynamics inherent in the stories, the alternation between the valuable freedom and its voluntary restriction or abdication, makes sense only after taking into account another interrelated dimension of meaning inherent in the stories: the dimension of social relations. This refers to one's relation both to the society and to significant others. It is the social, emotional relation which the men seek from the marital relation and which makes it a desirable thing in the men's lives.

At age eighteen there was a turning point. I met my wife. It was an upturn.

(Interviewer: What was changed?)

You feel that you have a person which you care for and who cares for you. I felt that I have reason to live. Before that I had a depressing period.

These two dimensions are interrelated in the sense that a man has difficulty in achieving total personal freedom and at the same time preserving a peaceable relation to a wife or girlfriend and to the society. The life stories express different models of balance and compromise between these two contradictory desires. When the man in his youth acquires more freedom, he simultaneously has to give up the close relation

to his parents. By getting married he regains a close social relation, but at the same time loses some of his personal freedom.

In addition to joining the phases of the narrative, the structure of the men's world view is built into the descriptions of the consecutive phases of the plot. Take, for example, the individual descriptions of "the settled life." The contradiction between the desire for a measure of personal freedom and duties toward the family and society can be seen in them.

(Interviewer: What do you usually quarrel about?)

Well, I'm active in the labor movement and often away from home. That is usually what causes our fights. And I admit that I'm away quite often.

An alcoholic, whose story is sliding into an open conflict, describes the same phase in a similar, even though a rougher way:

When I was twenty-five I began to drink more. I was working temporarily in another town, I was away from the family and got more money. Every spare moment, I went for a drink.

Thus, the structure of interrelated dimensions of meaning is not tied to the relations between consecutive phases of the plot. It is a frame that organizes the perception and interpretation of any event or action. Its very kernel is deeply rooted to men's notion of the tension between individual and society.<sup>13</sup>

In everyday life, the tension is lived out primarily as that occurring between family life and life outside. That is, the men's stories imply at first a feeling of dependence when the man is still living at home, and later while living with his own family. Both spheres can be equated and generally called the family sphere. In a similar vein, the time out of the family sphere, either as a specific phase of the story called "the wild youth" or the time spent outside the family during marital

life, has a meaning of personal freedom as well as a lack of satisfactory human relationships. This is called the public sphere. Interestingly, only the alcoholics, when facing conflicts with employers because of their drinking, pay attention to the limits the world of work places on an individual:

At the beginning of the 70's I had conflicts at work because of alcohol. The engineer said that he observed that I have serious problems with alcohol since I have to drink on the job. Well, I didn't give him the old explanation that I had a quarrel with my wife and that is why I had to move my drinking to the workplace 'cause I couldn't drink at home.

That the tension between individual desires and social constraints is primarily articulated as that between the public sphere and the family sphere transforms it into an issue of human relations, of the relation between man and woman. The tension between the two spheres defines and reproduces gender conflicts over the roles of the sexes. In the men's stories, the family sphere is defined as the female, and the public sphere as the male domain. This, in turn, implies the division of domestic labor where the husband is the primary family breadwinner, whereas the wife takes care of the household and children. Since she also has the role of her husband's controller, as the one who takes care that he doesn't neglect his duties, she is the nearest representative of the society.<sup>12</sup> Especially the alcoholics perceive their wives as the ones who should take care of their working:

It was largely because of my wife that I was away from work.

(Interviewer: In what way?)

In the evening when we had a quarrel, my wife threw the alarm-clock at the wall. I didn't wake [in time] to work in the morning. I got angry at her and went to the railway station. I went to a restaurant, bought a bottle in a drugstore near the railway station and jumped on the first train that was leaving.

The organization of spheres and practices, and their meanings described above, is not an exclusively Finnish phenomenon. Rather, it seems to have a lot in common with all

life, has a meaning of personal freedom as well as a lack of satisfactory human relationships. This is called the public sphere. Interestingly, only the alcoholics, when facing conflicts with employers because of their drinking, pay attention to the limits the world of work places on an individual:

At the beginning of the 70's I had conflicts at work because of alcohol. The engineer said that he observed that I have serious problems with alcohol since I have to drink on the job. Well, I didn't give him the old explanation that I had a quarrel with my wife and that is why I had to move my drinking to the workplace 'cause I couldn't drink at home.

That the tension between individual desires and social constraints is primarily articulated as that between the public sphere and the family sphere transforms it into an issue of human relations, of the relation between man and woman. The tension between the two spheres defines and reproduces gender conflicts over the roles of the sexes. In the men's stories, the family sphere is defined as the female, and the public sphere as the male domain. This, in turn, implies the division of domestic labor where the husband is the primary family breadwinner, whereas the wife takes care of the household and children. Since she also has the role of her husband's controller, as the one who takes care that he doesn't neglect his duties, she is the nearest representative of the society.<sup>12</sup> Especially the alcoholics perceive their wives as the ones who should take care of their working:

It was largely because of my wife that I was away from work.

(Interviewer: In what way?)

In the evening when we had a quarrel, my wife threw the alarm-clock at the wall. I didn't wake [in time] to work in the morning. I got angry at her and went to the railway station. I went to a restaurant, bought a bottle in a drugstore near the railway station and jumped on the first train that was leaving.

The organization of spheres and practices, and their meanings described above, is not an exclusively Finnish phenomenon. Rather, it seems to have a lot in common with all

descriptions of Western “working-class culture,” which in England and the United States was fully shaped by the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> Recent research on blue-collar people also shows a similar patterning of the everyday life and the role of alcohol in it: while the home as a female domain has an effect in restricting the men’s drinking, the drinking takes place almost completely outside the family sphere, in all-male groups on the job, during lunch breaks, and after work in parking lots or nearby bars (Ames and Janes 1986; Klee and Ames 1986). Ethnic differences would, of course, remarkably change and complicate such an overall picture, but it is nevertheless interesting to find how widespread certain patterns of everyday life are.

Before discussing the reason for these patterns of behavior among blue-collar populations, we must first pay attention to another aspect of the concept of collective subjectivity, the men’s self-concept, which is also built into the plot of the life stories. In addition to reflecting the men’s way of perceiving the reality they encounter, the life stories express their conception of themselves as human beings, as subjects behaving in the environment.

**Self-concept** The central feature of their self-concept is expressed in the way men tell about their schooling. For some, leaving school is a totally positive turn, but many stories include a certain ambivalence in this respect.

(Interviewer: I understand you were held back a year, what was it like?)

Actually there was a lot happening that year. I was sixteen and it was the last year of my schooling. I, for example, had an affair with my teacher. It was a wild experience.

(Interviewer: Was it an upturn in life?)

I suppose I was held back as a consequence of all this. So it really can’t be perceived as a high point.

