Anu Valtonen

RETHINKING FREE TIME: A STUDY ON BOUNDARIES, DISORDERS, AND SYMBOLIC GOODS

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Abstract

This study critically examines the contested category called free time. It aims to provide insights into this key category in consumer research that is generally accepted without critical reflection. To accomplish this task, the study brings together theoretical perspectives from symbolic and critical anthropology, critical consumption studies, and feminist studies. Through the constructs of symbolic boundaries, orders/disorders, and symbols, the study examines free time, and the complex ways in which consumption takes part in its formation. The empirical fieldwork is carried out in Finland. The primary data consist of cultural talk produced by focus groups, and they are complemented by cultural materials and fieldwork notes.

By drawing detailed attention to the boundaries of free time the study highlights the complexities and dynamics involved in this historically constructed category. It highlights the ways in which our everyday attempts to "be free" entail attempts to cope with idealized and morally loaded assumptions infused in different temporal categories. The study suggests that four symbolic battles can be identified: battle with temporal systems, battle with boundaries differentiating work and free time, dirty and clean free time, and waking and sleeping. This identification enlarges prevailing understanding of free time.

A key contribution of the study is the suggestion that, ultimately, the sub-world called free time is a mental world. Boundaries serve to differentiate thoughts, to create a symbolic world that enables one to think about the right things at the right place, and at the right time. This suggestion makes us to question the dominant way to comprehend free time in terms of the absence of work, or the presence of leisure activities, or through time-space relation. Closely related, the study makes a contribution by calling attention to the role of memory, to forgetting *and* remembering. By highlighting the significance of the moral division, dirty and clean, it also challenges the image of free time as a unified category. Importantly, the study opens up the concept of free time by bringing sleeping to our attention. It suggests that sleeping constitutes a significant pleasure, not a mere necessity, and therefore, it should not be excluded from free time studies at the outset.

The study also makes a contribution to symbolic consumption by suggesting a new role for consumption as manager of thoughts. While earlier studies have discussed the ways in which consumption serves to differentiate social groups, this study highlights the ways in which it also serves to differentiate and manage thoughts. Consumption hinders wrong thoughts from entering mind and so enables one to think differently. It is this very differentiation that seems to be, however, threatened in today's society.

Keywords: *cultural categories, free time, symbolic boundaries, symbolic consumption*

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On Friday, May 7, 2004, Helsinki
Anu Valtonen

Table of contents

1 INTRODUCTION 1

Prologue: Creating the stage 1
Free time is currently under major construction 2
Objectives of the study 11
Methodology 12
Producing cultural data 12
Analyzing cultural data 19
Structure of the study 24

2 TOOLS FOR RETHINKING FREE TIME 27

Free time as represented in time-use statistics 28
Understanding cultural meanings of free time 33
Free time in terms of orders/disorders and boundaries 40
Changing order 42
Moral order 45
Beyond order 47
Boundaries of free time and performativity 50
The notion of performativity 51
Performative consumption and goods 54
Subject as cultural performer 61
Symbolic-critical approach to free time 64

3 SYMBOLIC BATTLE WITH TEMPORAL SYSTEMS 68

Time in economic system: cycle of production and consumption 69
Time to earn and time to consume 70
Freedom: "*free to do what one wants*" 72
"Time for myself": 74
Time in tradition-based social system: cycle of life and death 76
Dangerous times and ordinary times 76
Binding: social and cultural renewal 79
Temporal systems encounter 81
Reversal*: "Thank God it's Friday!"* 81
Struggle: *"I can't be free of Christmas"* 86
Convergence: *"I clean out cupboards during holidays"* 88
Battle with different principles of time 91

4 SYMBOLIC BATTLE WITH WORK AND FREE TIME 94

The contested boundary between work and free time 94
Competing orders: to blur or to separate work and free time? 94
Boundaries and knowledge work 98
The contested boundary and consumption 100
Set of perfomative acts and artifacts 100
ICTs – symbolic polluters and cleaners 108

5 SYMBOLIC BATTLE WITH DIRTY AND CLEAN FREE TIME.......................... 112
The boundary between dirty and clean free time 112
Two-sided free time: dirty and clean 112
Being in-between.. 116
Symbolic goods that “make one free and bind” 120
Becoming free 120
Returning 126

6 SYMBOLIC BATTLE WITH WAKING AND SLEEPING.................................... 129
Symbolism of sleeping - *another world* 129
Beyond clock-time 130
Beyond the rational world 133
Boundary between waking and sleeping.. 135
Protected boundary 135
Setting different worlds apart.. 138

7 SYMBOLIC WORLD CALLED FREE TIME 141
Mental battlefield.. 142
Thinking about the right things at the right place.................................. 142
Balancing between forgetting and remembering.................................... 146
Symbolic consumption and thinking 148
Managing thoughts through consumption.. 149

8 CONCLUSIONS.. 153
Theoretical implications... 157
Understanding “free time”.. 157
Understanding symbolic consumption... 160
Methodological implications 165
Political implications.. 166
Areas for future research 169

APPENDIX 1: Methodological appendix.. 174

REFERENCES.. 181

List of tables

Table 1. Composition of focus groups... 17
Table 2. Time and free time in different temporal systems......................... 92
Table 3. Perspectives on symbolic consumption.. 163

List of figures

Figure 1. Time-use of Finns aged 10-64 in autumn 1979, 1987, and 1999*.... 29
Figure 2. Division of free time by usage in 1987-1988 and 1999-2000*.......... 31
Figure 3. Symbolic battle between dirty and clean free time.......................... 115
Figure 4. Free time played out in the arena of consumption.......................... 156

* Source: Niemi and Pääkkönen 2001 / Statistics Finland

1 Introduction

Prologue: creating the stage

The subject of my study is the category called free time. During my research process – when conducting fieldwork, or presenting my study at seminars - one question was constantly in the air: what is free time? Both respondents and researchers alike seemed to confront the same difficulty in answering or even approaching this question. This implies that the basic assumptions upon which we are accustomed to rely when thinking about free time are being challenged. We are forced to rethink what free time is.

This phenomenon should concern consumer researchers, in particular, since free time constitutes the basic category of the field. Free time is time to consume. Furthermore, this category is negotiated through consumption; through the use of mobile phones and coffee, for instance.

This work presents my search for such a theoretical approach that would capture the contested nature of free time in a way that highlights, not hides, the complexities and ambiguities inherent within it. In traveling through disciplines, I ended up at anthropology and classic authors such as Douglas, Turner, and van Gennep. Their symbolic viewpoint and the constructs of boundaries, disorders, and symbols seemed to meet my purposes. Recent authors such as Marcus and Fischer guided me to use these classic tools in a critical way. Butler's notion of performativity, in turn, made me think of the power of symbolic repetition as well as politics of boundaries.

These works led me perceive many aspects of my culture that had previously been invisible because of my cultural and theoretical blinders. I came to perceive that free time is not just happy time for happy activities, but a much more complex realm filled with fears and hopes, dangers and joys. I also came to perceive that the quest for free time involves many kinds of peculiar symbolic battles. Ultimately, the question seems to be of a mental battle that crystallizes into the question: how to be able to think of the right things in the right place? In that battle, the role of consumption turns out to be to manage thoughts: to hinder wrong things from entering the mind, and to help to balancing between remembering and forgetting.

In metaphorical terms this work is best thought of as a theatre. The theatre serves to unmask ourselves – the play displays something about us for us – thus I intend to unmask and display something about our ways of both doing and researching free time. In particular, I attempt to re-link issues that tend to have been separated. So both new technological devices and old artifacts like coffee and tobacco; researchers and researched; good and bad sides of free time; joys and dangers of being free will be seen at the same time. Issues that have been behind the scenes will be seen on the main stage. Therefore, the hidden, forbidden and forgotten issues, like sleep and thoughts will also be seen. In doing so, my play attempts to reopen doors that have remained closed when free time is discussed.

I hope you enjoy the play and please make sure your mobile phone is switched off.

Free time is currently under major construction

This study addresses the category called free time. In today's society, often called the information society, the category is challenged. As several studies indicate, time in general, and the modern dichotomy of free time and work in particular, has become problematized (Adam 1995; Bertman 1998; Bittman and Wajcman 2000; Frissen 2000; Moisander and Valtonen 2002, 2003; Nowotny 1994). In such a situation, the question "what is free time?" has become most relevant. This particular question has also inspired and guided the present study.

Basically, the culturally and historically constructed category called free time represents a symbolic *other world* that provides an opportunity to "be free" (Rojek 1995). The question is not one of any simple or fixed given, but of a world that must be constantly constructed and maintained in the midst of everyday life. The construction serves to set the world apart, to differentiate it. This setting apart has been challenged today. It means that drawing clear boundaries has become difficult. As one of my respondents, an IT engineer says:

- *…you can't possibly just close the door and leave all the work behind. If you don't have something totally different during your free time, go to the movies or something like that, that requires your entire attention and takes you to another world, so that's bad.*

The account poses several questions. If the separation of free time and work is that difficult, how is it coped with? If the separation requires active doing, like going to the movies, what is considered "doing"? If movies "require attention" how should the role of such an act of consumption be understood? What is actually separated? What is it to "be free"? Why is the blurring of free time and work considered "bad"? Does it concern all contexts or just certain ones? What other moral dimensions may be involved? Is free time itself not sometimes "bad"? Finally, are there no ways other than free time and work to comprehend and divide time? All in all, this leads to critically reflecting on the assumptions we tend to rely on when talking of "free time".

Throughout the work I seek to argue that, first, the understanding of free time is a complex theoretical and empirical task that requires the rethinking of the starting points and methods of investigation. Instead of uncritically following the dichotomy between free time and work, and the attendant assumptions, research attention should be turned to the making of this dichotomy and to areas that become obscured by it. Second, that addressing the topic of free time through the notion of symbolic boundaries makes it possible to expand the nature of free time *and* to elaborate on the role of consumption in its formation. Focusing on the boundaries, on the point of differentiation, provides a powerful analytical lever for cultural principles in general (Douglas [1966] 2002; Holt 1997), and in this context in particular, it enables the dynamics and complexities inherent in the phenomenon to be illustrated.

To take up such a task of rethinking free time through the notion of boundaries is of major importance for consumer research. First of all, free time constitutes an implicit basic category for the whole field - free time is time to consume (Baudrillard 1998; Cross 1993; Rojek 1995). It is, especially, crucial to assess the nature of the assumptions upon which free time is built and elaborate on whether they are in line with contemporary conditions. What is obscured and omitted if research continues to lean on the modern dichotomy between free time and work and its attendant assumptions? Previous studies have not asked this critical question although the field has witnessed an increasing investigation of its other fundamental categories, such as "consumption", "consumer" and "marketer" (Firat 1999; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Firat and Dholakia 1998; Joy and Venkatesh 1994; Penaloza 1994b; Moisander 2001). The question should be asked, because as Thompson (2002) points out, a critical reading of tacit research assumptions may not only lead to more insightful theories of consumption, but also to a revelation of issues left unresolved in our disciplinary map.

Another important rationale for taking up such a task is that the renegotiation of free time occurs through consumption. Previous literature has well documented the complex ways in which consumption enters into the process of drawing and negotiating social categories and boundaries (Bourdieu 1984; Douglas and Isherwood [1979] 1996; Holt 1997; Oswald 1999; Penaloza 1994a; Uusitalo 1995). There are also studies that have elaborated how time-use patterns, such as the use of leisure time activities, are used to

construct and express lifestyles (e.g. Uusitalo 1979). Studies focusing more directly on the formation of temporal categories have tended to concentrate on one culturally significant category at a time, such as Christmas (Miller 1993; Nissenbaum 1996), Thanksgiving (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), or holidays (Belk and Costa 1998; Selänniemi 1996; see also e.g. Jokinen and Veijola 1997; Urry 1990). They do not tell much about the contested nature of current free time and how its boundaries are negotiated at the everyday level. Those studies, in turn, that have focused on temporal boundaries at the everyday level (Nippert-Eng 1996; Zerubaval 1991), have not fully treated it as a consumption phenomenon. Accordingly, we have relatively little understanding of how consumption enters into the formation and management of the contested boundaries of free time.

This is a considerable gap, since this context has the potential to inform us about the nature of ordinary symbolic consumption. If we think that "a main characteristic of our society is a willed coexistence of very new technology and very old social forms", as Raymond Williams notes (in Silverstone and Hirsch 1992, p. 1), this is particularly true in the context of free time. At the boundaries of free time new information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones or e-mail, encounter traditional products, such as tobacco or coffee. Therefore, the context provides a fruitful opportunity to elaborate on the ways in which new consumer goods are taken into cultural usage and how they interact with existing ones. Instead of following the technological utopia that "technological devices free us from boundaries of time" the attention is here directed to the ways in which these devices are used to construct and negotiate boundaries of time.

Moreover, the given dynamic context of contested free time creates room for re-examining the role of symbolic goods and consumption. Previous studies, inspired by structuralism, have considered symbolic consumption to be like language: goods are treated as the carriers of meanings and as a means of conveying messages (Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Levy 1981; McCracken 1986, 1988). With this view, consumption and consumer goods are seen to "notch", "demarcate", and "communicate" temporal boundaries. This view does not seem to be fully adequate in the present context. How to "demarcate" boundaries when the boundaries themselves are brought into question?

How to consider desperate attempts to avoid thinking about work matters during free time as “communication”? How to consider symbolically charged boundary goods, such as tobacco, coffee, mobile phones, or a sofa, that have the power to liberate and enslave, attract and evoke shame, merely as “a means of conveying messages”? In such a context, therefore, it does not make sense to think that the major role of consumption is to provide marking services. Rather, it seems to be more relevant to consider that goods *do* something.

How, then, to address such a dynamic and complex phenomenon theoretically? My solution is to address it by drawing on the discipline of anthropology. Throughout its long history, anthropology has developed a rich set of tools and methods to make sense of cultures and symbols. Therefore, it provides a solid theoretical ground for the present study. It also helps to cultivate a distance from my own taken-for-granted world: being an alien discipline for me, a trained consumer researcher, it opens up fresh ways of thinking and reflecting on the topic of free time.

In particular, I draw on the school of thought that is often referred to as symbolic anthropology[1]. The tradition holds that reality is apprehended and cultural order established through symbolic classifications; we live within a world of symbols and symbolic classes of our own making. It sees symbolic classifications, boundaries, and boundary artifacts as key tools through which to assess cultural order (Douglas 2002; Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Turner 1977, 1992; van Gennep 1960). It maintains that the order is built up from a system of symbolic classification that differentiates the world into distinct kinds and makes it meaningful. This differentiation is sustained and negotiated through boundaries that in turn get material existence through symbols. Therefore, boundaries and their symbolic expressions are accorded a primary role in such research.

[1] The intellectual roots of symbolic anthropology can be traced back to structuralism and to names like Durkheim, Malinowski, Edward Evans-Pritchard, Radcliffe-Brown, Douglas, Turner, and van Gennep. This school of thought is also often referred as (British) social anthropology.

While these scholars, especially Mary Douglas, are often known to consider “culture as classification”, there is another dimension involved, “culture as contention” (Fardon 1999, p. 215-218). This means that even though we are built into the design of a classified world, these classes are not fixed but become contested. As Fardon puts it: “culture as contention describes what is to be contested in terms of classificatory culture” (Fardon 1999, p. 218). Therefore, I propose, this view is fruitful in my attempt to assess today’s contested temporal classifications.

Moreover, these scholars provide an interesting viewpoint to assess the cultural order through the disorder, through things that do not fit into classifications, through the threat and danger[2]. It is this very viewpoint, I suggest, that enables light to be shed on the peculiar tensions inherent in the phenomenon. It leads to the consideration of free time not just as an oasis of happiness and personal liberty, but also as a realm that is filled with dangers and threats. Free time is both fascinating and frightening. The theoretical viewpoint also leads to the consideration of the boundaries of free time not as a simple differentiation task but as a constant management task. This is due to the constant presence of the disorder; it constitutes a permanent condition of social life and calls for constant management and maintenance. In other words, the theory pictures a tense world that is perpetually in motion. This results in symbolic battles at the boundaries.

In the present context, this is a particular battle, since the disorder is present in two ways. First of all, the current society seems to face an overall temporal disorder as discussed in the beginning of the chapter. Various forces contribute to this situation. The emergence of the new communication technology is reported as one key force (Kopomaa 2000; Moisander and Valtonen 2002; Mäenpää 2001; Nowotny 1994; Uusitalo 2002), and the work that has become increasingly knowledge intensive represents another force (Blom, Melin and Pyöriä 2001; Castells 1996; Rodrigues 2002). In such a situation people are forced to renegotiate, redefine and manage blurring boundaries of time, and especially, the drawing of clear boundaries between work and free time is challenged.

[2] The idea to address normalcy through a-normalcy is present in the work of other authors as well, such as Goffman. For the importance of studying anomalous things see also Uusitalo and Uusitalo (1981, 1985).

Second, the very idea of free time represents disorder; being free means being out-of-order, beyond boundaries. In today's society, this is realized as ordered disorder, there are defined times and places to be free – such as weekends, coffee breaks, bars, or theme parks (Belk 2000, Turner 1982). However, as Rojek (1995) points out, these times and places are not symbolically similar: some are defined as culturally more acceptable than others. This means that the realm of free time is divided into good and bad, dirty and clean. It results in a symbolic battle at the boundary that differentiates these realms: one must negotiate whether to enter into the culturally acceptable or the slightly forbidden side of free time.

Moreover, the holistic spirit in anthropology leads one to take a look at the symbolic realms of freedom that are commonly excluded when free time is studied. That is, to go beyond boundaries imposed by previous studies. In this study, one such previously excluded realm is highlighted: sleep. It appears to play a significant role in my data. The boundary between awake and sleep requires symbolic maintenance, too, especially in today's society where the boundary seems to be challenged.

The renegotiation and management of boundaries is traditionally discussed in terms of rituals. I depart from that tradition and conceptualize boundary work as *performative* (Butler 1999; Turner 1992). That notion helps to highlight the repetitive and theatrical dimensions involved in the phenomenon. Performance takes place in the arena of consumption from day to day, week to week, year to year. The notion of performativity also leads one to acknowledge that all this is not without implications. As also Holt notes: "Symbolic boundaries are, by definition, socially consequential because they include and exclude" (Holt 1997, p. 340). The political nature of boundaries has been widely discussed by feminist authors (Charpentier 2001; Butler 1999; Haraway 1991).

On the whole, feminist studies have inspired my work. They are based on the premise of challenging the obvious, and, therefore, they provide a good intellectual standpoint for my present attempt to rethink one cultural category, free time, and its basic assumptions. They have also shown well the ways in which cultural categories become played out in everyday life (Charpentier 2001; Butler 1999; Haraway 1991; Meriläinen 2001; Moisander 2000).

Feminists, as well as current anthropologists, have also highlighted the importance of historicity in understanding cultural categories (Appadurai 1986, 1996; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fisher 1999). Following their suggestion, I draw on the literature dealing with the general historical construction of time and free time (Adam 1990, 1995; Appadurai 1996; Cross 1993; Marrus 1974; Rojek 1995; Whitrow 1988) as well as a specifically Finnish one (Anttonen 1996; Apo 2001; Ollila 2000; Vilkuna 2000). Uncovering the historical construction of free time highlights its thoroughly arbitrary nature. As Richard Johnson points out: "We can use history to show how contemporary conceptions of 'the natural' are themselves historical constructions" (Johnson 2001, p. 280). Moreover, tracing the roots of free time shows the complex ways it becomes infused into other social and political structures, including research practices, and becomes fashioned and enhanced through them. The historical look also shows how cultural meanings tend to be remarkably resistant in spite of material changes, and in so doing, it offers a possibility to consider the issue of cultural continuity and to better understand the nature of the symbolic battle that takes place at contemporary boundaries.

Thus, in addressing the category called free time I lean on classic symbolic anthropological tools but I apply them in a critical way - "to make accessible the normally unexamined assumptions by which we operate" (Marcus and Fischer 1999, p. ix). Therefore, I call my theoretical perspective symbolic-critical. The perspective relates to the increasing tendency to address the economy, (e.g. du Gay 1997; du Gay and Pryke 2002; Featherstone 1991; Jameson 1998) and consumption (e.g. Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry 1989; Holt 1997; Oswald 1999; Penaloza 2001; Venkatesh 1995; Sherry 1995) as a cultural phenomenon. It also relates to the emerging body of critical consumer studies that has called attention to the ways in which consumer research itself is seen as part of the process in which meanings are produced and some kind of social reality is constructed (Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Firat and Dholakia 1998; Joy and Venkatesh 1994; Penaloza 1994b; Moisander 2001).

This study pursues these basic streams while bearing in mind anthropology as a kind of basic discipline. As anthropologists' interest has shifted towards studying one's own cultures, the shift has shown well the key role of consumption in producing and repro-

ducing culture in contemporary societies (Appadurai 1986; Belk *et al*. 1989; Belk and Costa 1998; Miller 1995; McCracken 1986, 1988; Schiffer 2001; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). As Mary Douglas, one key developer of anthropology of consumption, states, "consumption is the very arena in which culture is fought over and licked into shape" (Douglas and Isherwood 1996, p. 37). This study addresses the ways in which the category called free time is fought over and licked into shape in the arena of consumption. In particular, the analysis is zoomed in on the boundaries separating the given category.

As the making of these boundaries tends to be repetitive, think of coffee breaks for instance, the present study deals with repetitive symbolic consumption, often labeled as ordinary consumption (Appadurai 1996; Gronow and Warde 2001). The study also takes a critical look at the ways in which these boundaries are commonly drawn in research, that is, what becomes included and excluded when free time is assessed, and what implications this may have. Therefore, the study falls somewhere between symbolic consumption studies and critical consumption studies.

During its history, the field of consumer research has addressed symbolic consumption from various points of views. Since Sidney Levy's notion that goods carry a symbolic dimension (1959), consumer symbolism has been studied from the experiential point of view (e.g. Hirschman and Holbrook 1981; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Uusitalo 1986; Uusitalo and Liukko 1999) and from the structural point of view[3] (e.g. Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Levy 1981; McCracken 1988). This study follows that latter stream of research.

[3] The relationship between structures and consumption has been widely elaborated also within sociologically inspired studies and then consumption is seen as a structuring force (Bourdieu 1984; Uusitalo 1979).

Being committed to the symbolic worldview, the study also views time in symbolic terms. The topic of time also nicely illustrates the special nature of our mundane symbols: they are such an evident part of everyday life that their symbolic nature tends to disappear. Symbols become naturalized (Douglas 1970). As Norbert Elias points out:

> One of the difficulties in investigating time is that people are as yet little aware of the nature and functioning of the symbols they have themselves developed and constantly use. They are therefore always in danger of losing themselves in the undergrowth of their own symbols. Time is one example. Human-made calendars and clock-faces bear witness to the symbolic character of time. But time has often appeared mysterious to human beings. Much remains to be done in elucidating the special nature of human symbols.
>
> Norbert Elias, *Time: An Essay*, 1992, p. 29-30

In elucidating the special nature of human symbols one must consider the ways in which they are supposed to acquire their meaning. In line with the theoretical tradition chosen it is thought that time, like other symbols, acquires its meaning in some system (Douglas 2002). One system that easily comes to mind is the market system with its classic idea "time is money". Is that, however, the only one? If sociologist Barbara Adam (2003), for instance, identified various institutional spheres such as "political" and "scientific" in which time may be comprehended somewhat differently, why would this also not be the case here? Temporal lines were drawn far long before the classes "free time" and "work" were invented (Whitrow 1988). We do still also rely on these traditional bases although they tend to go unnoticed. Consequently, complex and intertwined conceptions of time meet at our everyday life. This constitutes one further symbolic battle, a battle that can be traced back to different assumptions on time.

Objectives of the study

In this study my overall aim is to rethink free time. Towards that end I aim to develop a theoretical perspective that is able to shed light a) on the complex and dynamic nature of the category called free time and b) on the ways in which consumption plays a part in its creation. I have outlined above the basic starting points of such a perspective that makes a synthesis of symbolical and critical views, and that pays major analytical attention to boundaries. This perspective, I suggest, reflects and respects the dynamic and complex nature of the phenomenon under study and makes way for rethinking free time.

In particular, acknowledging that free time is a cultural and historical construction that has become contested in today's society, and that this contest is played out through consumption, this study asks: How is free time produced, renegotiated, and managed in the arena of consumption? The question is answered through the following sub-questions:

1. Upon what kinds of assumptions are the notions of "free time" constructed historically? In what temporal systems? How is the interaction of these systems coped with in everyday life?
2. What kinds of different boundaries are there to be renegotiated and managed in the context of free time? What is this process like?
3. How to understand the symbolic world constructed through boundaries? What is the symbolic field in which the renegotiation and management takes place?
4. What is the role of consumption and consumer goods in this dynamic process of production, renegotiation and management of free time?

In cultural literature, the terms "produce", "negotiate", and "renegotiate" are commonly used to refer to the dynamics of meaning construction: meanings are not stable but in flux. Here, they are used in that sense, too. Moreover, the term "management" is here used to refer to the process of coping with orders and disorders. To highlight this complex dynamics, the term "symbolic battle" will be used as some sort of umbrella term.

Methodology

To answer the questions posed above I have conducted empirical fieldwork in Finland during 2000-2003[4]. The data consist of two sets: the primary data set is produced by focus groups and the secondary data set consists of cultural material (advertisements and media), as well as fieldwork notes. I am, after all, living in the field I am researching. In this sense, the data production draws inspiration from ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995), although it does not follow its practices in the strict sense.

Besides the empirical data, I also consider the existing literature on free time, as well as statistics as part of the phenomenon, as data that shed light on the assumptions on which free time are built. As Alasuutari notes, "any material organized by the rules of research methodology may represent 'empirical material' of the study" (1992, p. 8). I not only read stories that my respondents tell about free time, but also those researchers tell.

