

Play in Finnish students' experiences of alcohol consumption

Marketing

Master's thesis

Joonas Eriksson

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Department of Marketing

Aalto University

School of Business

Author	Joonas Eriksson				
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Abstract

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate reasons for drinking by examining the elements of play in Finnish students' experiences of alcohol consumption. The other objectives include finding out what actions Finnish students perform to enable the play state in drinking and what are the implications for policy makers and marketers. The study belongs to the consumer culture theory (CCT) research.

Methodology

The research is qualitative and interpretative in nature. Eight Finnish students from universities and universities of applied sciences were interviewed and the transcripts of these interviews formed the empirical data of this study. The exploration belonged to the existential-phenomenological research approach and method.

Key findings

The key findings in this study are that alcohol consumption can result in play state which also is the ultimate reason to drink. The state has a positive effect on a person's life before, during and after the event, and it is perceived so compelling that the person is willing to engage various activities before, during and after the actual activity in order to enable play. However, even though drinking positively affects a person's life, there is a great risk of harmful consequences, which makes drinking as play also a disharmonious phenomenon.

Keywords: Alcohol consumption, consumer culture, consumer research, deep play, drinking, existential-phenomenology, flow, play

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Sometimes too much to drink is barely enough.”

– **Mark Twain**

“One tequila, two tequilas, three tequilas, floor” is a text written on one of my favourite shot glasses. I like the glass for the sake of the text not just because it is a funny yet truthful word play but because its message can be used both as a warning and a suggestion. It is, in my opinion, something that summarizes humankind’s attitude towards alcohol and drinking: they are both good and bad at the same time and hardly anyone is indifferent to them (Heath, 1987).

In this world of diseases and contaminated water supplies, alcohol has served as an important daily drink and an irrecoverable source of fluids and nutrition truly earning the title granted to it in the Middle Ages: *aqua vitae*, the “water of life” (Vallee, 1998, p. 80). Even today, alcohol is still used for treating different illnesses, such as the common cold and flesh wounds. It has also been studied to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006). Furthermore, besides taking care of human’s physical well-being, alcohol affects the spiritual welfare as well by offering hope, joy, enjoyment and solidarity in its different forms. For example, during Second World War beer and pubs were not only used to keep people’s minds off the war but to maintain public order and to provide social meeting places. Moreover, beer acted as a vital sustenance for the troops (Glover, 1995).

However, despite all these positive aspects, alcohol consumption also embodies numerous malign consequences to the individual and his or her surroundings in a dose of dependent manner – the higher the alcohol consumption, the bigger the harmful risk. The disadvantages related to alcohol consumption encompass both health risks including approximately 60 different types of diseases, and a broad variety of social nuisances that can be as trivial as disturbing the neighbourhood but also as serious as child abuse, crime, violence and homicide (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006).

Due to pernicious consequences and the fact that high alcohol consumption has been studied to increase their probability, the beloved but controversial alcohol has for long been stigmatized by its downsides in the eyes of public, policy makers and researchers alike. This has led to an increasing focus on trying to delete or at least reduce alcohol-related problems with policies and education campaigns. Recently, especially the alcohol consumption among children, young adults and students has been an eyesore. Nevertheless and despite all the hard effort, the problem still prevails (Shim & Maggs, 2005).

For most of us, it is clear that drinking has both a chance for good effects and a risk for bad ones. However, despite these hazards, we still keep on drinking and more often than not, above the risk limits that have so kindly been defined to us. But why are we ready to take the risk? Because we are utilitarian by nature and assume that we are more likely to get than to lose? Or since we trust to be safe? The question still bothers policy makers and researchers alike and despite numerous studies focusing in both extrinsic and intrinsic reasons, the question still has not been fully answered. My study contributes to this discussion by offering new information about the fascination of alcohol consumption in a form of a research about the elements of play in Finnish students' alcohol consumption experiences and by using the findings to provide policy implications. I chose the play approach since the concept has been used to study both everyday and optimal experiences and it relates to intrinsically motivated activities (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) to which I posit alcohol consumption also to belong.

1.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section includes two parts: research objectives and research questions.

1.1.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study belongs to the consumer culture theory (CCT) where phenomena are examined in different consumption contexts to create constructs and to complement or to alter existing theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Following the guidelines of the CCT, this study

concentrates in examining alcohol consumption in Finland, particularly among Finnish students. The purpose is to provide a narrative account to the alcohol consumption discussion by examining how Finnish students' experiences of alcohol consumption embrace the elements of play, a highly engaging experience capable of delivering intrinsic value leading to high enjoyment and distinction of everyday life. The study uses the concept of flow experience and more particularly a four-channel model of flow as application to further determine the concept of play.

Moreover, since play is a state and therefore includes the possibility of entering, exiting and re-entering, also the actions that Finnish students perform to enable the experience are examined and the findings of the study are used to provide policy implications.

1.1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research question of the study is:

- *How do Finnish students' experiences of alcohol consumption incorporate elements of play?*

The sub-research questions are:

- *What are the actions that Finnish students use to enable the play state?*
- *What are the possible policy implications of alcohol consumption as play?*

1.2. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The study consists of seven major sections: literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, conclusion, references and appendix. The first one, literature review, is divided into two major parts: "Alcohol consumption", and "Play as consumption". The "Alcohol consumption" part begins with a discussion of alcohol as historically and culturally important substance which is succeeded by examination of alcohol as a social issue and alcohol

consumption as a marketing research phenomenon. The second part of the literature review commences with discussion about the concept of play followed by research on its relation to games, its application in consumption, its definition through the concept of flow and its most famous variation: deep play. The literature review is followed by the “Methodology” part with research approach and data collection sections. Thereafter, the empirical data is studied in the “Findings” section and the outcomes are dealt with in the “Discussion” part which also reveals the implications and limitations of this study. The “Conclusion” section summarizes the research after which the study paper ends in “References” and “Appendix” sections.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review reveals existing findings and theories covering two major subjects for this study: alcohol consumption and play as consumption. The phenomena are summarized in this order.

For the sake of this study, alcohol consumption and drinking are used as synonyms.

2.1. ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

This section is divided into three parts: alcohol as an important historical and cultural substance, alcohol consumption as a social issue and alcohol consumption as a marketing phenomenon.

2.1.1. ALCOHOL AS AN IMPORTANT HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SUBSTANCE

“In wine there is wisdom, in beer there is strength, in water there is bacteria.”

– **David Auerbach**

Alcohol is a culturally specific (Dietler, 2006) artefact (Mandelbaum, 1965) that is often emphasized by modesty, intimacy, pleasure, joy or sociality (Kolbe, 2006) and it is by far the most important substance humankind has ever learned to consume to gain special bodily sensations (Mandelbaum, 1965; Heath, 1987). It is surrounded by paradoxes, being often recognized as a stimulant and a depressant, a food and a poison (Heath, 1987), and, its use is charged with a set of cultural rules (Dietler, 2006) and beliefs that include more positively and negatively valued imports and feelings than any other food or drink (Heath, 1987). Furthermore, since alcohol is a material that is created to be destroyed within a human body, and thus a form of what may be called an embodied material culture, it has an exceptional relationship to the consumer to both the inculcation and the symbolization of concepts of identity and difference in the construction of the self (Dietler, 2006).

Alcohol possesses a long and multifaceted history during which it has served many purposes (Vallee, 1998) and been a fundamentally important social, economic, political, and religious artefact (Dietler, 2006). According to Dietler (2006), it has been proven that alcohol was already consumed in the seventh millennium BCE in Neolithic China and in the areas of Middle East and Transcaucasia as early as the sixth millennium BCE. The first evidences of consumption of grape wine in Georgia and both grape wine and barley beer have been found in the area of Iran a few centuries later. By the third millennium BCE, beer and wine had spread in the areas of Mesopotamia, Assyria, Anatolia and Egypt, where beer was consumed by the lower classes as against wine as a more expensive product was a wanted merchandise and mostly enjoyed by the upper classes. Moreover, in Egypt alcohol also gained new characteristics. Firstly, wine was used for religious purposes serving an important role and secondly, both wine and beer had already a complete and documented manufacturing process. Moreover, by the new Kingdom, wine also had a complex labelling system,

In Europe, alcohol was consumed as early as the Neolithic age but beer without hops (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006) and fermented honey may have existed even earlier. However, it is certain that grain beer and mead were consumed in Europe at least in the first millennium BCE while wine came to Europe in Greece in the third millennium BCE where it was served as an elite beverage. From Greece, wine spread to the rest of Europe and eventually replaced beer and other drinks in societies like Romans, Greek and Etruscans. By the second to first century BCE, wine trade had expanded dramatically, so that an estimated 55 – 65 million amphorae of Roman wine were imported into France over a period of a century. Furthermore, whereas the origins of beer and wine are quite clear, the provenance of alcohol distillation is still somewhat uncertain, yet there is evidence that suggests that a distillation of plant essences was developed already in the fourth century. The distilled alcohol was at first produced by apothecaries and monasteries and it was solely used for medical purposes until in the sixteenth century when, due to its rising popularity, the production began to shift to merchants and commercial distillers. By the seventeenth century, consumption of distilled alcohol was already widespread and commonly consumed in everyday life, especially when the production of cheap sugar- and grain-based alcohols began in northern Europe (Dietler, 2006).

This brief introduction illustrated alcohol's broad significance in human history and shed light to the fact that alcohol appears differently in separate cultures (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006). These culture specific disparities are also regarded so important for alcohol research that academics have seen a need to create a definition "alcohol culture" to illustrate the phenomenon. The concept acts as an umbrella term that gathers all conventions and practises related to alcohol drinks within a certain society including such matters as communal background, regulations, ways of using alcohol, advantages and disadvantages, motives of drinking and the influence of factors outside the alcohol culture (Mäkelä et al., 2009). Furthermore, since consumption of alcohol always includes cultural expectations which regulate the emotional consequences of drinking (Mandelbaum, 1965), alcohol culture also defines the suitable level of drunkenness within a society (Martinic and Measham, 2008) and what is actually perceived as alcohol (Strunin, 2011).

Besides culture, alcohol has a close relation with religion (Mandelbaum, 1965), and hence with rituals, in which its role varies from insignificant to the most crucial (Dietler, 2006). As a Tanzanian informant in Willis' study (as cited in Dietler, 2006, p. 4) put it, "If there's no beer, it's not a ritual". In Europe, the relationship between alcohol and religion is visible for example in the ways young people get introduced with alcohol. In the Nordic tradition, children's introduction to alcohol is connected to the Protestant ritual of confirmation and transition to adulthood at the age of 14–15 whereas in Mediterranean countries children taste alcoholic beverages, mainly wine, in a family context while still very young (Beccaria & Sande, 2003). The ritualistic aspect of alcohol consumption can also be seen both in drinking games that have become a common action among young people all around the world (Beccaria & Sande, 2003), and in drinking as a whole satisfying different needs of the drinker. According to Treise et al. (1999) for students the most significant need that ritual order seems to fill is security; they know that they are able go to a particular spot on a particular night and expect a particular experience. The other notable needs are community which, depending on occasion, creates at best intimacy and at least connectedness and social gift of transformation which provides escape and a possibility for excitement and adventure. However, they (1999) also note that the ritualistic aspect of drinking includes dangers in a form of harmful risks, especially in binge drinking. Moreover, the ritual behaviour in drinking was found (Treise et al., 1999) to include four tangible components that determine the activity: ritual artefacts (for example the drink), ritual script (for example the level of common drunkenness), ritual

performance roles (for example the agitator), and audience (for example other people at the party).

The alcohol culture studies are characterized by an urge for classification. According to Room and Mäkelä (2000) already four ideal types of cultural position of alcohol consumption, that is drinking, can be identified: abstinent societies, constrained ritual drinking, banalized drinking and fiesta drunkenness. However, they also claim that such a categorization is not all-encompassing and suggest that a dimensional approach to typology building might be more fruitful. They propose two basic dimensions: regularity of drinking and extent of drunkenness as well as a few further ones that may be added to fit the requirements of the particular study.

Also other studies have preferred to group cultures together. In the earlier mentioned Mediterranean alcohol culture, the main purpose of alcohol consumption has been studied to be a nutrient among others within dining and a part of everyday life (Beccaria & Sande, 2003; Dietler, 2006), and hence an integrated part of another action (Mäkelä et al., 2009). In the Nordic countries instead, alcohol has been found to be used in the centre of social action being even the main reason and purpose of being together, and at special occasions in order to disengage from everyday life (Mäkelä et al., 2009). However, these culture groups and characteristics are not to be seen as static but dynamic. For example, Beccara & Sande (2003) who studied alcohol consumption among young Italians and Norwegians, came to the conclusion that drinking among the two groups is more similar than before and the distance between these two traditionally distinguished drinking cultures, Mediterranean and Nordic, has narrowed.

Furthermore, the alcohol culture categories are not restricted to large areas and groups of people, but numerous notable sub-cultures that vary in their drinking behaviour have been found to exist (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006). For example, Finnish people and the area of Finland is said to belong to the Nordic alcohol culture but to also have its own country-specific culture. The Finnish way of drinking, as it is often called, is characterized by a deep cultural structure resembling a homological way of thinking that is used to connect with nationality (Mäkelä, 1999, p. 129) and as a foundation for a strict alcohol control that has been dominant throughout the history of Finland (Rämö, 2007). Furthermore, Finnish drinking has been marked by salience of alcohol and a strong urge for intoxication. The binge drinking has been especially strong among men but during recent years its popularity has grown among women

as well (Mäkelä, Tigerstedt, & Mustonen, 2010, p. 281-286). Moreover, Finns have been found to drink the most in the evenings and during summer and December. Especially weekends, holidays and celebration days increase consumption in both in the quantity of consumed products and in number of consumers (Mustonen, Metso, & Mäkelä., 2010, p. 56-57). The drinking happens largely in home environment (Mustonen & Österberg, 2010, p. 72) even though drinking as a part of a Finnish eating experience is rare (Mustonen, Mäkelä, Metso, & Simpura, 2001). Many Finns also stress the social role of drinking when they explain their alcohol consumption (Rämö, 2007). In summary, Finnish alcohol culture is par excellence emphasized by impetuosity, aim for intoxication and cohesion spiced with a strong societal concern (Kolbe, 2006).