The ambivalence about schooling comes from the fact that this phase of life can be evaluated from two points of view. If the men pay attention to what they themselves liked and wanted at the time, schooling was boring and ending it was a relief, a liberation from the straitjacket of school. From this perspective, having fun during the school hours was the positive part of that phase. If, on the other hand, they consider how they got on at school and the usefulness of conscientious schooling for a future life, the values turn upside down.

I wish I had gone on with my schooling. Not then but now, afterwards. I sure would have handled it, even though I wouldn't have liked it then. Father should have forced me, but it was a question of money and the fact that I didn't like school. At that time people said that those who were good at school were pansies and that's something I didn't want to be. I guess it's some kind of timidity, you go along with the group.

The contradiction between the two points of view reflects the tension between future-oriented, purposive rationality and behaving according to one's own desires. In the stories, the men's desire was to leave school as soon as possible. School was, indeed, seen as instrumentally useful, but as a disgusting place. Even though many men have changed their minds since their school years, the articulation itself has not changed: they say that their parents should have forced them to stay at school, or that they should have forced themselves. They should have practiced self-discipline. In the stories, the men differentiate this part of themselves from what is being disciplined, their own desire. Such a division between self-discipline and desire is inherent in the men's self-conception; it is built into the narrative structure. The tension between man's desires and self-discipline is often expressed in descriptions of drinking. Among the alcoholics of the sample, the drinking, which in all the stories expresses and emphasizes freedom and personal independence, becomes an uncontrolled desire, alien from the man himself:

It was a high point when I got a job and became a sailor, although I drank a lot. Before I went to the army it got out of control really, I couldn't hold back.

The common and self-evident concept of self-discipline is indeed of central importance for understanding the social and psychological problem called alcoholism, often characterized by the concept of loss of control. That it actually seems to be a "culture-bound syndrome" (Room 1984a) implies that the whole division between "desire" and "self-discipline" is of social origin, deeply rooted to the existence of the exchange economy.<sup>14</sup> One might argue that "alcoholism" defined by using the "loss of control" as one of the criteria only exists in countries where the division of labor is predominantly based on an exchange economy, which has thus become the main organizing principle of the society.<sup>15</sup> Whether the facts would support such a hypothesis or not, it is interesting how the form of alcoholism found among the workers studied here is intertwined with their interpretation of their social position as manual workers. Why this is the case could be explained at the level of identity. I will first discuss the concept and the method employed in studying it, and thereafter present the results of the analysis.

## Identity

Thus far, the analysis of the life stories has been concerned with the dimensions of meaning that provide the men with lenses through which they perceive and interpret concrete, practical issues of everyday life. I have called this aspect of the consciousness the collective subjectivity. In the same vein, Bourdieu (1977, ch. 4) talks about *doxa*, the universe of undiscussed and undisputed knowledge, the basis from which people's discourse, arguments, and attitudes arise: "Because the subjective necessity and self-evidence of the common-

sense world are validated by the objective consensus on the sense of the world, what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*" (p. 167).

Even though they are here analytically separated, the level of collective subjectivity can never be treated as autonomously distinct from the forms of identity. We are never only condensations or products of social and cultural structures, forever doomed to blindly manufacture the society behind our backs, either in a Levi-Straussian or a Marxian sense. One has, somehow, to "make sense" of his view of life, impose order on the distorted and contradictory disorder of symbols, articulations, and practices of social reality. It is the very basis of identity formation—which, in turn, while consisting of an active process of interpretations and symbolic constructions of the social reality, reproduces and transforms the collective subjectivity. This kind of cultural production, aimed at the construction and preservation of identity—of self-esteem—is a form of inventive creativeness within the structured and structuring limits of doxa, as Bourdieu (1977) puts it, but it is all the time redefining the boundary between the universes of the conscious and the subconscious.

To further illustrate the difference between the levels of collective subjectivity and identity, let us consider the parallel difference between the concepts of meaning and sense in the case of drinking. Now, a collective *meaning* of drinking could already be found by analyzing the narrative structure of the life stories. In the plot, drinking always expressed the desire for personal freedom: it always took place outside the family sphere, either during "the wild youth"—expressing the independence from home—or outside the men's own families. Drinking at home did not seem to be significant enough to be voluntarily mentioned in the stories. When comparing excerpts from different stories, it turned out that men's traditional vices—smoking and other women—in addition to hobbies like volleyball or labor union activities

could be equated with drinking as serving the same function as expressions of “time out” from the family.<sup>16</sup> But, even though the inner logic of such a patterning of everyday life and the meaning of drinking in it can be intuitively understood, the plot does not in fact explain the *sense* of drinking or the sense of “freedom” which it expresses. Or rather, the patterning of life and the motivation of drinking can be rendered sensible in a number of ways in terms of the collective subjectivity.

As stated earlier, particular stories did indeed differ from each other in their contents in terms of the common plot structure. While, say, getting a wife was, for a youngster with alcohol problems, a means of regaining control over his life, for another it marked the end of an interesting period and was a way of finding a new meaning for life. These variants reflect different ways or aspects of making sense of one’s way of life at the level of identity, and illustrate the analytical distinction between the concepts of meaning and sense: whereas the meaning of an act, object, or artifact is a shared, taken-for-granted way to perceive it, for an individual it has a sense in the context of his view of life. From this perspective, the differences in content and emphasis of the narratives give clues about the forms of identity among the men.<sup>17</sup>

The forms of identity in the men studied can also be seen in the men’s evaluations of the reasons and rationales for their drinking or abstinence. Altogether, five modes of speech can be found in the data. Men say that they control their drinking; it can be explained as a form of revenge; one can present oneself as a self-conscious drunkard; drinking can be explained by the fact that restraints were missing; and finally, one can express his unawareness of the main reasons for his problematic drinking. These modes of speech—along with the variants in the narrative structure—will be regarded as clues in the task of reconstructing the forms of identity. A methodological device employed in grasping the inherent logics of the men’s lifestyles is the homological analysis of

the men's modes of speech dealing with different spheres or aspects of their lives. Essentially it is concerned with how far, in their structure and content, particular items parallel and reflect the style, typical concerns, attitudes, and feelings of the men (Willis 1978, pp. 191–93). In this way, homologies between the men's attitudes toward, say, drinking, family life, and work, are found. There is nothing mysterious about it: it is only natural that an organizing principle used in making sense of one's life is reflected in the accounts of any acts or habits that express one's identity.<sup>18</sup> Because particular accounts are not taken at their face value, the approach differs from that of "accounts theory," which is mainly concentrated in classifying accounts into types.<sup>19</sup>

The mode of speech where the man reports an unawareness and confusion concerning the reasons for drinking—or unwillingness to explain them—is not of much help here. It is not that we can ignore this mode of speech, used by men who say they developed their drinking problems only after marriage. The problem is that these men—despite the fact that drinking is first introduced in "the wild youth" and in this sense associated with a desire for independence—do not give accounts of particular events or situations where drinking occurs. They only express an overall loss of control:

The drinking increased when I was at about thirty. It became a problem. I was not aware of it. I don't remember when I began to take a drink for a hangover.