This methodological section starts by discussing the production of the data sets and then it turns to discuss the data analysis. A more detailed elaboration of methodological procedures will be found in Appendix 1.

Producing cultural data

Primary data set. The crucial methodological question of the study is: how to address contested boundaries of free time? My solution is to draw on *language* in addressing them. Given that language constitutes a primary means through which reality is constructed (Alasuutari 1998; Berger and Luckmann 1972; de Saussure 1983), it also constitutes a primary means for elaborating on that reality. Language provides the means to elaborate on what kinds of distinctions are found culturally important and what kinds of meanings and morality they presuppose. For instance, a statement "That's the way Fri-

[4] Being one of the leading adopters of new communication technology, Finland might be considered to provide a good context for examining the renegotiation of temporal order in the midst of the information society. Source: Global Information Technology Report 2002-2003 – Readiness for the Networked World; Finland is ranked number one. www.weforum.org.

day is" is a message about a certain kind of cultural and moral order. The language also provides the means to elaborate on the ways in which the order has been contested.

To obtain linguistic data I rely on discussions produced by focus groups. In doing so I depart from the tendency to rely on personal interviews to produce cultural data (e.g. Holt 1997; Joy 2001; Penaloza 2000; Thompson and Troester 2002). Focus groups are social settings where six to eight participants discuss some particular subject matter in an open and free-flowing manner for a limited time, normally from one to two hours (Bloor *et al*. 2001; Fern 2001; Morgan 1993; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). The moderator guides and facilitates the discussion, but the key responsibility for the discussion is placed on the participants. As a social situation, then, a focus group is quite a distinctive and dynamic one, and by its very nature, it is collective rather than individual (Madriz 2000). Therefore, it invites the kind of discussion that is suitable for the purposes of the present study.

First of all, the focus group produces a rich and comprehensive discussion of the topic in question at a level that is relevant to everyday life (Morgan 1993). Such discussion is fruitful for cultural analysis. As Holt (1997, p. 339) points out, in researching cultural meanings one cannot ask them directly. The analyst should infer them from the data and when it is a question of identifying and analyzing relational differences, rich and grounded discussions are needed.

When conducting the groups I was informed by the assumption that cultural categories are meaningful only to extent they differ from other categories (Douglas and Isherwood 1996). Therefore, my discussion guide did not just deal with free time, but also with work. The participants were asked to tell about their everyday life, how their normal day goes, how they spend their weekends, holidays, etc. That is, the discussion centered upon general cultural categories. This seemed to provide a fluent basis for the discussion. A wide range of probing questions was asked for each category to get an in-depth view of them.

However, although I asked participants to talk about their own contemporary life, the conversation widened to cover different temporal, spatial, and social spheres. It covered past, present, and future; experiences at home and abroad, in cities and the countryside, one's own experiences, as well as those of friends, parents, children, etc. Therefore, the data so produced may be characterized as rich and comprehensive.

Secondly, the method heightens the opportunities for participants to decide the scope, directions, and content of the discussion. In so doing it opens up room for participants to speak up on issues they find worth discussing about the topic in question (Madriz 2000). In practice, therefore, although I produced the topics to be discussed and guided the conversation, the participants played quite an active role. They begin to discuss issues of interest to them without waiting for questions from the moderator. This characteristic is of particular importance for a cultural analyst, because it enables culturally relevant topics to emerge, topics that otherwise might remain untouched. For instance, my discussion guide did not include such an issue as sleep, because I uncritically followed the assumption of active free time. Despite this, my participants did talk and comment a lot about sleeping.

Thirdly, the group generates the kind of cultural talk that is relevant for the present study: it makes the shared, taken-for-granted, contested, symbolically charged and tabooed things visible and researchable. Groups are situations to which cultural members have been invited to discuss some topic, like the topic of free time. In order to become a group, participants in a way negotiate what "we" are as a group, what do we have in common. The conversation in a group is largely based on pre-understanding what "we all" know and share. Therefore, the discussion tends to center on collective and common topics rather than individual ones, on topics that are widely available.

This implies that in the groups of this study the talk centered on categories that are customarily used for discussing free time. It covered shared cultural categories, symbols, meanings, and vocabularies related to free time, such as Friday, sauna, summer cottage, mobile phones, coffee, commuting, summer holidays, one's own time, Canary Islands or

Christmas. Individual leisure time activities, in turn, did not get much room, since they do not provide a widely shared basis for discussing free time.

Actually, the group discussion produced little stories about these categories: stories about the panic before holidays, about the difficulty getting rid of work issues, about lovely quiet Sunday mornings, about warm moments with family members, or about the beauty of just being and gazing into the fire. In this sense, focus group participants tell collective stories, or “write culture together” to use Madriz’s (2000) expression. For these stories to be meaningful and to acquire a degree of social understanding, they must draw on the shared stock of cultural knowledge. Therefore, although focus groups are divorced from the “natural” cultural setting, there is no reason to consider the conversation produced within groups as ”un-natural”. It is plugged into the culture.

These collective stories might be referred as drama. They are stories about social life, which “even in its apparently quietest moments is characteristically ‘pregnant’ with social dramas” (Turner 1982, p. 11). This is particularly true in the context of this study: the dramatic tension is built into the very phenomenon of the study. Consequently, little stories about free time are structured around the tension between good and bad, right and wrong, order and disorder, freedom and slavery. They are little moral stories about proper conduct of free time. They are also filled with fears, hopes, expectations, and importantly, taboos – silence talks as well. The issue of sex, for instance, was such a silenced issue.

Importantly, these stories reflect the contemporary time trouble. When cultural order in general is challenged, it becomes expressed and negotiated in the social sphere (Alasuutari 1995; Berger and Luckmann 1972; Douglas 2002). Focus groups provide room for that kind of negotiation. Therefore, the contested nature of free time became apparent. There is much talk about whether one is allowed to shop on Sunday, work at nights, or consider the work/free dichotomy as insignificant. There is also much hesitating talk about “what is free time, after all”.

On the whole, the focus group situation might be seen as a kind of mini-theater where participants tell moral and dramatic stories about themselves for themselves (Madriz 2000). Focus groups actually invite people to reflect upon the taken-for-granted conduct of life and become aware of it. In this sense, groups provide room for reflecting and commenting on culture, what is "our life about". In the case of my study, the participants talk about the mundane conduct of their life, and in doing so they reflectively comment on it; they comment on their Friday, weekend, holidays, or commuting. Such talk might be considered a kind of meta-comment of our culture (Turner 1982, 1992; cf. the term meta-culture Urban 2001).

One important condition for enhancing collective stories to be told is some kind of shared basis among participants; shared culture, values, interest, or histories that make it possible for participants to enter and engage in the same play. Commonly, the basis for similarity is created by an appropriate group composition, that is, groups are composed so that participants are likely to have something in common at the outset. This homogeneity is typically created either in regard to the substantial research topic, and/or to the demographics (Morgan 1993; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990).

As my primary interest lies in the on-going renegotiation of the boundaries of free time, it also guides the group composition. I assume that people who have somehow confronted and experienced the on-going renegotiation and lack of time might be particularly appropriate speakers, since they have been forced to reflect upon and rethink time conceptions. Drawing on a pre-understanding and the literature, it might be assumed that people working in information intensive professions (Moisander and Valtonen 2002) and parents who work, but have small children (Frissen 2000; Jallinoja 2000) constitute fruitful groups for the purpose of the study. These two dimensions also provide the needed basis for homogeneity. Participants working in similar professions, or those facing the need to balance work and family might have at least some sort of feeling of sharing and understanding each other.

Therefore, people working in the "typical" professions of the information society, that are also "creative" rather than productive, were purposely selected: people working in advertising, IT, media, or the communication sector. The participants were single or

couples with no children. The other set of groups consist of working parents with small children (at primary school or younger). They were all working outside the home, but no clear professional criteria were formed (middle class workers in practice), because the issue of having small children was supposed to create a sufficient basis for similarity.

Before conducting these groups, one pilot group was conducted in order to plan and test the discussion guide. That pilot group consisted of teenagers (male and female), for budgetary reasons, but it also turned out to provide an interesting and somewhat different viewpoint to the phenomenon. All in all, five focus groups were conducted in Helsinki in 2000-2001.

The composition of the groups is shown in the table below. Each group included 6 respondents that were strangers to each other. The sessions lasted approximately 1.5 hours and they were all audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. The respondents were recruited by Mobile Vista Ltd. The researcher moderated all the groups.

Composition of focus groups			
Groups	**Group criteria**		
	Familial status	**Sex**	**Age**
Pilot group: teenagers	---	Male/female	14-15
Creative workers	Single/couple, no children	Female	20-30
Creative workers	Single/couple, no children	Male	20-30
Working fathers	Have children	Male	30-40
Working mothers	Have children	Female	30-40

Table 1. Composition of focus groups.

I do not consider that these discussions give any direct access to how people actually spend their free time or how they “really” perform a wide variety of daily consumption activities. Instead, it gives access to the shared representational and symbolic machinery of free time. Accordingly, I am not interested in whether people ”lie” or ”speak the truth” when they talk about their daily life and free time. In any case, the conversation derives from and produces this culture. To put it roughly, it makes culture researchable.

It is also worth stressing that my purpose is not to reduce the discussion produced to the individual groups. That is, I am not interested in whether, for example, the boundary work of mothers differs from that of fathers. Rather, the discussion generated is seen to provide an access to the symbolic system called free time, and different groups just provide somewhat different angles on it. The reason for composing different homogeneous groups derives from the very nature of focus groups as a method. Therefore, the question whether the data corpus is sufficient should be evaluated against the appropriate unit of analysis of the study. That is, instead of thinking that I have five groups, or 30 individuals in the groups, it should be thought of as roughly one hundred temporal categories in the data.

A more detailed elaboration of conducting the focus groups will be found in the methodological Appendix 1.

Secondary data set. The secondary data set has a complementary role in the study. It consists of cultural materials such as advertisements and media, as well as fieldwork notes. The usage of the secondary data set serves to further base the study in the context where it is conducted (MacDonald 2001; Holt 1997). It also helps to get a more comprehensible picture of the phenomenon in question, and to make the interpretation and analysis more rigorous (Arnould 1998; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). The use of media and advertising also represents a way to acknowledge that the production meanings occur through various kinds of symbolic genres in current societies (Appadurai 1990).

Cultural material concentrates on the print material, simply for the sake of clarity. The question is not one of a systematically collected data corpus; rather, it is purposefully collected during the research process along with an understanding derived from the focus groups. For instance, the talk of sleep in groups led to attention being paid to the large number of bed advertisements, websites related to sleep, and news about sleep disorders. Similarly, the talk about consumer artifacts led to collecting advertisements related to them, like mobile phones and coffee. The on-going renegotiation of cultural boundaries that came out in the groups is also widely conducted in newspapers, for example, discussion about the grocery stores opening on Sundays. The data set consists such media discussion.

The particularity of the fieldwork of this study is, that actually, my field surrounds me all the time. Accordingly, I kept a research journal during the whole research process – during my free time, at seminars, at my workplace, while commuting. These notes concentrate on boundary work and are inspired and largely guided by the emerging interpretation derived from the focus groups. My journal includes notes and observations starting with the conduct of the focus groups and ending in December 2002.

Before the groups, four personal pilot interviews were conducted in order to become familiar with the topic and to find fruitful and easy-going ways to discuss free time in the groups. The interviews lasted nearly one hour each and they were all audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. The individuals interviewed were (names changed):

- Kirsi, female, marketing manager, single
- Tapani, male, project manager, IT sector, couple, no children
- Johanna, female, secretary, part-time worker, married, two children
- Pekka, male, media manager, media agency, single

Analyzing cultural data

How to analyze such data?[5] How to make sense of them? The way I have made sense of them should be considered an interpretation of interpretation - the world is already interpreted, and I just present one reading of it. I do not consider this reading to represent "the one and only truth"; rather, it represents one perspective, one possible way of interpreting and making sense of the data (Alasuutari 1996; Daly 1997). The task is, then, to make the perspective as clear as possible. I concentrate here on the basic analytical principles. The reader interested in a more detailed discussion on the data analysis process is asked to view Appendix 1.

[5] In answering this question I acknowledge that writing a separate "data analysis" chapter does not do justice to the actual analytical process, that is an inseparable part of the whole research. I further acknowledge the difficulty of explaining a process that, by its very nature, is simultaneously explicit and implicit, systematic and chaotic, serious and playful.

I rely on the view that the theory makes the data speak (Alasuutari 1995, 1996, 1998; Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Daly 1997). In doing so, I thus depart from the view of proceeding from data to theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Instead, I follow an assumption that the theory plays a significant role from the very outset of research. Already the process of data generating relies on some ontological and epistemological premises, that is, on premises about the nature of the reality being studied and the ways it can be studied. This does not, however, mean a rigid *a priori* theory formulation. Rather, the question is one of a constant redefining and reformulating of the theoretical frame in the course of analyzing the data (Alasuutari 1996). That is, the data and theory are placed in a constant dialogue, during which emerging understandings of both the data and theory are tested, challenged, and revised. Also the focus of study is narrowed and sharpened during this process, and in a way, is also the outcome of, not precondition of, the research. For me, therefore, both the data and the theory are food for thought, to use Alasuutari's expression (1992, p. 8), or more precisely, food for re-thought.

In this view, the primary role of the theory is to provide perspectives or lenses on the data – to open up the data, not to test it (Alasuutari 1996; Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Daly 1997). Accordingly, the theory might be considered a source of inspiration, a vehicle that helps to draw the observer's attention to things that would otherwise pass unnoticed. It should, in particular, enable one to see and find something *new* in the data, something that is inconceivable at the outset. In other words, the frame should liberate imaginative powers to see our everyday reality in a new way. It should "free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable to think differently", as Foucault (1986, p. 9) so nicely puts it.

In the present study, the requirement for seeing the everyday world in a new light is complicated by the point that I am doing research "at home". I am both historically and locally situated within the very processes being studied and my own perceptions about the phenomenon are determined by the culture and language I live in and with. That is, I see the world through the same categories as my respondents. This is likely to cause a problem of over-familiarity, which is said to become particularly crucial when one studies everyday life (Coffey 1999). A common suggestion regarding this problem is that

one should cultivate strangeness and distance. Here, the primary role of cultivating strangeness is given to the theory and critical self-reflection.

How does the theoretical frame provide a stance that helps me to see my world in a new light? *How* to critically reflect on the taken-for-granted premises of free time? First of all, as discussed, relying on the field of anthropology - a "strange" discipline for a trained consumer researcher – helps me to see not only my own world, but also the consumption world in a new way. Academic boundary crossing enables new questions to be asked of the familiar data. Moreover, the reliance on anthropological classics like Douglas, Turner, and van Gennep transfers me to a strange position in terms of time and space. When I associate myself, for instance, with the Leles in the 1950s and take a look at my own world from that position, it changes. Suddenly, a huge number of symbolic boundaries appear in my life. The daily commute starts to look like a fascinating status transfer. Weekly cleaning routines, that thus far were boring, become an interesting and even fascinating boundary practice. The everyday world turns out to be a tensioned site of good and bad, clean and dirty, order and disorder. Thus, the "strange" theoretical position provides me with the joy of being surprised in my own mundane life.

Moreover, feminist literature provides a fruitful intellectual stance to re-think, reconsider, and re-define my taken–for-granted world (Butler 1999; Haraway 1991; Meriläinen 2001). In the same vein, postmodern literature helps to reject the grand metanarratives and opens up room for reconsidering the category called free time (e.g. Featherstone 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Firat and Dholakia 1998).

One further fruitful method in the task of rethinking may be mentioned: the world of the arts (Belk 1986; Richardson 2000). The basic themes of my study, time, and freedom, have been widely dealt with and questioned within various spheres of the arts. For instance, reading *Don Quixote* nicely reminds that the theme of freedom does have a long and widely shared history. Or, reading *Hundred Years of Solitude* with it peculiar temporalities forces to question time.

Thus, these techniques of estrangement help to get some analytical distance from categories I live in and by. They let me perceive many aspects of my culture that had previously been invisible to me. However, I do not attempt to claim that I could step out of cultural categories in any simple way. Rather, I become aware of them. Neither do I want to claim that the world I am living in is thoroughly familiar to me. It does have strange passages that provide fruitful "ruptures" for analysis. This came out in the focus group situations. For example, I do not have children so I felt somewhat strange in the group of mothers and fathers with small children. Or, in the group of teenagers, I was the strange old researcher. On the whole, the question of strangeness and familiarity is rather complex conceptual machinery, as Coffey (1999, p. 22-23) points out.

It must also be stressed that my familiarity with the research topic does not constitute solely a problem, but is also a strength. In particular, my pre-understanding of the phenomenon was helpful in the beginning of the study, that is, in designing the study. Then, the phase when I should start to see something new and interesting in the data turned out to be difficult, and at that stage, the techniques of estrangement were fruitful. Towards the end of the research process, when some sort of analytical understanding is acquired, the familiarity turns out to be fruitful again.

Basically, such an analytical process is a process of reflection and self-reflection as Alasuutari notes:

> Analyzing empirical material qualitatively, approaching them from different perspectives, is basically a means of reflection and self-reflection aiming at new insight about the cultural premises of social life (Alasuutari 1996, p. 382).

At the practical level, what is taken as primary units to be analyzed? A cultural analyst following the theoretical thinking outlined in the beginning should start reading cultures from the viewpoint of the disorder. He/she should take a look at issues that do *not* fit into the assumed order, are out of order, fall in between classes, are defined as dirty or marginal, or merge with each other. The cultural enquiry should start by seeking out the principles of power and danger, as Douglas (2002, p. 62) points out.

What does this mean in practice? I take an example from the pilot group of teenagers. The following little dialogue deals with boating. Basically, it is about boundary crossing, stepping out of order.

- *YEAH. BOATING, A COUPLE OF YOU SAID YOUR FAMILIES HAVE BOATS, WHAT'S SO NICE ABOUT THAT?*
- *I love the sea! I couldn't possibly think of being in the woods, at a summer place, no, it's so liberating when you, well, you really get away.*
- *It's a fantastic feeling when you don't see any land, then you feel that you are really free.*
- *I would feel terribly anxious…*

This dialogue draws on key symbols of Finnish free time: on summer that is a special temporal category summarizing many of the meanings related to freedom, and on a summer place, another key symbol with specific meanings. It also draws on the sea, a rather widely shared symbol of freedom, especially the open sea representing "real freedom". This little dialogue also depicts well the ambiguity related to the idea of being really free, with no restricting boundaries: it both fascinates and causes anxiety. Such dramatic units constitute the basic analytical units in my study. All in all, in reading the group dialogue, it is not seen as merely a dialogue between participants; rather, it is seen as a dialogue between participants and cultural structures.

The final stage in the analysis is writing it. Within anthropology and ethnographic research in general, writing and representing have occupied center stage in the research process (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1999). Perhaps the most well known writing strategy of the discipline is that of "thick description". It means that with a detailed description of the field – describing the people, settings, and practices - the researcher aims at giving a detailed account of it (Geerz [1973] 2000). As a form of representation, it has been criticized as relying on the omnipotent authority of realist ethnography – showing "having been there" (Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Marcus and Fischer 1999). Instead of writing a thick description of the fieldwork, I have attempted to write a thick description of my theoretical and methodological position. In doing so I have attempted to give the reader the opportunity to enter the same position as I am in when analyzing the data, and to agree or disagree with my interpretations when reading the analysis.

My analytical writing might be referred to as "problem focused". It means that the theoretical and argumentative ambitions guide both the choices of data experts and the overall writing. The rhetorical frame of analysis might be considered that of drama – it constitutes a kind of underlying metaphor for seeing and understanding the world under study (see Marcus and Fischer for a good review of this, and alternative kinds of ethnographic displays, 1999, p. 56-77). Accordingly, the data extracts might be read as dramatic incidents in which cultural members engage in a dialogue with cultural categories.

As this dialogue concerns also my free time, the study has forced me to challenge many issues previously taken for granted in my daily life. In writing the study, the following quote has greatly inspired and energized me. Lawrence Grossberg reminds us that:

> What we take for granted, what we use as the resources of our storytelling, is often what is most in need of having its own story told (Grossberg 1992, p. 55).

Structure of the study

In the present introductory chapter, I have opened up the theme of my study, free time. I have placed it in the current societal context that faces an overall problem with time, presented my theoretical starting points, research questions, and methodological solutions. I also have given reasons for taking up such a research enterprise within the field of consumer inquiry and positioned the study in the wide stream of culturally oriented consumer studies. To follow the theater metaphor outlined in the beginning, this introduction serves to raise the curtain so the play called free time may begin.

Chapter 2 presents my search for such a theoretical viewpoint that could "free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently", as Foucault (1986, p. 9) so nicely puts it. The chapter concentrates on exploring the theoretical tools that serve to rethink free time. To start, however, it outlines how free time is thought of commonly. For that purpose, the chapter examines how free time is understood and defined in the Finnish time-use statistics. By contrasting that view with my data, I point toward themes that need rethinking.

To capture these themes, it is argued, requires the acknowledgement of cultural meanings embedded in free time. The following section explores how cultural meanings are understood in the theoretical frame adopted. Then follows a more detailed examination of the key constructs, boundaries, and orders/disorders, and the ways in which they enable one to shed new light on the phenomenon under study. It is proposed that they enable one to highlight and capture the complex tensions inherent in the current boundaries of free time: they are best understood as constant renegotiation and management of different disorders. This results in a peculiar symbolic battle that is played out in the arena of consumption. The chapter moves on to discuss how consumption is seen as performative and how symbolic goods convey performative power. This done the theme of the subject is taken up. In the anthropological frame adopted, the subject is not conceptualized as “consumer” but as “cultural performer”. The chapter ends by summarizing this theoretical viewpoint on free time, referred to as symbolic-critical perspective.

Chapter 3 starts to display the symbolic battle that takes place at the contemporary boundaries of free time. This particular chapter considers it at the system level. It proposes that the battle may be understood as a battle with different temporal systems. First the chapter outlines the history of two such systems, economic and tradition-based social system that lean on different assumptions and conceptualizations of time. Then it turns to consider the battle that takes place when these different systems meet at the everyday level. This is discussed through border categories such as Friday and Christmas, and through the practice of cleaning. The Chapter 3 also serves to place the research phenomenon in its historical context.

After this, the study focuses in more detail on the symbolic battle taking place at the boundaries of free time and on the ways in which consumption enters in it. The study identifies three such boundaries that appear significant in the context of free time. The first boundary to be explored is the one separating work time and free time. This problematic division is the theme of **Chapter 4** that also explores how consumption, ICTs in particular, enters into its maintenance and renegotiation. **Chapter 5** turns to explore a boundary situated *within* the category of free time: the boundary that separates dirty and clean free time. It highlights the ways in which people engage in a moral battle in their quest to become free. The following **Chapter 6** brings to the fore one further boundary

that tends to be hidden when free time is talked about. The question is of the boundary separating waking and sleeping. It is proposed that this is of particular significance; it represents the boundary that enjoys a peculiar protection. Sleeping as such seems to represent a peculiar realm of freedom, but it appears to have, however, become problematized in our current society. Sleeping well is often just a wish.

Throughout these chapters exploring various symbolic battles, I attempt to display the complex, contested, and persistent nature of free time. **Chapter 7** continues on further exploring the same theme. As boundaries of free time serve to separate the realm from some other realm, and to manage it, this chapter asks what is actually separated and managed and where this all takes place. It proposes that the question seems to be of managing thoughts, to be able to think about the rights things in the right place. It means that the brains constitute a crucial symbolic battlefield. This, in turn, leads to the role of symbolic consumption being reconsidered and the chapter ends by discussing that theme.

Finally, **Chapter 8** concludes the findings of the study and discusses their relevance for consumer inquiries. It concentrates on discussing how the symbolic-critical perspective applied in the context of free time may extend our understanding of a) the contested nature of free time and b) of symbolic consumption more generally. As methodological implications, I bring to the fore the use of focus groups in culturally-oriented consumer inquiries that have relied mostly on personal interviews thus far. In discussing political implications, I draw attention to boundaries that researchers draw when studying free time. In particular, I contemplate the question of excluding sleeping. I end the study by presenting some new doors to be opened in future consumer inquiries. I point towards the visual methodologies that may complement my textual analysis of the relationship between time and consumption; highlight the topic of sleeping and dreaming; call for assessing boundaries in the virtual environment so as to enrich the notion of boundaries; and finally, I propose taking a critical look at the notion of freedom.

2 Tools for rethinking free time

This chapter focuses on the question: How to rethink free time? It discusses in what specific ways the outlined concepts of order/disorder and boundaries enable one to shed new light to the phenomenon. Before rethinking, however, it seems necessary to consider how free time is commonly thought of. For that purpose, the first section discusses how free time is defined and understood in time-use statistics. Drawing on the Finnish statistics the section also gives the reader a general view of how free time is spent in the society where the fieldwork is conducted. Then, the chapter moves on to discuss in more detail the conceptual scheme and assumptions built in it.

To start, however, let us briefly discuss the terms “free time” and “leisure time”. In the common discourse they are used more or less as synonyms to refer to time away from work. This characterization that rests upon the sharp dichotomy between work and free time is also widely shared in the academic discussions. Especially, when considered as part of the work-spend cycle of capitalist society, both free time and leisure are understood as the opposite of labor. Both are loaded with the premise of getting free and recovering from work, and consequently, adjectives such as “escape”, “happiness”, “pleasure”, “fun”, and “freedom” are associated with them (for a criticism of this view see e.g. Rojek 1995).