Although alcohol has been used as the most common daily drink and an indispensable source of fluids and calories for the most of the past 10 millennia (Vallee, 1998), its consumption has also downsides. Drinking alcohol increases the possibility of ending up into an early grave (Marmot, Shipley, Rose, & Thomas, 1981) and it increases the risk of a wide range of social and health hazards (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006). Alcohol culture studies have therefore been heavily characterized by a focus on understanding the elements that cause these problems and finding ways to solve them. This has resulted in a need to single out normal drinking from abnormal and to focus on divergent behaviour – both excessive and exiguous. Especially excessive drinking has attracted attention from researchers, regulators and legislators alike (Szmigin et al., 2008). Such drinking is often related to young adults and numerous studies have produced definitions such as “binge”, “heavy episodic”, “excessive,” “harmful” and “hazardous” drinking (Martinic & Measham, 2008).

Binge drinking, the most popular of them, has many variations in meaning (Szmigin et al., 2008) and the quantitative definitions of binge drinking and its conceptualizations vary across countries (Oei & Morawska, 2004). For example, in Britain binge drinking means consumption of large quantities of alcohol, especially by young people (Pratten, 2007). In the USA, binge drinking has instead been defined as consumption of five or more drinks in one sitting during a two-week period for men and four or more drinks for women (Wechsler, Moeykens, Davenport, Castillo, & Hansen., 1994). Currently, binge drinking is most commonly used to refer to a high alcohol intake in a single drinking session, although there is still some contention as to the amount needed to be consumed. Some researchers have also defined

binge drinking as consuming over half the government's recommended maximum number of units for a week in one session (meaning at least 11 units for men and over 7 for women) while others mean consuming more than five drinks on a single occasion. (Szmigin et al., 2008). Furthermore, binge drinking has been delineated to be culturally specific and to include matters such as intoxication, motivation to get drunk, enjoyment of the process, desirability of its outcomes, and long-term experience with alcohol enabling an individual to control their drinking (Siemieniako, Rund-Thiele, & Kubacki, 2010).

Furthermore, binge drinking has been seen as a major health concern during the past decade and therefore an interesting target for many studies (Siemieniako et al., 2010). Research focusing on binge drinking among young people suggests there are many individual, economic, political and organisational factors that contribute to it (Kubacki, Siemieniako, & Rund-Thiele, 2011) and therefore the research studies have also varied quite a bit. The subjects that have so far been studied include young people's use of alcohol in different countries (Beccaria & Sande, 2003), alcohol consumption among female university students (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011) and reasons for binge drinking (Szmigin et al., 2008) such as an opportunity for good and bad nonmundane experiences (Treise et al., 1999).

The binge drinking studies have also been characterized by a need to classify consumers into labelled groups in order to find group-specific cultures. For example, Shim and Maggs (2005) segmented students into categories according to alcohol consumption rates and found out four types of drinkers: non/seldom drinkers, social drinkers, typical binge drinkers and heavy binge drinkers. Kubacki et al. (2011), on the other hand, used situation in life to determine different alcohol cultures and discovered three distinct types of binge drinking: initiation, indulgence and moderation. The first phase, initiation, was a learning phase before university. It was characterised by various degrees of parental control and supervision, specific to various social groups and mostly driven by curiosity. It was also something that was expected from individuals typically during high school. The second phase, indulgence, often coincided with the first year of university and was characterized by a steep rise in frequency and amount of alcohol consumed. It was studied to be mostly a follow-up of increased consumption opportunities and the resulted binge drinking was most likely to happen at the end of the weeks when pressure to study and attend classes was lower. The third and final phase, moderation, was a conscious choice to avoid frequent binge drinking due to various

reasons leading to consumption of smaller quantities of alcohol. Moreover, alcohol was not always consumed with others but it had become an individual experience as well, frequently focused on individual style and taste.

Besides the conception of binge drinking, the term extreme drinking proposed by Martinic and Measham (2008) has gained popularity. According to them, the concept of extreme drinking acts as an umbrella term for “binge”, “heavy episodic”, “excessive,” “harmful” and “hazardous” drinking and satisfies the need for a new definition of a drinking pattern that has many dimensions. The term is said to rule in the underlying motivations for heavy, excessive, and unrestrained behaviours associated with drinking for many young people. The concept highlights the aspect, that just like any other extreme behaviour, extreme drinking is motivated by an expectation of pleasure and it is not riskless for those who engage in it, people close to the consumer or the society as whole.

2.1.2. ALCOHOL AS A SOCIAL ISSUE

“No animal ever invented anything as bad as drunkenness – or so good as drink.”

– **G. K. Chesterton**

Alcohol consumption, like many other health-related demeanours, is more often a social than a solitary action (Mandelbaum, 1965) rooted in a social processes involving social identities and norms (Livingstone, Young, & Manstead, 2011). Usually, when examining this social aspect, a strong cultural feature of the observed groups’ – a factor such as gender, social class or occupation – has been selected as an explanatory. Hence, the sociality of drinking has usually been viewed as a part of a cultural feature of a certain group (Mäkelä, 1999, p. 76).

The most popular themes in alcohol studies focusing in sociality have been the socializing aspect of drinking (Livingstone et al., 2011), peer pressure and the meaning of the peer group (Borsari & Carey, 2001). Many of these studies have selected students (Treise et al., 1999), and recently especially female students (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011), as their focus groups. The reason for this trend is that the emphasized role of sociality in students’ lives (Siemieniako & Kubacki, 2013) in combination with alcohol’s social aspects (Piacentini & Banisher, 2006) makes the party a rich environment for research (Darian, 1993). As a demonstration, drinking

alcohol has become a common social activity on college campuses around the world during the past half century (Shim & Maggs, 2005) and significant variations in student alcohol consumption have been noted by gender across countries. So far, most research on the topic has been carried out in Australia, the UK and the USA. (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011).

2.1.2.1. Socializing by drinking

“Come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness.”

– *William Shakespeare, The Merry Wives of Windsor*

The importance of alcohol in peoples’ and especially students’ social worlds is clear (Piacentini & Banisher, 2006). An increasing amount of research has recognized that alcohol consumption unites people emotionally and strengthens relationships among them (Treise et al., 1999). It fills the need for intimacy at best and connectedness at the very least (Treise et al., 1999). The role of alcohol consumption in a social event varies from being an integrated part of action to the main connecting activity. Drinking and getting drunk is a way to go with the group and to not miss out on fun or the next-day discussion. The decision to get drunk is usually communal, a component of the script for a night out with friends (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011), and the action itself is guided by the group dynamic which normalizes what are undesirable social actions (Thurnell-Read, 2011).

Both Siemieniako and Kubacki (2013), and MacNeela and Bredin (2011) have found out that the effects of alcohol are also viewed in terms of consuming with other people. Consuming alcohol was seen as a good way to facilitate integration of people from different cultures and sub-cultures and of different ages, making such references as “social lubricant” and “a great ice breaker” common for alcohol itself (Piacentini & Banisher, 2006, p. 148). Alcohol’s role as a facilitator in social interaction has also been identified as a reason to drink in Finland (Huhtanen & Raitasalo, 2010, p. 244).

The social aspect in drinking is especially strong among heavy drinkers who place a greater meaning for alcohol’s role as a facilitator in social interaction than other drinkers. Furthermore, heavy users believe that drinking enhances their social image and promotes acceptance among their friends (Shim & Maggs, 2005). Heavy drinkers were also found to

interact with social network of heavy drinkers, to receive more encouragement to drink from important people in their lives and to participate in more heavy drinking activities than light drinkers (Orford, Krishnan, Balaam, Everitt, & Van Der Graaf, 2004).

Another proven motive for social alcohol consumption is the desire to impress fellow students. Among female students, the motivation is additionally emphasized by a desire to be liked by men leading women to drink more as they adopt the drinking behaviour and attitudes of their male friends (Siemieniako & Kubacki, 2013). Furthermore, also social rewards and avoiding social rejection have been named as reasons for young people's alcohol consumption (Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Egels, 2005). Even a term "conspicuous consumption" was created to mean drinking that is practised to acquire a certain social status within a group of students (Siemieniako & Kubacki, 2013).

The sociality in alcohol consumption has been largely seen to increase consumption even though it also has a decreasing effect. The study of MacNeela and Bredin (2011) on female students' drinking in UK illustrates that groups regulate drinking not only upward by facilitating drinking but also downward it through shared internalized values and explicit peer pressure. The respondents of the research told that they wanted to avoid the shame and stigma that resulted from exceeding the group norm and therefore did not want drink too much. Moreover, in a study on alcohol consumption in Finland respondents said that they stop drinking at the same time as others do and drink only as much the others (Huhtanen & Raitasalo, 2010, p 245). Many people also classify their own drinking in comparison to how much other people drink (Piacentini & Banisher, 2006), which is quite alarming since many people do not have realistic information on how much their peers drink in general. Therefore they tend to overestimate the amount and frequency of normal drinking. This leads to a situation where people often classify themselves as lighter drinkers than they actually are (Shim & Maggs, 2005).

The increasing or decreasing role of company on alcohol consumption depends on the group norms (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011), identification and individual attitudes (Livingstone et al., 2011). In a study of interaction between group norms, identification and individual attitudes on heavy alcohol consumption as the defining group identity; the authors found out that participants with a positive attitude to heavy drinking who identified strongly with the group,

reported stronger intentions to drink heavily when the group had a moderate, rather than a heavy drinking norm, indicating resistance to the normative information (Livingstone et al., 2011).

2.1.2.2. Peer pressure

“An intelligent man is sometimes forced to be drunk to spend time with his fools.”

– Ernest Hemingway

The importance of the cohort has been evident in all age groups but especially with children to whom peers have been studied to be the strongest influencer group (Elliot & Leonard, 2004), and with young adults who are peer-conforming in making certain kinds of choices and parent-conforming in making other kinds of choices (Brittain, 1963). Although the term “peer pressure” receives a great deal of attention, precise definitions of it are rare (Borsari & Carey, 2001).

Drinking occurs usually among peers and seldom with elders or in the family circle, which suggests sociality’s important role in drinking (Mandelbaum, 1965). Thus, for many people, one of the reasons or even the main reason for drinking is to be a part of a certain social group, and they emphasize the influence of their peer group on their behaviour instead of the effects of the alcohol. In some cases, the action goes beyond peer influence into peer pressure (Pavis, Cunningham-Burley, & Amos, 1997). Drinking, especially in university context, has a great potential to include such social pressure since drinking is often related to social activities (Livingstone et al., 2011). Furthermore, studentship includes both a pronounced shift in influence from parents to peers and an abundant amount of alcohol-based social opportunities, which both contribute to the potential of peer influence on individual’s attitudes and behaviour (Borsari & Carey, 2001). Treise et al. (1999) illustrate the result of these student conditions by stating that many of their study subjects thought that unspoken social pressures influenced their drinking even though none of them felt that their peers would berate them for not drinking. Instead, they did not want to stand out, look different or to miss out in general. Hence, the importance of the drinking rite for young people is clear:

“the procedures of the rite, its regularity and often also its solemnity, sensitize the individual into adopting the values and norms of the group” (Beccaria & Sande, 2003, p. 100).

According to Borsari and Carey (2001) both theory and empirical findings propose that peer pressure is not just a one dimensional factor, but it consists of a combination of three distinct influences: overt offers of alcohol, modelling, and social norms. Overt offers can range from polite gestures to intense demands to drink. Modelling occurs when the behaviour corresponds to another group member’s simultaneous drinking behaviour while perceived social norms define what kind of drinking is considered as common and acceptable (Borsari & Carey, 2001). Due to this segmentation, peer pressure can be viewed not only as direct but indirect as well. As an example, in some cases people decide to drink since they want to be with the group and not to miss out or be isolated from the post-experience of the event (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011).

Peer pressure especially has been consistently implicated in heavy-drinking of college students (Borsari & Carey, 2001), who have been found to interact with a social network of heavy drinkers, receive more encouragement to drink from important people in their lives and to participate in more heavy drinking activities than light drinkers (Orford et al., 2004). On the other hand, Livingstone et al. (2011) found out that among those with a positive attitude to heavy drinking, social pressure was applied differently to a drinking and a non-drinking target depending on the participants’ level of group identification and the group norm. The high identifiers socially excluded a non-drinker more than a drinker, but only when the norm information challenged the group stereotype. In contrast, low identifiers socially excluded a non-drinker more than a drinker, but only when the norm was one of heavy alcohol consumption.

2.1.3. ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AS A MARKETING RESEARCH PHENOMENON

"I feel sorry for people who don't drink. When they wake up in the morning, that's as good as they're going to feel all day. "

– Frank Sinatra

At first, alcohol study was mainly carried out in the disciplines of biology, medicine, public health, and social psychology (Dietler, 2006). The first anthropological alcohol studies were about ethnographic descriptions of drinking patterns among different world populations adding words "social" and "cultural" to academic discussion about alcohol (Heath, 1987, p. 101). The interest was in cultural differences but quite fast the focus changed into observing alcohol as a dangerous substance that is related to alcoholism and addiction (Dietler, 2006). However, by the 1980's alcoholism-and-addiction research was challenged with a research with focus on normal drinking and on alcohol as an integrated social artefact and culturally valued good. Since then anthropological alcohol studies have diversified (Dietler, 2006).

Alcohol consumption is in many studies viewed as harmful and especially binge drinking has been linked to a higher health risk (Wechsler et al., 1994). Therefore the research has also focused on social marketing: understanding the phenomenon of drinking and finding effective preventive messages, channels and methods (Barlow and Wogalter, 1993). Social marketing research in this area is largely concerned with the most urgent social needs, such as public health, social problems and injuries (Siemieniako & Kubacki, 2013).

During recent years, binge drinking in universities has risen as a popular study subject. It has been classified as a major problem (Wechsler et al., 1994) and there has been a lot of research aiming to find effective ways to communicate preventive marketing messages (Wolburg, 2013). However, despite numerous campaigns against binge drinking, the problem still remains unsolved and continues to be one of the most challenging problems facing college campuses (Wolburg, 2013; Shim & Maggs, 2005).

Research on the subject has included themes such as the risks of alcohol consumption (Wolburg, 2013), effectiveness of alcohol control laws (Ornstein and Hanssens, 1985), segmentation according to consumption rates (Shim & Maggs, 2005), personal values and susceptibility to interpersonal influence among beer drinkers (Kropp, Lavack, & Holden, 1999), effectiveness of different social marketing programs (Cismaru, Lavack, & Markewich, 2008) and influencing the decision to reduce alcohol consumption (Darian, 1993).

2.2. PLAY AS CONSUMPTION

“Life is like a game of cards. The hand you are dealt is determinism; the way you play it is free will.”