Because this kind of utterance states the very problem of loss of control to be discussed in the next section, it deserves to be treated separately there, after first analyzing the forms of identity on the basis of other modes of speech.

The next mode to be discussed, only appearing in the life stories of non-alcoholics, emphasizes the overall control over all aspects of life, including drinking. Should a man report a previous drinking problem, the recovery is presented as the result of his own sovereign decision:

Finding my wife was the most decisive factor in giving up [drinking].

(Interviewer: Why was that?)

If I went on, it would have been a disaster.

(Interviewer: Did your spouse say that?)

No, I figured it out by myself. Or it came to my mind when it became obvious that this is gonna be real bad. . . .

(Interviewer: Would there have been any other principle in telling your story?)

No, it would have become similar in any case. Maybe I have had a peculiar life, a result of my own struggle. I've had to keep my head above water.

#### Logic of mastery

The same emphasis on mastery is also reflected in the fact, noted earlier, that the non-alcoholics paid more attention in their life stories to changes in living conditions. By doing so, *they presented themselves as the sovereign subjects of their lives*. These men, in other words, placed great value on their ability to handle their life situations. On the other hand, the satisfaction and pride deriving from this form of identity formation, which is here called the logic of mastery, imply that such a control is not an easy matter to preserve. It presupposes a conflicting desire for something else: for freedom, which drinking expresses. In a sense, the logic of mastery is only an instrumental device to regain a measure of personal freedom, a way of negotiating the tension between social constraints and one's own desires. When men take care of their responsibilities and use their self-discipline to control their desires, they think they, in turn, have the right to a measure of personal freedom. In practice, the terms of this symbolic exchange are the topic of a continual family discussion. On the other hand, the ability, strength, and self-discipline needed in handling the situations one faces in everyday life are more than just an instrumental means for preserving independence. This kind of mastery has been given a tone of masculinity. It derives this meaning from the

world of work, where the workers' view of manual labor is similar to their view of drinking. As a means of livelihood, manual labor has only an instrumental role, but as an expression of a masculine mastery—the skill and strength needed in performing the tasks—it is rendered attractive *per se*.<sup>20</sup> Oftentimes, the masculine tone in accounts of male drinking is associated with the ability to withstand large amounts of alcohol, but it nevertheless expresses a form of mastery. The men show that they are able to handle it, and that they are free to set their limits by themselves.<sup>21</sup>

These accounts of problematic drinking can, in fact, be explained and understood in terms of the rationales behind the “normal” drinking. The second mode of account, for example, which presents heavy drinking as a form of revenge, can be understood on the basis of the symbolic exchange discussed above. If the wife, in the husband's view, has violated the terms of the “deal,” he, as a reaction, gives up his self-discipline and begins to drink in an uncontrolled fashion:

I was kept eight weeks in the army, without a break. My wife had been unfaithful during that time. After leaving the army I didn't come home for two days. I drank. I had never been unfaithful or used alcohol since we had married, I had consciously tried to avoid it. I had brought my paycheck home 'cause my wife took care of the household. Now, when I began to drink I left straight from work and drank the money. I did it five or six times a year. And I began to use other women [sexually].

The mode of speech, where the man declares himself to be a self-conscious drunkard, is pretty similar to the revenge mode. In this case a man is bitter and disappointed in life, and careless of the consequences caused to himself by his drinking:

(Interviewer: What would you emphasize?)

I have no sustenance.

(Interviewer: What about the treatment systems?)

I've been disappointed in them. They are of no use. It's all the same brainwash that you should not drink. It's been all right. What I've spoiled it's been because of booze. I regret nothing. Drinking is up to yourself.

Such a rationale for self-destructive drinking does not in fact help us to understand the sense of a form of revenge or an expression of disappointment that primarily hurts oneself. Stated differently, how is it possible to make sense of a way of life that leads into humiliating situations, into a loss of control and mastery over one's own life? The mode in which drinking is explained only by the fact that restraints were missing made it possible to analyze the inherent logic of heavy, uncontrolled drinking. It implies loss of control as a taken-for-granted point of departure, whereupon everyday life has to be organized and made sensible. A man who has self-consciously or anxiously confessed the inability to control his drinking has turned his failure into a victory—or, as Bourdieu (1977) puts it, has made a virtue of necessity—by redefining the meanings of freedom or independence. In case a person does not control or master things like drinking as a sovereign individual, he can base his self-esteem on voluntary submission. One organizes his life by externalizing his self-discipline, replaces self-control with outer control or restricting conditions. In this way, the wife, for example, has been given the role of a controller and caretaker. This could be seen in the story variant mainly told by alcoholics: when the men were separated, say, they said they started to drink more because of an increased freedom. When the whole life story is articulated with this orientation in mind, all events are evaluated from this point of view:

During the years of my youth I didn't drink too much, only every two weekends on paydays. Also my girlfriend restricted me some.

Logic of  
freedom

Total personal freedom is from this point of view achieved, paradoxically, only when every kind of self-control and self-discipline is delegated to other people or externalized to outer constraints. All the space that is left over belongs to the realm

of freedom. I call this orientation the logic of freedom. It is by no means a distinct form of identity possessed only by alcoholics. Rather, it is an alternative route cut through the articulations and symbolic systems that threaten to humiliate a man in repressive social conditions, found with the help of the map and compass provided by the shared collective subjectivity of the blue-collar males. It also has its homologous counterpart in the working-class shop-floor culture. When a worker under close supervision and control cannot in almost any sense control or plan his work, the situation can be rendered positively expressive by a rejection of the mental work involved. The separation of planning from the actual manual performance of tasks can in this way be turned into the profane form in which resistance to supervision manifests itself: a worker will hold onto his role in the division of labor even when he knows the instructions he has been given are in error (Corrigan and Willis 1980; Alasuutari and Siltari 1983).

Although the dominance of the logic of freedom seems to be especially characteristic of the forms of identity of the alcoholics, it is not confined to the issue of alcoholism, defined in terms of loss of control. All these men, as blue-collar workers, need both these logics in their daily lives in order to preserve their self-respect. While being forced to do their jobs to earn the money, they cannot claim to be completely free. In addition to being proud of their ability to withstand “the daily grind,” they willingly leave the control and planning to the foreman, taking pains to relieve themselves of responsibility. If the wife, in addition, sees that her husband maintains his work habits—wakes him up in the morning, say—it only lightens his burden and enlarges his freedom. This overall view of life is then expressed and reconfirmed in the traditional habit of heavy drinking. Not to use one’s self-control when drinking expresses one’s personal freedom.<sup>22</sup>

The recognition of these two supplementary logics inherent in the cultural forms of the manual workers also offers, at the level of identity, the linkage between the other men and the one who used a different plot in telling his story. At first hearing, his story seemed to be a collection of incidents in a chronological order. There seemed to be no plot. He had a “usual” childhood, a “usual” youth, got married and had children, and that was it. However, upon closer study of the structural dimensions of the events, there is a striking homology between all the events. He finds an external reason for everything that happened. He went to work as a forest worker at age 13 because his brother brought him there. One day in the workers’ cabin they started to drink, and on the third day they stopped because the foreman told them to. He got married because his girlfriend was pregnant. In the evening he may have a beer or two if there happens to be some in the fridge. In other words, he does not present himself as a sovereign hero of his own story, but as an object of external factors—which on the other hand he is actively manipulating. He is an excellent example of a way of life dominated by the logic of freedom, but nevertheless he is leading a stable life.