When it comes to industry related to the part of time outside work, the term “leisure” seems to have acquired a dominant position. For instance, when tourism and travel (Urry 1990) or specific entertainment rendezvous (Belk and Costa 1998) are assessed, they are referred to as “leisure”. There is also a debate on what counts as “serious leisure” or “casual leisure” (Stebbins 1982, 2001). Also academic journals and disciplines tend to use the term “leisure”, such as the journal *Leisure Studies* for instance. (For a discussion of leisure studies’ relation to popular culture and postmodernism see e.g. Rojek 1993.)

Interestingly, in the Finnish language, there is just one term available. The term “vapaa-aika” is equivalent to “free time” and is therefore used in this study. It is also a term that is commonly used when times are spoken of in the classificatory sense: free time and work make a pair. Here, “free time” is not seen to mean “free” time in any essential sense; rather, it is acknowledged that our concept of freedom is itself culturally and historically constructed.

Free time as represented in time-use statistics

What is generally counted as “free time”? To elaborate on that question I take Finnish time-budget statistics as an example. In today’s societies, statistics in general and time statistics in particular constitute an important form of representing and managing social life. As Gershuny notes: “if we can measure how the members of a society spend their time, we have elements of a certain sort of account of how that society works” (Gershuny 2000, p. 1). Statistics commonly enjoy some sort of “official truth” status in everyday understanding. They are referred to and discussed in the media, and, therefore, this “truth” becomes widely reproduced and shapes the social world. Despite their “true and natural” nature also statistical classes are based on disciplinary conventions and cultural assumptions. As classificatory systems in general, also statistical classes illuminate, and at the same time, conceal aspects of reality. This is not without social and political consequences. The study of Kinnunen (2001), for instance, well illustrates how wage differences between genders are maintained and legitimized by relying on a certain kind of professional classification. Therefore, it seems relevant to critically consider what becomes counted as free time and on what grounds.

Let us start by considering the overall time use of Finns. The following figure (Niemi and Pääkkönen, 2001, p. 9) illustrates how Finns have allocated their time per day in 1979, 1987, and 1999. My point is not to address the changes occurring during these years, but focus on the classes as such. As can be seen, time is classified into studying, homework, paid work, eating and hygiene, free time, and sleeping.

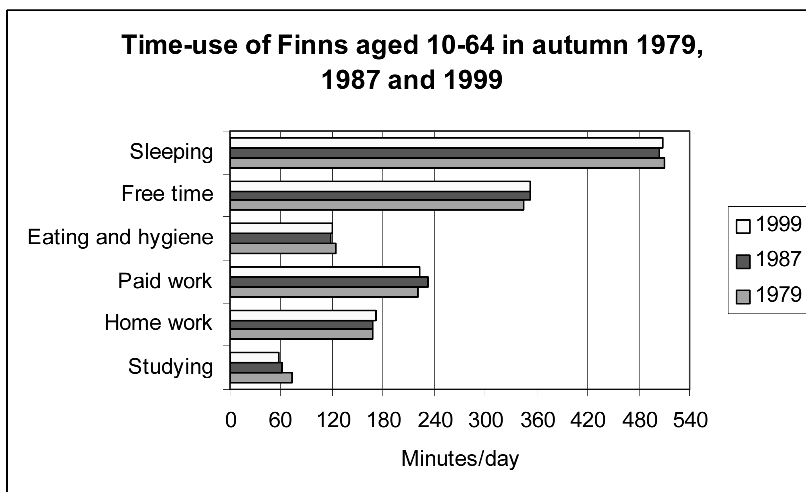

Figure 1. Time-use of Finns aged 10-64 in autumn 1979, 1987, and 1999.

Source: Niemi and Pääkkönen (2001) *Changes in Time-Use in 1990's*, Statistics Finland, p 9.

First of all, let us consider how *time* is understood in the above chart. The whole idea of these classes, and time-use studies in general, leans on the view that time is a quantifiable and measurable entity. Time is understood as a resource that can be used, allocated, and budgeted, just like money. This view to conceive time, however, raises some questions. How has it become such a dominant way to understand time? What if people do not think of their time in economic terms? What if they, for instance, prefer classifying time in terms of social relations? That is, to talk of "family time" or "own time"? Or, what is the relation of these classes to other cultural classes of time such as summer or weekend? Does it not make a difference to spend free time during summer or winter? All in all, what becomes excluded from free time studies if the time is considered merely an issue to be budgeted and calculated?

Secondly, let us consider how the class called *free time* is defined. It is defined as "time free from other activities" (Niemi and Pääkkönen 2001, p. 8). It means that free time is a residual, the amount of time that is left over when sleeping, eating and other personal needs, paid work, studying, and homework are taken away. This definition is widely used: free time is "time *left over* after meeting commitments to work and such essential

human capital maintenance as sleeping, eating and personal hygiene" (Vickerman 1980, p. 192, in Rojek 1985, p. 14, my emphasis).

Interestingly, the most time-consuming single activity per day, sleeping, is excluded from "free time" by default. The reason for this appears to be that sleeping represents a "physiological necessity". Necessities, the implicit logic suggests, are the opposite of pleasures, and therefore excluded from free time. A critical counter question may be asked: does this logic make sense? My data gives grounds to believe that this exclusion does not necessarily give a representative picture of the way people comprehend their free time. Sleeping may be seen as an important source of pleasure, and also a key means to define free time. Pleasurable free time may mean that one sleeps well. As one woman says when describing her weekend: "Sleeping, sleeping, sleeping, that's the point. It's so lovely to sleep".

Another interesting feature of the chart is that the transitions are infused into subsequent classes. This practice, however, risks hiding one dimension of contemporary life that is important not only socially and politically, but also symbolically. Transitions between home, work, school, and hobbies may take up even a remarkable portion of a day, and they may be taken for cultural usage, to produce and manage the change of times. As one father says: "Commuting, that's time for setting the brain at zero".

Finally, while the chart gives a picture of time classes as evident and clear-cut, my data direct attention to their contested nature. Free time and work get blurred and mixed, and require management and maintenance. "I try to separate free time from work, I try, but I can't. I just can't", as one respondent points out. Another points out: "They get blurred, but I don't care". Therefore, temporal classes cannot be treated as evident, but as ones to be negotiated and managed.

Let us turn to take a closer look at *what is counted as "free time*"? The following chart (Niemi and Pääkkönen, 2001, p. 33) summarizes how free time is spent in Finland. According to it Finns spend their free time watching television, socializing with others, reading, having various hobbies, resting, traveling, etc. This seems to be all in line with my data where people describe how they spend their free time. Though, the data sug-

gests that people do several things at the same time. One might, for instance watch television, socialize with others on the mobile phone, flip through magazines and eat simultaneously while lying on the sofa.

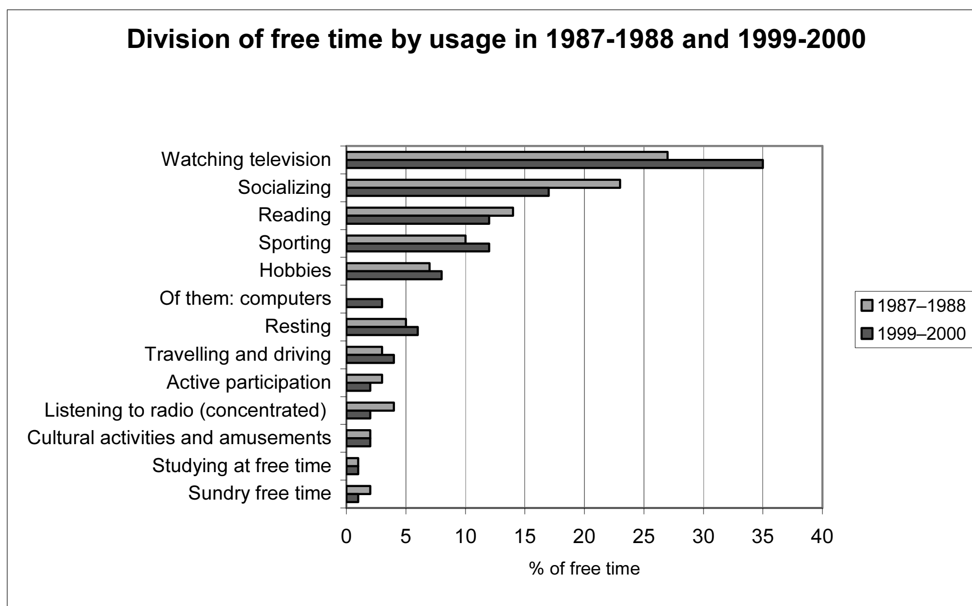

Figure 2. Division of free time by usage in 1987-1988 and 1999-2000.
Source: Niemi and Pääkkönen (2001) *Changes in Time-Use in 1990's*, Statistics Finland, p 33.

The chart seems to rely on the assumption that free time is time to be filled with doing things: hobbies, watching television, sporting, reading, etc, etc. On the whole, the assumption of free time as active time seems to dominate studies on free time: they often address certain activity such as gardening or mountaineering (e.g. Peelie 2003). The important question arises: what is then counted as "activity", as "doing"? If we think about activities counted in the above chart, at least one missing bar sticks out, shopping. Earlier literature has presented that shopping may occupy a central role in spending one's free time (e.g. Lehtonen and Mäenpää 1997 in the Finnish context). Also my data support this. Shopping on weekends, for instance, may be seen as a way to spend time together with family members. It may be defined as "family time" that includes not only shopping, but also attendant activities such as having lunch or going to cafes together.

Furthermore, considering the above chart, the class called "resting" invites attention. What does it include? Isn't watching television and lying on the sofa, for instance, resting? Can there not be many different sorts of resting?

Reflecting further on these "doings" of the chart, one notices that they are presented as somewhat neutral. As if activities such as computing and watching television, for instance, would not include different alternatives in moral terms. The moral dimension is present in my data. They depict people's battle between "good" and "bad" alternatives, for instance, in choosing television programs. The data also depict the ways in which the choice between various activities may include a moral battle. One may negotiate, for instance, whether to play sports or watch television after work. On the whole, the chart seems to conceal the moral dimension involved in free time: that is has two-sides, the good and the bad.

Finally, we should consider what purpose these "doings", most of them being consumption activities, actually serve? How to understand, for instance, the statement of one marketing manager: "I ride because then I can't think of work matters"? The statement invites one to rethink the customary way of considering leisure activities as a way for cultivating oneself, diverting, or constructing identities. Instead, it invites one to consider them as a way to control and manage thoughts.

Reflecting on the way "free time" is defined and understood in the Finnish time-use statistics, and contrasting it with my data, I have pointed toward some themes that require rethinking. The reminder of this chapter presents the theoretical viewpoints and tools through which the rethinking is done.

Understanding cultural meanings of free time

The way statistics are presented is obviously tied to the methods and methodologies built into the given type of inquiry. They presuppose the world to be measured and quantified, and do not aim to consider cultural meanings as the methodology adopted here. It is the aim of this section to consider what is meant by cultural meanings in the theoretical frame of this study. That is, as the question is not one of elaborating on subjective meanings related to free time (as e.g. Unger and Kernan 1983), what is it then? The answer is closely related to the overall ontological base of symbolic anthropology. Therefore, the section deals with ontological questions, and in particular, with the question of language. In doing so, it lays the foundation for understanding the key conceptual scheme to be presented in the following section.

A key premise of the symbolic anthropological tradition is that cultures emerge from a quest for order. "Organising requires classification and classification is at the basis of human coordination" (Douglas 2002, p. xvii). The order is built up from a system of symbolic classification that differentiates the world into distinct kinds and makes it meaningful. This differentiation is sustained and negotiated through boundaries that in turn get material existence through symbols. The very basis of cultural classification, therefore, is the presence of symbols that demarcate boundaries or lines of division. In doing so, they provide a powerful analytic lever on cultural principles, and consequently, boundaries and the ways in which they are symbolically expressed are accorded a primary role in such research (Alexander 1989; Douglas 2002; MacDonald 2001; Turner 1977; van Gennep 1960; VanLoon 2001; Wuthonow *et al.* 1984).

The focus on order should not be misunderstood as trying to promote the idea of one homogenous order. The contemporary condition in particular, often discussed in terms of fragmentation (Firat and Venkatesh 1995), forces one to acknowledge the co-existence of multiple life-worlds. The idea of a fragmented world is already present in Douglas' work. In *Purity and Danger*, originally published in 1966, her major argument is that basically "we" do not differ from "primitives" in terms of symbolic or ritual behavior, but that our behavior just produces multiple life-worlds instead of one.

> [T]he real difference is that we do not bring forward from one context to the next the same set of ever more powerful symbols: our experience is fragmented. Our rituals create a lot of little sub-worlds, unrelated (Douglas 2002, p. 85).

"Free time" represents such a sub-world. However, it is not seen to represent any consistent or static order. On the contrary, with this line of thinking free time is subject to constant symbolic maintenance and management. A kind of structural turbulence is built into this theory. It offers an image of reality as socially constructed and as perpetually in motion; people carry on the continuing task of producing, reproducing, and managing the world they live in. This is because, first of all, this theory acknowledges that the process of the formation of cultural order is continuously taking place. As Turner points out "we are to think of changing socio-symbolic field rather than static structure" (Turner 1992, p. 21). Secondly, we are obliged to constantly manage order, since disorder is always lurking. The peculiar disorder simultaneously represents threat and relief, danger and escape, seeds of change and of fear. This very character gives a specific dynamic spirit to the theory.

The process of classifying the world is inherently arbitrary and thoroughly social. Symbolic classes are seen to be socially constructed and not reducible to the "nature". Rather, the "nature" becomes accessible and meaningful through symbolic classification. That is, classifications such as "Sunday" or "time-out" cannot be reduced to some outer reality; rather, we see the world through these categories we create. In this sense, the classifications actually create the world, and in doing so, they provide a basic understanding of that world (Anttonen 1996; Berger and Luckmann 1972; Douglas 2002; Wuthnow *et. al.* 1984). They shape the ways cultural members think about and act toward the world. The categories might well be named differently and given different meanings, but they tend to appear "normal" and "taken-for-granted" to us. This very appearance of normality suspends the arbitrary character of reality. Alasuutari summarizes this way of perceiving reality as follows:

> The way in which we perceive reality, divide it up into distinct categories, is a systemic entity, but that entity is not dictated by nature but rather by cultural tradition and life-practices (Alasuutari 1998, p. 102)

This viewpoint on reality can be traced back to de Saussure (1983), who proposed that meanings of constructs are not fixed by references to objects in the world, but by their internal difference within the system of language itself. The emphasis put on language for understanding societies has attracted wide attention within social sciences in general (Alasuutari 1998; Anttonen 1996; Berger and Luckmann 1972) and in post-structualist thinking in particular (Butler 1999; Moisander 2001). Also the British anthropological tradition has witnessed the shift "from function to meaning" (MacDonald 2001, p. 65).

The systemic approach implicates that elements are seen to acquire meaning in relation to other elements in a particular system; it is the difference between elements that constitutes the meaning. This basic structuralist premise of a *systematic relation of difference* (de Saussure 1983; Douglas 2002; Douglas and Isherwood 1996) also constitutes a starting point for most contemporary consumption studies, including those that fall under the label of post-structuralism (Barthes 1983; Holt 1997; Moisander 2001). Douglas summarizes the underlying theoretical premise as follows:

> No particular set of classifying symbols can be understood in isolation, but there can be hope of making sense of them in relation to the total structure of classifications in the culture in question (Douglas 2002, p. vii).

In the context of the present study this means that free time is seen to acquire meaning in relation to some other time within some system. The prevailing relation is that free time becomes defined in relation to work time and it is the economic market system that makes this relation sensible (Firat and Dholakia 1998; Rojek 1995). Importantly, the idea of relational difference should not be understood in terms of simple oppositional pairs. Although we might understand the world through opposites, they do not hold for all kinds of classification systems, and they become understandable only against some larger system. For instance, Friday does not get its meanings through its opposite, no-Friday, but rather, from being part of the weekly system. Therefore, the system as a whole, its underlying rules and logics must be taken under consideration when cultural meanings are assessed (Douglas 2002, p. 80).

In this line of thinking, the research focus is put on identifying underlying structures and patterns that condition and enable particular meanings to be constructed (Douglas and Isherwood 1996; van Loon 2001). In other words, the research focus is *not* put on researching *subjective* meanings, nor *meanings* as such, but rather on rules, patterns, and structures that make things *meaningful*. The view, thus, differs from interactionists who regard meanings as an outcome of human interaction, as well as from those views that stress individual meanings.

The Douglasian view of cultural meanings acknowledges meanings to be context-dependent. This reflects the socio-linguistic theory of Basil Bernstein that underlies her thought (Atkinson 1985; Douglas and Isherwood 1996). For instance, Jetsu's (2001, p. 135) work on funeral rituals exposes how the cadaver's status depends on the context: whether at home, in a hospital, church, or graveyard. This view, thus, differs from Levi-Strauss' thought in the sense that it does not assume that researchers could reveal the "hidden universal meanings" by using appropriate methods. Instead, this view not only grants that symbols, like consumer goods, can have different meanings in different contexts, but also that symbols can represent many things at the same time (Turner 1977, p. 52). Symbols can be poly-vocal and ambivalent.

Therefore, rather than being fixed or stable, meanings are conceptualized as moving and fluxing. In anthropological theorizing in general, and Douglasian thought in particular, rituals serve to drift and fix flowing meanings. Douglas considers rituals to be a pre-eminent form of communication, as a kind of cultural speech that carries, drifts, and transmits collective information, just like language. In my work the term "ritual" is not emphasized[6], but is replaced by the construct of performativity as I shall later discuss in more detail.

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[6] Grant McCracken has further elaborated the question of movement of meanings and the role of rituals in this process. He also adds advertising and fashion to his considerations (McCracken 1986; 1988). His theoretical account has been significant in highlighting the point that meanings are constantly in transit. However, this process has been shown to be much more dynamic and dialogical than he originally proposed (e.g. Thompson and Haytko 1997; Ritson and Elliot 1999). For instance, Ritson and Elliott (1999) show in their study, that advertising does not just transfer meanings from one location to another in a one-way style and independently of other means. Rather, advertising and consumption rituals are closely connected to each other by interactive and circular ways.

> Meaning flows and drifts, it is hard to grasp. The main problem of social life is to pin down meanings so that they stay still for a little time. Without some conventional ways of selecting and fixing agreed meanings, the minimum consensual basis of society is missing. As for tribal society, so too for us: rituals serve to contain the drift of meanings. Rituals are conventions that set up visible public definitions. […] To manage without rituals is to manage without clear meanings and possibly without memories. […] Goods, in this perspective, are ritual adjuncts; consumption is a ritual process whose primary function is to make sense of the inchoate flux of events (Douglas and Isherwood [1979] 1996, p. 43).

However, the emphasis on meanings in motion does not attempt to claim that individuals were open to "freely" play and manipulate them. Rather, the notion of language clearly underlines how the set of available meanings is thoroughly socially and historically constructed. One is not able to create language or language-like systems on one's own. Therefore, ordering and the creation of the world are not a private matter, but are based on social agreement (Butler 1999; Douglas and Isherwood 1996). This social agreement pre-exists us. We become part of a culture by learning its language and categories, and simultaneously we also learn what the world is like, and what kind of time there is in that world (Elias 1992). In this sense, language constitutes a key instrument through which culture becomes transferred to others and also preserved over time. Language has the capacity of becoming a reservoir of vast accumulations of cultural meanings – it represents collective memory (Anttonen 1996; Berger and Luckmann 1972).

In the work of Douglas (1996) the notion of language is not that much present in the linguistic sense. Rather, she views human-made symbols as *language-like*. That is, people communicate with each other through the use of various kinds of symbols and in so doing they create their social reality. In accordance with this line of thinking, man-made time-symbols, such as the clock and the calendar, are seen as communication devices through which a certain kind of time lines is produced (Elias 1992). However, such human symbols are understood through and by language. For instance, consumer goods are named, classified, explained, shared, and talked about through and by language.

Language is central in ordering the world, but the created cultural order is infused in the structuring and organization of social life in its entirety. The category of free time is closely incorporated in the arrangement of social life itself; in the legislative system, research practices, mundane social relations, eating habits, body gestures, speech, in

cultural materials like media and advertising, etc. (Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Nippert-Eng 1996; Zerubavel 1991). Through these symbolic forms, people expose and negotiate their view of proper free time. Therefore, they can be interpreted as messages about patterns of culture, about the ways in which the world has been ordered. Reading culture through social messages implies that no explicit analytical distinction is made between social and cultural; rather, culture is "interwoven into the fabric of social life itself, not an attitudinal reality separated from it" (Wuthnow *et. al* 1984, p. 252).

How, then, to think of the issue of *sharing meanings*, having some sort of agreement over them? The idea of shared meanings constitutes a kind of basic starting point for any anthropological/ethnographic research (Alasuutari 1998). In what sense are meanings shared in the context of the present study? Traditionally, anthropologists have focused on a certain spatially defined "culture", "society", or "community" that constitutes the basic unit of the study and also a basis for thinking about the issue of sharing. In the contemporary mass-mediated and globalized world, however, this strategy has become problematic. The basic notion of "culture" is not necessarily definable in spatial terms. Therefore, Appadurai has suggested that it would be actually more apt to use the adjective "cultural" instead of the noun "culture", since the adjectival form better highlights the concept of difference and leads one to stress the situated nature of difference (Appadurai 1996, p. 12-13). The contemporary condition has also forced one to look for new ways to think about the issue of "community" (Alasuutari 1998; Appadurai 1996; Marcus 1999; Marcus and Fischer 1999). In the field of consumer research, a rather common solution has been to approach this question in terms of consumption, for instance, in terms of owning a Harley Davidson (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), in terms of shared consumption tastes and ideals, "imaginary communities" (Uusitalo 1996), or as temporary "hypercommunities" (Kozinets 2002).

In this study, the issue of defining the likely basis for sharing temporal meanings related to free time is rather complex. Although I have conducted the fieldwork in Helsinki, Finland, it is not reasonable to claim that the findings concern only that particular area. This is because meanings transgress spatial boundaries and because these meanings have been constructed over a long time continuum.

Appadurai (1990) has elaborated different "instruments" along which cultural meanings move across national boundaries: ethnospace, technospace, financespace, mediaspace, and ideospace. In the context of this study, the technospace and mediaspace are of particular interest. The rapid spread of the new communication technology not only makes the world sharable, but also meanings embedded in these devices tend to be shared and understandable in a rather broad context, at least to some degree. The idea of freedom and slavery present in the new technology, for instance, can be found in studies conducted in several countries (Kopomaa 2000; Mick and Fournier 1998). The mass media also promotes the sharing of cultural practices and symbols; contemporary symbols can be rather global (e.g. Belk and Costa 1998; Kozinets 2001). This means that through television, movies, and other media, the busy urban lifestyle, for instance, may become shared beyond urban areas, and beyond national boundaries. Through such instruments, the stock of temporal knowledge and categories become understandable, available, and identifiable in broader context.

By this I do not want to argue that the temporal order would be totally homogeneous. On the contrary, when the global ideals meet the local ones, it might receive various and heterogeneous articulations (Appadurai 1996). In my study, traditional Finnish conceptions of time and boundaries of free time (Vilkuna 2000; Ollila 2000) meet the idealizations of a 24/7 information society. However, to label something "traditionally Finnish" is certainly not without its problems. By reading the historical body of literature, we can identify some Finnish ways of classifying and producing time such as Midsummer when the day is at its longest, or an ancient custom of starting the day by taking a swig; a custom that was later replaced by coffee (Anttonen 1996; Apo 2001; Vilkuna 2000; Ollila 2000). However, when considered in terms of structures and patterns, a number of affinities with other cultures can be identified. Seasonal changes and cycles of nature in general, for instance, have been somehow demarcated in most cultures (van Gennep 1960; Whitrow 1988). On the whole, most temporal customs and festivities that we tend to view as "our own" and "traditional" turn out to be a mixture of several traditions of several nations or areas (Karjalainen 1998).

Moreover, the historical body of literature on time shows that the construction of time has a relatively widely shared and standardized basis in the Western (Christian) world at large (Whitrow 1988). Through various kinds of political, economic, and religious struggles, Westerners share most of the basic temporal patterns such as a 24-hour day, a 7-day week, a 12-month year, the division between work and free time, and several festivities, like Christmas. The same concerns the metaphorical structure underlying Western time conceptions. The notion of cyclical and linear time, or the idea that time is money is widespread (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Cross 1993).

To sum up, in this line of theoretical thinking "free time" represents one way to organize and order the world. This takes place through the language, naming is ordering, but the cultural order is infused in the structuring of social life in its entirety. Ordering differentiates the world, separates it to distinct entities. Boundaries and their symbolic expressions constitute the key elements through which cultural order and meanings are assessed. These meanings are relational: free time gets meaning in relation to some other categories in some system. Meanings are also structural: assessing free time leads to consider shared structures, rules and patterns that give it particular meanings. There structures should not be understood as static but as constantly in motion and under construction. In today's world of globalization and mass media, they also become shared through various instruments.

Free time in terms of orders/disorders and boundaries

If we assume that the category called free time requires constant management and maintenance, what is the force that keeps it in motion? The answer is based upon the constructs order/disorder and boundaries. This section focuses on how these constructs enable one to shed light on the peculiar dynamics inherent in the contemporary category of free time. It elaborates on three different ways in which the tension between order and disorder may be comprehended in the context under study: changing order, moral order, and beyond order.