– **Jawaharlal Nehru**

Play is a universal cultural category (Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971) but a difficult construct to define. It seems to belong to those concepts that are clear as day at the tacit level but extremely difficult to express in concrete terms (Rieber, 1996). The challenge with play is that the word can be and is used in so many ways (Grayson, 1999), i.e. one can play football, play a role in a theatre piece or play with toys. The concept of play has interested a wide range of academics: anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, literary theorists, performance theorists, and even neuropsychologists (Grayson, 1999). However, despite all the attention and efforts, the nature of play is still far from being understood (Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971).

A common way to think about play is to picture it as an action characterized by its lack of productivity and therefore many define it as a counterpart for work (Rieber, 1996) which was also the offset for the concept of describing play as nonwork in early anthropological studies (Malaby, 2009). Nevertheless, the opposite of work is not play but leisure and work has actually potential to be defined as play if the work is so satisfying that getting paid to do it becomes a secondary motivation (Rieber, 1996). As a matter of fact, almost every human action can be play (Huizinga, 1955). However, there is no particular activity that is always play and neither there is an activity that under some condition could not be play (Grayson, 1999). Moreover, Philips Stevens went even so far in his essay “Play and Work: A False Dichotomy?” that he claimed that if by play is meant to illustrate a mode of human experience, the concept cannot be used as a label for a form of distinct human activity (Malaby, 2009).

Play is often associated with fun, pleasure, positive feelings (Malaby, 2009), teamwork and cooperation, but it has also an equally strong association with trouble-making, mischief, and deception (Grayson, 1999). Moreover, play has been described as an activity with nothing at stake (Ortner, 1999) but that is not always the case. Gambling, for example, is usually a play that involves stakes and can often be extremely compelling without being fun, cooperative and enjoyable. Another aspect attached to play is its open-endedness: no matter how routinized, play is never the same and therefore anyone who engages in it knows that

improvising will be a part of the action. Furthermore, play can be seen as an arrangement where the person is made an agent within social processes. The person can affect the events but the influence is only limited leading to unintended consequences of action. The idea is in line with Oliver Wendell Holmes' "bettabilirism" which states that every time we act, we effectively make a bet with the universe that may or may not pay off (Malaby, 2009). Play is also always enacted in relation to the current situation, involving the option to follow or to deviate from the role expectations of the situation, or combination of both. However, noteworthy is that in order for the situation to be play it needs to qualify the requirements of being a play (Grayson, 1999) which according to general definition are: the activity is usually voluntary, it is intrinsically motivating, it involves some level of active engagement and it is distinct from other behaviour (Rieber, 1996)

The concept of play is often related to the concept of games which, just like play, still lacks a sound classification even though there have been suggestion that it could be done, for example, according to the kind of stimuli that the game selects out of the environment or the kind of projects that are relevant to it (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennet, 1971). The concept of games is important in play discussion since games are described to be a pre-backed sets of possibilities by cultures that allow individuals experience play. They are characterized by a set of relatively few and clear rules stating what should be done and what not and therefore making it possible for participating individuals to abandon themselves to competition and to forget the needs of their individual selves in course of the games (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennet, 1971). Due to the rules, a person can also be described to perform either well or poor which is why games also act as an arena to demonstrate one's capabilities (Malaby, 2009). Furthermore, the second important aspect with games and play is that just like religious experience can be separated from rituals as cultural form, a playful experience is separate from games. Hence, playful experience is not irrelevant to games as religious experience is not to rituals but notable is that play is not always present in games. In addition, both rituals and games have been deployed as cultural forms by individuals and institutors (Malaby, 2009).

The concept of play has also attracted attention in marketing literature where it has appeared as an instrument in relationship building, a dimension of experimental value and as an action of consumption (Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004). The research of play in marketing literature is characterized by Holbrook et al. (1984) who defined play as intrinsically motivated consumer

behaviour that is done for its own sake, such as games, sports, hobbies, leisure activities, aesthetic appreciation and creativity. They also found fun, enjoyment, satisfaction and other affective, internal and hedonic elements to be “the essence of play and other leisure activities” (Holbrook et al. 1984, p. 729). Thereafter Holbrook (1994) applied Huizinga’s (1955) observation of play into marketing perspective to create the idea that almost every product or service can be consumed and sold as play. According to him (1994) products and services can have playful value that is active, intrinsically motivating and self-oriented. Utilizing Holbrook’s work, Holt’s (1995) typology of consumption produced a concept of “consumption as play” in addition to the concepts of “consuming as experience”, “consuming as integration” and “consuming as classification”. With the concept of “consumption as play”, Holt (1995, p 9.) described a form of autotelic interconsumer interaction in which a “consumption object is essential” to the communing and socializing activities of spectators in a baseball game. Furthermore, Grayson (1999) contributed the discussion of play with an observation about the existence of general types of playful consumer values: a one in which the expected rules by the marketer are followed by the consumer and one in which consumers break the rules.

Furthermore, the meaning of inner consequences in play has evoked many conceptualizations such as immediate experience, leisure experience, sporting experience (Holbrook et al., 1984) and “flow experience” that has been used to describe a stand-alone state but also as an exploratory model of play (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

The origins of flow experience lie in Csikszentmihalyi’s study of creative process in the 1960’s. During his studies he came across a peculiar phenomenon among painting artists: when the work of a painting was going well, despite discomfort, hunger and fatigue, the artist did not want to stop working on the painting. However, after the painting was finished, the artist surprisingly lost interest in it. Flow approach was born from this study trying to understand this clearly intrinsically motivated and autotelic activity (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). A self-contained activity, that is not done with an expectation of some future benefit but because the doing itself is the reward (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Since then, the concept of flow has been used in studies of everyday experiences and optimal experiences, for example, leisure, play, sport, art and intrinsic motivation (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) as well as shopping, rock climbing, dancing and gaming

(Csikszentmihalyi & Bennet, 1971). Moreover, the concept became popular outside the academic world in the spheres of popular culture, business, politics, professional sport and education (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) whereas recent research has focused increasingly on investigating the flow experience in the context of media consumption and information technologies in general and computer use in particular (Weibel, Wissmath, Habegger, Steiner, & Groner, 2008). All in all, notable is that flow experience is found to be the same across different lines of culture, class, gender, age and activities (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). It has also been studied to be present in both working and leisure activities strongly affecting the quality of experience (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989).

The flow perspective on play has said to disallow many experiences to be categorized as play that might draw interested to be called as play. However since the conceptualization has similarities with ideas of the most famous of play theorists, John Huizinga, and it has acknowledged as an important contribution (Malaby, 2009), it is worth further investigation.

According to Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet (1971) flow is a mental state of operation in which person is absorbed in what he or she is doing, acting with a total involvement (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989) and full capacity (Deci, 1975). It is created when a person participates in an activity for its own sake and therefore the core of the experience is in its autotelic state (Weibel et al., 2008). The state is "so enjoyable that... doing the thing is the thing" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 37) and therefore the person is intrinsically motivated to continue repeating the action (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennet, 1971).

Furthermore, studies have suggested that phenomenology of enjoyment has eight major components: intense involvement, clarity of goals and feedback, concentrating and focusing, lack of self-consciousness, distorted sense of time, balance between the challenge and the skills required to meet it and the feeling of full control over the activity. A combination of all of the components cause a sense of deep enjoyment that is so rewarding people feel that expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile simply to be able to feel it, that is a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Everyone experiences flow from time to time and will recognize its characteristics. A person in flow state usually feels to be alert, strong, unselfconscious, at the peak of his or her abilities

and in effortless control. Additionally, the sense of time and emotional problems disappear, and there is an exhilarating feeling of transcendence regardless of the task being performed (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

However, if the person's ability and the requirements of environment are in imbalance, the experience and its value degenerates (Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004). This balance is inherently fragile. If challenges exceed skills, the person becomes first vigilant and later anxious if the situation does not improve. If the person's skills exceed challenges, he first feels relaxed but if the situation does not change, the person becomes bored. These shifts between states provide feedback about alternating the relationship to the environment. Experiencing anxiety or boredom presses a person to adjust his or her level of skill and/ or challenge in order to escape the aversive state and re-enter flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

The concept of flow experience is extended by a four-channel flow model which identifies four states of mind: flow, boredom, apathy, and anxiety. Each of them is associated with different levels of skill and challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975):

- Flow context: Challenge and skill are balanced and elevated above some critical threshold.
- Boredom context: Skill exceeds the level of challenge for a task.
- Apathy context: Skill and challenge fall below a critical threshold.
- Anxiety context: Challenge exceeds the skill level for a task

The process and factors involved in entering flow experience and exiting it are illustrated in model of experience, consciousness and the self which was developed in conjunction with flow concept (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). In brief, according Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) attention plays a key role in entering and staying in flow state since it limits the overwhelming amount of information around us to a degree that is eventually processed by our consciousness. In other words, entering flow depends largely on how person's attention has been focused in the past and in present. Thus, staying in flow requires that attention remains in this limited stimulus field. Furthermore, just like flow state, apathy boredom and anxiety states, are largely operations of how attention is being structured at the

given time. The difference is that the states permit attention to drift (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Moreover, since flow state is so enjoyable that doing the thing is the thing, the person is intrinsically motivated to continue repeating the action. Therefore he or she seeks to replicate successful past experiences, which introduces a selective mechanism into psychological functioning that fosters growth. This means that as people master the challenges of the activity, their skills improve leading to situation where the involvement of the activity decreases. Therefore, in order to continue experiencing flow, he or she must identify and engage progressively more complex challenges. Furthermore, since flow state is an intrinsically motivated phenomenon, the source for new goals within the flow experience, is the person itself (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Lastly, like mentioned earlier, flow experience is also used as an application for play. According to it, play is a state of experience in which actor's abilities meet the requirements of environment and the contingency level balances. Failure in finding the balance leads to a state of too much or too little contingency (Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971). Play is also described as "an action generating action: a unified experience flowing from one moment to the next in contradistinction to our otherwise disjoint "every-day" experiences" (Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971, p. 45).

In addition to the interest towards the elements of play, the concept has also been applied to represent the characteristics of society (Malaby, 2009). For example, in India the changes in alcohol culture have been studied to reflect the major changes in social structure (Mandelbaum, 1965), playing mahjong by expatriate Hakka Chinese in Calcutta to symbolize their practical commitment to the uncertainties of the market itself (Oxfeld, 2009) and playing mahjong in Taiwan to represent the position of young Taiwanese men in a nation-state characterized by martiality (Festa, 2007). Furthermore, the characteristics of society have been studied in Clifford Geertz's (1972) famous study of Balinese cockfights which also provided a notable contribution to play research by introducing his version of the concept of "deep play" separating a form of playful action from the general discussion.

The term "deep play" that Geertz (1972) used in his study originates to Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian point of view that sometimes people engage in irrational behavior even though it

does not make any sense. This “irrationality” Bentham illustrates by telling about a person with a fortune of a thousand pounds but who wagers five hundred of it on an even bet forcing himself into position where the marginal utility of the pound he stands to win is clearly less than the marginal disutility of the one he stands to lose. Geertz (1972) continues Bentham’s definition for deep play by stating that in deep play, both parties are engaged in a seemingly irrational action. They are both in over their heads. Having come together in search of pleasure they have entered into a relationship which will bring the participants, considered collectively, net pain rather than net pleasure. Moreover, the Balinese men engaging with cockfights always attempt to create an interesting or “deep” game by making the centre bet as large and cocks as equal as possible, and thus, making the outcome of the game as unpredictable as possible (Geertz, 1972).

Bentham’s conclusion of the concept is that people who engage in deep play differ from ordinary people by fundamentally lacking in rationality and should therefore be protected from themselves and deep play as immoral action should be prevented legally, whereas Geertz moves his focus well beyond this. Instead of crabbng to the ethicality, he focuses on the phenomenon that even though there are highly irrational stakes involved in Balinese cockfight - such as illegality and danger of the action, good changes for losing the cock and the money, no permanent change in status – people continue participating in them (Goodall, 2004).

In his article, Geertz (1972) continues by pointing out money is less a measure of utility, had or expected, than it is a symbol of moral import, perceived or imposed. He continues by stating that in shallow games with smaller amounts of money involved, money is merely a measure of utility and loosing or gaining it is reason for happiness and unhappiness. In deep games, there is much more in stake than material gain or pain: status. Geertz suggests that in both cases money does matter but in deep games the more a man risks it, the more other things are risked. For example, men lay their public selves on the line through the medium of their cock (Niehaus & Stadler, 2004). Furthermore, in Geertz’s view point, games become static appraisals of an unchanging social order (Malaby 2009), stories people tell themselves about themselves (Niehaus & Stadler, 2004). Therefore an element that is vital for any understanding of the experience of play is lost. That element is the indeterminacy of games

and the way in which, by being indeterminate in their outcomes, they encapsulate the open-endedness of everyday life (Malaby, 2009).

Geertz's (1972) application of "deep play" and the study about the Balinese cockfights has gain acknowledgement and generated a few deep play studies, such as deep play in muchongolo dance contests in the South African Lowveld (Niehaus & Stadler, 2004), deep play in poker rallies by Ferrari owners and enthusiastic on Long Island (Goodall 2004), deep play in the Grand Marais Mardi Gras (Ancelet, 2001), deep play in PeeWee ice hockey (Ingham & Dewar, 1999) and deep play in black male identity rituals in urban ghetto communities (Lefever, 1988). However, Geertz' study has also been under critic. First, Geertz has been said to been unable to show how to access and interpret unspoken Balinese values and some of his interpretations are clearly his instead of Balinese themselves Second, the appropriateness of Geertz textual metaphor has been questioned since it is problematic to compress all sorts of data into one single one such as a text (Kuper 1999). Third, it has been claimed that Geertz provides a thick description of the actual cockfight itself but his analysis of the context still remains thin (Niehaus & Stadler, 2004).

2.3. CONCLUSION

"For art to exist, for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception to exist, a certain physiological precondition is indispensable: intoxication."

– **Friedrich Nietzsche**

Alcohol, the water of life (Vallee, 1998) and bringer of death (Marmot et al., 1981), may not be as old as human but it has been a part of our lives long enough. It is by far the most important substance we have ever learned to consume to experience special bodily sensations (Mandelbaum, 1965). Alcohol's significance for humankind is indisputable. Due to its multifaceted part in human life it has been an interesting and diverse subject for research.

So far the major points of interest have been the cultural applications of alcohol (Dietler, 2006) and its role in society and social actions (Livingstone et al., 2011). Additionally, alcohol research has been dominated by a categorization of alcohol as a harmful substance (Wechsler

et al., 1994) directing research to focus on separating normal and abnormal drinking from each other (Szmigin et al., 2008) and defining different types of alcohol consumptions, their features and reasons. During recent years the alcohol research has focused on drinking above the defined standard levels, in other words binge drinking (Wechsler et al., 1994). A particularly popular target group has been college students (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011) and as a study subject their drinking habits. These tendencies have also greatly affected alcohol-related marketing research leading it to focus on trying to find the right alcohol policies and marketing methods to affect the kind of drinking that has been labelled as harmful, especially among college students. However, despite all the efforts, the problem still remains unsolved (Wolburg, 2013; Shim & Maggs, 2005).