### **The change in the family system**

Thus far the analysis of the stories has shown the way heavy and even alcoholic drinking derives its meaning and sense from the collective subjectivity and the forms of identity shared by both alcoholic and non-alcoholic manual workers. The last task of the study is to explain how drinking becomes a problem, an overwhelmingly compulsive and uncontrollable form of behavior. In order to explain the reason for loss of control in its culture-bound context, we need to reconstruct the process through which drinking becomes uncontrolled at the same time its meaning and sense become obscure for a drinker. It is doubtful that any universal model

of such a process could be constructed, not even in a specific case such as male workers. All that can be said is that in all the cases in the present study, drinking appears to reflect the tension between the individual and the society, reflected in the conflicting relations between the sexes and often crystallized in marriage. This is why the case of men who became alcoholics while married serves as an illuminating example, even though many other men in the sample became alcoholics before any marriage.

As already stated, it is characteristic of the stories told by these men that they express their total confusion about the reasons and process of alcoholism. Somewhere along the way, they say, they found themselves in the habit of taking a drink to relieve a hangover. But they cannot say when it was.

To make taking a drink for a hangover a first sign of alcoholism, as the men do, means that it is interpreted that way by them. In such a case it is made a part of the definition of the concept of alcoholism. In the context of the everyday life, frequent and heavy drinking only expresses that the man is not satisfied with his life, that he for some reason has too limited personal freedom, or that he pursues personal freedom more intensely. He wants to relax. In the family context a heavy drinker violates the rules of the decent life, and insults the wife. If drinking is heavy, it does not symbolize conjugal togetherness (*cf.* Haavio-Mannila and Holmila 1986). It belongs outside the family sphere:

When I began to drink on the second day, even only one drink, my wife couldn't stand it at all. . . . Earlier we did drink together, had a certain company of people. But no more since I began to drink on the second day.

When drinking becomes an object of mutual concern and control, the family life takes on a rhythm of dry and wet periods:

(Interviewer: The drinking has had different phases?)

Wife: Yes it has. First we drank together. Then my husband drank alone. And the dry periods have appeared.

It is not only that drinking is redefined and that family life gets a new rhythm. As a result of a dialectical process, the logic of freedom also becomes more dominant in the man's form of identity. When the wife tries to hold back the man's drinking, it becomes an arena where the spouses' battle over power and over man's independence is being fought. The vicious circle is completed. When resisting the constraints on his freedom, the man drinks in the way which was the reason for the wife's control in the first place.

When the man cannot anymore be trusted in everyday life, the wife has to go on controlling her husband. And when he discovers himself helplessly under control and supervision, in order to regain his self-esteem, he has to turn his situation into a virtue, a positive state of affairs. The more others take the responsibility, the more he is free from all the duties. He gains the desired independence another way around, not by showing he is entitled to it by employing self-discipline, but rather by actively delegating all the responsibility to others, especially to his wife:

Right in the beginning my husband took care of the payments. Except that when we were tenants I took care of the rent. At first he took care of the payments, then he began to forget about it. We got many overdue notices of unpaid bills. Then I began to check and take care of them. At that time, alcohol already played a part in our life.

The new situation poses the problem that if she interprets his drinking as a purposeful protest or violation of norms, the logical response would be to put an end to the relation. The women say indeed that they put up with the situation either because of a child or because of the dry periods. During them he tries to make it up to her, to be an exemplary husband.

It is precisely because a wife is a central mainstay in the man's life that the man seriously tries to mend his ways over and over again. Drinking, when primarily interpreted as expressing the desire to cut loose and be personally free, is contradictory to the alcoholic's will to preserve his marriage. To overcome this cognitive dissonance, drinking must be redefined. It is no longer defined as an expression of an indefinite desire to cut loose from a constraining marital relation and position, but rather as a proof of the man's physical, uncontrolled, and senseless craving for alcohol. In this way the man's desire is redefined as a "natural" craving beyond the realm of culture. It is no longer explained in terms of any kind of sensible or meaningful human behavior.<sup>23</sup>

## Discussion

To sum up, let us first tackle the issue of validity as well as the overall nature of the cultural approach employed in this study, and then discuss the levels at which generalizations can be made of the results.

The study mainly consisted of an analysis of the ways life stories reflect the men's collective subjectivity and identity. This leads us to ask whether the format men used in telling their life stories was somehow adopted from or influenced by the treatment ideologies prevailing in the A-clinic or in the A-guild self-help group. In other words, could it be presumed that the results are biased by the differences between the interview and life situations of the interviewees? Such a possibility seems unlikely for two different reasons. The first of them has to do with the research design, while the other reason is connected to the overall nature of the approach.

On the one hand, the fact that both the alcoholic and non-alcoholic men used the same narrative structure, reflecting the shared collective subjectivity, shows that the results are

not, on this level of analysis, determined by the situations of interaction. Accordingly, because the analysis at the level of identity was based on the results of the previous phase, and because I was able to give a consistent explanation of the meaning and sense of drinking in the case of both alcoholics and non-alcoholics, it is hard to see how the result of this phase of analysis should be “biased” by the nature of the data.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, the whole issue of “influence” or “effect” of ideologies must be rethought when one is dealing with an approach which expressly analyzes the role of meanings, articulations, and ideologies in the emergence of alcoholism. One must bear in mind that we are all the time making use of a range of articulations and symbolic systems in reach, when trying to make sense of our environment and our place within it. These structures of meaning appear, in turn, in the way we translate our personal experience into speaking terms, into a story. This is why there can never be any “virgin,” “uninfluenced” life story. But then again, as Thune (1977) pointed out in the case of A.A. life stories, a stereotypic quality of a life story is not merely a sign that an individual is seeking group acceptance, a mark of his effort to adhere to the prevailing norms of the group. A search for group acceptance is only secondary in nature, and as such a sign of the individual’s belief that seeking group acceptance is worthwhile. Primarily, the adoption of the story format is a sign of the individual’s effort to make sense of his life in a new way, to adopt an identity that preserves his self-respect and keeps him sober. Finally, ideologies just do not come out of thin air. The pattern of telling life stories which reflect the ideology of the A.A. movement in a nutshell, for instance, had its predecessors in the Washingtonian movement—the first American self-help association involved in rehabilitating alcoholics (Maxwell 1950)—on the one hand, and the anti-liquor fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Lender and Karnchanapee 1977; Silverman 1979) on the other. Now, the similarities between the ideologies of

these movements, I suggest, cannot primarily be explained by influences. They are rather due to the particular location alcohol was to take in the cultural structures of the emergent, industrial Western societies. It leaves only a limited range of options for a culturally “sensible” and successful ideology. Whatever should be the ideology in the background of a treatment program—derived either from medical science or from, say, religion—an alcoholic and those close to him understand and interpret it, in any case, in terms of their own cultural patterns. Alcoholism, then, as a concrete phenomenon, is always—whether in its “active” or “recovering” phase—a result of the endless interplay between lay or professional explanations and their application in the face of changing living conditions.