To start, however, it is worth clarifying the basic idea related to the constructs of order/disorder. It is: although we might attempt to order and fix social life, we are forced to live with the disorder. Despite our quest for purity we must live with ambiguities, inconsistencies, and areas of indeterminacy. Every system of classification produces anomalies, matter out-of-place, and, therefore, they are constantly present in cultures. We are obliged to try to keep the world pure and clean, but at the same time to acknowledge its impossibility. We can never escape the disorder. It is a necessary and permanent condition of social life. In the present context, for instance, there are times that do not fit tidily into the temporal categories imposed upon us: all kinds of times simply *do not fit* into the modern dichotomy of work and free time. As Douglas states:

> It is part of our human condition to long for hard lines and clear concepts. When we have them we have either to face the fact that some realities elude them, or else blind ourselves to the inadequacy of the concepts. The final paradox of the search for purity is that it is an attempt to force experience into logical categories of non-contradiction. But experience is not amenable and those who make the attempt find themselves led into contradiction (Douglas 2002, p. 200).

However, and importantly, we do not condemn the disorder, because it represents seeds for change and creativity. It offers relief from the order. Therefore, when confronting something that does not fit into existing categories, we do not necessarily condemn it but "we can try to create a new pattern of reality in which it has a place"(Douglas 2002, p. 48)[7]. In this sense the disorder opens up a possibility of creating something new. Given that the question is of state without boundaries, it also represents threat and danger. It is simultaneously fascinating and frightening. It represents not only threats, but also promises. As Douglas states:

> Granted that disorder spoils pattern, it also provides the material of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power (Douglas 2002, p. 117).

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[7] This possibility to create new patterns of reality is visible, for instance, in Haraway's work. She constructs her cyborg manifest upon the possibilities inherent in the liminal transformation, in the breakdown of clean distinctions between human and machine. She claims: "my cyborg is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities" (Haraway 1991, p. 154).

Changing order

We have discussed earlier how the world is ordered and made meaningful through symbolic classification. Given that this making is arbitrary, and not fixed, it is subject to change. What makes the temporal order change? Is the question one of "constant change" or of something else?

The change of cultural categories relates to the changes in the living conditions. Innovations, for instance, force the renegotiation and redefinition of the cultural order. Once traditional classes no longer hold, new ones are needed. This puts the once cherished order into a state of disorder. This state is not only promising, but also threatening. Therefore, it requires some sort of symbolic cleaning: social renegotiation, new regulations to be imposed, new classes to be created, or attempts to protect the old order.

The launch of the Walkman provides a good example of how a seemingly simple device might threaten cultural boundaries in a rather profound way (Du Gay *et al.* 1997). When the Walkman was introduced, it evoked a wide public dispute about its dangerous qualities and its usage was controlled through various kinds of prohibitions. These acts represent attempts to restore the threatened cultural boundary of public and private, to clean it up.

Given that the restoration and renegotiation takes place within the existing cultural framework – against the prevailing patterns - the question is rather one of transformations than of complete reformations as Alasuutari reminds us:

> [] changes in living conditions, whether resulting from changes in technology or natural conditions, also influence the way we perceive reality. New frames of interpretation need to be developed in place of the old ones that no longer work. However, the changes are never perfect because the new living conditions and the challenges they pose will be examined within the framework of the old models (Alasuutari 1998, p. 102).

The change of temporal classifications relates closely to technological innovations and/or the changing economic conditions (Adam 1995; Nowotny 1994; Whitrow 1988). The move from an agricultural society to an industrial society, for instance, forced the

re-classification and redefinition of time. A wide body of literature has also demonstrated how various kinds of technological innovations have changed the way time is conceived and classified (Adam 1990, 1995; Nowotny 1994; Whithrow 1988). The innovation of railways, for instance, made Finnish cities follow a common time; before that, each city had its own time. In a wider perspective, technology has also had an influence on the globalization of times (Adam 1995, p. 105-124). This trend is also visible in the on-going spread of new communication technologies. They are commonly accorded a crucial role in today's renegotiation of times, as Nowotny remarks:

> And always and everywhere I encountered those technologies, which are changing the human perception of time most immediately and most visibly – the modern technologies of communication. Their influence is perceptible, tangible, and demonstrable at work and at home, in means of transport and in communication networks, in the finance markets of the world and in the countries of the Third World (Nowotny 1994, p. 8).

The emergence of the new communication technology has evidently forced people to redefine and reclassify time. We have now, for instance, new time classes such as "real-time" or "on-line". We are also forced to follow, or to react, to new temporal norms embedded in technological devices, such as constant availability and simultaneity (Adam 1995; Nowotny 1994; Moisander and Valtonen 2002, 2003). The new technology is also likely to be one of the underlying forces that have put time and time awareness in the forefront of our consciousness.

In discussing the change of cultural classes, however, it is appropriate to keep in mind that they tend to be somewhat reluctant to change. As Alasuutari points out: "The research evidence indicates that cultural classification systems are incredibly persistent, even when external conditions are completely changed" (Alasuutari 1998, p. 107). The work context provides a good example of how old cultural classes retain their force and usability although the external working conditions have completely changed. My respondents, for instance, working in highly technologicalized offices use the word *spadework* when they talk about their jobs. They keep using agricultural terms when they talk about working in offices. This signals that cultural classes carry values in a

rather profound way. Changing them would imply changing basic understandings of being in the world.

One further reason for the persistence of cultural classes is that they tend to be widely and deeply infused in the everyday practices and institutions. The change would require quite a profound change in the entire society (Douglas 2002, p. 46). This has become evident in many feminist studies. Gender practices are infused throughout society.

Though, in discussing the change, we must acknowledge that not all cultural boundaries are of equal importance. Some boundaries enjoy more significance than others. For Douglas, the body constitutes the most significant boundary; it is the one to be protected, not to be transgressed (Douglas 2002, p. 202). In her thinking in general, the human body represents a kind of symbolic model for boundaries (see Douglas 1970, p. 75; see also Charpentier 2001 for a good analysis of this theme). When thinking of other significant boundaries, gender boundaries seem to enjoy a significant role in cultures in general (Douglas 2002, p. 194; Charpentier 2001). Threatening them causes strong cultural reactions and protective measures are taken.

The temporal system seems also to have some remarkable persistent features. The seven-day week system, for instance, has some 2000 years' of history (Whitrow 1988). But within the temporal system itself, all boundaries are not of equal importance. Threatening the boundaries of Sunday, for instance, causes different reactions than those of Tuesday. Or, threatening the night is different from that of day.

All in all, today's society seems to face a general temporal disorder due to changing living conditions. However, instead of following the trendy premise of constant change, it seems more apt to view the change as a peculiar battle with the new material world and old categories. Yet, this disorder deriving from the changing condition does not represent just a threat. It also opens up the world to be reclassified, to redraw existing boundaries, to reframe time.

Moral order

In my data, one of the respondents says: "I'm ashamed to say but I did nothing last Sunday." The statement reflects some sort of moral order. This section discusses how to understand this moral dimension.

Cultural categories provide moral information to carry on life in "proper" ways. Accordingly, temporal categories such as "own time", "family time", or "Sunday" reflect and produce a certain kind of worldview, and they also entail ideas about proper ways of spending that time. This means that boundaries do not represent any neutral way of differentiating and ordering the world; instead, they separate the world into good and bad, right and wrong. They create a moral order.

In the Douglasian framework, the moral dimension is considered through the concepts of clean and dirty (Douglas 2002). On the whole, the topics of symbolic pollution and cleaning are key themes in her work. The clean represents the "normal", the kind of order defined as "right" in the culture. The dirty, in turn, represents the "abnormal", the disorder, the out-of-place that becomes defined as bad and threatening. The particularity is that we do not totally condemn the bad. On the contrary, we actually look for it every now and then. We tend to feel special attraction to forbidden pleasures of life, to little sins such as coffee or chocolate (Valtonen 2000).

What becomes defined as clean or dirty depends entirely on the cultural classificatory system. Dirt is not an essential attribute of any object or event; rather, it is a by-product of systematic classification. "No single item is dirty apart from a particular system of classification in which it does not fit" (Douglas 2002, p. xvii). In other words, waste or dirt cannot be understood without a system that defines it as waste or dirt. "Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining table" (Douglas 2002, p. 44). But, in some situations, such as a modern art exhibition, shoes on the dining table might well become defined as normal, as a kind of expected disorder. Douglas summarizes this theoretical idea in the following way:

> Defilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur expect in view of a systematic ordering of ideas…For the only way in which pollution ideas make sense is in reference to a total structure of thought whose keystone, boundaries, margins and internal lines are held in relation by rituals of separation (Douglas 2002, p. 51).

Importantly, the dirt calls for reaction. It is a manifestation of danger and pollution; it provokes fear and disgust. If things get out-of-place, they must be put back in their right place. If shoes are on the table, they must be removed. Performing mundane activities such as sorting, tidying, cleaning, and putting things in their place all reflect the fear of-disorder. They are ways of reinforcing a certain kind of moral order. Likewise, housecleaning is a way of conveying some sort of message about the home we find good and appropriate, and morally acceptable (for Finnish housecleaning, see e.g. Aalto 1996). Though, most of our pollution rituals tend to be justified and legitimized through the use of science and medicine, nevertheless, they reflect our fear of the disorder (Douglas 2002).

The fear of disorder can be seen in the reactions that follow if things get out of place. They may provoke a range of emotions, including disgust, revulsion, anger, fear, or anxiety. To take an example, being drunk at work represents an out-of-place activity that is likely to be seen as insulting and even shocking. It evokes reactions of some sort: punishment, disapproval, avoidance, or silence. Normally, communities try to prevent this possibility by a set of protective measures, prohibitions, and sanctions. Bloomfield (2001), for instance, provides one example of how electronic tagging is used in order to keep things in their right place in hospitals. These various kinds of symbolic treatments represent symbolic cleaning up.

With this line of thinking, therefore, crime and dirt are the same phenomena. Both represent something out of place, and both generate reactions: for crime there is punishment, for dirt there is cleaning (Wuthnow *et al.* 1984). These reactions to the threatened boundaries constitute one of the basic mechanisms by which a society strengthens, renews, and redefines its symbolic boundaries (Douglas 2002, p. 48-50). By defining what is dirt, the society defines what is clean.

In the context of free time, there is a moral play between dirty and clean, good and bad alternatives. We consider what should be done and what should not be done, and also whether there is a need for symbolic purification or punishment afterwards. The saying that one is ashamed of doing nothing on Sunday, therefore, is a message of that kind of play. Shame is an indication of the dirty side of life.

Beyond order

Now it is time to go beyond boundaries, to step out-of-order, to the realm of freedom. To those moments when one could say: "I feel free." How are our daily "time-outs", "moments of escape" and annual holidays theoretized?

Going beyond boundaries represents a symbolic step out of order that structures and binds everyday life. Turner calls these liminal states (Turner 1977; 1982)[8], by which he means in-between states. They are like cultural time-outs that provide liberation and relief from the normative constraints. They are necessary states for social life and, therefore, cultures have legitimated times and places for such a relief. Turner notes:

> By verbal and nonverbal means of classification we impose upon ourselves innumerable constraints and boundaries to keep chaos at bay, but often at the cost of failing to make discoveries and inventions: that is to say, not all instances of subversion of the normative are deviant or criminous. Yet in order to live, to breathe, and to generate novelty, human beings have had to create – by structural means – spaces and times in the calendar or, in the cultural cycles of their most cherished groups which cannot be captured in the classificatory nets of their quotidian, routinized spheres of action. These liminal areas of time and space – rituals, carnivals, dramas, and latterly films – are open to the play of thought, feeling and will; in them are generated new models, often fantastic, some of which may have sufficient power and plausibility to replace eventually the force-backed political and jural models that control the centers of a society's ongoing life (Turner 1977, p. vii).

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[8] The division "liminal " and "liminoid" made by Turner is not used here, for the sake of clarity, and for its controversial nature (Turner 1982, p. 29-30, 1992, p. 9; see also Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry 1989; Belk and Costa 1998, p. 233 for discussion of this theme).

As he lets us know, in today's society we seldom face a total step out of the order, any "genuine" freedom; rather, we face milder versions and in an institutionalized form. We face ordered disorder. We have specific times and specific spaces when it is legitimated and also expected to be free and in which normal roles and statuses do not apply. Examples include commercialized theme parks or places like Las Vegas where it is allowed to invert normal behavior (Belk 2000; Featherstone 1991; Firat 2001) or "natural" spaces like deserts, forests and the sea where one experiences a certain kind of sacredness (Belk 1997).

The idea of liminality has been widely applied in studying tourism and traveling (e.g. Belk 1997; Selänniemi 1990). As Lash and Urry point out (1994, p. 235) "the key aspect of many kinds of travel is to enter a kind of liminal zone where some of the rules and restrictions of routine life are relaxed and replaced by different norms of behavior". Tourist resorts represent a neither-this-nor-that domain, therefore, a peculiar period of non-status and non-anchored identity. People in these resorts acquire a special kind of freedom. They have a right to misbehave, or behave like a child ”To behave anti-socially is the proper expression of their marginal condition" (Douglas 2002, p. 120).

At a more mundane level, we also find a great number of liminal states. We find liminality at the weekend, on the way home from work, on coffee breaks, in the mid-afternoon nap, or in the sunset. They all represent times and places that in some sense fall in-between prescribed roles and statuses. For instance, the state between the realms of day and night, the sunset, is a state when one is free from the grip of day duties, not yet bound up in those of the night. It is a state with a sort of sacred dimension; the sunset is often looked at in piece and quiet, deep in one's thought. This state is also widely reproduced commercially. We find sunsets on a number of postcards, in brand imagery (in a Finnish beer brand, for instance), and in classic Westerns the hero rides into the sunset at the end of the film (Wuthonow *et al*. 1984).

Liminal times and places are filled with a peculiar set of meanings, such as relief, excitement, escape, liberation, play, freedom, and creativity, as well as shame, fear, disgust, darkness, and danger (Douglas 2002; Selänniemi 1996). They are realms full of symbolism, as Turner points out:

> The attributes of liminality […] are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon (Turner 1977, p. 95).

In particular, liminal states entail the danger. It is a question of transgressing boundaries and this transgression is dangerous. Margins and boundary transgressions play a key role in Douglas' work. She holds that all social systems are vulnerable at their margins, that is, at their boundaries. When one transgresses boundaries one is exposed to dangers and powers. Rules and prohibitions must be used to cope with it. The danger inherent in boundary transgressions is most visible in the ultimate transgression, in death. Funerals serve to cope with the danger inherent in that boundary, to build a bridge to ensure a safe transfer (Jetsu 2001; Bonsu and Belk 2003).

In sum, in our mundane cultural "time-outs", it is a question of momentary visits in different realms, of a step to the margins and a return. Actually, our everyday life may be seen as a permanent transition from one realm to another, as a constant balance between being free and not being too free. Importantly, even after a momentary visit to these "time-outs" we return re-energized and recreated. This is the master meaning embedded in various kinds of cultural "time outs", such as coffee breaks and holidays. They represent cultural renewal. van Gennep (1960) saw "regeneration" as a law of life: the energy, which is found in any system becomes gradually spent and must be renewed at intervals. This regeneration, he suggests, is accomplished in the rites of death and rebirth.

Boundaries of free time and performativity

We have discussed above tensions inherent in the category called free time, and how these tensions dramatize at boundaries. Accordingly, people are forced to constantly impose, protect, cross, and manage those boundaries. This task of imposing and managing boundaries is commonly discussed in terms of rituals both in the anthropological and consumer literature (Douglas 2002; Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Rook 1985; Turner 1977; van Gennep 1960). Ritual is an encompassing term with very many definitions. One particular nature of rituals is that when one enters into a ritual, one proceeds to the destiny like a train (Alasuutari 2004). If we think, for instance, of the rituals of baptism, marriage, or death, babies are christened, couples are joined together, and people get buried. The mundane rituals aiming at differentiating free time from other time, however, do not necessarily lead to such a happy ending. On the contrary, one might be bound to work issues despite a serious set of separation rites. Therefore, I do not consider the term "ritual" the most appropriate here.

What should be used instead? Nippert-Eng uses the term "boundary-work". By this she means a "never ending, hands-on, largely visible process through which boundaries are negotiated, placed, maintained, and transformed" (Nippert-Eng 1996, p. xii). This term might also be suitable for the present study, since the notion of "work" nicely captures the sometimes laborious character of trying to get free. Nevertheless, I use the notion of *performativity*. How to understand the given notion? How does it relate to consumption? What does it mean to talk about "performative consumption" instead of "ritual consumption"? How is the "consumer" to be understood in the context of performativity? I elaborate on these questions in this section.

The notion of performativity

The notion of “performance” and “performativity” are widely used in current anthropology (see e.g. Herzfeld 2001, p. 284-285 for “anthropology of performance”, or Virtanen 2003). In particular, performance has been a key theme for Victor Turner, who seems to suggest it as a kind of postmodern view of rituals (Turner 1992). For him ritual is a “transformative performance revealing major classifications, categories, and contradictions of cultural processes” (Turner 1992, p. 75).

The idea of performance conveys a theatrical or dramatic viewpoint to social life. To consider social life as drama-like, as a staged performance, has received considerable attention among various authors. Goffman (1967, 1971), and Turner (1992), for instance, share the same idea that the social order is accomplished and negotiated in the midst of everyday life and this may be seen as drama-like. For Goffman all social interaction is staged while for Turner the dramaturgical phase begins when crises arise in the daily flow of social interaction. Also in the marketing literature the theatre metaphor is widely used. Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Firat and Dholakia (1998, p. 154-155), for instance, see the marketplace as a theatrical stage.

In the feminist field, Judith Butler (1999) has forcefully brought up the notion of performativity. Her work also highlights the theatrical dimension involved, and importantly, it has the benefit of highlighting the *repetitive* dimension in the staged performance. As Butler remarks: “performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual “ (Butler 1999, p. xv). It also has the benefit of highlighting that these repetitive acts are constitutive: they *produce* something. She discusses this in the context of gender categories. Gender does not simply exist, but becomes produced through various kinds of repetitive performative acts[9].

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9 The idea of performativity as an act that does something may be traced back on speech act theories (e.g. Austin 1962). This stream of research has emphasized that speech acts not just communicate but produce a state of affairs. Statements like “You are arrested” or “I now pronounce you man and wife” make something.

Accordingly, ways of speaking, dressing, and behaving in a certain way are performative acts that make gender. We dress up as men or women, and perform certain practices every morning and evening in a rather routine and conventional fashion. These culturally constituted acts are not seen as resulting from some fixed gender identity, but as ways of performing that identity (1999, p. xiv). These ways have been historically formed, but may have been formed differently. Yet, once formed there is not much room for repeating in another way; as if we were locked into the available set of practices that condition and limit the possibilities of doing gender. This poses challenges in political terms, how to open up ways of repeating in another way.

Although the work of Butler concentrates on gender categories, her ideas have been applied in other contexts as well. For instance, the study of Fortier (1999) shows how Italian ethnicity is performed in particular places in London. Time and gender, especially, have affinities as cultural categories: both become produced everywhere, all the time, and for both this tends to go unnoticed. We perform gender by certain kinds of clothes and we perform time by certain kinds of clothes, casual Friday clothes for instance.

In producing the time difference, we lean on a culturally available set of acts to be repeated, a repertoire of practices of repetition (Butler 1999). It is actually the existence of these practices of repetition that gives existence to cultural categories. Free time would cease to exist if there were not a set of practices of repetition. Friday would simply die out in the sense we now know it unless we keep leaning on and producing it by casual Friday clothes, by Friday night bottles, or telling jokes on Friday. The repetition is based on tacit social agreement, a culturally coded and conditioned way to produce and repeat in a certain way and not in another way. It is a question of a reiteration of norms, and not of a voluntary process. It means that one is expected to repeat in the correct way; we punish those who fail to get their gender right, for instance (Butler 1999, p. 178, see Charpentier 2001).

> As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated.* This repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimatization (Butler 1999, p. 178).

When cultural categories come about because of performing, boundaries are drawn. In the context of time, one kind of category is separated from another. In producing free time, the peculiar world that serves to make us free, the aim is basically to set different times apart and *transform* from one temporal category to another (Turner 1992); to transform, for instance, from the sphere of work to the sphere of free time. The transformation takes place – symbolically and often concretely – at the door, or at the threshold (van Gennep 1960). As my data indicates, people try to forget work issues as soon as they close the door of the workplace, yet, it does not always succeed. “I try to forget work matters as soon as I close the door, I try, but I can’t”, says one of my respondents. The door represents a kind of master symbol of differentiation of times. The door is a place of performance, a place where the separation and the transformation is actualized. Representing a place where two worlds risk blurring it also represents threat. The door is a place where the safe inside meets the potentially dangerous outside (Belk 1997).

Historically, doors, murals, and gates have occupied a central symbolical stage in demarcating and protecting countries, cities, and homes (Turunen 2002; van Gennep 1960). Still today, the threshold continues to mark the physical boundary between inside and outside, family and stranger, home and world. While the ancient Egyptians had the Sphinx to guard the gates of the Pyramids, we have specialized security companies and branded locks that serve to keep danger away.

Due to dangers involved in the doors, the trespassing is often made through formalities. These formalities serve to provide a safe way to pass from one realm to another. In anthropological literature, they are commonly discussed in terms of “rites of passage” as proposed by van Gennep (1960). His classic suggestion is that rites include three phases: separation, transition, and incorporation. The separation refers to practices that serve to detach the person from the current status, and to prepare him/her for the transitional zone. Incorporation in turn serves to connect the person to the new status. We can identify separation and incorporation practices in the starting and ending of the workdays, for instance; think of the customary questions upon returning to work on Monday morning, or upon returning home – one is likely to be asked how the weekend or workday went (Nippert-Eng 1996). The intervening commute in turn represents a liminal time to transform from one world to another.

These three phases suggested by van Gennep are, in practice, overlapping and do not hold an equally important role in all events. They might also be a rather long-term process as in the case of tourist trips (Belk 1997; Selänniemi 1990), as well as in the case of becoming an adult (Crapanzo in Marcus and Fishcer, p. 61-62). The latter case, a study by Crapanzo of circumcision in Morocco, has also questioned the supposed "automatic" change in status resulting from these rites. Rather, when the supposed change in status is tightly inscribed in the culture and keeps being produced through public discussion, this creates a moral imperative to change the status. It *must* make a difference. If one does not feel so, it causes anxiety. Considering the topic of the present study, the change in status between work and free time, for instance, is inscribed in our culture - free time *is* to be different from work time - but its production is not necessarily automatic, and the division not necessarily meaningful. Still, the lack of status change may cause anxiety. I am out of office, why do I not feel like it?

All in all, the way the notion of performativity is used here, is inspired by anthropological and feminist streams of research. Accordingly, social life is presented as a staged performance; a performance through which cultural categories such as free time are produced. To perform is to *make* something, to draw time lines, and to transform them. In this performance *repetition* is a key element.

Performative consumption and goods

Free time is produced through a set of repetitive performative acts that might take several forms ranging from speech acts to body gestures and consumption. Through drinking some coffee and having subsequent coffee chats, for instance, a break is produced. But what does it actually mean to consider consumption as performative? If repetition is a key element in performativity, what is repetitive consumption like in the present context? If to perform is to make something, how should the nature of goods be then understood? This section contemplates these questions.

In the anthropological frame adopted, consumption is seen as a symbolic means of displaying, negotiating, and maintaining some sort of cultural order (Applbaum and Jordt 1996; Douglas and Isherwood 1996; McCracken 1988, 1986). That is, when symbolic goods are used, offered, accepted, or refused this all marks, and either reinforces or undermines, established order. The question of temporal order has been commonly discussed in terms of periodicities, intervals, or time scales (Appadurai 1996; Douglas and Isherwood 1996). I quote Douglas:

> The calendar has been notched for annual, quarterly, monthly, weekly, daily and shorter periodicities. The passage of time can then be laden with meaning. The calendar gives a principle for rotation of duties, for establishing precedence, for review and renewal...jubilee, New Year, time for loving and time for dying. Consumption goods are used for notching these intervals (Douglas and Isherwood 1996, 43-44, my underlining).

The quote leans on the idea of cyclical time, that is, time that repeats in certain periods or intervals. It also leans on the idea that consumer goods are used for notching these intervals. Let us consider these ideas in the context of performativity. As discussed the notion of performativity conveys the idea of *repetition.* Let us contemplate that question first.

Mundane time lines are produced through acts such as coffee breaks, changing clothes, having a cigarette, taking a shower, reading papers, or switching the computer on every morning. These acts are commonly performed in a rather routine-like and conventional fashion. Therefore, as a form of consumption, they fall into the mode of repetition and habituation (Appadurai 1996; Gronow and Warde 2001).

What is the underlying cultural logic of the repetition? What makes them be repeated not only from day to day, and year to year, but also from generation to generation? In elaborating the relation between repetitive consumption and time, Appadurai suggests that small-scale cycles get their basis from the inertia of the body (1996, p. 67-70). The body calls for disciplines that are repetitious, or at least periodic. Several mundane consumption practices such as drinking and clothing tend to center around the body; they serve to feed and maintain the body. He calls these practices, following Mauss (1973), techniques of the body.

However, thinking about the set of symbols through which small-scale time lines are produced in today's society, not all of them can be understood through the body. The new communication technology and the media, for instance, play a significant role in the production of times: many of our repetitive routine practices have to do with ICTs and/or media. Think of the daily morning routines, for instance. They include routines such as switching on computers, logging on the Net, and reading e-mail. Several studies have reported how media consumption is used to rhythm days and the passage of the week. The start and end of the day may be marked by the News, and weekdays may get their rhythm through the habit of watching at television. "Tuesday and Sunday are TV nights", said one of my respondents. Repetitive acts like these cannot be reduced to techniques of the body.

As Gronow and Warde (2001) suggest, thinking about the repetition also in terms of "social and cultural inertia" may give a more representative base for thinking about the repetitive consumption in the production of time. If techniques of the body serve to feed and maintain the body, so the other techniques serve to feed and maintain social and cultural relations. They provide continuity. They are to be repeated since, as van Gennep (1960) notes, we have to renew our social and cultural cycles every now and then. They do not last automatically, but require maintenance. Through the repetitive acts, therefore, culture reproduces itself.