As literature review illustrates, the current research has focused on classifying consumers by their drinking habits and aims to find themes and messages to affect the categorized groups whose drinking has been profiled harmful. So far, it has been revealed that the consumer's social network, the company and culture in which one drinks. It has also been examined that consumers drink on certain occasions and on certain times of week, year and day more than in others. Additionally, alcohol has been studied to be used to achieve certain goals, such as entering adulthood, integrating with other people, being part of something, being socially accepted, having fun and feeling bodily effects of the substance. However, the meaning of alcohol consumption occasion itself as a reason for drinking has remained neglected even though it could broaden the understanding of drinking and offer useful information for policy-making and social marketing.

This study fills the mentioned research gap by focusing on the meaningfulness of the drinking occasion itself by investigating the alcohol consumption experience of Finnish consumers through the elements of play. The reason to approach alcohol consumption from perspective of play is the similarities between play and alcohol consumption found in earlier studies.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section provides the research approach as well as the data collection methods. Also data analysis method and the individuals interviewed are illustrated.

3.1. RESEARCH APPROACH

The study is qualitative in nature and the purpose of it is to examine concrete human existence including the experience of free choice and action in concrete situations. Since I examine the phenomenon within a certain context I have chosen interpretive approach from the two predominant approaches to gain knowledge in the social sciences (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

In the interpretive approach, nature is socially constructed and holistic. There are multiple realities and the reality is seen as contextual. People are seen as proactive actors that interact to shape their environment. I possess the same background characteristics as the interest group of this study and therefore I am somewhat familiar with the chosen subject and the phenomenon. Due to this, I believe to have the experience and well-justified opinions on the studied matter which cannot and should not be excluded from the study – vice versa. The interpretivists also consider that each researcher comes into the research environment with some knowledge or pre-understanding. Since the goal of this study is to understand a phenomenon rather than to predict it and its certain aspects, an interpretive approach is well justified (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

The interpretive approach includes various descriptively-oriented research approaches focusing on description and understanding whose value has been recognized within the consumer-research field (Belk, Sherry, & Wallendorf, 1988; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Thompson et al., 1989). The most common approaches have been ethnographic (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Hirschman 1986), semiotic (Mick, 1986), and structuralist (Levy, 1981) approach. Since my intention is to picture human phenomena and not to generalize the findings (Hycner, 1985) but to understand a complex issue, I have chosen phenomenological

approach which popularity has grown steadily over the years alongside with increasing interest in studying marketplace phenomena from new cultural perspectives. Furthermore, the approach has so far been used in both organizational and consumer research in order to develop an understanding of complex issues that may not be immediately implicit in surface responses (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

In the field of marketing, phenomenology, its principles and applications to various research situations is greatly characterized by the work of Craig Thompson (Thompson, 1997; Thompson et al., 1989) and it has been described to be a beneficial approach when interpreting and theorizing based on lived experiences (Goulding, 2005). Furthermore, a popular approach within phenomenology is existential phenomenology, a paradigm that blends the philosophy of existentialism with the methods of phenomenology (Colaizzi, 1978). According to it, the world of lived experience does not always correspond with the world of objective description because objectivity often implies trying to explain an event as separate from its contextual setting (Thompson et al., 1989). Therefore human beings are viewed in non-dualistic terms and a first-person description of experience is sought to attain (Giorgi, 1983). In addition, existential-phenomenology describes human experience as both unreflected and reflected (Thompson et al., 1989).

During the interview, the respondent realizes she is happier with products bought on impulse than those purchased for practical reasons (her term). Prior to the interview, the respondent had not seen the experiential pattern of liking impulse purchases more than planned ones. The respondent's reflecting on a specific lived event allowed this pattern to emerge in the interview. (Thompson et al., 1989)

Existential-phenomenological researchers claim a person's life-world is a socially contextualized totality in which experiences interrelate coherently and meaningfully (Thompson et al. 1989; Colaizzi, 1978). They seek to describe experience as it emerges in some context(s) or, to use phenomenological terms, as it is "lived" (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006; Thompson et al., 1989). One major reason for this is that the context and the current situation define how people see, feel and observe their reality. For example, the experience of time changes as the person matures from childhood to adulthood or moves from a boring task to an interesting one (Dapkus, 1985).

Since the lived experience may not always honor standard conceptual boundaries, it must be understood relative to the specific life-world from which it emerges (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1990). In other words, existential-phenomenologists study “the totality of human-being-in-the-world” (Thompson et al., 1989, p. 135).

3.2. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The chosen approach for this study is existential-phenomenology and the data collection method is empirical in nature (Thompson et al., 1989), more precisely existential-phenomenological interviews (Kvale, 1983; McCracken, 1986; Thompson et al., 1989) with the presumption that the observer cannot separate himself from the world. The reason for using interviews is that they are one of the most powerful means for attaining an in-depth understanding of another person's experiences (Kvale, 1983). Furthermore, phenomenological interviewing is chosen because it is also said to be suit well for research with discovery-oriented goals (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Thompson et al., 1989).

The goal for the interviews is to provide a context in which respondents freely describe their alcohol consumption related experiences in detail and through that gain first-person descriptions on the matter. The purpose is to learn how play appears in the informants' alcohol consumption experiences.

The interviews were conducted in 8 single person long in-depth interviews and even though I included myself and my experience in to the examined world, I positioned myself to an equal position with the respondent (Kvale, 1983) seeking to provide a setting conducive to entry into a descriptively focused, nonjudgmental dialogue (Colaizzi, 1978; Kvale, 1983). The structure for the interviews was semi-structured including both predetermined and open-ended questions and topics. The questions are attached in “Appendix” section.

The informants for the interview were purposely selected among 24 to 27 year-old Finnish students to maximize chances of uncovering insights on this important consumer phenomenon (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). The place for the interview varied

depending on the preferences of the respondent in order to offer them a comfortable and natural environment of their choice and to create a natural and relax atmosphere for the dialogue. Since the place was dependant of the informants' choice it varied some. Four interviews were conducted at home and four in different bars.

Before beginning the interview with each of the informant, I explained the area for the study and attained the informant's consent for audiotaping the interview and using the material. I also briefly explained the purpose of this study and promised to protect the respondent's confidentiality. After the interviews I contacted the respondents via private message to clarify some answers and to gather more information from topics risen during the examination of the data. The eight interviews resulted about 400 minutes of recording which were then transcribed in verbatim. These 139 pages of transcriptions were then put into close examination.

3.2.1. INTERVIEWEES

The data consisted of in-depth interviews with eight 24 to 27 year-old Finnish students, six males and two females. During the time of interview all of them were studying either in university or in university of applied sciences. They were all my friends and based on previous knowledge about their alcohol consumption habits and experiences, they were chosen as subject of the study in order to gain as versatile data as possible.

Here is a brief introduction on the interviewees. Names of the respondents have been changed in order to protect their privacy.

Miika is a 25 year-old male student studying sociology. He is working full time a part of the year and studies the rest and he is about to graduate within a year. Miika spends his free time hanging out with friends and doing sports, which is a quite big part of his life at the moment. During weekdays he exercises a lot but during weekends he often meets his friends by a drink. Drinking is not the main thing for Miika but a natural part of socialization. He says that he usually drinks together with his friends in different social events but he might also have a glass of whisky or a beer or two alone at home after work to relax and to enjoy while listening to good music. As drinker, he describes himself as systematic: most of the times he knows

when he is going to drink well in advance. He also knows when to stop drinking and fancies keeping the drinking in control. Miika also adds that while drunk he becomes more social but other than that, his personality does not change.

Kari is a 26 year-old unemployed male mechanical engineer student, who has not advanced in his studies at all. He spends his spare time at his computer or drinking with friends. Occasionally he attends sport or other leisure activities when his friends ask. For Kari, drinking is a social activity and he describes himself to be as social and calm drinker who does not usually lose control. Kari also sees that while drunk he is a bit more social than normally but other than that his personality does not change.

Werner, on the other hand, is a 25 years-old male business student studying procurement full time. He has work experience mainly in IT and procurement departments. During his spare time Werner plays computer and video games, listens to music, goes to gym and hangs around with his friends. For him, drinking is most of all a social activity done with friends in different kind of events. Werner says that sometimes he drinks more and sometimes less, depending on the current occasion. He also says to know in advance when he is going to drink.

Ville is a 25-year-old male student in the field of communication technology. At the moment, he is working and finishing off his studies. Ville spends his spare time coaching young swimmers, watching movies, doing sports and hanging out with his girlfriend and friends. For him, drinking means having fun and being with his friends. He says to have changed much as a drinker: before he drank more and could not control his actions but nowadays his drinking has become more controlled.

Ismo is a 25 year-old male studying business administration and he is about to graduate soon. He also works part-time. Ismo's spare time goes at his computer, doing sport and being with his friends. He usually drinks to get drunk but the level of drunkenness depends on the company and the event. Ismo says that his drinking habits have changed: before he drank a lot with a certain groups of friends but nowadays not so much. He says he drinks according to the current occasion and really tries not to get too drunk.

Katri is a 27 year-old female student just about to graduate with finance as her major. She spends her spare time doing sports and hanging out with friends. For her, drinking is a social activity and she says to have changed as a drinker: more before and now moderately. Katri

drinks with friends and food is usually involved in the situation. She calls herself “a median drinker” meaning that she drinks in social events, not too much and not too often.

Keijo is a 24-year-old male student finishing off his accounting studies. He does not have much free time since he is working and studying at the same time. The spare time he has goes more or less with his girlfriend and the rest doing sports and hanging out with friends. Keijo says to have changed as a drinker: during the first years of drinking, drinking was the main point but nowadays it has become a part of a social event or a good meal. For him, drinking is relaxing and trying new flavors. He says to drink sometimes more and sometimes less according to the occasion but drinking more than expected is an extremely rare occasion today.

Oili is a 26 year-old female business administration student working full time and finishing off her studies. She is working a lot at the moment so there is not much free time but the little spare time she spends with her friends and doing sports. She usually drinks to get more or less drunk and she does it because it is fun and acts as a counterbalance for everyday life. When drunk, Oili says her personality does not change. She says to be a bit more social and to do more stupid stuff than sober but since she does those things sober as well people do not always realize that she is drunk. For her, drinking is a way to have fun and to get drunk.

3.2.2. INTERPRETING AND ANALYZING DATA

The interviews should be transcribed into text from which they can be comprehended by studying the data methodically (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006) and interpreted (Kvale, 1983). The analyzing for the chosen approach should be done by analyzing the transcribed interviews as a text or on a model of textuality and viewed as cultural talk (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006)

A systematic analyzing and interpretation method is important because interviews are always open to multiple interpretations (Ricoeur, 1976). Additionally, in order to carry out a sound examination of data, it needs to be secured that the interpretation is consistent with the aims motivating the study, it can be directly supported by reference to participant descriptions, and it provides insight into the phenomenon being investigated (Giorgi 1989; Thompson et al., 1990; Thompson et al., 1989).

Therefore there are a few suggestions for stages that researchers should conduct in qualitative data analysis but since existential-phenomenological interpretation proceeds by means of an iterative back-and-forth process of relating a part of a text to the whole (Ricoeur, 1976) the operations are not steps but merely suggestions. With these operations the researchers also organize data, form meanings, make conclusions and produce theories, Spiggle (1994) claims that qualitative data analysis includes the following analytic operations: categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalization, integration, iteration, and refutation. Colaizzi (1978) offers a seven step process:

1. The first task of the researcher is to read the participants narratives, to acquire a feeling for their ideas in order to understand them fully.
2. The next step “extracting significant statements”, requires the researcher to identify key words and sentences relating to the phenomenon under study.
3. The researcher then attempts to formulate meanings for each of these significant statements.
4. This process is repeated across participants’ stories and recurrent meaningful themes are clustered. These may be validated by returning to the informants to check interpretation.
5. After this the researcher should be able to integrate the resulting themes into a rich description of the phenomenon under study.
6. The next step is to reduce these themes to an essential structure that offers an explanation of the behavior.
7. Finally, the researcher may return to the participants to conduct further interviews or elicit

These steps are similar to the guidelines of Graig Thompson who suggests reading the transcribed texts in full to gain an overall view. After multiple readings, the next stage includes hermeneutic endeavor (Thompson et al., 1990), or intertextuality (Thompson, 1997), where similarities and differences are sought from the texts. Thereafter, wider range of considerations is included as well as fusion of horizons between the interpreter’s frame of reference and the texts being interpreted (Thompson, 1997). There are also some other

suggestions for the analyzing process, such as Hycner's (1985) but for this study I chose to follow Colaizzi's (1978) guidelines.

My interpretation and analyzing process started by reading all the transcribed texts several times after which I focused on one text at a time. During this phase, I also started the coding which in qualitative research drives the retrieval and organization of data (Miles & Huberman, 1984, pp. 56 - 60). Also since the materialized text is the focus of interpretation and a phenomenological researcher must be able to show where participant descriptions support the thematic interpretation (Giorgi, 1983; Thompson et al., 1989), recording and coding is a vital matter.

For the coding method, I chose emergent coding which is a standard method in qualitative research and suits phenomenological research well. I conducted this phase by reading the same text a couple of times in a row and in tandem coded the electronic copy of texts to enable an easy retrieval of all passages defined as belonging to the same category (McCracken 1988, p. 47). This I did by using different color for highlighting words and answers. I also made notes for initial main categories to ease the permitting the flexible use of subsequent interpretation.

When I had done this with each interview, I read them again and started to code the data by using emergent coding, which is a standard way to code qualitative research. Next I started to collect the coded words to different theme groups and after all the words and sentences were placed into a excel sheet, I started go through them in order to find out different themes. I used these emerging themes to label certain columns and gathered all the parts from the interviews to a column that I imagined represent the certain meaning. Thereafter I examined emerging themes and the words put inside them and examined whether all the parts belonged there or not.

Now when I had the data sorted out to a some sort of order, I started to group previously identified categories into more general, conceptual classes, which both Spiggle (1994) as well as Miles and Huberman (1984) define to be a part of abstraction process in analysis. Next I started looking for similarities and differences between the incidents and re-examined each

text a couple of times to ensure that I had not missed anything important and to find out if I would need some more data.