Thus, drinking habits and the phenomenon called alcoholism must always be explained in their cultural context. In the case of blue-collar workers studied here, drinking appears to reflect the tension between individual desires and societal restraints in a particular way. To achieve a sense of personal freedom, the man has externalized some of his self-discipline to the wife, who thus becomes—along with the foreman at work—a representative of societal constraints. Drinking, as expressive of the man’s desire for freedom, is controlled by the wife, and provides the concrete issue around which the limits of male freedom are being negotiated. Loss of control, then, becomes a way of making peace: when drinking is perceived as a craving beyond the man’s willpower, it is no longer interpreted as an offensive form of behavior. To put the explanatory model in other words, uncontrolled drinking comes about as a way of solving the cognitive dissonance caused by an individual’s seeking to preserve simultaneously his social relations and his individual independence. Marital relations have been offered as one example, but they are by no means the only arena where such a dissonance may become acute and needs to be solved.

Other research suggests that there are striking similarities between the patterns found in this study and those in blue-collar populations of different countries. The collective subjectivity and the forms of identity of the workers studied here, for instance, parallel the structure of meanings suggested by historical and recent research on working-class culture. The type of alcoholism discussed and explained also seems to be in accordance with studies on drinking habits and types of alcoholism among different social strata (Casswell and Gordon 1984; Öjesjö 1983). Moreover, studies on treatment systems suggest that blue-collar workers are more apt to adopt a medical model of gamma alcoholism and, accordingly, prefer medication to psychotherapy (Schmidt et al. 1968; Beaubrun 1971).

These similarities, I suggest, are due to the fact that the drinking habits and the type of alcoholism characteristic of the men studied are rooted to their lived experience as manual workers. There is a homological relation between the attitude toward hard work and the sense of heavy drinking: they both reflect a similar way of making sense of one's living conditions, preserving a measure of self-respect.

But the similar forms of identity are not mechanically determined by living conditions, a fact that can be seen in the differences and variations between different ethnic groups. The striking similarities in the way of making sense of the reality and of one's position in it are made possible by the fact that the materials used in the production of identities—meanings, articulations, symbolic systems—are so similar in the Western countries. The emergence of industrialism has, throughout the Western world, brought about a distinctive organization of everyday life, as well as a self-concept that is structured by the duality between the desires and the self-discipline in an individual.

At this level, it cannot be argued that the results of this study are valid in the case of male manual workers only. It must be remembered that there is no comparative aspect in the research design. In the case of Finland, one cannot really speak about distinctive cultural histories of social classes. Many characteristics of our drinking habits probably date back to the roots of the general Finnish way of life in the peasant society. And the same is true of the Western world in general. Addiction, both as a concept and as an existential experience of loss of control, is a historical creation of the epoch of industrialization. In the particular case of drinking, Levine (1978) relates its discovery to the emergence of the individualistic middle-class world view, not to that of the working class. One might suppose that the similarities between types of alcoholism between social classes are greater than the differences. To grasp the inner logics of various types of alcoholism, studies of different sociocultural groups would be needed. The form of alcoholism typical of upper- and middle-class people, where a clocklike ingestion of alcohol throughout the day is a characteristic feature, would for instance certainly make a case that differs from the blue-collar pattern, characterized by the alteration of dry periods and heavy drinking bouts. Moreover, the addictive drinking in "wine cultures," where drinking is associated with regular meals in the family, would probably reveal a distinct structure of meanings.

The fact that loss of control is closely related to the concept of self-discipline, brought about by the exchange economy, suggests that addiction as a phenomenon can emerge in a specific form in any culture where exchange economy has become the dominant organizing principle of the society. Inversely, it can be presumed that it is nonexistent only in a society where the concept of self-discipline has not been developed.

Even though "loss of control" can be explained as a culture-bound syndrome, as arising from the interplay of particular situations and behaviors, it is by no means therefore unreal, mere imagination, or personal self-deception. As a part of the family structure and of the wider cultural structures through which the men perceive their living conditions and themselves, it is a solid and difficult social fact. Actually the problem lies in the fact that the Western culture makes a sharp distinction between physical and psychic, between nature and culture. In terms of this dichotomy it is quite difficult to understand processes which are caused by social systems but are dependent on thought and behavior as anything else but a bit unreal and imaginary. The value of the approach we have employed lies exactly here. An interpretative type of explanation does not explain why an individual has become an alcoholic, but it is useful when one wants to help a person suffering from alcoholism. The analysis sheds a revealing beam of light on the cultural structures by which people treat the motives of drinking or abstention, and in this way provides tools for critical self-reflection.

## Notes

1. As introductions, see Bertaux 1981; Bertaux and Kohli 1984; Thompson 1978.
2. A-clinics, the first of which were established in 1954, are outpatient treatment units operating in most Finnish cities. There are altogether 39 A-clinics in the country (Immonen et al. 1980). Characteristic of A-clinics is that while treatment is based upon close cooperation among psychiatrists, social workers, physicians, and nurses, the work is guided by an explicitly nonmedical working philosophy concerning alcoholism (Bruun 1963 and 1971).
3. The interviewees were asked to draw a continuous line depicting the ups and downs of their lives, and then to explain them in an unstructured interview. The metalworkers and the members of the A-guild were interviewed by myself and two research assistants, whereas the workers who had come to search for help with alcohol problems were interviewed by therapists at the beginning of therapy.