Hence, a rather significant role appears to be accorded to the set of seemingly mundane repetitive consumption acts. At the everyday level, the significance can be seen by the reactions when they cannot be performed for some reason or another. When there is no coffee available in the morning or no morning paper, it may cause quite strong reactions. Moreover, as we have discussed earlier, the reproduction of current temporal order, and free time, is of particular kind. It is under change and requires renegotiation; it includes moral dimension to be coped with; and it invites to transgress boundaries and cope with threats and dangers invoked.

Against that context one may ask: how are seemingly mundane goods able to do all that? Is it apt to think that goods serve for notching these repetitive time lines? Thinking consumption as performative means that consumption does not merely communicate

and mark, but that it *makes* something, produces something (Butler 1999). The phrase "It is time for a drink", for instance, at the end of workday not just communicates some sort of temporal change, but also *produces* that change. It produces a time line that ends some period and begins a new one. In other words, free time becomes therefore produced by the expressions that are commonly said to be their results. As Butler notes, performativity is an "expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates" (1999, p. xiv).

If we assume that goods make something, we must also ask where do they get their performative power? In the reminder of this section, I attempt to elaborate on this question by drawing on Douglas' notion of power: how symbolic goods are charged with power deriving either from the order or from the disorder. Through such elaboration we can also shed some light on why just some kinds of artifacts become infused in some repetitive acts, but not in others.

In the Douglasian framework, the notion of power refers to force, strength, or energy. Both the order and disorder are invested with the power, but they have somewhat different functions (Douglas 2002). The power that resides in the order works on behalf of society. Consequently, such power brings about a respected and appreciated status. The power embedded in professions such as a policeman and a lawyer, for instance, derives from the order and works for society (Wuthonow *et al* 1984). The power that resides in the disorder, in turn, works against society. It derives from the margins, and, consequently, it arouses fear and evokes protective reactions. For instance, marginalized people, such as witches, were thought to have a special kind of evil power that may harm and threaten society. To prevent such harm from happening, protective measures were to be taken. In the case of witches, they were persecuted.

However, the disorder also has its constructive side as we have discussed. The disorder represents seeds for the creativity, for the new. If we continue thinking of professions, the meanings imposed on creative professions make this ambivalency visible. Considering the origins of creativity, one cannot point to any well-defined source such as education or legislation; rather, creativity comes from some indefinable source, from the margins. Accordingly, creative professions and people tend to carry some sort of threaten-

ing stigma. These professions are, for instance, often talked of in terms of “creative madness”.

In this example of creativity, it is a question of boundary transgressions. Such transgression brings about powers and dangers, as Douglas notes:

> The danger, which is risked by boundary transgressions, is power. Those vulnerable margins and those attacking forces, which threaten to destroy good order represent the powers inhering in the cosmos (Douglas 2002, p. 199).

In the contemporary world of goods, this play between powers and dangers, orders and disorders, is played out in the arena of consumption. One can buy goods filled with powers and dangers in order to be in touch with the margins and become empowered. Then, one can also buy goods filled with purifying powers that ensure a safe return to the order. Examples include such products as energy drinks, alcohol, tobacco, water, soda, or pizza. They create some sort of power to *do* something: to bring us to the margins, to purify, to remedy. Some of these products may draw their power from history and mythology, just as alcohol has some mythological status in Finnish history (Apo 2001), or water as a strong symbol of purification (Douglas 2002). Interestingly, new products may also lean on the same old available meanings that basically derive from the logic of order or disorder. To illustrate this, I take two examples of contemporary goods: energy drink and toothpaste.

My first example illustrates how power may be loaded into a brand through leaning on cultural meanings of margins. The Finnish energy drink, “Battery”, is a canned energy drink with caffeine and taurine (www.batterydrink.com). These physiological characters imply energizing features, but more importantly the empowering feature comes from the reliance on cultural meanings of margins. First of all, the whole brand leans on the notion of electricity; the brand name and design - the can looks like a battery - and advertisements visualize the current. Electricity carries the empowering meaning - Battery “keeps you going” – but it carries the dangerous meaning as well. Electric current can kill.

Secondly, the relation between power and danger is generally constructed through prohibitions as we have discussed. Dangerous things must be hedged with prohibitions and rules of avoidance. Through rules of avoidance, one can infer that the product is dangerous and, therefore, powerful. The following warning text is on the Battery can:

> Warning. Avoid drinking before going to sleep. Not for children, pregnant women, or for people allergic to caffeine. Recommended use: maximum 3 cans per day.

In this case the rules of avoidance concern users, use context and amount of use. The text prohibits the use in certain contexts (not before sleeping); it prohibits certain people from using it (children and pregnant woman plus those allergic to caffeine); it also steers towards moderate usage by stating the maximum daily consumption. Considering the users and usage context mentioned, it is a question of in-between statuses, of those that are culturally treated as vulnerable and requiring protection. In particular, pregnancy is a kind of in-between state that is hedged with a number of prohibitions (Turner 1977). Sleeping is also such a liminal state, as I shall discuss later. Recommending moderate usage is also an interesting feature; the same kind of logic can be found when alcoholic beverages are discussed.

Indeed, the same kinds of warnings and rules of avoidance are present in classic products such as tobacco, alcohol, and coffee. They have the power to re-energize, refresh, and change moods and they are hedged with a set of prohibitions regarding who is allowed to use them, at what age, where, etc. They carry power and danger: they may kill (Valtonen 2000). Things that are anomalic in some sense are accorded a dirty, forbidden, dangerous status, as Anttonen (1996) for instance remarks. For these products, this status has been constructed throughout the centuries, and they have been the target of prohibitions of many kinds.

Let us now consider the other kind of power, the one that derives from the order. To illustrate this, I take toothpaste as an example. Toothpaste is a product that also relates to boundaries: brushing one's teeth every morning and night is a way to perform boundaries. Its symbolic function is not so much to make oneself free and to empower, but rather to purify, to prepare the transition to the following realm. Accordingly, the power of such a product does not come from the margins, but from the order. Toothpaste

represents the good and ordered side of life. It works for the good, for the order. Let us take a look at the kind of text we can find on a tube of toothpaste. My example comes from a tube of Pepsodent.

> Recommended by the Association of Dentists. Prevents caries.

This time the text is not filled with warnings, but with recommendations: recommended by the Association of Dentists. Considering the general status of doctors in the Western world, they represent good and respected to society. They take care of the health, one of today's most cherished values. Reflecting on the advertisements of such products – that show test laboratories and results of clinical tests - they also lean on another powerful source, that of science. Therefore, such power embedded in the product works for the good, it "protects" and "prevents". It also has well-defined sources, In other words education and science.

In the context of brushing teeth, one must also take up the symbolism of water. Water imposes a rich set of symbolism: it represents a source of life and it is a symbol of purification and renewal (Douglas 2002, p. 198-199). After being in the margins, at the source of danger, one needs to purify and wash symbolically – and often concretely. Nowadays, there is branded water, and also many other products that have acquired the status of purifying, curing. From the Finnish context, one may mention certain sodas that cure hangovers, as well as some foods, such as pizza, that seem to have acquired the power to heal and construct a bridge back to order after visiting the margins.

These examples illustrate that boundary products are symbolically charged, there is some sort of performative power in them. The power may have two sources: it may derive from the order or from the disorder. Through this logic, one can understand why certain kinds of products are taken in certain kinds of situations. Roughly put, there are those that make us free and there are those that help us return.

To end the section, I want to call attention to the historicity of these practices of repetition. The artifacts that I have outlined, such as coffee, alcohol, and tobacco, have been used to perform time for centuries (Apo 2001; Schivelbusch 1986; Falk 1986). This is

an interesting phenomenon when thinking about the contemporary abundance of goods. Although we have a huge number of possible products that we might use in performing the boundaries of free time, we still use the very same as our ancestors. It is also interesting that once we adopt new products such as ICTs in the performative practices we do not abandon the old ones. This being the case we face an interesting layer of very old and very new symbols in contemporary performative practices.

In sum, I have discussed how performative consumption may be understood in terms of two key characteristics: that it *makes* something and that it is *repetitive*. In the present context of free time two bases for the repetition may be identified. One derives from body inertia, the other from social and cultural inertia. These repetitive practices are not seen as a matter of individual choices, but as culturally and historically conditioned. This points towards assessing the underlying conditions and codes that make us perform free times in a certain way and not in another way. Therefore, in this line of thinking the research focus is not on elaborating how people choose goods to make themselves free; rather, the focus is on elaborating what choices become possible in certain kinds of cultural contexts. For instance, in what context does one choose coffee instead of beer? These goods are not considered merely communicators, but goods that make something. They are able to impose boundaries, manage and transgress them, because they are symbolically charged with powers deriving from orders or disorders.

Subject as cultural performer

We concluded earlier that boundaries of free time become performed into being and in this section, I turn to elaborate on who is the performer. That is, how is the subject conceptualized in this study? When the subject is seen in anthropological terms, the economic subject, on which our images within consumer research have been largely based, must be replaced by a different conception (Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). I do not think of people primarily as "consumers" but as "performers". In the reminder of this section, I clarify my choices.

The symbolic anthropological school of thought relies on the assumption that culture exists at the social rather than at the individual level. Accordingly, an isolated individual does not stand at the center in this kind of analysis (Douglas and Isherwood 1996, see also Douglas and Ney 1998). Several recent authors have criticized the individualist stance prevailing in economics and consumer research (Firat and Dholakia 1998; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Oswald 1999; Ritson and Elliot 1999; Moisander 2001; Uusitalo and Uusitalo 1981). The source of these criticisms may differ to some extent – for instance, postmodern or poststructuralist researchers question the assumption of an essential core self – but, nevertheless, they echo the same concern, which is that, "individualist theories of knowledge and behaviour have had their day and run their course" (Douglas and Isherwood 1996, p. 41).

If people are not conceptualized as individuals exerting rational and sovereign choices in order to satisfy "natural" needs, what kind of conceptual base is relied on? I propose here to view the subject as a cultural being who makes sense of the world in terms of symbols and meanings. People are, therefore, seen above all as *communicative and symbolic beings* that through various kinds of cultural messages, such as language, performances, and consumption, construct their social realities (Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Given the historical dimension adopted, one must also acknowledge that people are born into a world, which is already constructed in certain ways, and which they inherit. In this sense, "the subject of knowledge is not taken here to be the individual person but the stream of many generations of people", as Elias (1992, p. 30) notes.

If we further think about the domain of the present study one dimension may be added. When the question is about cultural messages such as telling jokes on Friday or killing time by playing computer games, this indicates that one should consider people playful. Therefore, in my study the underlying conceptualization of humans comes closer to *homo ludens* (Huizinga [1944] 1950) than to *homo economicus*.

"Play" is an encompassing term with very many definitions and usages. Several postmodern writers have highlighted it (e.g. Baudrillard 1988; Firat and Dholakia 1998) as well as the anthropologist Victor Turner (1977; 1982). He suggests: "play is more seri-

ous than we, the inheritors of Western Puritanism, have thought" (1977, p. viii). Drawing on him, I use the term "play" in the context of the theatrical sense – people engage in a kind of play when they impose and transgress the boundaries of free time. The notion of play does not refer solely to amusing, enjoying, and having fun; it might well be also troublesome, boring, and frightening. Moreover, people are not seen as free players who can freely choose the play and create rules; rather, the culture provides the opportunities and limits for the play. Roughly put, the cultural condition writes the script for the play, or provides performative acts to be repeated, to use Butler's term. This means that we have some sort of shared understanding how to behave and perform during coffee breaks (by talking about funny things instead of tough work matters, for instance), or, how to perform during holidays or at parties.

In line with this kind of conceptualization, I call people *cultural performers.* This metaphorical term is appropriate for the present study for several reasons. First of all, calling people in terms of nations or tribes, such as "Finns" like the anthropological stance might suggest, would be somewhat questionable in the contemporary world. Second, the term "performer" suits the theoretical stance of my study, especially if compared with the most obvious term in the field, "consumer". The latter term derives from the economic frame and is constructed in the market process as an antithesis of "producer". Such a dichotomical view is in contrast to the theoretical commitments of my study. The "consumer" not only carries the burden of individualism and sovereign choice (see e.g. Moisander 2001), but it is also constructed upon the notion of value: the consumer is supposed to consume (devalue) the value produced by the producer. In my study, consumption is seen as a productive not as a destructive act.

Though, culturally oriented studies have presented another viewpoint by seeing consumption not as using up, but as production; production of identities, meanings, and culture (Featherstone 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Firat and Dholakia 1998; MacKay 1997; Uusitalo 1995). In doing so, they have given new meanings to the term "consumer". Nevertheless, it still tends to carry its historical economic message.

Using the notion of "performer" also provides a way to go beyond the rigid dualisms that tend to characterize academic research practices (Coffey 1999; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Penaloza 1994b). Boundaries such as producer/consumer and researcher/ researched become erased in the context of my study. Both advertisers and marketers and consumers and researchers take part in the on-going re/de/production of the boundaries of free time. In this sense, we are all cultural performers.

Finally, the naming of people is not only a theoretical question, but also a moral one. The crisis of representation has put forward the need to reflect on how to word the world under study (Coffey 1999; Marcus and Fischer 1999; Richardson 2000). In the field of consumer inquiry, this directs us toward reflecting on how we as consumer researchers word people who we study. As Firat and Venkatesh note: "we as consumer researchers construct the consumer in much the same way as the contemporary market system determines what he or she is" (Firat and Venkatesh 1995, p. 258-259).

In this sense, the notion of performativity that has been the subject of the present section enables one to consider the ways in which the researcher takes part in the constitution of the world under study.

Symbolic-critical approach to free time

This chapter has elaborated on the question *how* to rethink free time. There is a need for rethinking, because the category called free time has been contested in today's information society. This chapter has further specified this need by contrasting the way free time is understood in the time-use statistics with the empirical data of the present study. It has identified certain themes that point toward rethinking: the notion of time involved in free time, it is not merely a resource; the ways to define free time, that is, does the absence of work or presence of certain activity make certain time as free; the very nature of temporal categories, that is, whether to consider them as evident, given, and neutral or as morally loaded, blurring and constantly in motion.

To accomplish the task of rethinking the study proposes a theoretical approach that is called symbolic-critical. It brings together perspectives on symbolic and critical anthropology, critical consumption studies and feminist studies. It puts cultural meanings, classifications, boundaries and symbols at the center of analysis of free time. Basically, such an anthropologically inspired analysis investigates the way the world under study is ordered. Accordingly, the category called free time represents one way to organize and order the world. The ordering takes place through the language, but the cultural order is infused in the structuring of social life in its entirety. The ordering means differentiation and through differentiation things acquire their meanings. Therefore, free time is meaningful only to the extent that there is some other time from which it differs. The differentiation makes sense only within some system. Assessing meanings of free time is, therefore, to assess rules, patterns and systems that make it meaningful.

When a cultural analyst follows this line of thinking, and starts to examine the way the world under study is ordered and made meaningful, he or she pays attention to the point of differentiation, to boundaries. Boundaries and their symbolic expressions constitute the key analytical tools through which cultural principles may be assessed. Importantly, the cultural analyst does not firmly decide a priori which boundaries are assessed, and therefore, this sort of perspective opens up ways of rethinking free time.

The particularity of this theoretical stance is that it addresses the order through the disorder. Despite the focus on order, it acknowledges the constant presence of disorder. This aspect gives a particular dynamic spirit to the theory and makes it suitable for investigating the current category of free time. It is suitable, in particular, because there may be identified two kinds of disorders. First of all, the whole category of free time is in a state of disorder in the current society; the temporal order in general, and division between work and free time in particular, are called into question. Secondly, the category of free time itself entails the idea of disorder, becoming free means being out-of-order, going beyond boundaries. In today's society this is organized as ordered form, as ordered disorder. That is, there are prescribed times and places to "be free". Nevertheless, these prescribed realms are not symbolically similar; they are divided into good and bad, dirty and clean.

Through this theoretical prism, therefore, free time appears as a complex and tensioned realm requiring constant renegotiation and management of disorders. Due to these tensions we encounter peculiar symbolic battles at the boundaries of free time. To further specify these tensions inherent in the phenomenon, the present chapter has discussed them in terms of *changing order*, *moral order* and *beyond order*. On the one hand, today's society seems to face a general temporal disorder due to changing living conditions. On the other hand, the order seems remarkable resistant. This results as a peculiar battle with new material world and old categories. Moreover, free time entails a peculiar moral battle between dirty and clean, good and bad alternatives. People have to consider which side to visit and whether there is a need for symbolic purification or punishment after such a visit. On the whole, in our cultural "time-outs", it is a question of momentary visits in different realms, of a step to the margins and a return, going beyond boundaries and coming back. These transitions also convey dangers. Importantly, however, even after a momentary visit to these "time-outs" we return re-energized and recreated. This is the master meaning embedded in various kinds of cultural "time outs", such as coffee breaks and holidays. They represent cultural renewal.

To conceptualize the complex process of drawing, renegotiating and managing boundaries this study draws on the notion of performativity, instead of ritual. Two theoretical streams have inspired the conceptualization: the anthropological and the feminist. These streams lead to considering social life as a staged performance through which cultural categories such as free time are constituted. In particular, these performances are *repetitive* and they *produce* something. The repetitive practices of Friday, for instance, produce that day. In this line of thinking, consumer goods are not considered merely communicators; rather goods enable to make something, to impose boundaries, manage and transgress them. They are able to do all this because they are symbolically charged with powers deriving from orders or disorders.

All in all, this theoretical stance considers free time as a symbolic *another world* that we create in order to "escape" or "be free". This world is not any given entity but requires constant making and management. The study approaches the sub-world called free time in 21st century, but there is no reason to consider it our invention. We build our understanding of this sub-world on pre-existing knowledge. We inherit the knowledge of

good and proper free time, as well as the practices by which to make it. Perhaps we also slightly transform them, but in any case, the likely change and renegotiation occurs against the background of the historical construction.

Moreover, although the study approaches the sub-world in Finland, there are likely to be affinities in the Western world more generally. This is because in the contemporary world certain symbolic forms tend to be rather global; meanings transgress national and local boundaries through various kinds of instruments. Besides, our notions of time have a relatively long shared history within the Western world. This situation has, probably, partly enhanced the taken-for-granted nature of time related topics; their arbitrary character becomes seldom considered. Therefore, there is a need to critically assess the grounds on which our notions of free time are built.

3 Symbolic battle with temporal systems

The category called free time is a category of time. The contemporary way to classify time is a result of a long historical process during which different views and notions of time have become infused and transformed. Consequently, the current construction of time is many-layered (Whitrow 1988)[10]. This concerns free time as well. Through time, it has been constructed within different temporal systems with subsequent assumptions and principles. What happens when these different systems meet? What kinds of articulations does the meeting evoke at the everyday level? These questions constitute the topic of the present chapter. It proposes that the symbolic battle that takes place at the contemporary boundaries of free time may partly be understood as a battle with different temporal systems.

The chapter discusses this theme by taking up two symbolically charged border categories, Friday and Christmas. Why are they not understood as just another workday or time free of work? It also takes up the traditional border practice, cleaning, and discusses the ways in which it is carried out in the current world of goods. The chapter starts, however, by presenting two different temporal systems and their historical constructions. In so doing, it places the phenomenon under study in its historical context.

The historical description that follows is a rough one, I admit, but hopefully sufficient to lay the ground for understanding our present assumptions of free time, and in particular, to highlight the multi-layered nature of time. Such highlighting is needed since time is one of those "naturalized" symbols we tend to take for granted. In particular, it is needful to discuss the co-existence of different views on time, since previous studies on time tend to discuss only one view: one stream of research follows the tradition-based path (e.g. Karjalainen 1998; Turunen 2002), the other the economic path (e.g. Gershuny 2000; Cross 1993). The different systems do, however, meet in the everyday life.

[10] A crucial foundation for this layering is the Judeo-Christian seven-day week system whose roots might be traced back to Babylonia, some 500 years BC. Other crucial time units are the dividing of the day into 24 hours and the year into 12 months.

The economic system is outlined first, since it may be seen as the dominant one in conceiving the category called free time. Then, the tradition-based social system is discussed. Once the logic of these different systems has been developed, the chapter turns to show how they co-exist and meet in the midst of everyday life.

Time in economic system: cycle of production and consumption

How has the temporal class called free time been constructed in the economic system? Upon what kinds of assumptions has it been built? Can there be identified any other temporal classes than free time and work? This section deals with these questions.

The origins of free time, as we commonly understand it, may be traced back to the Industrial Revolution. Then, free time became separated from work time, and the oppositional division of work and free time was born. Industrialization was not a separate phenomenon, but closely related to other change processes, such as modernization[11], urbanization, and commercialization (Firat and Dholakia 1998; Marrus 1974; Rojek 1995; Rosenzweig 1983; Whitrow 1988). In the production of the division, one key feature is that it was based on clock time. The idea of an hour-based work rhythm clearly defined work time and, consequently, free time. Concurrently, clock time and time-discipline started to become significant in societies (Adam 1990; Nowotny 1994; Turner 1982).

Free and work became separate entities in terms of time, as well as in terms of space. This resulted a kind of metronymic society in which work and free time have their appointed time and place. They became divided not only materially, but also symbolically: work and sociability, work and fun, work and play became split (Rosenzweig 1983). If people were used to singing together while working, now they had to work first, and then join a workers' singing club.

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[11] Modernity – thinking of it as a general transformation of economy and society – has roots in the Enlightenment, but it crystallized with the Industrial Revolution (Rojek, 1995, p. 36).

Time to earn and time to consume

This break between work and free time lay the foundation for perceiving and classifying time in terms of money: there is a time to earn and a time to consume. This logic still prevails and is followed, for example, in time-budget studies. Time is classified so that there is "the paid work, the unpaid work and the consumption" (Gershuny 2000, p. 1). The connection between time and money also echoes that time is subject to economic laws. It is a scarce resource to be optimized and used efficiently.

Let us see how the marriage between time and money was established. The idea that work, and therefore earning, was based on the clearly defined clock time, made time something to be exchanged. And because there was a separate time for earning money, there was need for a separate time for consuming that money. That is, free time. Through history, therefore, two spheres of times were created, one for earning money and the other for consuming that money (Firat and Dholakia 1998, p.15-16; Nowotny 1994, p. 118). This led to the emergence of the leisure industry and gradually, free time started to became equated with time free for consuming (Marrus 1974; Touraine 1974).

These separated spheres were not equally valued. In modern times, production and work were valued most; they represented the real and serious side of life. Free time, in turn, was seen as the less serious side and a time that was defined and justified by work, as a reward for working (Appadurai 1996; Firat and Dholakia 1998; Rojek 1995).

Currently, however, free time seems to have taken on the nature of work. As Appadurai notes: "consumption has become the principal work of the late industrial society – a serious form of work" (Appadurai 1996, p. 82). The harried nature is another closely-related characteristic of contemporary free time, as several studies have reported (e.g. Bittman and Wajcman 2000). People confront constant time pressures and schedules also during time they are supposed to be free. As a result, we face a sort of hypertime or frenetic leisure, as Appadurai points out.

> When consumption is transformed into contemporary forms of leisure, where both space and time mark distance from work, we enter the world of the luxury cruise and the packaged vacation, commodified as "time out of time". But everyone who has taken a vacation within the highly constrained circumstances of an industrial society knows that the commodity clock of productive time never ceases to operate. This sometimes leads to the paradox increasingly characteristic of industrial leisure: the harried vacation, packed with so many activities, scenes, and choices, whose purpose is to create a hypertime of leisure, that the vacation indeed becomes a form of work, of frenetic leisure – leisure over conscious of its forthcoming rendezvous with work time (Appadurai 1996, p. 79-80)

Nowadays, work and free have, therefore, similar characteristics, and as classes they are closely interdependent. In order to have free time one must work. This close connection can be seen in the way people who do not work are defined; they are not called "free", but "unemployed" or "retired". As Adam (1995, p. 105) notes, the market-based free time "makes the concept inapplicable for all those outside paid employment". To be able to have free time, and spend, requires working, unless the question is of an affluent person who does not need to work.

In fact, there seems to be no escape from this work-and-spend cycle as Cross (1993) points out. According to him, the key contemporary problem is that we do not have time away from the cycle of consumption and production.

> Time has become money in both work and "after hours". We experience a scarcity of both goods and leisure. But ultimately the problem is that we lack time free from working and spending" (Cross 1993, p. 1).

Despite the current affinities of free time and work, the division once made seems to be persistent. The grand metanarrative of work and free time underlies the way times are classified and understood. As metanarratives often do, they obscure other options to talk and understand things (Firat and Dholakia 1998). The option offered us is that free time should be different from working time (Baudrillard 1998, p. 158), although that difference would not be the one through which we make times meaningful. Still, we must react to it, reflect on our thinking against it, and talk through it.

Freedom: “free to do what one wants”

When discussing the assumptions on which free time is built, freedom is one such crucial assumption (Marrus 1974). This can already be seen in the label: a certain kind of time is defined as *free* time. As discussed above it roughly refers to the freedom to consume. Moreover and importantly, free time rests upon the ideal of a *free individual*; upon the ideal that free time is time when “I can do whatever I want”. Free time is the time when one *owns* time and can exploit it according to one’s will. It is private property, something that can be owned just like goods (Baudrillard 1998). Free time, therefore, is presented as a realm where individuals can make free choices about how to spend that time. They are self-determinate (Firat and Dholakia 1988; Rojek 1995).