Finally, when I was satisfied my clusters I reduced the data to a totality which explained the phenomenon under study through the lived experiences (Thompson et al., 1989) simultaneously forming a structure that would explain the behavior I was interested in. During this stage I felt a slight need for additional information and contacted the respondents to ask a few further questions about the themes I found as well as to clarify some answers. During the whole analysis and interpretation part I continuously revised my interpretations as the process advanced (Thompson et al, 1990).

4. FINDINGS

The findings section consists of three parts. The first introduces the elements of play in Finnish students' alcohol experiences. The second studies the actions students take during alcohol consumption occasion by examining alcohol consumption through the four-channel model of flow and the third part summarizes the finding of this study.

4.1. THE ELEMENTS OF PLAY IN FINNISH STUDENTS' ALCOHOL EXPERIENCES

In this part, the concept of play is discussed through the application of flow experience that I would posit to offer a more comprehensive definition than the common requirements for play which include the following features: the activity is usually voluntary, it is intrinsically motivating, it involves some level of active engagement and it is distinct from other behaviour (Rieber, 1996). According to the application of flow, the play state is caused by a combination of eight major components of enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

1. There is a balance between the challenge and the skills required to meet it
2. Concentration and focus
3. Clarity of goals
4. Immediate feedback
5. Intense involvement
6. Feeling of full control over the activity
7. Lack of self-consciousness
8. Disordered sense of time

Furthermore, since play experience is characterized as an activity done for its own sake (Holbrook et al., 1984) and because both drinking and play (Geertz, 1972) encompass senseless behaviour; these two elements are also included into the investigation.

The section starts by studying the desirability of the drinking action. Thereafter the components of enjoyment are examined in the following order: intense involvement and disordered sense of time, clarity of goals and feedback, concentrating and lack of self-consciousness, balanced challenges, and required skills and the feeling of having full control over the activity. The final part of this section is comprised of peruse of irrationality.

4.1.1. AN ACTIVITY DONE FOR ITS OWN SAKE

Interviewer: *"Millaista juominen on sulle?"*

Ville: *"Hauskanpitoa eli siihen ei sisälly mitään niinku. Se on hauskapitoa se on se juttu."*

Ville's answer to the question about what drinking means to him illustrates greatly the essence of play: it's simply fun (Csikzzentmihalyi & Bennet, 1971). The activity is so encompassing and diverse that even though the person tries to give a more comprehensive answer, he or she ends up settling for the simple definition evoked by his or her subconscious. Moreover, the answer also signifies that drinking is not about extrinsic motivation but an activity done for its own sake. It is "something so enjoyable that... doing the thing is the thing" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 37).

Kari: *"No... eipä nyt silleen et ei siinä... Tosiaan tossa alussa todettiin: kyllä mä aina lähden mesiin, jos joku on lähdössä. Kyllä mä aina pyrin lähteen. Ei se mitään erityistä tarvii olla että... Kyllä se ilta sit, jos jotain erityistä on, niin se tulee kyllä siinä illan aikana esille. Ei siinä tarvii mitään erityistä olla, kun pitäis lähtee."*

Kari's answer demonstrates the desirability of the drinking action and embraces the impression of drinking as an autotelic activity (Weibel et al., 2008). The person is so intrinsically motivated that he or she wants to continue repeating the action (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennet, 1971) whenever an opportunity appears. He or she also thinks that drinking will be a great experience without otherwise being a special event, such as a birthday party or a Midsummer festival.

Weneri: *"Sitä mitä lähemmäs se juhannus tuli, niin Facebookissa alkoi viestiä tulemaan moninkertaisella nopeudella aikaisempiin päiviin asti ja loppuvaiheessa, kun ihmiset odotteli, et pääsee pois töistä ja muuta, niin Facebookki.-. Kun katsoi, niin viestiketju päivittyi kolme kertaa minuutissa tai vielä nopeammin. Silloin täytyy sanoa, että se juomakeikka alkoi jo siellä, kun sitä rummutettiin niin voimakkaasti."*

This example by Weneri illustrates the positive role drinking has in a person's life. It offers hope, helps coping in everyday life and creates communality already before the action actually happens. It is something a person truly waits for, and due to the intensity of the anticipation the waiting often turns into a communal activity, ultimately a hype. This intercourse occurring before the activity itself produces interaction that serves as information exchange and a booster of good feeling which both are necessary for drinking as play. The exchange of information provides the facts creating the event and the boosting of the feeling increases the prospect of reaching the play state by affecting the participants' abilities to concentrate and cope with the challenges of drinking. Hence, the activity object is also essential for the pre-activity interaction (Holt, 1995).

Kari: *"Kyl se... Pitää se fiilis olla hyvä et... Jos on valmiiks jo paskana... Juonut sen edellisen päivän oikein kunnolla ja lähtee liikenteeseen. Muutenkin väsyttää ja on vähän semmoinen vitutusolo. Ei siitä oikein tuu hyvää keikkaa. Kyl se pitää se silloin jo olla se oikee fiilis kehissä silloin, kun lähtee liikenteeseen."*

Interviewer: *"Voit sä muistella jotain tällaista kertaa?"*

Kari: *"Joo, se oli tota. Se oli tässä jokunen aika sitten. Tuli semmoinen tilanne et oli tietysti perjantai - lauantai päällä ja sunnuntaina vähän istuttiin niin maanantaina tuli puhelu et lähekkö käymään kaljalla. Sit kävin kaupasta ostaan muutaman oluen ja lähin kattomaan sitä toimintaa. Siel oli kaks ihmistä ja oli muutenkin vähä väsyny ja itellä ihan kauhee olo. Ei se kalja kyllä oikein tuntunut uppoovan silleen kunnolla. Siinä kuitenkin sit väkisin pakotti ittensä juomaan kaheksan, yheksän bissee ennen kuin lähti kotio nukkumaan, mut ei se kyllä hyvältä tuntunut."*

Ismo: *"Miespuolinen ja sen kans me oikeastaan ollaan sellainen taistelukaksikko ja me rampataan baareissa aika usein. Mä olin just edellisen iltana ollut juomassa*

kuoron kanssa ja silleen suht paljon. Mua väsytti paljon eikä mulla ollut iltapäivään saakka... Iltapäivään saakka mä olin koko ajan silleen, et mä en ota. Kaveri oli sitä mieltä, et hän vois juoda ja yritti houkutella mua siihen. Lähtisin mukaan. Noh, ihan niin kuin baariin sisään astumiseen saakka olin sitä mieltä, et tuun vaan hengaa mukaan ja pitää hauskaa, mut just sinä lauantaina sattui olemaan tosi kova meno Helsingissä eli se oli toi ylioppilaspäivä ja baari oli täynnä ja hyvä meininki ja sit oli paljon kauniita naisia ulkona. Sit siinä ajatteli, et kyl tänään on... Et ei voi missata tätä tsäänssiä”

However, as Kari’s and Ismo’s examples illustrate, even though the drinking occasion is clearly compelling, autotelic and something a person seeks to reiterate, there are conditions that prevent entering the play state and therefore not every drinking occasion can be play. If the conditions for play are adverse, there are two options:

1. The person does not try to enter the play state at all
2. The person participates and hopes that entering play state succeeds in spite of the difficult starting point

However, of these two scenarios, drinking as play is not totally restricted to the option number two. As the interviewees point out, a person might change their mind and aim for the play state after all, because the surrounding conditions are subject to contingency. Therefore the conditions can turn to be favorable for drinking as play by themselves and this change in events alternate the challenges of drinking and leads to a situation where drinking can shift into play. Nevertheless, the success in play always requires that the desire to drink wake up in the person. The outward circumstances improve chances but the core motivation needs to be intrinsic and the drinking voluntary.

Furthermore, if the person believes that he or she has even a slight chance to achieve play experience, the possibility is perceived so compelling that the person does not usually give up after a few units of alcohol, but forces him- or herself to drink even over the limits of binge drinking (Szmigin et al., 2008) because the moment is a chance that cannot be missed. If the attempt fails, it is often regarded as a bad drinking occasion.

Miika: *”Jos on joskus käynyt niin, että on juonut liikaa ja on ollut humalassa niin voi olla, että juomisen jälkeen tekee mieli pitää pieni tauko. Siis päivistä. Tai ei juo seuraavana viikonloppuna. Ne on aika harvoissa ne kerrat, kun on ollut semmoinen tunne, mut joskus on ollut. Sit jos on jäänyt niinku hyvä fiilis, niin on sopinut kavereiden kanssa, et otetaan uusiks ihan lähiaikoina ja tälleen. Yleensä ne myös pitää paikkaansa ja sit voi olla, et jos on hyvässä seurassa viettänyt ne illan ja kaikki on mennyt...Niiin haluaa toistaa sen ja mieluummin nopeemmin. Et kyllähän ne niinku vaikuttaa. Edellinen kerta.”*

Both successful and unsuccessful efforts to create a play state in drinking affect the pending attempts as Miika here explains. A success acts as an indicator that the person's skills have been in balance with the challenges meaning that there is no need for improvement, and hence creates a good feeling about the next drinking occasion. On the other hand, if the attempt has failed, the person realizes that either the challenges have been too difficult or his or her skills require ameliorating. Usually the bigger the failure, the longer the period one waits before the next occasion. However, the length of this training period varies a lot and positive changes in challenges often shorten it. Furthermore, in a successful experience of play the participants often share the same feeling of happiness and want to repeat the occasion as soon as possible. In order to create such a possibility, they often interact and affect the conditions together and thus, enable the event.

Miika: *”Tulee. Esimerkiks eilisiltana istahdin ja join yhden lasillisen viskiä ja kuuntelin musiikkia ja kelailin päivää läpi. Ei se sen kummempi ollut, mut sen jälkeen oli rauhallinen mennä nukkumaan. Mä pidän sitäkin aika hyvänä juomakertana, vaikei se jonkun mielestä välttämättä edes ole juomakerta”*

This other example of Miika's illustrates that a drinking occasion can be very enjoyable with only a glass of whiskey enjoyed alone. Drinking as play does not necessary require large amounts of alcohol, other people, intoxication or even the aim for it. The moment can be created with very little effort.

4.1.2. COMPONENTS OF ENJOYMENT

In this section, the components of enjoyment are examined in Finnish student's drinking experiences.

4.1.2.1. Intense involvement and disordered sense of time

Ville: *"Mä olin yhden mun valmentajakamun tai kahden valmentajakamun kanssa. Käytiin päivän aikana syömässä ja sen ruokailun aikana otettiin pari viinilasia. Sit mä menin toiselle näistä istumaan vähäks aikaa. Käytiin sitä ennen ostaan yks viinipullo vielä ja... Sit mä oikeestaan olin juonut sen viinipullon jo siellä. Sitten me lähdettiin sieltä mun kämpille istuun iltaan. Sit oikeestaan ihan vaan juteltiin. Sitten mä join ihan vaan huomaamattani kauheen nopeesti. En mitään olutta, vaan siis ihan viiniä. Sitten jossain vaiheessa sitä semmoista riisiviinantyypistä juttua. Ni sitte se lähti ihan lapasesta. Siitä enempää tai pidempää en pysty kertoo, kun en muista mitään."*

As Ville's example illustrates, the person is so deep in the drinking occasion that events just flow by unnoticed and he or she keeps on performing the activities included to the occasion without noticing it him- or herself. That is, if conditions are propitious, drinking turns into play state and the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic. The person stops being aware of him- or herself and becomes united with the action (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Furthermore, the time no longer seems to pass the way it usually does. During the experience the time appears to stay still, to create a timeless space. After exiting the state, the time seems to have vanished somewhere leaving the person wondering where the time went (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). "It can't be time to leave, we just got here a minute ago" or "It can't be Sunday, Friday was yesterday" are common phrases we all have heard.

Moreover, these two features of play also cause challenges for the play experience since the person is in a state of mind in where actual control turns into an illusion of control. The person has a risk of drinking more than his skills allow or the challenges require turning the desired loose of control into a total loss of control. Also due to the feeling of timelessness the person is not able to evaluate the speed in which he or she is consuming alcohol resulting in stronger intoxication than intended.

4.1.2.2. Clarity of goals and feedback

Interviewer: *"Milloin juot?"*

Werner: *"No esimerkiksi, jos menee kattoon vaikka lätkämatsii kaverille, niin silloin riippuen siitä mikä on fiilis ja mikä on yleinen porukan niinku tota suunnitelma illanviettoon., et lähetääkö liikkelle ja vedetään kovemmat kännit. Niin riippuu siitä, että juoko sen muutaman kaljan vai 12-päkin tai yli. Se oikeestaan riippuu siitä yhteisestä sopimuksesta, illan suunnitelmasta se juoman määrä."*

Interviewer: *"Voit sä vähän tarkentaa tota illansuunnitelmaa?"*

Werner: *"Jossain vaiheessa yleensä muodostuu tai on tai tota... Ihmiset päättää, että onko joku erikoinen päivä, pääseekö joku lomille, onko päässy tentistä tai onko joku muu erityistapahtuma, että sen takia lähdetään juhlistamaan eli juomaan kovemmmiin. Niin se yleensä on tai kaveri saattaa jopa sanoa, et tänään otetaan kunnolla tai etukäteen on voitu keskustella, et sitten otetaan enemmän. Tai jos se on vaan sillai, et mennään istuun iltaan niin ei oteta paljoa."*

The drinking occasion has usually either in advance defined goals and rules or the goals and rules, the game plan, arises during the occasion as the example of Werner illustrates. The plan is not set in stone and it often changes during the event when the participants' actions resonate with the challenges of the environment (Csikzzentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971). The chosen goals and rules provide a frame for the event which acts as a benchmark for feedback. The input has usually varying amount of forms that all share the same key feature: they include a symbolic goal reminding the person that he or she needs to success in the goal of the event (Csikszzentmihalyi, 1990). If the feedback provides sufficient possibilities for uninterrupted flow of action, the play state continues (Csikzzentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971). If not, then it breaks, at least momentarily.