4. In a similar vein, Pierre Bourdieu speaks about habitus, a generative principle, *modus operandi*, that is at the same time a system that generates perceptions and a system that generates practices (Bourdieu 1977).
5. This script neither is definitely completed at the onset of childhood, nor does it continue to operate according to its own rules; it is defined by the dialectics of the prefixed structure, on the one hand, and of its permanent transformation, on the other. When facing new situations, the person has to adjust his life model (Hankiss 1981).
6. There are, of course, exceptions, such as van Dijk 1980 and Chafe 1980.
7. The applying of Propp's method did not and could not, of course, mean mechanical copying of it. As tape-recorded interviews, the data of this study were so different from those of Propp that they had to be treated in a special way suggested by studies in the ethnography of speech (Labov and Waletzky 1973; Labov 1972) before the analysis of narrative structures could be undertaken. The so-called free and restricted clauses which do not describe the development of the plot were separated from the text that was to be analyzed as a narrative. Their content and meaning will be discussed later, under the heading "Identity." But, whatever the adjustments in solving particular problems have been, the basic Proppian principles have indeed been the methodological base of sociological studies dealing with narratives (see Wright 1977; Radway 1984; Alasuutari and Kytömäki 1986).
8. Propp (1975, p. 5) criticized sharply such classifications of folk tales: "The most common division is a division into tales with fantastic content, tales of everyday life, and animal tales. At first glance everything appears to be correct. But involuntarily the question arises, 'Don't tales about animals sometimes contain elements of the fantastic to a very high degree?' And conversely, 'Don't animals actually play a large role in fantastic tales?' Is it possible to consider such an indicator as sufficiently precise?"
9. The stories do include "flashbacks" in the sense that men sometimes return to a phase they already mentioned, but in such a case they make clear the phase in the chronological order of events they are referring to. The narrative analysis, then, deals with the expressed chronological order of events, not the literary form of the presentation.
10. Propp (1975), with a slightly different definition, called the component parts functions, while Dundes (1964) entitled them motifs.

11. Chafe (1977) finds a similar structuring principle in the folk tales of Caddo Indians from his schema-theoretical point of view. They are composed of “scenes,” much like scenes in a play. Interestingly, each scene appears to be organized according to the same schema. At the beginning of each scene there is someone on stage doing something. Then there is the arrival of a visitor, followed by a conversation between the visitor and the person already there. Then the host does something to or for the visitor, and finally the visitor leaves. Now, the same schema “may even constitute the organizing principle for the chunking at a higher level—that is, for the story as a whole rather than for individual scenes within it” (Chafe 1977, p. 223). According to the explanation Chafe gives to this phenomenon, the Caddo, like other American Indian groups, have traditionally spent a great deal of their time visiting. As a familiar pattern of behavior, it has found its way into tales.
12. For a similar interpretation of the Finnish culture, see Falk and Sulkunen (1983). A monograph consisting of ethnographic case studies dealing with these issues has also been published in the Finnish language (Sulkunen et al. 1985). For an article based on one of them, written in the English language, see Alasuutari 1985.
13. Gareth Stedman Jones, for example, talks about the remaking (referring to the first “making” studied by Thompson 1980) of the English working class in 1870–1900 in London. According to him, the shift from work-centered culture to a culture oriented toward the family and the home had to do with the growing separation between home and workplace due to the vast migration of the skilled working class from the city to the suburbs. This happened simultaneously with an increase in both leisure time and earnings. As a consequence, at least the wives of skilled workers stayed at home. The home increasingly became the wife’s sole domain, and the association of mother with home became increasingly axiomatic. The wife also became the decision maker in all household expenditure (Jones 1983, pp. 217–19). In a similar vein, Roy Rosenzweig (1983) describes in his social history of the city of Worcester, Massachusetts, the emergence of the primarily male leisure space, the saloon. The fact that leisure, at the beginning of the twentieth century, more and more turned into a family occasion—picnics in the park, the movies, etc.—has not seemed to change the proper location of traditional drinking that belongs outside the family sphere. The results of the study by Haavio-Mannila and Holmila (1986) could be interpreted to show, in the Finnish case, that the emergent habit of companionate drinking among the spouses explains why new, “light” drinking habits seem to be additional to, rather than substituting for, traditional heavy drinking (Mäkelä 1975, pp. 350–53, and 1978, p. 341).

14. This is why one might trace the social history of “self-discipline” in the Western countries. Its birth seems to have been connected with the breakthrough of the exchange economy, changes which compelled people to behave more and more in an instrumental fashion. Take, for example, Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie’s (1979) study of Montailou, a French village at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Among the peasants, “self-discipline” was not valued or needed. Even though they appreciated living on their own work, they worked only as much as was needed to survive. No surplus products were gathered. In case something more interesting happened, the working could be interrupted for weeks. The peasants’ conception of sin was in accordance with their relation to work. If, say, prostitution or an extramarital relation attracted both parties, it was conceived as innocent. As soon as it became unpleasant, it was understood to become a sin. The later Protestant notion of sin was quite completely the opposite. Especially in Calvinism, everything sensual and emotional was prohibited as sinful; not only sexuality—which was accepted only as far as its function was to multiply—but also all diversions and even an interest in high culture were suspect. Work was conceived as a profane form of sacred devotions (Weber 1958). From this perspective, it is no wonder that drinking to the point of drunkenness was first redefined as evil, sinful, and punishable by Puritan ministers (Ames 1985).
15. For a similar treatment of the phenomenon of addiction, connected to the emergence of self-discipline, see Levine (1978). In a somewhat similar vein, Room (1985b and 1985c) has argued that cultural and structural changes which tend to accompany industrialization and the mobilization of labor increase the demand for sobriety and self-control, and in this way bring about both the idea of addiction and the existential experience of loss of control.
16. In a similar vein, Jones (1983, pp. 217–19) explains the consequences of the wife becoming the decision maker in household expenditure: in many households the husband was only entrusted with pocket money to be spent on fares, beer, tobacco, and a trade union or club subscription.
17. But the data also include other clues. In any oral narrative, there are—in addition to the “narrative clauses” that make up the plot—the so-called “evaluative clauses” in which the storyteller presents his or her personal point of view on the events described in the plot. Even if one tells a story, a legend for example, one usually gives a motive for telling the particular story, and more or less comments on or evaluates the events of the story while telling it. Even the same story may have a different point, function, or morale when told in different situations (Allen 1979; Murase 1975; Siikala 1984). The evaluative clauses reflect one’s identity, the way one makes sense of and organizes his everyday life in the per-

ceived living conditions as expressed in the narrative structure of the story. The evaluative clauses can easily be identified by testing how fixed in the story is the place of a clause. The order of narrative clauses is totally fixed in the sense that changes in their order result in an unintelligible or different kind of plot. The evaluative clauses, instead, are "free" or "restricted" in nature. The place of free clauses can be freely changed, whereas the restricted clauses can be placed in between certain narrative clauses without changing the original plot (Labov and Waletzky 1973; Labov 1972). As outlined above, the personal evaluations of the events told in a story are often embedded in the way the narrative events are told, in the choice of words, emphases, and phrases (Robinson 1981).