Such a construction of free time as a realm of personal liberty and free will is firmly built into our general notions and definitions of free time. My respondents, for instance, used such expressions as “then I can decide myself what I do” or “time when I engage in my own things”, or “free time means that I can do what I want” when they described their views on free time.

We are led to believe, therefore, that free time is time when we can do what we want. At the same time, however, there are strong assumptions on how, when, and where we should want to spend it. These basic ideals of the category called free time are well summarized in the following quote (that also highlights whose time it is historically a question of: *his*). Free time:

> “…consists of a number of occupations in which the individual may indulge of his own free will – either to rest, to amuse himself, to add to his knowledge or improve his skills disinterestedly or to increase his voluntary participation in the life of community after discharging his professional, family and social duties.” (Dumazedier 1960, p. 527 in Rojek 1985, p. 3).

The expression that one is supposed to “rest” during free time is of importance here. Free time is time to recover from labor, and resting is one way to achieve that end. However, what is counted as “resting”? Does it refer to some sort of doing or just being? To some degree, the category of free time seems to be built into the assumption of active time. As if free time equals *doing*, not just being. This assumption can be seen in

the conduct of everyday life. For instance, when returning to work after the weekend, a rather typical question is: "What did you *do* during your weekend?" Or, taking a look at the way newspapers classify and write about free time, it is based on the assumption of active free time. Also research tends to concentrate on various kinds of free time activities, such as gardening or going to museums. As if just being and resting would not be legitimate ways of spending free time.

The assumption of active free time can also be seen in the way people talk about Sundays. Historically, Sunday used to be the day of rest. Then it was actually forbidden to do anything; if one did something it evoked shame and guilt. Now, it is just the opposite. One might say like one of my respondents: "I am ashamed to say, I did nothing last Sunday…" Free time should be filled with doing things. Doing nothing requires an explanation, a comment of some sort. As one mother said: ”I'm a loser, I guess, but I enjoy being, just being". The norm of efficiency that leads to filling every time unit efficiently seems to penetrate all spheres of life (Moisander and Valtonen 2002).

Besides, these free time activities should be *socially acceptable,* of the *proper* kind. They should enjoy a valued and normal status in society, like going to museums and the theater, reading good literature, playing sports, gardening, or having a picnic with the family. This reflects the civilizing role accorded to free time (Baudrillard 1998; Rojek 1995). It is time for cultivating and civilizing oneself, in order to contribute to the betterment and well being of the individual and society; to grow up as a consumer and a citizen. Leisure studies have largely followed this assumption and concurrently there has been little interest in "deviant" forms of leisure, as Rojek (1995, p. 38) points out.

All these activities should also be pleasurable and enjoyable. Free time is time for having fun, enjoying, pleasurable moments, having good experiences, being *happy*. The grand metanarrative of work and free time suggests that free time is to be liked, and conversely work should not be. Therefore, free time studies have underestimated that "some forms of leisure might be experienced as boring and oppressive" (Rojek 1995, p. 38). This rather strong assumption about free time as a happy time can be seen in confessions people make if they do not feel the same way. For instance, in the introductory chapter of his book *"Time and Money*" Gary Cross notes: "I do not particularly enjoy

free time" (Cross 1993, p. viii). He says that for him the pleasures of intellectual life are more enjoyable. In my data, one AD working in an advertising agency mentioned he liked his job. Still he pointed out: "Well they think I'm crazy if I keep smiling at work". Even if one likes one's job, it is not really legitimate to show it. Working is not for smiling.

"Time for myself"

Given the prescriptions infused in the category called free time one may ask: how free is it? Is it time when one can do what one wants? The current version of this ideal seems to be the category called "time for myself", or "me-time" (in Finnish "*oma aika*"). This category seems to fall in-between prescribed classes of free time and work. Given that these two classes seem to carry rather strong cultural assumptions and status qualities regarding what to do and not to do, the class "time for myself" goes beyond them. It represents a way to be liberated from these categories and their attendant assumptions. "Time for myself" is time without strict prescriptions, "free" time in that sense.

The notion of "time for myself" is widely used in my data, most strongly in the groups of fathers and mothers. In talking about free time, they describe how they spend free time with their families, having "family time". But then they stress having their "own time" as well. The following quote is from the group of mothers.

> *SO HOW ABOUT THIS ME TIME, WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY IT?*
> - *Well, it is my own free time.*
> - *The family doesn't relate to it at all….*
> - *Yeah, it is not free time, it is me time, time for myself.*

In other words, by naming some sort of time as "time for myself" one actually becomes free from the obligations and statuses prescribed in the category of free time. During "my time" one is not prescribed to be happy, but can feel blue; one is not prescribed to do something if one does not feel like it; one is allowed to sleep - or even work if one pleases. The key meaning is the self-determination. As one mother describes her view on "time for myself" in the home context:

- You can decide about your life yourself, be one's own master for once! Go downstairs defiantly when all the others are asleep upstairs and even stand on your head if you feel like it.

The notion of "time for myself" emphasizes that time is considered private property. It is actually often used in the form "*my* own time" in order to further emphasize that the question is of ownership. The expression suggests that this kind of time enjoys the same sort of rights as private property generally does. Ownership makes it legitimate to use one's own time for one's own purposes. Others should also respect it. "Own time" is time that should not be disturbed. Recent time studies have reported a general desire for time when one is not disturbed (e.g. Bittman and Wajcman 2000). This desire seems to get its articulation especially in "time for myself".

However, "time for myself" must also be constructed. Boundaries must be imposed and expressed to others. The question is of constructing little moments of one's own in the midst of everyday life, be it through hobbies, listening to music, through the media, or the rhythm of family life; when others sleep, time is at one's own disposal. Stevens, Maclaran, and Brown (2003) show in their study how women's magazines may be used to create and justify "me-time" in the context of the home. One father describes his construction of "me time" through newspaper in the following account that also highlights the door as a possible threat through which the cherished time might be disturbed.

- *And on Sunday mornings I wake up a bit earlier than the others, so that I can read my Hesari [newspaper] in peace and quiet, I try to have two hours for that. Then I am really irritated if the others wake up too early…It's fabulous if one of my family members wants to sleep until noon, two of them watch television and I can read my Hesari. No disturbance before 11 o'clock. Actually, one should switch off the doorbell so that no one could possibly ring it.*

To sum up, this section explored upon what kind of assumptions free time is built within the economic market system. Within it, time is subject to economic laws: it is reducible to money, a scarce resource to be allocated, budgeted, and used efficiently. Free time is constructed as the opposite of work, as part of the cycle of production and consumption. It rests upon the notion of freedom, of individual freedom in particular. It is presented as an oasis of release, escape and personal liberty. Nowadays, this ideal seems to be best actualized in the category called "time for myself". It represents a category in which it is possible to be free of the obligations prescribed in free time.

Time in tradition-based social system: cycle of life and death

Let us turn to take a look at how times were structured before the birth of the division work and free time. There was also a rhythm to work and free time, play and recreation before industrialization, no doubt, but it was not written into the passage of clock-time, nor was it labeled "free". It was written into the passage of the days and seasons, in the passage of social life (Anttonen 1996; Vilkuna 2000; Whitrow 1988). I call the system a tradition-based social system, and in this section I elaborate on what this system is like, and what are its key assumptions.

Dangerous times and ordinary times

The very early basis of structuring time relates to marking changes in the alternation of natural events (Anttonen 1996; Vilkuna 2000; Withrow 1988). The alternation of day and night, for instance, gave our ancestors an impression of the passage of time. Therefore, cycles of sun and moon, day and night, summer and winter formed an ancient basis for counting time[12].

In particular, in counting time center stage was given to those events that were considered somehow dangerous. The dark night was such an event. The night appeared peculiar and mystical: during the night, the safe, light world disappears into the darkness. When the sun sets, the day dies. Understandably, the night has a long history as a symbol of death. If one survives such a dangerous state, it is worth counting (Turunen 2002). Counting time in terms of nights is still visible in some Finnish sayings, such as "how many nights until Christmas". The peculiar status given to the night is present also

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[12] Referring them as ancient does not mean that they would not be in use currently. My respondents, for instance, made a difference between "light and dark seasons" when they described the ways in which they spent their free time.

in the way ancient Egyptians counted time. They invented a clock but they counted only the light daytime, 12 hours, as if there was no time during the nights (Whitrow 1988).

In the Finnish history of counting time, the winter constituted another such dangerous event. The cold, dark winter represented a difficult period not only symbolically, but also concretely. If one survives it, it is worth counting (Vilkuna 2000; Turunen 2002). Against this background, it is logical that the light, warm summer was - and still is - a realm of joy, relief, and freedom (Ollila 2000). Summer time is free time. As one of my respondents said: "Well, in summer, *everything* is freer." Nowadays, though, the summer and sun might be looked at from tourist resorts all year round (Selänniemi 1996).

Moreover, those natural events, which were somehow exceptional and peculiar, were important temporal markers. Examples include such as the time when there is no moon, when the day is at its longest, or at its shortest. These events were found to be exceptional and different, that is, anomalic (Douglas 2002). Consequently, they evoked some sort of danger.

These various kinds of dangerous times were differentiated from other times and marked as specific kinds of times. They were given sacred status, that is, they enjoyed a special cultural quality and were hedged with a set of rules and prohibitions. This is visible in the language, we talk about "*pyhä*" and "*arki*" (see a good presentation of the Finnish word "*pyhä*" ("sacred") in Anttonen 1996). The sacred time means: "risky, dangerous, a day requiring rules of conduct" (Vilkuna 2000, p. 374). As Anttonen notes:

> [Sacred is] used temporally to denote days that are, as it were, on the border and 'fall between' temporal categories. It thus became a basic term in the reckoning of time according to the lunar calendar. Among the Baltic Finns it was used to mark off times into periods by virtue of its meaning of prohibition. *Pyhä* meant forbidden, something to be avoided, dangerous, so that the behavioural norms prescribed by society had to be observed during the time marked off as sacred. According to the ancient calendar system, possibly the Sumerian time-reckoning system based on seven already, each month consisted of four periods of seven days marked off by a sacred time. The 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th days in the lunar cycle are thus sacred. The very fact of their liminality, and thus their being beyond the temporal categories ruling the everyday life of the community, made them not only sacred but dangerous, too (Anttonen 1996, p. 216).

Actually, the ancient way of dividing time was based on the division into dangerous times and ordinary times. Since the dangerous – sacred – days were filled with rules and prohibitions, it was the ordinary time (*arki*) that may be understood as more free. For instance, the border category such as Sunday gets its specific meaning through prohibitions and regulations; through the definitions of what one is *not* allowed to do; not to work or have fun, for instance, but to spend it in silence (DeGrazia 1974, p. 81-82). Although such traditional (and religious) prohibitions related to Sunday might have been erased to some extent, the same logic is still visible - though, now, in the arena of consumption. In Finland, there is an on-going cultural debate about what one is allowed to do on Sunday: it is culturally acceptable to go to museums and movies, but not necessarily to go shopping. The regulation of retail hours on Sunday evokes strong reactions as a recent study shows (Kajalo 2002). A rather interesting solution is that now shops are allowed to be open on Sunday during summer time. Everything is freer during summer time?

The rules of avoidance related to sacred in-between days concern working in particular: then one should *not* work. Think of the days in-between Christmas and the end of Christmas, Epiphany. Currently, though, the period ends at New Year. In Finnish, these days are commonly called "*välipäivät*" (in-between days) that were managed through certain rules, one of which being the rule to avoid working (Turunen 2002, p. 22). Still today, there are negotiations concerning whether one works on in-between days or not. They have become a kind of legitimate time not to work. I quote part of the discussion from the group of creative women:

- *I have to say that I feel really annoyed…I have not yet accepted the fact that I'm not a student anymore. I am so bitter during Christmas because I have to work on the in-between days.*
- *Exactly!*
- *That's true, I feel so bad…*
- *It's so cruel, isn't' it!*
- *I've done pretty well in having those days off, well, to be honest, I guess I was working last year for a couple of days. This year, I am going to have them off, to have a break.*

Thus, temporal boundary categories convey danger and therefore they are filled with rules of conduct. The rules represent a way of dealing with the dangers. Another way to cope with the dangers inherent in border categories is to abolish all normal rules of con-

duct (Anttonen 1996, p. 110). That is, to allow the kind of behavior that would be disapproved of on normal days. This phenomenon when rules and statuses are reversed is commonly referred to as “carnivals” following Bakhtin (in Belk 2000). In the Finnish calendar system, May Day, Midsummer, and New Year are such temporal border categories for carnival behavior. There are also newer forms such as the festivities associated with the beginning and end of school terms. During these times the normal rules of conduct are abolished. ”That’s so cool, New Year, May Day and Midsummer, then you can do just about anything, no one really cares no matter what foolish things you do”, as one male respondent pointed out.

One further border practice must be mentioned: cleaning. Traditionally, temporal changes are marked and produced through cleaning. The change to winter and summer, for instance, has been demarcated by cleaning the house and especially the windows (Ollila 2000). Cleaning is also part of the preparations related to Christmas, and on a smaller scale, part of the weekend practices[13]. It represents one way to cope with the dangers; in cleaning things are concretely and symbolically put in order. That is, the threatened order is re-established.

Binding: social and cultural renewal

Upon what kinds of assumptions and ideals is this way of conceiving time based? While in the market system the question is of freedom and individualism, here the question is rather one of collectivity and binding. Time classes such as Christmas or Midsummer are not idealized as realms for individual liberty, but as realms for renewing social and cultural relations. We are supposed to be bound to society rather than to get free from it.

While the above-discussed cycle of production and consumption centers on keeping the market alive, this cycle centers on keeping our social and cultural life alive. To renew what is found socially and culturally valuable. They need to be renewed every now and then, since the energy loaded in them becomes exhausted. van Gennep (1960) saw “re-

[13] In this context, one must also mention the Finnish place for personal cleansing, the sauna, and the custom for going to the sauna on Saturday evening, to be purified for Sunday. The sauna represents some sort of sacred place and is filled with symbolism – a traditional place for giving birth and the place for washing dead bodies, but to concentrate on that is out of the scope of the present study.

generation" as a law of life: the energy, which is found in any system becomes gradually spent and must be renewed at intervals. This regeneration, he suggests, is accomplished in the rites of death and rebirth. In our calendar system, we have appointed times for cultural renewals; those turning points when one period ends and a new one starts, such as Christmas and New Year, for instance (Anttonen 1996; Appadurai 1996).

In today's societies, renewals may have different forms, as Douglas points out. We might have "purely" commercial cycles such as paydays, sales, seasonal hits, or new launches of software products. They represent the contemporary renewals.

> So we must treat the spring millinery and spring-cleaning in our towns as renewal rites which focus and control experiences as much as Swazi first fruit rituals (Douglas 2002, p. 85).

The practice of gift giving represents one particular form of creating and enhancing the social and cultural linkage. Think of such categories as Mother's Day, birthdays or Christmas, or personal border categories, baptism, marriages, or birthdays, in all of them gift giving constitutes a key part of the celebration. There is an abundance of literature on gift giving. In the context of my study it is enough to summarize that it is one of the key practices "through which we relate to each other and help weave the web of culture" (Belk 1995, p. 69, see a good summary of gift giving literature). In particular, gift giving entails reciprocity: people become interdependent. Therefore, it represents a dilemma. It is also an act of enslavement (for reciprocity in gift giving rituals see also Joy 2001; Uusitalo and Liukko 1999).

To sum up, within this tradition-based social system the basic temporal layer derives from the alternation of natural events. Certain events are considered specific, considered dangerous, and filled with a set of rules of avoidance. To a large extent, our current calendar festivities have been anchored to these basic temporal border points, such as New Year or Midsummer. They have been laden with specific meanings, and basically, they are times for connection and cultural renewal rather than times for individual liberty. The economic system has, though, built its rhythm upon this layer; these days are commonly free from work. Yet, within this system, time is not seen in terms of money but in terms of "rhythm of repeated collective activities" (Baudrillard 1998, p. 152).

Temporal systems encounter

Given that both of the symbolic systems discussed co-exist in the everyday life, the interesting question is: what happens when the systems meet? What kinds of articulations does the meeting generate? I shall consider these questions through three different boundary events: two boundary categories, Friday and Christmas, and one boundary practice, cleaning.

Reversal: "Thank God it's Friday!"

There is a strong presence of Friday in my data. In a peculiar way, the respondents devoted much time and energy to talking about, and laughing at, that particular weekday. Reflecting on our culture at large, Friday seems to constitute an endless source of jokes, stories, practices, and sayings, like the heading for instance[14]. Why this particular day is charged with such a rich set of meanings? How do they become understandable? Let us start to consider the specific meanings related to Friday by taking a look at a little extract from the group of creative women.

> *- My weekend starts as soon as I close the door of my workplace.*
> *- Exactly.*
> *- It is the beginning.*
> *- Precisely, it's totally different leaving work on Wednesdays than on Fridays.*

Friday is a border category that differentiates between workweek and weekend[15]. In the extract, the differentiation culminates at the end of Friday: crossing over the threshold of the workplace starts the weekend. However, as we have discussed, boundary practices tend to be rather prolonged (Nippert-Eng 1996). They might already start on Friday morning as illuminated in the following description from the group of mothers. The description also nicely illuminates the specificity of Friday as a workday, and how this specificity becomes taught in early childhood: the day care centers might be full of Batmen on Friday.

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[14] Acronym is TGIF in American English (Gusfield 1987).

[15] In Finland, the five-day work week dates from 1960's. In the school system, the habit of having school on Saturday was abolished in 1972.

- *[] Friday starts the weekend, in the morning the children can disguise themselves as Batmen, take toys with them, etc. Although one goes to the day care center and to work, anyhow, it gets you ready for the right Friday mood.*
- *Good food, a bottle of wine, they are always essential parts of Friday. It is the beginning of the weekend.*
- *And you must confess Friday is a different day at work…*
- *Definitely.*
- *…people have a different attitude to work, they discuss what they are going to do during the weekend, Friday, it's the time for hope.*
- *As a workday Friday is restless somehow…*
- *Yes it is, yes it is.*
- *Think of those dirty conversations at work…*
- *Oh yeah!*
- *At our work at least.*
- *I like Friday afternoon, because then people leave so early.*
- *Yes!*

The above extract refers to *talking* as a special kind of element related to Friday. On the whole, in my groups there is a lot of talk about talk when Friday is described. There is even a term for such talk: it is "Friday talk" (in Finnish "*perjantaipuhetta*"). The question is of non-work talk, but even that might be separated into two sorts. One sort of non-work talk refers to talking about the coming weekend and/or about the past workweek. Such conversations represent separation and/or incorporation through which one prepares for the transition between work and free time (Nippert-Eng 1996; van Gennep 1960).

The other sort of non-work talk refers to kinds of conversations that are *restless*, *indecent, hysterical,* and *dirty*. The question is of funny conversations, of jokes of all kinds. In particular, the question appears to be of those indecent smutty jokes. The following account further illustrates the nature of such Friday talk. The account also illustrates the prolonged production of Friday: it might start on Thursday. One IT engineer described the Friday of his workplace in the following way.

- *I have noticed that at our work, people start to be more relaxed already on Thursdays, Thursday is a nice day at work, we are joking and kidding a bit, and Friday, well Friday is really restless…*

These funny conversations represent one way of breaking down the rule of rationality, of abandoning the status of a severe, decent worker. Verbal humor is one means of producing the reversal of the seriousness of work. The assumption of work as serious is turned upside down; the sphere of work is turned into a sphere of play.

Both forms of Friday talk are also signs of *sociability*. On Friday, this activity once excluded by the metanarrative is included again. On Friday it seems to be legitimate, and even expected, to have relaxing, fun moments with work colleagues and also with clients. This becomes clear from the following extract taken from the group of fathers.

ALL RIGHT, WHAT'S THAT FRIDAY MOOD LIKE?
- *Well, you notice that at work, people become hysterical and restless and all the talk is, well Friday talk. It just has an effect on everything.*
- *Also with clients you talk that way, joking, it's part of that.*
- *True.*

Besides the talk about talk, there is a lot of talk about *clock-time* when Friday is described in my groups. Interestingly, those who worked in creative professions stressed throughout the discussions that their work is *not* based on clock-time: "marketing is not an 8 to 4 job, you know", "you can't throw your pen down at 4 o'clock", "this job is not based on time cards". Still, on Friday clock-time matters. As if the whole Friday centers around the question: when can I leave? As one IT engineer points out:

- *I think that the weekend starts on Friday morning. You wake up and realize that great, it's Friday! Then you try to work, but it does not go so well, because you know that it's weekend, and you are just restless all day long and wait for the time you dare go home.*

The work and free time division is constructed upon the premise of strict clock-time that dictates how long to work. On Friday, this rule is disobeyed. Rather, the cultural rule of Friday says that it is completely legitimate and normal to leave earlier than normally. As if it were a cultural fact that "all people leave earlier" as one mother said in the earlier quoted extract. Actually, if one does not obey this Friday rule, co-workers might punish it with nasty comments. In particular, working overtime on Friday causes special reactions. As one marketing manager pointed out: "Last Friday, I kept working at 6 o'clock and I have to say that I felt like a martyr…". In the group of fathers, one of them said:

- *…and around four o'clock people start putting coats on and go for a little chat with each other, and if there is somebody still trying to work at five to four, well, we go and hint that it's time to leave…*

On Friday, after working hours it is a rather common habit to have a drink in a bar or at home - to reward oneself for the workweek and to perform a change. Drinking is a common practice to mark temporal boundaries, to provide a transition between various spheres, especially between spheres of work and free time (Apo 2000; Gusfield 1987; Valtonen 2000). Taking a drink ends the workday and starts another time. In the Finnish context, the Friday bottle is a common concept. As one father describes it:

- *The weekend starts when you go home, you think to yourself that now it's over, you take a bottle of beer and sigh. That's it.*

Interestingly, Friday is such a day when one may have a *drink* at *work*. At the time when I conducted my fieldwork certain companies – largely IT companies and advertising agencies – tended to offer so-called Friday bars for workers. Now that the economic situation has got worse this practice is largely abandoned. However, the very idea of the Friday bar in a way crystallizes the reversal of work and free time. The following extract is from the group of creative women.

- *We have the Friday bar at three o'clock as well.*
- *Yeah.*
- *People gather together, talk about on-going work matters, and it is so easy to stay and keep on drinking wine, and not work anymore.*

People, therefore, gather at Friday bars to drink and socialize. Drinking together is a traditional form of sociability and a way of enhancing solidarity as several studies have shown (e.g. Alasuutari 1992; Gusfield 1987). What is of particular interest is that it happens at work. Drinking alcohol is largely regulated in cultures in general and in Finland in particular. There are appropriate times and places for consuming as well as purchasing alcohol. Through the division of work and free time, drinking became excluded from the realm of work and included in the realm of free time. The logic is that one earns money working and then buys and consumes alcohol during free time. This logic is turned upside down in the idea of Friday bars. One drinks at work and it is the company who pays for it.

Here, the reversal of the logic of money seems to be of particular interest. There is peculiar power in *free* alcohol. If drinking as such constitutes a rich source of cultural stories and jokes (Apo 2001), drinking free alcohol is an enormously rich source. The power of

free alcohol seems to be irresistible: "you always decide that even if it's free or not, I am not going [to parties], but still you go". Especially, if it is the state - the government and the tax collector - who offers the drinks, it is worth mentioning: "last Friday we were drinking on the states' account".

Through the above story of Friday I suggest that Friday represents a day when the metanarrative of work and free time is reversed. As we discussed earlier, boundary categories are commonly demarcated either by ruling them or reversing these rules (Anttonen 1996). Friday seems to represents the latter. What is reversed is the set of rules constructed by the economic system. The metanarrative leads us to believe that work and free time are separate spheres physically and symbolically; work is serious, very important, with no room for sociability, and is defined by the clock-time. On Friday this is all reversed. It is this reversal that actually reveals well the implicit assumptions on which work and free time are built. This makes understandable the peculiar set of meanings related to Friday, and the practices described are legitimate expressions of the in-between character of it[16].

The meanings related to Friday are also widely produced in the media, in adverts, in TV and radio programs, etc. Nowadays, jokes on Fridays are also delivered through the e-mail. I received one electronic postcard with the text: "I have just one question in mind." By clicking the question, Garfield suddenly pops up with sounds of laughter, and a text: "Is it Friday yet?" This example illustrates how ICTs are put to work enhancing the cultural meanings of Friday.

To conclude the story about the specificity of Friday I quote one IT engineer: "Well, from the point of view of the employer, it is not the most profitable day…" But, this statement must be understood against the background of the strict economic logic. Representing in-between time Friday gives room for creativity, for ideas to come and flow, and in that sense it may also turn out to be the most profitable day.

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[16] Also Monday is a border category and part of cultural talks, Saint Monday, but in my data it was not present. Of the practices of Friday, there may also be others that did not come up in my data. For instance, casual Friday clothes represent one way to reverse the normal working rules, but this did not appear in my data, perhaps because respondents came from workplaces without strict dress codes (See Hill and James 1999 for a study on more casualness in dress in workplaces).