Interviewer: *"Millaisia asioita sä liität sellaiseen juomakertaan jolloin tuntui hyvältä?"*

Miika: *"No, varmaan just se että lähtökohdat siihen juomiseen on hyvät. On niin sanotusti hyvät fiilikset. Ei oo mitään sellaisia hoitamattomia tai tekemättömiä asioita takana, mitä mieltis siinä juomisen aikana eli se on yks tärkeä. Juomisen suhteen itellä ei nyt kovinkaan suhteen ole sitä ongelmaa, että juominen lähtis niin sanotusti käsistä. Pystyy kontrolloimaan omaa juomista ja sitä humalatilaa eli niinku juomisen pysyminen käsissä on tärkeä asia ja varmaan se justiin, että kaikilla muillakin on hauskaa. Ei oo semmosia henkilöitä, jotka on selkeesti niinku liian päihtyneitä tai sammuneita tai tälle. Et itellä on silloin hauskaa, kun kaikilla muillakin on hauskaa. Se on ehkä se tärkein. Ja tietysti jos juomisen jälkeen sitä hetkee mieltii niin totta kai toivois, että itsellä olis sen juomisen jälkeenkin hyvä olo."*

As Miika's example reflects, the person by him- or herself adjusts his or her behaviour according to the changes in challenges and the person's own abilities to cope with them. However, since there are other people involved in the actions, also their performance affects how the individual feels about the event. If everything goes smoothly, the person does not worry about others unless he or she sees they are not acting the same or they are expressing divergent feelings. If this happens, the person has a danger of exiting the play state. Furthermore, since the play experience is the goal in drinking as play and since other participants have an effect on success of the play experience, an individual often seeks to drink with people whom he or she has a good success rate achieving the play state.

4.1.2.3. Concentrating & lack of self-consciousness

Interviewer: *"Tuleeks mieleen jotain muita pieniä juttuja? Kaikki mitä tulee vaan niinku mieleen niin sano ihmeessä."*

Kari: *"No siis niinku tulee semmoinen niinku huoleton olo. Ei oo silleen väliä mitä tapahtuu ja missä. Et pystyy lähteen vaikka... Mäkin oon pari kertaa löytänyt itseni ihan ihme jatkoilta. Jos olis ollut vähänkin ollut selvinpäin, niin olisin todennut en kyllä oo tonne menossa. Sielläkin on ollut sitten ihan mukavaa. Se on vaan*

semmosta vaan yleistä hyvää oloa, ettei tarvi miettii mitään turhii asioita, vaan keskittyy vaan siihen asiaan mikä on käsillä.”

As Kari’s example illustrates, the drinking as play requires such concentration that only a selected amount of information is allowed into awareness. The person is fully focused on the activity forgetting all the unpleasant aspects of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The person does things he would not do outside the play state if the flow of the events in play experience carries him or her to do such things. The person is also able to enjoy different activities and aspect of life during the play than what he or she would outside the play.

Miika: *”Sillon kun juon niin tietysti nuosuhumalan nää tunnetut vaikutukset: ilo, hilpeys. Tunne siitä niinku lentoonlähdön olo tai semmost tunnetta niinku... No ei voi sanoa niin, et kokis olevan joku muu, mut kokee kuitenkin niinku. Noh. Mut kyl ne on tota positiivisia ajatuksia mitä siinä on: iloa, hilpeyttä, halua sosiaalisen kanssakäymiseen. Ehkä ne on siinä. Keskeisimmät.”*

In drinking as play, one does not only feel joy but he or she also loses an outside viewpoint on his conduct (Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971). As Miika’s example reveals, the person becomes something else. The person is him- or herself but at the same time he or she is not. Being able to forget one’s self separates him or her from everyday life and helps to concentrate on the action itself and jump into the flow of events. Such a momentarily feeling creates also a great deal of enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Furthermore, the person is a part of the action itself and if there are other people participating in drinking as play, he or she senses also their presence but not as individuals but as a part of the whole experience. This shared lack of self-consciousness also establishes cohesion between the participants.

4.1.2.4. Balanced challenges

This section studies challenges of drinking and how they affect drinking as play before, during and after the activity.

4.1.2.4.1. Before drinking

Interviewer: *”Mainitsit tossa suunnitelmallisuuden niin mitä siihen kuuluu?”*

Ismo: *”Ensinnäkin pitää selvittää, että kuinka paljon jengi halua juoda. Jos sul on ollut pitkä tauko, niin se tarkoittaa sitä et sä haluat oikeesti juoda. Sit jos joku on ollut jo edellisenä iltana jossain, niin se ottaa vähän rauhallisemmin. Sun pitää löytää samanlainen mieltymys ja olotila toisten osallistujien kanssa. Se tappaa yleensä sen hauskanpidon. Muuten se on vähän semmost, et toinen nihkeilee ja toista ärsyttää, et toinen ei juo niin paljon. Tai jotain tollaista. Se on se yks pääsuunnitelma, et pystyy vähän määrittelee mitä se toinen halua siltä illalta, et lähetäänks jatkoille vai onks se semmosta tissuttelua ja ollaan kotioloissa vai vaihdetaan vaan muutama sana ja mennään illaks kotiin. Se just et mitä halua tehdä sinä iltana.”*

As Ismo’s example indicates, the person aiming for a play state in drinking prepares him- or herself ready for the event by trying to create as favourable a starting point as possible before the drinking by affecting the pre-known challenges. Such things include discussing and agreeing on the goals and rules of the event, which is vital for the success since divergent goals and rules may break the harmony of the experience or event preventing the play state. The discussion before the event also makes the participants aware of what is going to happen and hence, giving them the possibility to either adjust their goals and behaviour according to the agreed standards or aim for play state or to understand that the frame of this particular occasion does not respond to their goals. Usually people who attend the event have their own smaller goals besides the shared objectives and regulations but as long they don’t contract, there is no problem. Moreover, in larger drinking events full of people, usually only the ones with whom the person drinks affect the play experience. The rest appear merely as bits of the drinking environment as long as they do not attract the individual’s attention.

Besides the rules and goals of the event, a person also tends to make sure that the challenges are suitable. He or she usually tries to keep the drinking event aiming for play state separate from as many exterior factors as possible. It is also important that there will not be any extra challenges in the drinking occasion itself, for example not enough required matters (alcohol, big tv, good music, cosy place etc.) and people that have a high risk to prevent the play state.

4.1.2.4.2. During drinking

Interviewer: *"Tuleeks mieleen semmosia asioita jotka sais tietyn juomakerran tuntumaan pahalta?"*

Keijo: *"Se että sä loukkaat jotakuta henksesti siinä mielessä, et teet jotain tyhmää: et pidä lupauksiasi tai teet muuten vaan jotain tyhmää tai se et se menee fyysisesti överiks. Elikä tulee juotua liikaa tai et jos menee paljon rahaa tai jotain muuta niinkun aiheuttaa ylimääräisiä ongelmia tai on jotain tekijöitä jotka aiheuttaa ylimääräisiä ongelmia."*

Interviewer: *"Voit sä tarkentaa?"*

Keijo: *"Aaa... Lähinnä liittyy siihen, et jos joku ryyppää kadulla tai joku toinen tekee siitä paheksuttavan. Jos joku juo seurueessa liikaa tai jotain vastaavaa. Tai silloin kun on juonut enemmän kuin muut. Tai silloin kuin juominen johtaa humaltumiseen sen sijaan, et saat parempaa fiilistä siitä. Jotain tämmösiä asioita. Ite juonut liikaa, tapahtunut jotain minkä takia se juominen ei näytä enää hyvältä tai silloin, kun sun pitää keskittyä."*

The challenges during the occasion need to be such that they are all done by voluntary fiat but still not to exhaust possible actions (Csikzzentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971), that is they need to be accepted by the person. They also need to be something the person can actually accomplish. As the example by Keijo illustrates, if the drinking event does not go according to goal and by the book, play state will not happen or the person will exit the flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Factors that result in exiting a play experience include such matters as other participants breaking the set rules, the goals of the event being in too big a conflict with the person's own goals, or the challenges being too difficult for the person. In other words, something happens that makes the person aware of himself and the world again.

4.1.2.4.3. After drinking

Ville: *"Joo... Yleensä tulee aina sen juomakeikan lopussa syötyä joku rasvainen ruoka tai sitten aamulla varsinkin, kun herää on tiettyjä rutiineita. Aika usein sattuu päähän ja joutuu ottaa lääkettä. Tai sitten ihan sikana juo vettä ennen nukkumaan menoa ja aamulla sen jälkeenkin juo tosi paljon vettä ja koittaa lepää hyvin. Kahvia hyvin. Sit yks juttu on, et aina yrittää päästä liikkeelle sen päivän aikana. Et pitää käydä ulkona tai jossain. Pysy liikkeellä, et ei tuu niin paha olo, jos on ollut ihan kunnan juomakeikka."*

After the play state of drinking, the person tries to impact the possible negative side effects. The side effects do not affect the play state but they influence the likeness of repeating the action, usually by postponing the next event. As Ville's example illustrates, the person tries to protect him- or herself from the chemical and biological consequences of drinking by drinking water or eating. On the following day, the person usually has a sort of routine and a set of ways to survive the day. These preventive actions and the fact that the occurrence and intensity of the negative side effects varies, drinking and pursuing the play state remain more desirable than they would be if harmful consequences were inevitable.

4.1.2.5. Required skills and the feeling of having full control over the activity

Miika: *"Kyl mä nään sen siinä rentouttamisessa mielessä juomisen positiiviset puolet. Rentouttaa fyysisesti ja henkisesti ja... Monet sanoo ja itekin sanoo, että silloin on sosiaalisempi nousuhumalan vaiheessa. Ei välttämättä enää siinä vaiheessa, kun on juonut omaan kestokykyynsä nähden liikaa mutta... Ne positiiviset tekijät on siinä. Negatiivisia, jos miettii, niin tota tietysti itellä on aika hyvä kontrolli, mutta toisinaan sekin on pettänyt. Se täytyy myöntää. Niin tota, silloin ei välttämättä niinku... Ei koe niitä rentouttavia vaikutuksia. Et sit on voinut mennä vaikka pahan olon puolelle tai jotain. Seuraava aamu on ollut sitte ikävä. Mut ei niitä ehkä semmosia kokemuksia halua toistaa. Ne on niitä negatiivisia."*

The play state in drinking also requires that the person has the skills to create a balance with the challenges of the activity. In drinking, the necessary skills include for example the ability to drink so that the play state is reached and maintained. Too many or too few drinks will ruin the attempt. In different drinking occasions the ideal amount varies which is also one of the

reasons why in some events the challenge exceeds someone's skills or it is so easy that it frustrates the person. Moreover, the person needs to have enough abilities to attend other activities associated with the drinking event, for example socializing, different games and staying awake. If he or she does not possess enough skills and they play a notable role in drinking, the task becomes stressful and the play state will not be reached.

However, the more you practise the more you learn. Past experiences and feedback during the event teach the person to adjust his or her skill eventually improving the individual's abilities. For example, due to this learning, the person might understand to replace a few drinks of beer or wine with water to prevent feeling too drunk, or avoid drinking shots if the person knows that shots have a strong chance of ruining the attempt to reach the play state.

Furthermore, as Miika's example illustrates, in play state the person does not want to have a fear of losing control, which is a typical situation in everyday life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Hence, the action is desirable when there is a feeling of control. The loss of control often results in a realization of the loss and thus, exiting the play state. However, the person does not usually notice the total loss of control by him- or herself but through another participant or an outsider. Feedback from either of these parties usually results in the realization of the current state and the exit play state as the example by Keijo explains.

Keijo: *"Kyllä vaan. Äää.. Joo. Esimerkiks kerran tota mun piti mennä tyttöystävän luokse, mut meninkin erään kollegan kanssa parille ja juomaa viskiä. Se ilta meni siinä sitten mukavasti. Meni vähän liian pitkään ja sitte huomasin, että olin juonut vähän liikaa ja päätin soittaa mimmille mutten pystynyt puhumaan. Tota se aiheutti sosiaalisti ongelmaa."*

4.1.3. IRRATIONALITY

Ville: *"Hmm. joo. Yks viikonloppu. Vuosi tai puoltoista takaperin. Tuli otettua niin paljon että sunnuntaina oli niinku aivan jäätävä olo. Niin hirvee olo, et olis tehnyt mieli soittaa itelle ambulanssi. Silloin tuntui tosi pahalta. Silloin oli tultu juotua kaikkee sekaisin aivan liikaa. Silloin oltiin ihan mun kotona ystävien kanssa."*

Eikä se muutenkaan ollut edes kivaa jälkeensä ajateltuna, kun ei ite tajunnut mistään mitään. Oli vaan niin humalassa koko ajan.”

Drinking has been studied to entail many harmful side effects affecting both the individual and his or her environment and the disadvantages include health and social risks (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006). Hence, drinking is said to be a play in where one's health and social relations are at stake. Of course, people do drink moderately with only a small risk, but quite often the play also happens with irrational stakes and the person enters deep play where people come together in search of pleasure, and engage in an action that creates net pain rather than net pleasure (Geertz, 1972). The example by Ville demonstrates this with a narrative of an occasion where the informant's state is so poor after drinking that he feels a need to call an ambulance to pick him up. This is a common story among Finnish students. No one wishes to suffer like this but still it happens time after time as people try to reach a deeper play state. After all, there is always a chance that the play is reached without losses. Moreover, as Ismo's example illustrates, the drinking occasion also has a great change to damage the drinker in other ways. The person might do something that he or she not only regrets but that could affect life during a longer period. Such thing can be as trivial as spending a bit too much money, punching a friend or saying mean without meaning it but it can also be as serious as ruining a relationship, committing a crime or a suicide or killing someone. It is true that often nothing happens but no one can know for sure how the next drinking occasion goes or how alcohol affects the person's actions.

Interviewer: *”Tuleeks sulle mieleen jotain tiettyä juomakertaa jolloin tuntui pahalta?”*

Ismo: *”Niin se on tää yleinen käsite morkkis. Tulee harmiteltua, et on tehny jotain tyhmää sinä iltana. Ehkä just se, et on vaan tullut se raja vastaan, et oot juonut liikaa ja sitten tekee jotain itsekästä. Sanoo jollekin rumasti, vaikkei tarkoittanut sitä sinä iltana. Jotain muuta tällasta joka loukkaa toista henkilöä. Se yleensä harmittaa sitten.”*

Interviewer: *”Tuleeks vielä jotain mieleen?”*

Ismo: *”Ämm... No.. Myös semmonen aika useinkin toistuva asia on se, et jos sä oot tuhlannut liikaa rahaa. Sinä iltana sun estot katoo ja sä et ajattele yhtä selvästi.*

Niin ku sulla kuluu myös sitä rahaa paljon enemmän kuin normaalisti että... Et lähdet tarjoileen vaikka muutamalle kaverille tai tuntematVillemille ihmisille. Se näkyy kyl sit seuraavana päivänä tilillä. Et on liikaa kulutettu.”

4.2. A FOUR-CHANNEL MODEL OF FLOW IN ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AS PLAY

This section examines how the elements of a four-channel model of flow as application of play incorporate Finnish students' experiences of alcohol consumption (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). First the flow state is studied, then boredom state, apathy state and finally, anxiety state.