18. Particular items or habits, like drinking habits, do not of course only express one's view of life; the elements in a cultural relationship also influence and modify each other (Willis 1978, pp. 201-03). Heavy drinking habits, say, expressing one's view of life, lead a man into conflicts which sooner or later result in changes in his living conditions. They, in turn, make him adjust his way of making sense of the reality.
19. See, for example, Scott and Lyman (1968), who distinguish four modes of excuses and six modes of justifications. The study of people's rationalizations for their behavior is indeed interesting in showing what mode of an account is regarded legitimate in a particular case, culture, or era (Room 1984b). But to explain why some acts require accounting and others don't, and why certain modes of accounts do while others don't, one has to study the collective subjectivity on which accounts are based and from which they derive their sense. From this perspective, the power of culture does not lie in the accounts; they are only clues to the underlying cultural structures and forms of identity.
20. The relations among the meanings of drinking, gender, and manual labor are, in the case of Finnish blue-collar males, discussed in detail by Alasuutari (1986). A similar structure of meanings, concerning the English working-class cultural forms, is presented by Willis (1977) and Corrigan and Willis (1980). According to them, the specific articulation of the distinctions between male/female on the one hand, and mental manual labor on the other, is of focal importance in explaining why the Western class societies can exist in the free form of democracy: should all people really try to get mental work, which is generally valued as superior to manual labor, the blue-collar population would be a real, disappointed, and dissatisfied lower caste. The social order would have to be secured at gunpoint. Actually those socialized into the working-class culture thereby reject mental work; according to Corrigan and Willis, this rejection is the main feature of working-class culture. Among the blue-collar males this reversal of the dominant value

system is achieved by associating manual labor with the social superiority of masculinity, and mental labor with the social inferiority of femininity.

21. Gusfield (1979) describes a similar kind of pride in an ethnographic study dealing with drinking-driving. A norm of "competent" drinking prevailed in the bars that were studied. It was not regarded as incompetent to limit one's drinking, to avoid driving, or to be drunk as long as the drinker could indicate that the determination of the state of incompetence was *his* self-recognition—that it was not forced upon him. From this perspective, paradoxically, the one who did not fall behind in drinking might regard himself as more competent to drive. Falling behind was taken as a sign that one was getting drunk.
22. This meaning of heavy drinking could be clearly seen in a case study I conducted dealing with a group of regular customers in a suburban pub (Sulkunen et al. 1985, ch. 8). These men despised customers who just hastily dropped into the pub and left. Accordingly, a member of the group, leaving before the closing time, felt a need to explain why. Paradoxically, such an organization of the everyday life presupposed the existence of outer controllers or limits. Oftentimes, a man might wonder what was wrong because his wife had not yet come to take him home.
23. In a similar vein to those life stories, such a medical model of alcoholism was reflected in A.A.-influenced movies analyzed by Room (1985a): the motivation for the characters' alcoholism and drinking remained obscure. The present study suggests why the motivation for alcoholism should remain mysterious, either in A.A. or in the everyday life of the men studied. In addition to excluding the guilt and blaming often connected with alcohol problems, it seems to offer a logical solution to the cognitive dissonance outlined above. The A.A. program, based on such a medical model, has proved to be a successful means of recovery. Paradoxically—at least in the case of the alcoholics studied here—the very solution creates a great deal of the problem.
24. The question of reliability has to be posed, in my view, another way around: a "bias" could be shown by presenting a better, more consistent way of organizing the clues into a coherent interpretation. That is, by somehow falsifying the theoretical model presented here.

## References

- Alasuutari, Pertti. "The Male Suburban Pub-Goer and the Meaning Structure of Drinking." *Acta Sociologica* 28 (1985):87-97.
- . *Työmiehen elämäntarina ja alkoholismi. Tutkimus alkoholismin suhteesta emokulttuuriin* [The male worker's life-story and alcoholism: A study on the relation of alcoholism to the parent culture]. Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, University of Tampere, Finland, ser. A, no. 9. 1986.
- Alasuutari, Pertti, and Kytömäki, Juha. "Pahuus on tappava bumerangi. Vanha Kettu -televisiosarjan maailmankuva ja juonirakenne" [Badness is a deadly boomerang: The world view and narrative structure of the television series "Der Alte"]. In *Kymmenen esseetä elämäntavasta* [Ten essays on the way of life], edited by Kalle Heikkinen. Lahti: Oy Yleisradio Ab, 1986, pp. 139-50.
- Alasuutari, Pertti, and Siltari, Jorma. *Miehisen vapauden valtakunta* [The realm of male freedom]. University of Tampere, The Research Institute for Social Sciences, Publications, ser. B 37/1983. 1983.
- Allen, Barbara. "The Personal Point of View in Orally Communicated History." *Western Folklore* 38 (1979):110-18.
- Ames, Genevieve. "American Beliefs About Alcoholism: Historical Perspectives on the Medical-Moral Controversy." In *The American Experience With Alcohol: Contrasting Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Linda A. Bennett and Genevieve M. Ames. New York: Plenum Press, 1985, pp. 23-40.
- Ames, Genevieve M., and Janes, Craig R. "Heavy and Problem Drinking in an American Blue-Collar Population: Implications for Prevention." *Social Science and Medicine*, forthcoming, 1986.
- Beaubrun, Michael H. "The Influence of Socio-cultural Factors on the Treatment of Alcoholism in the West Indies." In *Alcoholism and Drug Dependence: 29th International Congress*, edited by L. G. Kiloh and D. S. Bell. Sydney: Butterworths, 1971, pp. 525-26.
- Beaugrande, Robert. *Text, Discourse and Process: Toward a Multidisciplinary Science of Texts*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1980.
- Bertaux, Daniel, ed. *Biography and Society: The Life-History Approach in Social Sciences*. London and Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1981.
- Bertaux, Daniel, and Kohli, Martin. "The Life Story Approach: A Continental View." *Annual Review of Sociology* 10 (1984):215-37.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

- Brémond, Claude. "Morphology of the French Folktale." *Semiotica* 2 (1970):247-76.
- Bruun, Kettil. "Outcome of Different Types of Treatment of Alcoholics." *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 24 (1963):280-88.
- . "Finland: The Non-Medical Approach." In *Alcoholism and Drug Dependence: 29th International Congress*, edited by L. G. Kiloh and D. S. Bell. Sydney: Butterworths, 1971, pp. 545-59.
- Casswell, Sally, and Gordon, Alistair. "Drinking and Occupational Status in New Zealand Men." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 45 (1984):144-48.
- Chafe, Wallace L. "The Recall and Verbalization of Past Experience." In *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, edited by Roger W. Cole. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977, pp. 215-46.
- , ed. *The Pear Stories: Cognitive, Cultural, and Linguistic Aspects of Narrative Production*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1980.
- Corrigan, Philip, and Willis, Paul. "Cultural Forms and Class Mediations." *Media, Culture and Society* 2 (1980):297-312.
- Denzin, Norman K. *The Alcoholic Self*. Sociological Observations, vol. 18. Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1986a.
- . *The Recovering Alcoholic*. Sociological Observations, vol. 19. Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1986b.
- van Dijk, Teun A. *Macrostructures: An Interdisciplinary Study of Global Discourse, Interaction, and Cognition*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980.
- Dundes, Alan. *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales*. FF Communications no. 195. Helsinki, 1964.
- Faik, Pasi, and Sulkuinen, Pekka. "Drinking on the Screen: An Analysis of a Mythical Male Fantasy in Finnish Films." *Social Science Information* 22 (1983):387-410.
- Gergen, Mary, and Gergen, Kenneth. "The Social Construction of Narrative Accounts." In *Historical Social Psychology*, edited by Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary M. Gergen. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1984, pp. 173-89.
- Gustfield, Joseph R. (Assisted by Joseph Kotarba and Paul Rasmussen.) "The World of Drinking-Driving: A Report to the National Science Foundation Law and Society Program." Part One, "Managing Competence: The Ethnography of Bars in the Drinking-Driving Context." San Diego: Sociology Dept., University of California, 1979.