Struggle: "I can't be free of Christmas"

Here I take up another symbolically charged category: Christmas. It provoked the liveliest discussion in my groups. The discussion considered disputes over whom to spend Christmas with; the favorite and disgusting foods; the pressure before Christmas; the pleasure of sitting down at the table; the enjoyment of eating at night; joyful faces of children; gift-giving in its various forms, etc., etc. Christmas does occupy a particular status in Western cultures, which is also reflected in the vast number of studies addressing Christmas (e.g. Horsley and Tracy 2001; Miller 1993; Nissenbaum 1996; studies for attendant gift-giving see e.g. Belk 1995, p. 65-66). My viewpoint is to draw attention to the question of being free and being bound. Although Christmas is a time free from work it is seldom referred as time "free". On the contrary, it appears very hard to be free of Christmas. Certain Christmas practices are repeated year after year no matter whether one likes them or not. Why is individual freedom not exercised on that day? What are we tied to? Let us take a look at the following quote. One single woman says:

- *Well, a sacred family feast, until today, I have not managed to find a way to get rid of it …[]. But, of course, you think that parents do not live forever, for my mother especially it is a most important feast.*

This little account shows two key themes that are present when Christmas is talked about: family relations and death. These themes tend go hand in hand, as above: "parents do not live for ever". In my secondary data set there also is an interesting account in regard to death. In a newspaper article dealing with Christmas, one woman says: "Sometimes I feel that I cook for dead people". She refers to the way in which she keeps cooking the same foods as her deceased ancestors. Death is also present in contemporary Christmas practices. It is the custom, for instance, to visit graveyards on Christmas Eve and light candles on the graves of past family members.

This link between Christmas and death has historical roots. In Finland, the ancient crop festivity called "*kekri*" is the predecessor of Christmas. "*Kekri*" used to be the day when the dead were remembered. It was the day when the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of generations was renewed (Karjalainen 1998).

It is indeed this idea of generations that sheds light on the tenacious nature of Christmas. It is not just a question of a family feast, but above all of a feast through which earlier and later generations are bound together. Therefore, the new generation is accorded the primary role. They are tied to the cycle. "Christmas is for children", as one mother said. The following quote is from the group of fathers.

- *Now that I have my own children and I see how much they look forward to Christmas, it makes me work for it.*
- *It's such a lovely time for children, you have to do it for them if only you can.*
- *Christmas, it's for children, anyway.*

Christmas represents, therefore, a time when the on-going cycle of generations is celebrated and renewed. The cycle is kept alive by repeating the same practices all over again, in the same scheduled way, from one Christmas to another. Gift giving represents one important way of keeping this cycle alive (Miller 1993). Through gifts, family relations are enhanced, especially between generations: grandparents often keep buying gifts for grandchildren although not necessarily for their own children. And in today's society, that has witnessed a breakdown of nuclear families, Christmas gift giving also represents a way to end family relations. No Christmas gift for ex-spouses (see also Joy 2001).

Besides the gifts, the food constitutes another crucial way to renew and bind the cycle of generations. The traditional Christmas foods seem to be particularly persistent both at the family level and at the national level. Food in general and sharing the food in particular are centuries' old ways of incorporation. Through eating together ties of belonging are formed (Jetsu 2001; van Gennep 1960). Therefore, sharing food at Christmas creates a bond among present family members, and by cooking the same family foods from year to year, from decade to decade, creates a bond with earlier generations.
Christmas is a time for eating, for sharing food together, gathering around the common table. It also is a time when rules related to eating may be reversed: one is allowed to eat at night, for instance. As one mother says:

- *The best thing at Christmas is that you can eat. You are allowed to eat even at night, ham and mustard, so sinful, so lovely!*

Christmas, therefore, ties us to the cycle of generations and it is this tie, I suggest, that is hard to sever. Cutting that kind of tie is like cutting off one's roots, to be cast loose. Therefore, these days of Christmas are not necessarily times "when one can do what one wants". If one does, it becomes interpreted as an *escape*. One current way to escape is to buy a package holiday trip. To further legitimize that kind of escape from (family) Christmas one can say one is spending "time for myself". As one woman in my groups told how she, together with her husband, has escaped Christmas by saying "we announce [for relatives] that we dedicate Christmas as a time for ourselves".

All in all, the question seems to be of a struggle between assumptions imposed upon us through two different temporal systems. One leads one to be free, other to be bound. Most clearly, this struggle seems to become visible at Christmas.

Convergence: "I clean out cupboards during holidays"

How about if we just follow the assumptions inscribed in both of the systems simultaneously? I take up this theme by discussing one traditional boundary practice: cleaning (Ollila 2000). In my data, there is a lot of talk about how holidays are used for cleaning out cupboards, cellars, garages, sheds at summer places, organizing collections, etc. This may even be presented as an essential part of holidays. How to understand this? What is actually meant by cleaning? Let us start elaborating on these questions by taking a look at the following quote from the group of creative women:

- *…even if you had a holiday for five weeks, you just have time to travel abroad, go to the summer cottage, see relatives and clean out cupboards on some rainy day…*
- *Yes, those are the traditional things you must do during the holidays.*

The question of cleaning appears to concern, above all, organizing. Actually, my respondents commonly used this very term. "Well, then you organize your things and stuff like that", one single man said when he described his Saturday. What is organized? Goods. We live in a world of an unprecedented number of goods. Therefore, it is quite

understandable that contemporary cleaning practices center on these goods, on putting goods in their right place[17].

Considering the need to organize the number of goods leads one to consider the way of acquiring those goods. That is, shopping. Previous literature has shown how shopping constitutes an important way to spend free time. People spend their time in malls and other "temples of consumption" that provide exciting yet safe frames for getting out of the everyday realm (Bauman 2000, p. 97-99; in the Finnish context e.g. Lehtonen and Mäenpää 1997). They offer "the near perfect balance between freedom and security" as Bauman notes (2000, p. 99). Moreover, shopping is often a crucial part of going on holiday and of museum visits (Belk 1997).

In my data, shopping is also widely present. Shopping seems to acquire a sort of cultural status in a sense that everyone must define his/her relationship to shopping. Accordingly, my data is filled with respondents' relationships to shopping; whether they like it or not; under what condition they like it; what goods they do or do not like to shop for; with whom they like to shop; what shops they like best, etc., etc. Here is one relationship to shopping.

- *Well, one important thing is shopping. Once a week, I have to go to Stockmann [famous department store in Helsinki], otherwise I have withdrawal symptoms. Stockmann is my second living room….I do not necessarily buy anything, but just see what's available, and well, quite often you notice you've have bought something. And then you have those things like going to the laundry, as I should have done before this interview.*

Shopping during free time is quite in line with the assumptions of the market system. Free time is supposed to be spent by consuming, buying, shopping. Obeying this assumption makes goods build up at home, and call out to be organized. As Richins points out "a large portion of people's time is spent acquiring goods or working to pay for them" (1994, p. 504). I would continue: "and on organizing goods once bought".

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[17] The whole practice of cleaning is obviously commercialized from detergents and cleaning equipment to cleaning services. My focus here, however, is on how the abundance of possessions becomes organized and managed during free time, especially during holidays.

In organizing, the question is about putting things in their right places, but for carrying out that task one must first buy boxes, sheds, racks, cupboards, containers, etc. These issues seem to constitute an important part of the assortment of current furniture stores such as IKEA. Then in organizing one tries to decide what to keep, what to throw away; what has become rubbish, what might be of use, what to recycle or resell at the second-hand market. After doing this one feels satisfied. One has beaten the chaos caused by the amount of goods and re-established some sort of order - for a while.

Organizing possessions is a special sort of cleaning. The large body of studies on materialism has shown well how property and possessions may carry deep values and personal attachments. This is because they are used to define who you are (Mehta and Belk 1991; Richins 1994; see also overview in Belk 1995). Therefore, it is quite understandable that one organizes one's possessions oneself, although one might well hire a cleaning service, or use laundries for washing clothes (like the above quote suggests: take the jacket to the laundry). The cleaner would hardly know when a certain item has become useless; he or she would hardly understand why certain seemingly useless goods should be stored; he or she would not know the memories embedded in them. Only in organizing possessions oneself, is one able to know all this. In doing that job, one often goes through feelings of personal loss and gain. Sometimes, it is so hard to decide whether to throw away something or not, that the easiest solution is to "keep it until next summer".

The cultural time for doing the organizing seems to concentrate on the holidays (and there are also practical reasons for that). However, some sort of social crisis may also provoke the "need" for cleaning and organizing one's home in some other time. As Douglas (2002) notes:

> Though, we often experience things out of place but do not react. Given some crisis in our social relations, however, we suddenly announce that 'this place is a mess' and proceed to clean it up. It is the social crisis, not things out of place, that suddenly makes the room seem messy and dirty.

To sum all this up roughly, we first spend our free time by consuming and shopping as the economic system leads us to do. Then we spend our free time by organizing what we have bought as the tradition-based social system leads us to do. To close, it is apt to remark that cleaning practices take place not only at home, but also at work. In today's offices, organizing often refers to organizing computers; putting mail and documents in folders, deleting unnecessary ones. They represent contemporary ways to avoid the chaos.

Battle with different principles of time

This chapter has proposed that the symbolic battle taking place at the contemporary boundaries of free time may partly be understood as a battle with different temporal systems. Two such systems are identified: economic and tradition-based social system. They rely on different assumptions and ways of comprehending time. Therefore, their meeting at the everyday level may cause a clash of principles, as Adam (2003) puts it.

In the economic system, time is subject to economic laws: it is an issue to be budgeted, allocated, and used efficiently. The category of "free time", in turn, is constructed through the modern division of work and free time. It is part of the attendant cycle of production and consumption. In particular, "free time" is imbued with the ideals of individual freedom. It is time when one is supposed to exercise one's own free will. Currently, this ideal appears to be best realized during time called "time for myself", or "own time". This current category seems to represent a step away from the assumptions prescribed in the dichotomy of free time and work. Then, one is free even to work.

Though, all kinds of times – although free from work - are not based on the ideal of freedom but rather on the ideal of binding. Within the tradition-based social system, the idea of structuring time is based on the idea that there are dangerous and ordinary times. Ultimately, the logic derives from the cycle of life and death, of continuous renewal. Many of our current seasonal and social festivities are anchored in that basic idea. These festivities do momentarily free one from the duties of everyday life, and are often days

free from work, but nevertheless, their basic idea does not rest upon freedom. Rather, it rests upon binding, to the society, community, or family.

These systems are intertwined and overlapping since they have been built upon each other through the passage of time. To present them as separate, however, is important in order to highlight how they rely on a different logic when conceptualizing and labeling times; they represent different systems of meanings with different underlying assumptions. The assumptions turn out to be norms to be followed. Therefore, they also condition the ways in which free time is performed.

The following table serves to summarize the differences of these two systems.

	Market system	**Tradition-based system**
Time		
Seen as	Resource; quantifiable, invariant, decontextualized	Tool to organize social life; repetitive, variant, contextualized
Based on	Clock-time	Alternating social events
Naming	Free time – work time	Sacred – ordinary (Feast-everyday)
Defined in terms of	Money	Social and cultural relations
Norm	Efficiency	Renewal
Free time		
Based on	Freedom & individualism	Collectivism & binding
Status in the system	"left over"	"protected"
Part of the cycle of	Production/consumption	Life/death

Table 2. Time and free time in different temporal systems.

Through three examples this chapter has illustrated how these temporal systems coexist, meet, and clash in the conduct of everyday life. Two examples deal with temporal border categories, Friday and Christmas, and one with traditional border practice, cleaning. These examples shed light on the ways in which people lean on and attempt to cope with different, even contrasting norms and assumptions imposed upon them. Friday, for instance, is a workday but being a border category, it is a special kind of workday. It

appears to be a day when the division between work and free time, built in the economic system, is reversed. An act of consumption such as wearing casual Friday clothes is part of this phenomenon. Christmas, in turn, is a day free from work, but nevertheless, it is not understood as free. On the contrary, it appears to be a category from which it is most difficult to be free. This is because it represents symbolic renewal; then one is supposed to create ties to generations of which one is part.

Finally, the example of cleaning illustrates the convergence of temporal systems. People first spend their free time shopping like the economic system leads them to do, and then spend their free time organizing what they have bought like the tradition-based system leads them to do. In so doing it provides an illuminating example of the ways in which traditional border practices may be played out in the arena of consumption.

4 Symbolic battle with work and free time

This chapter goes on discussing the symbolic battles that take place at boundaries of free time. It focuses on the battle that concerns the separation of free time and work. As discussed, today's society faces an overall temporal disorder, and this particularly concerns the given distinction established by industrialization. The emergence of the new communications technology, and the increasingly knowledge intensive work have been reported as key forces affecting the blurring of the boundary between free time and work. This chapter elaborates the kind of symbolic battle that such a situation brings about. What is the battle like and how does consumption, ICTs in particular, relate to it?

The contested boundary between work and free time

My elaboration acknowledges that the change of cultural categories tends to be persistent and that the change also constitutes a threat (Douglas 2002). Therefore, in this section I am going to explore the ways in which the blurring of work and free time constitutes a threat and how these threats are coped with. Is it found normal or threatening to *not* to separate these realms? I start with that question and then I turn to discuss one particular condition that makes the separation difficult: the knowledge work.

Competing orders: to blur or to separate work and free time?

To start, let us take a look at the following accounts. As can be seen, these two men have different views about the relation between work and free time.

> *- For me, work is work and free time is free time. I separate them.*

- *I can't make such a clear division between work and free time. Perhaps it is because I am so excited about my work like a child, my work is inspiring, so I don't feel that I should get rid of it. It may be dangerous to blur free time and work, but on the other hand, if you do not kill yourself with stress, and if it does not cause any illnesses, and if you don't work for 12 hours, and if you don't have any bitwidow (bittileski) waiting at home. Then, I do not see it as evil if you can't make the division. Besides, working and handling work matters properly may give you intellectual fulfillment, so it may be counted as one sort of free time. Though, for an outsider all this looks like just working; oh, you are working again.*

The first view – to separate work and free time - seems to represent the "normal" order, the right way. Such a view requires no further explanation. The other view – not to separate work and free time - in turn, requires specific explanations. One must legitimate this view in some way, like, for instance, by saying that that one is "excited about one's work like a child" and that it gives "intellectual satisfaction". The expressions "childish"[18] and "excited" are frequently used in my data in order to stress the impossibility of drawing a line between free time and work. They represent some sort of symbolic defense against the prevailing norm of drawing the line between work and free time.

Interestingly, as the latter account illustrates, blurring of the boundaries of free time and work seems to bring about threats and dangers of many kinds. This is shown through expressions such as "kill yourself with stress", "cause illnesses", or "bitwidow". The same kinds of threats have been widely discussed and reproduced in the media, especially in the context of IT works. If we consider those threats we see that they rest upon the key values of Western society: health and family, and ultimately life, since death underlies these threats. Blurring of the temporal boundaries, therefore, is pictured as threatening societal values as a whole; just like the blurring of gender boundaries is presented as a threat to the entire society (Charpentier 2001).

However, these dangers created by the blurring of work and free time tend to be one-way. They seem to concern only situations when work enters the realm of free time, but not the other way around. On the contrary, handling private matters during work time is presented as a somewhat natural and legitimate practice in my data, not as a threat. It is

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[18] A similar kind of meaning is commonly reported in the context of ICTs – mobile devices are referred as 'toys' (e.g. Eriksson and Moisander 2002; Pantzar 2003)

found normal to plan free time during work time and communicate with friends through e-mails and by phone during workday. Practices like these are presented as a kind of logical compensation from the probable hard work. One may also talk of them without any particular explanations: “you handle work matters during free time and private matters during work time, they get blurred”.

Though, the separation of work and free time should be considered in contextual terms. Rather than thinking that certain people always keep work and free time separated while others let them always become blurred, there are certain cultural conditions and situations that guide the question of whether to separate or not. For instance, although the distinction of work and free time would not be found meaningful in weekday contexts, there are certain cultural situations, such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, or Christmas, when it is likely that the blurring of boundaries is considered harmful. All the occasions mentioned serve to renew life, to celebrate the on-going cycle of birth and rebirth. Such occasions are to be kept pure and clean, and transgressing that boundary is polluting. One other such occasion is sleeping, as I shall discuss later.

Moreover, in considering the question of separating free time and work, it must be acknowledged that not all work issues are the same. The grand metanarrative of work and free time seems to suggest that all work issues are boring and something to get rid of. However, in many jobs there are those work matters that are nice and enjoyable and then there are those that are boring and disgusting. It is these less pleasant ones, but not necessarily the nice ones, that one wants to get rid of during free time. The following extract illustrates this distinction between the qualities of work matters. It is derived from the group of creative women.

WELL, AFTER A GOOD WEEKEND, HOW IS IT?

- *Actually, I'm thrilled to go to work.*
- *Not thrilled, really?*
- *Thrilled, nooooo-o…?*
- *I am, I am, if I have had a relaxing weekend, and I know that some nice project is waiting for me at work, it's not so hard.*
- *Not hard, but I wouldn't say thrilled…*
- *I would, I am thrilled, but sometimes it is hard, it depends.*
- *It depends on what you have going on.*
- *Precisely.*
- *If you have some huge pile of work to do.*
- *Yeah, or some very hard job, or something very disgusting, then you feel: Oh no!*

The above extract draws on the normative assumption of work as something not to be liked. In the beginning of it, one participant claims to be thrilled about going back to work after the weekend. She has to give reasons for saying this, although just previously in the group all the participants had described that they do like their work. All in all, this dialogue might be read as a dialogue between cultural meaning structures: the categorizations of industrial society meet those of the current creative workers. The once created assumptions on the nature of work appear to be persistent.

However, in the practical conduct of everyday life it may be easier to live beyond the metanarrative and assumptions built in it. One may well do some work during free time and find it quite normal, and even enjoyable. This may become a problem when it is brought to the social sphere: then, one is put in a situation when one must reason and explain one's view against the metanarrative. In families, for instance, one family member may like to work during the weekends without finding it a problem, but other family members' reactions bring this practice into question. Different moral orders meet and compete.

Actually, although our way of classifying time would not fit into the categories of work and free time, we must keep on referring to and leaning on them. This is because our language does not provide appropriate options to talk and think about time. Separate words "work" and "free" continue to keep times separate. In this sense, we face a kind of anomalic no-name situation. One frequent solution for coping with this problem appears to be to call both work and free time "hobby". This highlights the similarity of these spheres and suggests that they both have a pleasurable character. Or, another way to cope with giving names to the times is, as we have discussed, to call a certain type of time "my own time".

These new terms like "hobby" may reflect one's view of times as being enjoyable, but they do not, however, fully capture the very foundation upon which the whole temporal distinction between work and free time is originally built. It is built upon the logic of money: there is a time to earn and a time to consume. In a way, this logic of money may

be the one upon which to lean when classifying times. This can be seen in the following quote from an IT engineer:

> - *Well, I am so excited about my work, when I am at work I feel free, only I get free coffee there…so I like my job, and I am paid for it. When I am at home, I do similar things, such as coding, I code as a hobby or try to do some useful programming. So, for me the division is like (draws an indefinite line with his hands).*

All in all, the question of separating between free time and work seems to be also a moral question: whether it is right not to separate. It is also a contextual question. There are times and places when it is right to let work and free blur, others when it is not. On the whole, although this modern dichotomy has been questioned, it appears to be *the* dichotomy through which we think and talk about times, and on which we must react and form an opinion.

Boundaries and knowledge work

Here, I turn to consider one characteristic of contemporary work condition, namely, its knowledge intensive nature (Blom *et al*. 2001). Briefly put, in such a work the brains constitute the major tool. As one IT engineer nicely pointed out in the interview: “You can’t leave your spade at the workplace”. How is this kind of condition reflected in the way boundaries of free time are drawn?

The knowledge intensive work seems to make it quite difficult to draw and maintain the distinction between work and free time. Although one would like to separate free time and work, it does not necessarily succeed, because one cannot leave one’s brain at the workplace. There is always the possibility of continuing to think about work matters, although one would not work in a literal sense. As one marketing manager points out:

> *- This is this and that is that, that’s my viewpoint. Unfortunately, my head does not function the same way, as I said earlier, my head keeps working hard even at night.*

This peculiar phenomenon is widely present in my data. The respondents talk a lot about the problems of thinking work matters after work time. Below is one example of such a description. It also brings the question of payment to the fore: payment is commonly based on clock-time but brains do not obey clocks. One IT engineer points out:

- *I try to avoid taking work home, it is a curse, because I try to keep free time free, and once at work I am at work. You may be able to leave work matters physically, but they may well come into your mind during the weekends, for instance. It's not fair, you should be paid for it, if you just keep thinking of work when you should not.*

Though, as we have discussed earlier, there are several sorts of work matters; some boring, others exciting. Gaining insights is commonly rewarding no matter whether it occurs during work time or free time. In particular, as earlier studies have shown, ideas and creativity relate to liminal, in-between states (Douglas 2002; Turner 1977; van Gennep 1960). They free us from the conventional and rational thought and behavioral patterns that we, otherwise, routinely follow and make it possible for good ideas to come. This can be seen in the following discussion from the group of women working in creative professions. They describe how ideas come into one's mind during various in-between and in-betwixt states when one is a bit relaxed, out of the prescribed statuses: when vacuuming, commuting, or going to bed.

- *Yeah, it was Saturday afternoon, I was vacuuming and then I got an idea, you know, when you work with your brain, you simply can't just do it when you are at your work table…ideas just emerge from somewhere, from the subconscious…*
- *Yeah.*
- *Yeah, and it does not disturb me, if I am vacuuming and some work matters enter my mind, oh I could do it that way or that, I should remember to do this.*
- *Same for me, I know many people who just set their brains at zero, but I abandoned it, I think that if I get a big idea, I go and work on it no matter whether it is Sunday or any other day.*
- *I have always a piece of paper at my night table, just in case I get an idea, then I have to write it down, otherwise I don't remember it anymore, and I keep a dictating machine always in my car.*

The question of working with brains seems to concern the so-called creative workers, in particular. Those of my respondents whose work is much about planning, creating and solving problems reported that their brains do not obey the clock. However, also people working in more "common" professions such as nurses or selling assistants brought the very same problem at the fore. Perhaps, this is due the fact that the nature of work has

been reported to put increasing responsibility, independence, and “freedoms” on the shoulders of the workers (Blom *et al*. 2001). This is likely to result in some sort of insecurity and constant thinking about work.

The contested boundary and consumption

I turn to elaborate on the ways in which consumption relates to the production and management of this boundary between work and free time. In particular, I address the question: how to understand the role of the new information and communication technology in this process? The section starts by situating ICTs as part of the historical and cultural continuum of the production of boundaries of time. That is, they are considered as part of a set of performative acts and artifacts that enter into the process of drawing and managing boundaries of time. The question is of repetitive practices such as logging on to the e-mail, scanning newspapers, switching mobile phones on and off, having a cup of coffee, talking about celebrities, and writing post-its. To end the section, I focus in more detail on the symbolic and cultural role of ICTs.

Set of performative acts and artifacts

> A main characteristic of our society is a willed coexistence of very new technology and very old social forms.
>
> Raymond Williams, in Silverstone and Hirsch, *Consuming Technologies*, 1992 p. 1

> Nokia wants to replace tobacco and coffee.
>
> Headline in *Talouselämä* 43/2001, p. 16 (Business Magazine)

The above quote of Raymond Williams becomes clearly concrete in the context of temporal boundaries. If we just take a look, for instance, at the table be it in the café or at the workplace, we can see a willed co-existence of old products, such as coffee, tobacco, beverages such as soda or beer, and very new technology, such as mobile phone or laptop, complemented by newspapers or magazines. How do new and old artifacts

and practices interact in the everyday life and enter into the boundaries? Do ICTs replace old practices as the second quote seems to suggest?

I discuss the topic by following the rhythm of a common workday as pictured in my data. My reason for concentrating on the workplace is that in that particular context the role of ICTs becomes crystallized.

Good morning – bad e-mails? Morning is a symbolically charged time. It is situated in-between night and day, which represent separate realms. Morning constitutes a bridge that connects these realms; it separates from the realm of night and incorporates into the realm of day. This happens through a set of performative practices. Let us take a look at contemporary morning practices at the office. The following example comes from the group of creative women.

- *I go to my workspace and switch on my computer and then I go and get some coffee.*
- *Yeah, I log on to check for e-mail messages.*
- *It takes a half hour to wake up and well, you go and have a chat with your workmates and everybody has some coffee, yes it takes a half hour before you can start working, really.*
- *Right, and I read some newspaper Hesari or Taloussanomat and then I start working.*

The extract shows the common morning practices, such as having a cup of coffee, chatting with workmates, scanning newspapers, switching on computers and logging on to check for e-mails. They all serve to open up the day: to leave home issues behind and start to orientate toward work issues. A particular contemporary practice seems to be to start the day by logging on to check the e-mails. It represents one act through which one connects to others, to society, to order. In this sense its symbolic function comes close to that of the media. Reading a newspaper or looking at news in the morning represents acts through which one connects to the ordered realm of the day after that of night.

However, checking for e-mail messages is a somewhat different practice than taking a look at the newspaper. Opening the in-box is not just a neutral act, but it may be exciting and even a slightly frightening moment. As one father pointed out when describing his morning at work:

- *…going to your computer, logging on, reading e-mail messages, that's how the day starts, but it entails some sort of unpleasant excitement, in a sense concerning what kind of message bangs out first. Fortunately, I can't read them in my car!*

How to understand the frightening character of e-mails? It becomes understandable considering that yoy never know *what* is there: Problems? Bad news? Complaints? The content is unpredictable and this enhances the risk and danger. This brings us to the symbolism of the door. As we have discussed, the door represents the place through which the potentially dangerous outside world might enter (Turunen 2002; van Gennep 1960). E-mail is one such contemporary door through which the potentially dangerous outside world might enter - to your workspace, to your screen. This analogy between physical doors and virtual doors becomes clear in the following comment of one father:

- *Well, e-mail messages, phone calls, clients that suddenly open the door, and all kinds of single chaotic things determine when you can have your lunch.*

In the same vein, phone lines – be they fixed or not – represent routes through which the likely disturbance can enter and cause annoyance. In the groups, phones were frequently accorded the major role in causing interruptions and disorders. This echoes, perhaps, a wish for non-disturbed time. Bittman and Wajcman (2000) conclude in their study that a non-disturbed time is a significant feature of pleasurable free time, but this is often just a wish. This appears to be the case in the context of work time as well. To construct that kind of non-disturbed time, one has to conduct anti-pollution activities. One such activity is to come to work earlier than the others as the following extract from the group of mothers illustrates:

- *It's so amazing that you can work so much harder from eight to nine in the morning.*
- *That's right, because there are no phone calls.*
- *Right.*
- *When you know that no one is going to disturb you, you can work properly. It's quiet.*
- *That's so true.*
- *And the office is calm and quiet, no one else there.*

Would it not be just enough not to answer the phones and not read the e-mail messages? Basically, these new devices do provide the opportunity for the user to let him or her decide when to handle calls and answer mail. Due to the norms built in them, however,

this is not that easy (Nowotny 1994). The norm of simultaneity dictates that e-mails are to be answered *now*. The norm of reciprocity, that is built in the conduct of human life in general (Marcus and Fischer 1999) and in communication technology in particular, dictates that one keep connected. The norm of constant availability in turn dictates that one keep connected all the time. This all results from the fact that contemporary doors are not that easily locked.