4.2.1. FLOW STATE

Oili: *”No siis mulle tuli kavereita Jyväskylästä käymään, joita en oo nähnyt. Toisen oon nähnyt viimeks kesällä ja toisen tyyliin maaliskuussa. Niin tota oon tänne just muuttanut ja on kiva nähdä vanhoja kavereita. Kämpiksiä ja näin. Siinä alkoi oleen aikamoinen rytmiryhmä kasassa. Me tota tultiin lauantaina tänne niin, oltiin meillä yötä ja päivällä pyörittiin ja illalla mentiin meille alotteleen. Se vaan se paskanjauhannan määrää, kun pääse niinku pitkästä aikaa jutteleen kaikki elämäntilanteet, mitä kuuluu ja keräännytään yhteen. Ja tota sitten ainahan sitä mietitään, ku ollaan tollasella muijaporukalla liikkeellä ne, et mitä kellekin kuuluu ja kuka on ketäkin kikkinyt ja tota sellasta hauskaa. Että niin niin... No mitäs muuta. Siinä käydään tavallaan kaikki läpi, kun nähdään pitkästä aikaa ja kaikki juo omia juomiansa, kuka mitäkin tykkää juua. Joku juua viiniä, joku juo viinaa niin kuin allekirjoittanut. Ja tota, sitten soitetaan kaikkee hyvää musiikkia. Mun pravuuri on Pirkka-Pekka Peteliuksen trallalaa, kun sitä kuunnellaan etkoilla ja tanssitaan. Mulla on tosi hieno esitys siihen. Sit mä oon villinyt sitä itse. Se on aika suosittu biisi kavereiden keskuudessa. Porukat ennen kaikki vihas sitä. Et mikä vittu tuo on. Mut nyt kaikki rakastaa sitä, kun mä esitin sen niin ihanasti. Mutta... Mitä me nyt siinä. Me törpöteltiin ja lähettiin kaupungille siitä. Ööö... Lähettiin köpöttään bussille, joka napataan Manskun varresta. Nyt ei lähdetty siihen bussiin, vaan mentiin limusiiniin, jonka jotkut onnettomat oli vuokrannut humalapäivään*

ja ne heitti meidät kaupunkiin ja pyöritti vähän kylillä. Tota niin niin... Sitten mä jouduin oleen kartturina, kun ne oli ihan pihalla. Mentiin Bar Bäckäriin ja siellä me sit tumultetiin. Siellä oli sit mun poikakaveri ja muita Jyväskylän niinku jätkäporukasta. Siellä oli iloinen jälleennäkeminen. Oli hirveen kivaa.”

The example by Oili illustrates nicely how the challenge and skills are balanced and elevated above the critical threshold (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) in a drinking resulting in play state. It includes old friends with whom the state has been achieved before and with whom the rules and goal of the event are clear. They have experienced drinking as play together multiple times and the elements that make it happen are known by all the participants. Furthermore, since the participants have not seen each other for a while the event does not have a danger to slip in to state of boredom which might happen in a case where the actions have been repeated several times in a short period of time..

The event starts from Oili's place which is a controllable area without disturbing extrinsic factors. At the apartment, everything goes smoothly without thinking. Every participant drinks whatever she desires which means that they like the drinks they are drinking and know how they affect. Hence, maintaining a suitable drinking phase is easy without distracting the focus from the activity itself. The time goes by without noticing and moving to the next phase, a switch to a bar scene, happens without contradictions. However, during the transfer everything does not go as planned and they step into a limousine instead of the bus. This brings new challenges as a new vehicle and new people are involved and Oili needs to act as co-driver. Despite the change, due to the resulted cohesion, the play state remains and this new twist merges into the experience. Eventually, the whole group gets into the destination which is also a familiar environment with known people. Of course, since the last stop is a bar, there are a lot of variables which can affect the play in a positive or a negative way. However, since the bar scene is familiar and there are a lot of friends, the environment is more controlled and suitable at this particular bar than in bars in general. In this example, the action was truly a unified experience flowing from one moment to the next in contradistinction to our otherwise scattered everyday experiences (Csikzzentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971).

Furthermore, Ville's example below highlights learning during play experience (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002 and the fact that the skills and knowledge of the person grow from

one experience to another. Due to this advancement, the person can meet the challenges better, and hence he or she is required to engage progressively with more complex challenges in order to be able to enter the flow again. In drinking, this progress usually means a demand to consume more or stronger alcohol in a more complex environment than before. However, failures and long breaks from the action affect the skills by reducing them. Furthermore, since there is an immeasurable amount of different alcohol beverages which all affect the human body in different ways, mastering drinking is impossible. Also the changes in one's own body, such as weight loss or lack of sleep or food matter. Moreover, the whole drinking event is subject to contingency which makes it a platform for ongoing learning.

Ville: *"Tulee semmonen hassuolo päähän. Se on se nousuhumala ja alkaa naurattaa enemmän ja alkaa jutut tyhmenee. Ehkä ne alkuun voi olla ihan hauskoja.. Emmä tiiä.*

Mä oon muuttunut aika paljon juojana. Esim silloin kun aloitti niin ei osannut hallita., jos nimenomaan juotiin kunnolla, niin ollenkaan omaa käytöstään. Nykyään taas on rauhattunut varsinkin viimeisen vuoden aikana aika paljon, ettei tuu niinku hölmöiltyä ja tuntee omat rajansa."

4.2.2. BOREDOM STATE

Ismo: *"Se on se, et jos mä oon saman kaverin kanssa.. Useimmiten, kun mä oon juomassa, siinä on joku sama ystävä ja niitten kanssa on tullut juotua monet kerrat vähän silleen jopa, ettei se alkuilta oo mitenkään tärkeä, vaan enemmänkin se, et me juodaan vaan sen takia, et me ollaan lähdössä ulos. Sen takia, kun mun mä oo alottelemassa kaverin kanssa, niin saattaa olla jopa joskus.. Emmä halua sanoo tolleen. Jos on jotkut bileet, joku vähän erikoisempi juttu, niin kyl mä oon silloin alkuiltana jo messis. Mut jos mä oon kaverin kans juomassa, niin mä oon helposti kärsimätön kun mä mietin sitä loppuiltaa."*

In the boredom state, the skills exceed the challenges of the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). As Ismo's example illustrates, in a drinking event, the activity can turn to boredom state if the drinking event has more or less the same characteristics every time: same people, same place

and same schema. The similar aspects that enable entering play state by offering suitable conditions can also become disadvantages in certain circumstances. The reason for this is that even though they have resulted in play state before, they might not do it anymore as the person's skills grow and exceed the challenges. The combination of routinization of the action and increasing skills result in a state of dullness (Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971) characterized by below-average concentration, an adequate sense of control, and otherwise average mood states (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Furthermore, the fewer opportunities for action a person gets, the more bored he or she becomes (Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet, 1971). In order to exit boredom, the person needs more demanding challenges that in the case of drinking are special events, change in scene, more complexity and more possibilities for randomness.

4.2.3. APATHY STATE

Interviewer: *"Pystyt sä muisteleen jotain semmoista milloin ei tehnyt mieli juoda?"*

Ismo: *"Noo... No yleensä mä laskisin sen näin että jos ei tee mieli juoda niin se kyl loppuu siihe. Mä en yleensä jää sinne hengaileen jos toiset. Että mä ehkä peilaan sitä liikaa tätä esimerkki mikä mulla on. Koska meillä on tapana olla kuorossa joka kuukauden ensimmäinen maanantai saunavuoro. Et mennään saunaan ja juodaa. Ja ne on maanantaisin ja maanantai-päivä tosiaan ja mul on nyt usemman kerran ollut silleen, et se on jotenkin koettu kohtalokkaaks, et sinä maanantaina on tullut juotua. Töiden merkeis sit tiistaiamuna siit on ollut haittaa. Sit mä oon tehnyt päätöksiä pikkuhiljaa, et mä olisin jättänyt sitä vähemmälle ja tota.. Muistan että semmonen viime kerta, mitä nyt ainakin tulee mielee jolloin ei tehnyt mieli. Se oli juomakerta jolloin ei tehnyt mieli juoda. Meillä oli hallituksen kokous. Eikun anteeks, vuosikokous. KY:n vuosikokous, jonka jälkeen oli vielä sauna. Kokous alkoi joskus kasilta ja mulla oli pakko olla siellä kokouksessa, jonka vuoksi tuli juotua. Mäkin join yhden bissen, mut siin suurin piirtein kaikki muut jatkoi sinne saunalle ja mä olin tehnyt alunperinkin päätöksen, et silloin ei tehnyt mieli juoda. Mä ajattelin et otetaan tää yks bisse sit."*

The apathy state is born when the skills of the person and challenges of the activity fall below a critical threshold (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). In this state, the person sees no reason to drink and no chance for the play experience. In the apathy state, the key aspect for the activity, which in drinking event is drinking, becomes an obligation that holds only a little intrinsic interest (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). The example by Ismo describes that a person does not usually drink if he or she is in the apathy state. However, if the person feels to be pressurized by the event or by his or her company, he or she might assent to drink. However, in this state, the action does not provide satisfaction and feels merely a burden.

4.2.4. ANXIETY STATE

Interviewer: *"Mites tota. Tuleeks sulle mieleen semmoinen juomakeikka joka ei ollut niin hyvä?"*

Kari: *"Joo, no siis tuleehan niitäkin mieleen mutta. Yleensä ne on sellasia että tulee juotua liian nopeasti tai liian paljon ja on yleistä räihinää tai jotain ja tekee mieli vaan lähteä himaan tai jotain muuta sen jälkeen että. Kyllä se varmaan jatkuu se ilta siitä sitten mutta jos osakin kavereista on vähän temperamenttisiakin ja saattaa ihan turhistakin asioista. Niin sen jälkeen se vähän katoaa se filis koko illasta tavallaan"*

Kari: *"Mmm.. Se on jotain, et jos on tapahtunut jotain tai on vaarassa ollut tapahtua jotain kavereille. Esim. Hyvinkäällä ampuminen, et vaikka kavereita siltä säästyikin, niin oli liikenteessä. Oli lähettyvillä muutamia ja. Kyllä siitä tuli sellainen huoli et onks omat sukulaiset kunnossa..."*

In anxiety state, the challenge exceeds the skill level for the task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). The example by Kari shows that in drinking the person enters the anxiety state when he or she realizes that he or she will not or has not been able to drink according to the plan of the event. The creation of realization has two possibilities: either person notices the situation by him- or herself or someone else points out the problem. The first happens, for example, when a person drinks less than what is needed or cannot concentrate enough. The second occurs, for example, when a person does something that the other participants do not tolerate and tell

him or her about it. The critique and mood change of others are often the aspects that attract the person's attention and make him or her aware of the reality. Moreover, also extrinsic factors that bring extra challenges may cause the anxiety state such as crime, fighting and disagreements. All in all, the anxiety state is resulted when a challenge overwhelms the person (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

4.3. SUMMARY

Drinking is enjoyed and regarded as a pleasant experience both done alone and with friends. The elements of play classified by the model of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and by the common play definition (Rieber, 1996) are all visible in Finnish students' experiences of alcohol consumption. The characteristics and the amount of alcohol are not crucial in creating the play state but the substance is a requisite for creation of the activity. Drinking is something that is clearly done for its own sake. At its best, it acts as a bringer of hope in everyday life and the thought of it is so compelling that it creates hype and extremely passionate feelings both before and after the event, just as Christmas does especially in young children.

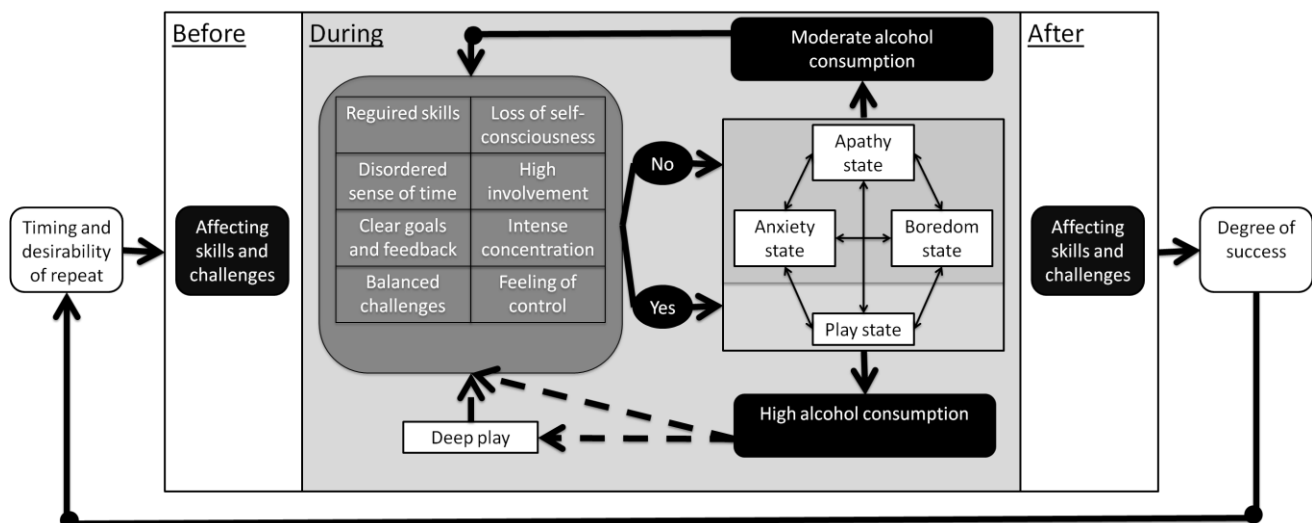
The desire to reach the play state in drinking makes people focus on the event before and after the actual activity. Beforehand, it creates discussion between the participants, and actions that aim to affect the challenges of drinking and the skills of the participants. The participants highlight the greatness of the forthcoming occasion transposing the concentration into the event. They also make sure that school work, sports and other duties that might stress them during the event are done beforehand. Moreover, alcohol, food, tickets and other event related necessary items are bought well in advance. After the drinking, the participants have their own ways to survive the next day or make it as enjoyable as possible. Furthermore, the success in creation of play state affects the desirability and timing of the next drinking occasion: the better the event, the more likely reiterating is.