- Haavio-Mannila, Elina, and Holmila, Marja. "Juomiskumppanuus ja juomisen rajoittaminen perhesuhteiden ilmaisijana" [Drinking companionship and the controlling of drinking as indicators of conjugal relations]. *Sosiologia* 23 (1986):117-26.
- Hankiss, Agnes. "Ontologies of the Self: On the Mythological Rearranging of One's Life-History." In *Biography and Society: The Life-History Approach in Social Sciences*, edited by Daniel Bertaux. London: Sage Publications, 1981, pp. 203-09.
- Immonen, Erkki J.; Murto, Lasse; Pajunen, Sisko; and Österberg, Ingalill, eds. *A-klinikkasäätiö 1955-1980* [The foundation of A-clinics 1955-1980]. Kouvola: Lehtikanta Oy, 1980.
- Jones, Gareth Stedman. *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Klee, Linnea, and Ames, Genevieve. "Reevaluating Risk Factors for Women's Drinking: A Study of Blue Collar Wives." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, forthcoming, 1986.
- Kortteinen, Matti. "Turhapuro-syndrooma" [The Turhapuro syndrome]. *Alkoholipoliitikka* 48 (1983):60-67.
- Labov, William. *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972.
- Labov, William, and Waletzky, Joshua. "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience." In *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, edited by J. Helm. San Francisco: American Ethnological Society, 1973.
- Lender, Mark Edward, and Karnchanapee, Karen R. "'Temperance Tales': Antiquor Fiction and American Attitudes Toward Alcoholics in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 38 (1977):1347-70.
- Le Roy Ladurie, Emanuel. *Montaillou, the Promised Land of Error*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Levine, Harry Gene. "The Discovery of Addiction: Changing Conceptions of Habitual Drunkenness in America." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 39 (1978):143-74.
- Mäkelä, Klaus. "Consumption Level and Cultural Drinking Patterns as Determinants of Alcohol Problems." *Journal of Drug Issues* 5 (1975):344-57.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Alkoholipoliittisen mielipideilmaston vaihtelut Suomessa 1960- ja 1970- luvulla* [Fluctuations in the climate of opinion concerning alcohol control measures in Finland in the 1960s and 1970s]. Reports from the Social Research Institute of Alcohol Studies no. 98. Helsinki, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Level of Consumption and Social Consequences of Drinking." In *Research Advances in Alcohol and Drug Problems*, vol. 4, ed. Yedi Israel et al. New York: Plenum, 1978, pp. 303-48.
- Mandler, Jean Matter. *Stories, Scripts, and Scenes: Aspects of Schema Theory*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1984.
- Maxwell, Milton A. "The Washingtonian Movement." *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 11 (1950):410-51.
- Murase, Anne. "Personality and Lore." *Western Folklore* 34 (1975):171-85.
- Ojesjö, Leif. *An Epidemiological Investigation in a Total Population: The Lundby Study*. Lund: Institute for Social and Juridical Psychiatry, Lund University, 1983.
- Prince, Gerald. *A Grammar of Stories*. Belgium: Mouton, 1973.
- Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1975.
- Radway, Janice A. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Robinson, John A. "Personal Narratives Reconsidered." *Journal of American Folklore* 94 (1981):58-85.
- Room, Robin. "Alcohol and Ethnography: A Case of Problem Deflation?" *Current Anthropology* 25 (1984a):169-91.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "How Good an Excuse is Drunkenness?" Seminar presentation at the Institute of Law, University of Helsinki, May 10, 1984b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous in U.S. Films, 1945-1962: The Party Ends for the 'Wet Generations.'" Paper presented at an International Group for Comparative Alcohol Studies Conference on Cultural Studies on Drinking and Drinking Problems, Helsinki, September 24-28, 1985a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Dependence and Society." *British Journal of Addiction* 80 (1985b):133-39.

- . "Drugs, Consciousness and Society: Can We Learn from Others' Experience?" In *Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco: An International Perspective—Past, Present and Future. Proceedings of the 34th International Congress on Alcohol and Drug Dependence*, vol. 2. Edmonton: Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, 1985c, pp. 174-76.
- Rosenzweig, Roy. *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers & Leisure in an Industrial City 1870-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Rumelhart, David E. "Notes on a Schema of Stories." In *Representation and Understanding: Studies in Cognitive Science*, edited by Daniel G. Bobrov and Allan Collins. New York: Academic Press, 1975, pp. 211-36.
- Schmidt, Wolfgang; Smart, Reginald G.; and Moss, Marcia K. *Social Class and the Treatment of Alcoholism: An Investigation of the Social Class as a Determinant of Diagnoses, Prognosis, and Therapy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968.
- Scott, Marvin B., and Lyman, Stanford M. "Accounts." *American Sociological Review* 33 (1968):46-62.
- Siikala, Anna-Leena. *Tarina ja tulkinta. Tutkimus kansankertojista* [Story and interpretation: A study on folk storytellers]. Mänttä: SKS, 1984.
- Silverman, Joan L. "'I'll Never Touch Another Drop': Images of Alcoholism and Temperance in American Popular Culture, 1874-1919." Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1980.
- Sulkunen, Pekka. *Abstainers in Finland 1946-1976: A Study in Social and Cultural Transition*. Reports from the Social Research Institute of Alcohol Studies no. 133. Helsinki, 1979.
- Sulkunen, Pekka; Alasuutari, Pertti; Nätkin, Ritva; and Kinnunen, Merja. *Lähiöravintola* [The suburban pub]. Keuruu: Otava, 1985.
- Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1980.
- Thompson, Paul. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Bristol: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Thune, Carl E. "Alcoholism and the Archetypal Past: A Phenomenological Perspective on Alcoholics Anonymous." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 38 (1977):75-88.
- Turner, Terence S. "Narrative Structure and Mythopoesis: A Critique and Reformulation of Structuralist Concepts of Myth, Narrative and Poetics." *Arethusa* 10 (1977):103-63.

- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Charles Scribner: New York, 1958.
- Willis, Paul. *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Hampshire: Gower, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Profane Culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
- Wright, Will. *Sixguns & Society: A Structural Study of the Western*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977.