A successful play state is distinct from other behaviour and it is created when an individual sees the activity as intrinsically motivating and is actively willing to pursue it. The play state of drinking includes the eight components of enjoyment. Hence, in order to create drinking as play, the person entering the state needs to have clear goals and feedback in the activity. He or

she is required to have enough skills to overcome the challenges of the event. If the challenges are too easy or too difficult compared to the skills, the play state cannot be created. Furthermore, the person needs to be so concentrated in the activity that he or she loses his- or herself in it. This merging with the activity in the play state results in a feeling that even though the person does not have actual control over activities, they seem to happen just as they are supposed to, thus creating a smooth flow of events which also creates an illusion of control and disordered sense of time. During the event, time seems to stay still but after the event the participant is confused where all the time went, as if they had been in a sort of trance.

Moreover, the Finnish students' experiences of alcohol consumption also indicate the existence of irrationality in the activity, and hence the presence of "deep play" in drinking (Geertz, 1975). This state appears especially in binge drinking occasions where the amount of consumed alcohol is higher, creating serious health and social risks for people involved. Furthermore, besides the play state, the drinking also includes the other three states of the four-channel model of flow: boredom, apathy and anxiety, which are the alternatives for play in drinking. The findings of this study are summarized in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 The elements of play in Finnish student's experiences of alcohol consumption



04 July, 2014

5. DISCUSSION

This section further discusses the key findings of the study, how they contribute to the alcohol consumption research and answers to the three research questions presented in the beginning of this study. The first question asked how the Finnish students' experiences of alcohol consumption incorporate elements of play. This question was answered in the findings section which addressed that drinking can reach the play state and that state is also often the reason why Finnish students engage in drinking. It also presented a list of play elements and illustrated how they appeared in the experiences of alcohol consumption. The second question asked what actions Finnish students use to enable the play state. This question was also answered in the findings section. The analysis illustrated a number of functions that the students undertake before, during and after the play state in order to be able to manage the experience. The third question, asked what the possible policy implications of alcohol consumption as play are, and this question will be answered in this section.

Next, I highlight how the analysis of the findings section responds to the existing research and thereafter the third question is answered in "Implications" sub-section. That is followed by the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

Consumption of alcohol has been admitted to offer numerous enjoyments (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006) but due to the possible harmful side effects, academics often treat it as a disadvantage for individuals and society alike. Therefore the research has heavily focused on trying to understand alcohol consumption with a desire to highlight the detriments and to find a way to affect people's consumption habits as ulterior motives (Barlow and Wogalter, 1993). My study does not refute the importance of this approach, but according to the findings of this study, drinking can also be a positive aspect in an individual's life. It can create so much enjoyment that it acts as a beacon of hope for the person, making him or her willing to attend a drinking event whenever he or she can. This event also provides enjoyment after the actual action by offering an overall good feeling. Due to this, the person also performs multiple operations before, during and after the event in order to improve his or her chance to reach the play. Hence, drinking as play can be said to improve one's quality of life and affect

positively not only the person but also his or her social circles and society as a whole (Argyle, 2001, p. 7). Therefore, my tentative suggestion is that in research, trying to find a solution to the problems of alcohol, its positive consequences should not be forgotten. This side in alcohol consumption is also something worth studying further.

Szmigin et al. (2008) introduced the concept of calculated hedonism related to drinking, meaning that alcohol consumption and especially binge drinking is much about balancing between the benefits and disadvantages of alcohol consumption. The person wants to maximize the positive effects and minimize the negatives ones. While doing so, he or she tries to find a suitable balance. My study also finds the aspect of balancing but the analysis differs from Szmigin et al.'s. Sure the person wants to avoid unpleasant consequences and enjoy pleasant ones, but I would also posit that the goal of these actions in certain drinking occasions is enabling drinking as play. The actions the person takes before the event aim to provide suitable conditions for the play state. Actions during the event aim to create and maintain the play state and they can be even seen as harmful when taken out of the drinking as play context, such as drinking a whole bottle of vodka or running naked around a block. The actions after the event instead are usually routine-like and aim to create a better feeling for the day after. However, these following actions are meaningless for the successfulness of the drinking as play and only affect the future events.

Furthermore, my findings also resonate with the analysis of MacNeela and Bredin (2011), according to whom groups regulate drinking not only upward by facilitating drinking but also reducing it through shared internalized values and explicit peer pressure. I extend this idea by tentatively suggesting that these shared internalized values relate to the "plan of the evening" and to the desire to enable the play state for the whole group.

Moreover, alcohol literature often links drinking with celebration and situations deviating from normal life (Szmigin et al., 2008). Also Finns have been studied to usually drink during holiday seasons and national holidays (Mustonen et al., 2010, pp. 56-57). My research does not question these arguments but I would posit that those occasions might not be the reason why Finns drink, at least not Finnish students. The drinking happens often during those times because they offer a good starting point for enabling a play state in alcohol consumption: people have a suitable feeling, enough time for the activity and the stress levels are apposite

since those moments are regarded to belong to leisure time. Furthermore, besides that drinking has been named to happen during leisure time, and thus is separated from everyday life, it has been suggested to be used as an escape from it. I contribute to this discussion by positing that even though drinking as play offers an escape from everyday life, it does not happen if stress levels are too high. Therefore my research also questions the study of workers' alcohol consumption by Martin et al. (1992), who proposed that drinking is heavily associated with escapist reasons and that coping or escapist reasons are associated with higher levels of drinking. Instead my analysis is more in line with Rabow and Duncan-Schill's (1995) suggestion that drinking can, from time to time, be seen as escape from stress, but it does not occur when stress levels are high.

Besides alcohol literature, my study contributes to the play research which is characterized by a concentration towards positive feelings, fun and pleasure in play, even though the negative side of play has also been noted among academics (Malaby, 2009). This study supports the play research by presenting that alcohol consumption as play has both positive and negative consequences. I posit that in drinking as play the person feels enjoyment and excitement while in play state. However, while the person tries to manage the play state, there is a great risk of harmful consequences which can also break and prevent the play state. Such corollaries can have lifelong effects for the person but the environment and people around him or her during the particular occasion as well. These consequences are also regarded as a major problem around the globe. Due to this, my tentative suggestion is that the positive aspects in play should not be underrated but the possible negative consequences of play deserve a greater focus.

Furthermore, the findings of my study are in line with Grayson's (1999) proposition that play can be both harmlessly enjoyable but also dangerously revolutionary meaning that there are at least two values in play for consumer: one in which consumer follows the rules expected by the marketer and one in which he or she does not. In drinking, this means that both drinking according to the healthy drinking limits and above them can create value to the consumer. Similarly, drinking one's beer both in an advertised situation (for example a bottle of Tuborg with friends in a party) and outside of it (for example drinking the Tuborg alone at home) create value.

Additionally, play literature often defines and analyzes play with a paradoxical positioning casting play's imaginative, free, open and experimental elements against the goal-oriented and rule-bound nature making the consumer either a slave, breaker and sometimes even the maker of the rules (Kozinets et al., 2004). My study contributes this conceptualization by presenting that within a drinking event a person can have multiple roles at the same time, though in different contexts. He or she can break the rules by drinking more than the policies allow, thus being a rule breaker. However, at the same time he or she can also be the maker and a slave of the rules by participating in designing the rules of a play and after that acting according to them in order to enable it.

Moreover, this study extends the idea of MacNeela and Bredin (2011) who introduced the concept "the script of the night out with friends" that gives a structure for drinking and defines what happens during the evening. My study implicates that in drinking events with multiple people, the group creates a script for the event in order to be able to enable a play state. This script includes the rules that the people are expected to follow and the goals towards which the participants should aim for. The script is often predetermined but it can also form in the beginning of drinking and change during it if there is a consensus. The reasoning behind the plan is that divergent behavior has a risk of disabling or breaking the play state for other participants. However, due to the rule breaker value, a person might act against the agreed plan and to enter or stay in play state, thus endangering the play state of other participants with his or her divergent behavior.

5.1. IMPLICATIONS

This study provides a new context to consumer culture and existential-phenomenology and interesting new perceptions on alcohol consumption experiences. It contributes to literature with an empirical research on play in Finnish student's experiences of alcohol consumption. The study broadens the understanding of alcohol consumption experience and of the reasons why people drink by presenting alcohol consumption as play. It highlights the positive effects alcohol consumption can have in an individual's life and suggests that the positive consequences of drinking are worth a greater attention. It also introduces the anxiety, boredom and apathy state in relation with drinking and thus, offers new information on the

challenges in drinking. Furthermore, by examining the elements of play in alcohol consumption and the actions that Finnish students undertake to enable the play state, it also illustrates new aspects in the consumption experience and related behavior. The study also contributes to the play research by introducing a new context and reminds that play is not just about enjoyment and fun but it can also have harmful consequences, and thus suggesting that drinking has potential to be studied as deep play as well.

For marketers and policy makers this study offers insights on how consumers regard alcohol consumption. The study suggests that consumers gain playful value from acting according to the rules of marketers and policy makers but also from breaking these same rules. This means that even though marketers and policy makers would want to avoid the playful value, it is most likely impossible (Grayson, 1999). This indicates that both marketers and policy makers need to take the existence of playful value in consideration when creating messages, campaigns and policies. Moreover, the study also illustrates the play state as reason for drinking and introduces numerous actions that consumers perform to enable the play. These actions highlight the matters that both prevent and enable drinking as play, thus including necessary information in understanding drinking and how to affect it.

Furthermore, the existence of irrationality in drinking sheds light to the reasons why people sometimes drink so much that from an observer point of view, it does not make any sense. By understanding the elements of play in drinking the marketers and the policy makers have a better possibility to affect the consumers and select better angles, practices and themes to promote their agenda.

5.2. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Even though existential-phenomenological approach and existential-phenomenological interviews have been acknowledged to pose a useful research paradigm and methodological approach, they have been suggested to possess restrictions (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Therefore due to the nature of the chosen research approach, data collection method and intentional choices in data collection, this study has a few limitations.

To begin with, it has been implicated that in interpretive approach, the analysis of the texts rests on the author's own foreknowledge, interpretation and explanations of behavior making results a reflection of the author's own view of the phenomenon and the world (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Secondly, the knowledge generated from phenomenological approach has been suggested to be time bound, idiographic and context dependent (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988) and therefore not applicable to larger or wider subsets of people (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Furthermore, the same uniqueness of human experiences that the phenomenology deeply respects, is said to prevent any attempt to totally and comprehensively capture the phenomenon of human experience (Hycner, 1985).

The model of existential-phenomenology that was proposed by Thompson et al. (1989), is problematic for cultural analysis since it draws on the mentalistic tradition in social theory (Reckwitz, 2002) and locates the production of social order in the minds of people, focusing primarily on the individual. Hence, it runs the risk of guiding researchers to place too much emphasis on personal independence and the role of individuals in social life, and thus failing to direct adequate attention to the cultural complexity of social action and marketplace activity. Furthermore, frameworks that attend to consumer's personal perceptions do not provide adequate data for a much-needed ethical analysis (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

Also the claim that with the right interview techniques the researcher can step into the informant's mind and experience the world as the informant does (McCracken 1988, p. 9) has been called into question. The reason is the argument that the interview can be seen as a particular form of social interaction and cultural practise regulated by cultural discourses that are significant for the topic and available in context of the interview, thus making the informants active participants constructing and assembling account of their experiences rather than telling the exact truth (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

Furthermore, the deliberate choice of interviewing only students can be viewed to set some limitations. The demarcation of the study group into students enables an examination of elements of play in alcohol consumption within an academically and health-wise popular and important group. But, as it was noted in the literature review and in the examples of discussion part of this study, the drinking patterns of consumers change during their life and this shift is especially strong and characterized by binge drinking during student life, which can be considered to set limitations. Also, the purposeful decision to interview friends can be

seen as a restrictive factor. Studying people from which one has previous knowledge might have an influence on the informants' answers and stories. Due to the relationship, the researcher might also have pre-understanding and knowledge of the informants' ideas, attitudes and behaviour, which affect the analyzing and interpretation of the data. Furthermore, even though the institutions of learning, ages and gender varied, they all were native Finns studying in Finland and friends of mine, thus representing a rather homogenous group of people.

Furthermore, the resemblance of the informants provides also possibilities for further research. I posit that the existence of playful alcohol consumption and its elements in other homogenous groups would provide useful information both about alcohol consumption within a particular group and about the applicability of play approach in alcohol studies. Moreover, since the play state has now been noticed in consumption of a stimulant, I posit that studying the elements of play with other stimulants would create interesting research possibilities on matters such as drug abuse, smoking and eating. Moreover, as the analysis of this study presented, play is not just about fun but it can also have harmful effects, which is a subject that has not been acknowledged enough. On the other hand, the alcohol research has mainly focused on the downsides of alcohol forgetting its cohesive power on community. Therefore my tentative suggestion for further research is also to focus on the positive consequences drinking has in a person's life and the negative ones play can have.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined how Finnish student's experiences of alcohol consumption incorporate the elements of play and what kind of actions students take in order to enable the play state. These findings were then used to provide implications for marketers and policy makers. The empirical data of the research illustrated a research gap in the understanding the reasons of drinking, and the study provided a new context for consumer culture and existential phenomenology and a new application for play.

According to the findings, the elements of play by the flow experience perspective (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and the common play definition (Rieber, 1996) appeared in Finnish student's experiences of alcohol consumption making the activity distinctive from any other, thus offering a proof that drinking can be play. The play state was also seen as a goal for the activity which governed the construction of drinking structure and affected the behavior of the drinker before, during and after the event. Moreover, the activity acted as a beacon of hope and a moment of extreme enjoyment bringing happiness to the person's life, thus improving the quality of life of the individual. The current alcohol consumption research has heavily focused on the negatives sides of alcohol but this study makes a suggestion that the greatly positive aspects of drinking deserve further research and should not be forgotten in order to create better understanding of alcohol consumption experiences.

The findings of this study also indicate the existence of irrationality in drinking, which implicates that drinking can be a deep play where one's health, social circles and ultimately life are at stake. These harmful consequences also remind about the matter that play is not just about positivity but it also includes malign corollaries which have not gained enough attention in research.

All in all, I would posit that the emphasis of this study is important both in the development of a comprehensive conceptualization of play and in understanding of alcohol consumption.

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8. APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Questions and topics covered in the semi-structured long interviews

Background information

- Tell about yourself
- What do you do?
- How do you spend your free time?

Drinking in general

- Can you tell about your drinking?
- What is drinking like to you?
- What does drinking include?
- What occurs to you in regards to drinking?
- Describe yourself as a drinker
- When do you drink?

Drinking occasions

- Can you think back of a drinking occasion when...
 - I. you felt good or nice
 - II. you felt bad
 - III. you did not feel like drinking
 - IV. you felt like drinking

Feelings on drinking

- Can you tell how you feel when you drink?
- How do you feel before drinking?
- How do you feel after drinking?