Interestingly, the talk about ICTs centers on negative features. They are pictured as sources of disturbances and interruptions. How to understand this? It becomes understandable against the cultural logic of doors and boundaries. The kind of talk that locates the bad outside – "others disturb" - and the good inside is quite a typical way for humans to perceive the world (Douglas 2002; Turunen 2002). For centuries, the bad has been located outside and people have tried to keep it there through locking doors. The actual or likely transgressing of that boundary calls for symbolic handling and talking. Therefore, the threat invokes the liveliest discussion.

Though, the route is open also for private issues to enter the workplace. As one respondent noted in the group of creative describing his morning:

- *For me it is self evident, that I log on the Net and the mail, it announces that there are messages, I classify them in some way and then read them. It easily takes, my boss would not like to hear this, but it takes an hour or two to just read them, and to reply to friends' messages. Then I surf the basic sites and I notice that it's time for lunch, and that I haven't done anything yet.*
- *Sounds familiar.*

Time for lunch/coffee break. Let us move on discussing on coffee and lunch breaks. Those little moments free from work have a strong presence in my data. Every group gave detailed accounts how lunch time or coffee breaks are organized in their workplaces; where and when they eat, with whom, what they talk about; what are the coffee breaks are like, where they take place, who pays for the coffee, who makes it, whether there is coffee available all the time or at certain periods, etc. Let us start the elaboration of these breaks by the following quote of one father.

- *The coffee break is freer than the lunch break. During the lunch break, you don't have much time and you try to eat healthy and properly, it takes all the time, no time for fun. During coffee breaks, there is much more time for chatting and joking, it's more relaxing.*

This account illuminates the cultural difference accorded to these breaks: coffee breaks enjoy a more relaxed status, while lunch break is somewhat more serious. This becomes understandable considering the cultural meanings embedded in coffee on the one hand and food and eating on the other. In general, coffee occupies a central cultural stage in the Western context (Gusfield 1987; Schievelbusch 1986) and in the Finnish context in particular (Falk 1986; Valtonen 2000). Finland is one of the leading countries in the world in coffee consumption; over 90% of Finns drink coffee, and the average amount is approximately 9 kg per person per year[19]. Historically, coffee was introduced into Finland around 1600-1700, first as a beverage for upper class people, and then as a common beverage for the whole society. Coffee occupies a strong cultural status with a rich set of meanings, and throughout its history coffee has been subject to regulations and restrictions. Its availability after the Second World War, for instance, was restricted. On a smaller scale, cultural restrictions are visible in attempts to avoid and lessen consumption of coffee.

Essentially, coffee is a boundary product. It belongs to larger boundary occasions, such as weddings and funerals, as well as smaller-scale boundaries, such as starting the day or ending the meal (Gusfield 1987; Valtonen 2000). It has the power to perform boundaries, to re-energize, empower, to create another world. Its symbolic power will be discussed further in the following chapter, but let us here consider the chat accompanying coffee.

What are so called "coffee chats" like? Coffee breaks are for being funny and relaxing. It is the time for jokes. Coffee breaks, in particular, are for talking about non-professional or non-work related issues – unless telling jokes about them, gossiping about workmates, for instance. Breaking that assumption is likely to cause social punishment of some sort. Often, the "right" topics appear to be derived from the media:

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[19] Average consumption of coffee in the EU countries is 5 kg per person per year. Statistics taken from www.kahvi.net - webpages of the Association of Coffee Roasters (*paahtimoyhdistys*).

from news, from television programs, from tabloids. One father describes the practice of starting the day by going to the restaurant to have a coffee and talk:

- *…our group, we go to a restaurant to have a cup of coffee in the morning, because otherwise work matters come to mind, we start to debate on some legal case, so that's why we like to spend the coffee break in peace, by chatting about sports or Lola's silicon breasts , about how she took such ones….*

Tobacco is very similar to coffee (Valtonen 2000; Schievelbusch 1986). It also creates a break, performs boundaries and certain kinds of non-working matter discussions relate to it. Moreover, smoking has been and is subject to regulations and restrictions. Currently, Finnish legislation forbids smoking in workplaces. Both coffee and tobacco represent culturally legitimate ways to create breaks at workplaces. Conversely, without them, one may even find it difficult to create legitimate breaks. As if it were not fully legitimate to just sit and relax. One AD notes:

- *I don't smoke and I don't like coffee, so I don't have many breaks…If I just go and sit when others are smoking or having coffee, I feel guilty.*

Food and eating are also such cultural artifacts and acts that serve to perform boundaries, to create breaks. Food represents a rich set of cultural meanings and it belongs to boundaries of several kinds; boundaries are imposed, realms separated through certain kinds of foods and eating (Jetsu 2001, p. 135-136). Food and eating, in particular, occupy some sort of protective status, people who are eating are not to be disturbed. Accordingly, words such as "peace" and "food" frequently appear together in my data. Today, eating and food have become problematized as such – what is "good" and "healthy" food (see e.g. Mäkelä 2002) – but in the context of my study the viewpoint of problematized non-disturbance is of particular interest.

In today's workplaces, it is not self-evident to be able to eat in peace. The assumption of non-disturbance is being questioned. Eating as such does not necessarily perform a protective boundary, but further protective measures are to be taken. One male respondent describes his lunch break in the following way:

- *During lunch breaks at some restaurant, you can be in peace, when you just don't take laptops and mobile phones with you, so that you can't be reached, then you can feel free. At my workplace, I have told my workmates that they should not disturb me even if I'm just in the next room eating a hamburger, I just do not take phone calls and I do not want to listen to anything, then I feel free.*

The above account illustrates how the boundary is threatened by the new communication technology and attendant norm of constant availability. To maintain the boundary requires a further protective measure to be taken; to refuse to use communication devices, to actively refuse to be available.

Closing the workday. Let us move on towards the end of the workday. The practice of closing the workday and starting the private one does not necessarily refer to any strict moment; rather, the question may be one of a prolonged process during which one orientates to the next realm little by little. One example of this kind of prolonged process is the practice of calling and communicating with family members through ICTs:

-… my wife often prepares for the end of the workday by sending SMS messages, who does the shopping and what shall we eat tonight, things like that.

Closing the workday is also to prepare the next workday. The practices relating to the end of the workday serve to construct a symbolic bridge to the following workday. How to construct such a bridge? Let us take a look at the following extract derived from the group of creative women.

- *That's why I try to write down things to be done the next day at the end of the workday, so that my mind would not work on them at home any more.*
- *That's an excellent way to get on to the next day.*

The extract illuminates one common practice through which the workday is closed and the following one prepared: writing. Making a list of what has been done and what is to be done seems to be a widely-used practice. The list may be written on post-its, calendars, or technological devices. By doing so, the boundary is drawn: one day is marked as ending and the other as beginning.

Such performative acts serve to capture work issues. They serve to keep things in their right place. These acts relate, in particular, to on going work issues, that is, to issues in the transitional period. Just like in-between matters in general, also un-finished, un-captured work issues have the peculiar power to pollute, attack, and cause panic. Non-captured work issues may enter into the mind at night and cause panic. To prevent such an attack, protective measures must be taken. Writing is such a protective measure. By writing work issues down, they become concretized and captured on the piece of paper or computer. As De Saussure has pointed out: "the graphic form of words strikes us as being something permanent and stable" (DeSaussure 1974, in Howarth 2000, p. 36). Putting work-issues into words prevents them from becoming free-floating.

Talking seems to represent another performative act through which boundaries between work and free time are imposed. When work matters are talked through at the end of the day, they become closed. As one father stated: "But you have to talk them through with somebody!" be it a spouse, friend, or workmate and let it happen at work, on the way home, or later at home.

However, even after performing all sorts of protective measures disturbance may enter - through contemporary routes. As one marketing manager notes:

- *But this bloody device (mobile phone) means that the boss may call on Saturday morning at ten o'clock and check some issue. Because of all these things, e-mails, GSM and voice boxes and all these systems, it is hard to get rid of, everything gets muddled.*

The disturbance must be understood against the cultural context when it occurs. Saturday morning – especially if the question is of waking up – is likely to be experienced as more polluting than a call just after the work. Or, as Mäenpää notes in his study of the use of mobile devices: "The employer who calls you at your summer cottage was the interviewees' worst example of such deprivation of leisure." (Mäenpää 2001, p. 117).

In considering the difficulty of maintaining the separation between work and free time, however, the question is not necessarily one of just ICTs and of making strategies concerning how to cope with them. Importantly, it is also a question of making strategies

with whom to spend free time and *what to talk about*; whether to talk about work issues or not when socializing after work hours. Those group members who did not have families and who frequented pubs, restaurants or hobbies outside working hours, in particular, brought up this question. Their descriptions reflect a constant struggle for the right kind of conversation: people tell about disputes they have had with friends over what to talk about, about the benefits of having friends from different professions, about decisions to refuse to go out with workmates, etc. Due to current time pressures, unpredictable working hours, and different timetables, however, it may be difficult for people to make appointments with their own friends. This being the case, an easy solution is to socialize with workmates – and to talk about work issues, and talk about talking about work issues. The following extract comes from the group of creative women:

- *Last Friday, we had a farewell party for my workmate, and when you stay there, having a party with your work colleagues, you don't feel that this is weekend.*
- *That's true.*
- *You keep talking about work matters.*
- *I like to be with my own friends, they have different professions, we talk about different things, not just about advertisements….But if you are with your colleagues, it's not a real weekend even though you go out. But once you have a different professional background, you can't keep on talking about work matters.*
- *I have some close colleagues within my work community with whom I talk over work matters.*
- *You have to talk them over with somebody.*

ICTs – symbolic cleaners and polluters

We have above outlined the ways in which the ICTs enter into the everyday practices of renegotiating and managing boundaries of free time and how they interact with other artifacts. Now, it is time to consider in more detail the role of ICTs in this process. My analysis suggests that the role of the new communication technologies is not just to change times, but also to produce, enhance, and protect existing temporal boundaries. They are to be understood both as symbolic cleaners *and* polluters.

Let us start by reflecting back on ways in which ICTs enter into the renegotiation of the boundary of free time and work. Being part of the routine tasks of daily morning practices, ICTs enter into the centuries-old practice of opening the day and incorporation;

they are also taken to produce a transition between work and home, and to produce and enhance the cultural meanings of Friday for instance. In other words, they enter into the production and maintenance of the prevailing boundaries and work in line with other goods.

This is in line with a wide body of studies that have discussed how various kinds of technological devices are adopted as part of existing cultural patterns and become embedded in the structures and dynamics of culture (Mackay 1997; Pantzar 1996, 2000, 2003; Silverstone and Hirsch 1994). When technology such as radio, for instance, arrived in the home, it captured cultural time and space and become domesticated: “Radio began to weave itself skillfully into the repetitive rhythms of quotidian culture” (Moores in Mackay 1997, p. 280).

Adopting ICTs into the production of the boundaries of free times does not mean, however, that older practices were abandoned. We do not suddenly stop drinking coffee when we buy a mobile phone. Free time has been performed through centuries by coffee and tobacco and still is. Interestingly, despite the abundance of products available in today’s market, we still rely on the very same artifacts as our ancestors in performing boundaries of free time. What is particularly interesting is that when new artifacts and practices are adapted into these boundary performances, they do not replace old ones. Rather, artifacts and practices seem to pile up. For example, let us think of a common morning opening – we wash up, put our clothes on, drink some coffee, read the newspaper, listen to the radio or watch television, have a cigarette, switch the mobile and computer on, and perhaps chat with other people. Moreover, some of these acts are conducted both at home and at work.

However, ICTs enter also into the pollution of boundaries; they also constitute a threat to the prevailing order. This threat derives from the fact that they carry the possibility of boundaries becoming blurred. It is this *possibility* that is polluting, not the technology as such. ICTs entail a possibility that boundaries become transgressed, wrong issues enter into the wrong sphere, and different realms get blurred. In carrying ICTs one carries a contemporary door through which the unpredictable outside world, the threat, can enter.

They make temporal harassment possible. The following discussion taken from the group of creative men illustrates this:

- *I am disturbed quite often, people call me if they have troubles, but generally I say in a nasty way that why in hell do you keep calling, I am at home.*
- *People call me because of work matters, but if I don't feel like answering, I don't answer, I can see the number, so.*

Keeping these doors closed appears to be somewhat difficult because of the temporal norms built into devices: norms of constant availability, simultaneity, flexibility, mobility, and reciprocity (Kopomaa 2000; Moisander and Valtonen 2002; Nowotny 1994; Rojek 1995). One underlying force for the existence of these norms is the prevailing economic market system. Within that system, time is subject to economic laws: it is a scarce resource to be optimized and used efficiently. Just as one should get the most for one's money, one should also get the most for one's time. The "waste of time" is a sin (Moisander and Valtonen 2002). The power of the norms built into the ICTs can be seen in the way in which refusing to use them, even momentarily, may cause specific reactions. As if the switching off of mobile devices were a sign of contemporary courage and cold-bloodedness. A statement like "currently, I switch it off, I just let it be there" arouses admiring glances and a question: "How dare you?"

This kind of situation of constant availability creates un-safety and anxiety. It may be compared to a situation when the door of your home should be kept un-locked and anybody could enter anytime. Therefore, the situation forces protective measures to be taken. One is obliged to manage and control the door constantly: to make decisions concerning whom to let in, whom to refuse (see also Mäenpää 2001). As one respondent said: "You just have to make a firm decision that now I have free time and I do not take any calls".

Interestingly, the act of switching devices off, or not answering them appears to be an insufficient act of imposing the boundary. Instead, one should physically leave the devices. The expectation that one *should* be available appears to be so strong that one has to make sure that one *could* not be available. Only then can one feel free. This implies that actually one must free oneself from the possibility of being available. A contempo-

rary escape implies an escape from the possibilities. This logic can be seen from the following description of one IT engineer where he describes his holiday.

- *The point is that you are not reachable, you don't have any chance to do anything. Even if I were to read my e-mail messages, I can state that actually, I did not read this, because I am not available. I am ready to invest in my holiday so that I can make a clear division, to go away, that's the point. Though, actually it is much harder to be on vacation somewhere than to be at work.*

In sum, this chapter has displayed and investigated the symbolic battle that takes place at the boundary separating free time and work. It has illustrated how this contested boundary becomes negotiated and managed in the everyday life. In particular, the chapter has presented how the dichotomy between work and free time is a persistent one. People are obliged to lean on it and on attendant assumptions although they may appear as futile. They are obliged, actually, battle against these assumptions. Furthermore, although one considers the given separation meaningful and attempts to maintain it, it does not necessarily succeed. It is threatened, in particular, by the knowledge intensive work. The brain does not necessary obey boundaries of time and space as inscribed in the dichotomy.

Furthermore, the chapter has discussed the complex role of ICTs in the maintenance and separation of work and free time. It has displayed the ways in which ICTs enter into traditional boundary practices in line with other products. In doing so, ICTs serve to maintain and reproduce traditional boundaries, but they also constitute a threat because they may be understood as symbolic doors through which the unpredictable outside world may enter. All in all, ICTs may be seen both as symbolic cleaners and polluters.

5 Symbolic battle with dirty and clean free time

The dynamics discussed in the previous chapter may be understood through the disorder caused by blurring of boundaries. Here, we turn to examine different sort of disorder. Basically, getting free represents an opportunity to step out of the everyday reality, to get rid of constraints and controls of all sorts (Douglas 2002; Turner 1977, 1982). In today's society there are prescribed times and places to "be free", to go "out-of-boundaries". This is best described as ordered disorder. The question is not, however, of only one sort of disorder, but of two sorts: some of them represent the good and acceptable side of free time, others the bad and less-acceptable side. This tension results in a symbolic battle. This kind of disorder and its management through consumption is the topic in this chapter.

The chapter starts by examining the nature of dirty and clean free times as culturally prescribed. It goes on discussing states that fall in-between these prescribed realms by taking commuting and sofa as examples. Then, it turns on examining how the battle is played out in the arena of consumption through certain kinds of artifacts. In large part it discusses the same artifacts we have already touched upon, namely coffee, tobacco, media, ICTs, and alcohol. They are symbolically charged objects that seem to be fit objects for symbolizing freedom, and slavery.

The boundary between dirty and clean free time

Two-sided free time: dirty and clean

We have discussed that free time is a metaphorical *other world*. Instead of being a unified one it appears to have two sides: the clean and the dirty. What are these sides like? What kind of peculiar battle takes place *within* the category called free time? These questions are addressed in this section.

Generally speaking, the clean free time refers to socially and culturally acceptable realms such as museums, theatres, sports, outings, and socializing. The dirty one, in turn, refers to bars, to over-long parties, to resorts of several kinds. What becomes defined as dirty and as clean depends entirely on the system in use (Douglas 2002). My present elaboration focuses on the culturally dominant way to define and understand them. This is not to deny the likely existence of social and personal differences; what is dirty to one person coming from a certain social background might be clean to someone else. The major purpose of my analysis is to break down the notion of free time as one unified realm, and for that purpose the somewhat rough elaboration is enough.

I start the discussion with the following data extracts. The first one is taken from the group of creative women and serves to illustrate the clean side. It refers to the movies and the arts (sculpture) as culturally acceptable leisure activities. The second one is taken from the group of fathers and it serves to illustrate the dirty side. It refers to boozing and running away. On the whole, the latter extract sums up some key symbols of Finnish freedom: summer, summer place, sea/lake, boating, and alcohol.

- *I went to the movies yesterday and I was so proud of myself, I went out, I went to the movies!*
- *I did something cultural, I went to see that monument to Kekkonen (former president of Finland). I felt good, I am a proper person you know.*

- *And even though you don't drink a lot, during the holidays you must be really drunk a couple of times, it's part of the holiday.*
- *Exactly!*
- *Me and my little brother…it was the last evening of the holiday, we were at our summer place with our families…we had noticed that the tank of the boat was full, well, we ran away to the city near by, we returned in the morning, and we were forgiven. Even our father who is really tough only said that 'well that wasn't such a good idea but you refilled the tank, didn't you'.*
- *Yeah, summer and boating, it's so cool.*

The different nature of these realms becomes reflected in the way they are discussed. The culturally and socially acceptable side of free time may be discussed in an open and proud way. It does not require any legitimatization or explanations. The talk of not-so-acceptable side of free time, in turn, is filled with legitimatizations or expressions such as "being ashamed", "run away", or "forgiving". They signal the bad and somewhat sin-

ful character of that realm. Visiting it is followed by embarrassed or guilty returns to moral codes. Interestingly, similar kinds of guilty expressions are present when people tell that they do nothing during their free time. They just rest and this may bring about shame as well. This can be seen in the following discussion taken from the group of creative women.

- *Sunday is a kind of flabby day, I don't wake up until eleven, and I just slouch about, just doing nothing. But then you feel that you must do something…*
- *You feel that you haven't got anything done during the weekend.*
- *Exactly, it is a terrible feeling, some sort of pressure that I should do something.*
- *Some sort of internal mechanism, me too, on Sundays I must go for a walk at least, my friend lives nearby…*

Let us go on elaborating on these different realms. The clean free time represents the pure side of life and consequently there is no need to purify after such a visit. One can be just proud of it; proud of going out or to the movies for instance. Interestingly, entering into the good side is not described as easy and obvious. On the contrary, it seems to require a symbolic battle to be able to trespass over the threshold that is perceived to be of a particular height. "You just have to force yourself to trespass over that threshold and go to dance class," one of my respondents pointed out. In order to win that battle, particular strategies may be drawn up. For instance, by going to hobby classes at set times and paying for them in advance forces one to take part in them. Or, by leaning on friends one forces oneself to go out like the above account suggests.

Actually, visiting the culturally acceptable free time may appear to be the norm. It becomes something that must be done: "I should visit exhibitions more often." Accordingly, the non-visit may arouse shame, a guilty feeling of not behaving according to cultural expectations. This can be seen in the above extract where the respondents talk about the shame caused by just vegetating: one should at least go out to pursue the expectations of proper free time. The cultural expectation of doing something during free time may be interpreted also against the norm of efficiency. The prevailing market system creates an expectation of filling one's time efficiently, not only during work time, but also during free time (Moisander and Valtonen 2002). Against that norm, doing nothing turns out to be "waste of time".

How about the dirty side of free time, what is it like? Interestingly, the threshold of such free time appears to be particularly low. It is presented as a threshold that is even too easy to trespass over. As if it required a conscious effort to avoid its peculiar temptation: “I always decide that I never ever again go to parties…”. One must fight the bad. But if one gives in to the temptation and visits the bad realm, one needs purification: one has been in touch with the dirt and needs to be purified somehow. It may occur through forgiveness by family members as in the above extract taken from the group of fathers, or through refusals, or a set of practices that will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

The bad side may also become a must in a sense that one cannot resist the temptation. It becomes an “addiction” or “compulsion” as commonly referred to in earlier literature (e.g. Hirschman 1992). One becomes hooked on the bad, and keeps on visiting the dirty realm. Conversely, being able to avoid such a dirty realm may evoke positive feelings, something to be proud of. As one of my respondents pointed out: “I stopped going out, I just don’t sit in bars any more, I’ve kept my decision and that’s great.” On the whole, the moral battle between good and bad free time appears to be rather complex. The following picture aims to summarize and illustrate the nature of such a battle.

Figure 3. Symbolic battle between dirty and clean free time.

The battle becomes more understandable if we think of it in terms of power. As Douglas (2002) notes, power resides both in structures and in margins. The power of the clean free time derives from the order, the good. It works for society, for normalcy. Such power serves to maintain cultural structures and it makes people to perform good free time. The other kind of power, in turn, the one that resides in the margins, makes people get rid of structures, go beyond the boundaries, to taste "forbidden fruits". Still, both good and bad free time are commonly understood and described as freeing moments. Both of them have the power to re-energize and empower, but their source is somewhat different.

Being in-between

Above, in discussing dirty and clean free time, we referred to somewhat "prescribed" free time, associated with realms such as bars or hobbies. Here, I turn to take a look at the realms that fall in-between these prescribed realms. I examine two such in-between realms: commuting and sofa. I focus on these examples because they are symbolically charged – then one is free from obligations and allowed to loosen up - and because they may also occupy quite a considerable portion of daily life.

Commuting. Commuting is a special kind of trip in a sense that it is repetitive and it serves to move from one fixed place to another. It represents a transition: one leaves one realm and goes to another (Nippert-Eng 1996). Despite some annoying characteristics that often relate to commuting it may be taken into cultural usage, to set one's brains at zero, to be free. Frequently, my respondents described commuting as "time for myself". It is time when one is free to concentrate on one's own matters and also to decide how to spend that time. Though, the "me-time" must be constructed. Those using their own cars may construct their own time by playing their favorite music, like one father described, or to make calls. As also Mäenpää (2001, p. 117) notes: "Cars were generally seen as one of the best places to make calls from – particularly when you are driving alone." Those who use public transport may do it by reading newspapers or books or by closing their eyes, listening to music with earphones, or just staring out of the window.

A key part of the symbolism of commuting derives from its in-between character. Then one is momentarily away from the duties of work and home, or at least, has the chance to be. It is legitimate to be in-between, not to worry about things at home or work. This becomes clear in the following account of one mother:

- *…on the way home, I don't nap, although I always have a book with me, I seldom read. I just stare out of the window and think. It is time for myself, no need to feel guilty because the dishes or some other job needs doing.*

Like cultural in-between states in general, commuting is also a state where prescribed statuses do not apply. In this sense it is "free" time. Commuting has its own rules, obviously, traffic rules for instance. Nevertheless, think of other public places where one would be allowed to sleep, read, chat, be quiet, put on make up, work, talk on the phone, listen to music, play mobile games, send SMS messages, scan newspapers, study, do homework, etc.? This allowance illustrates its peculiar cultural nature - doing all this at work or in a café, for instance, is likely to cause reactions.

Commonly, cultural in-between states also arouse fear, since in these states one is neither here nor there and is vulnerable to dangers. For instance, the danger is present in the sense that on the way home the bad realm of free time may appear attractive – instead of going home one may slip into the bar. The danger infused in transitions is also visible in a recent advertising of an insurance company. The advertising shows a worried mother waiting for her family to arrive home.

On the sofa. I want to call attention to one further in-between state: the sofa. My data are filled with little sofa stories. It is the piece of furniture around which the talk about free time at home appears to center. I discuss them in this section. In doing so, I show the attractive power of the sofa and its contemporary counterpart, the TV. On the whole, the sofa is a symbolically charged piece of furniture in the Finnish context, especially as a sort of status symbol (for a history, see Sarantola-Weiss 2003). My data suggests that the sofa is a symbol of freedom in the home context.

The sofa entails an in-between status both in terms of time and space. Considering time first, the sofa seems to be the place to spend time in-between work duties and home duties, and/or in-between home duties and sleeping. The following two accounts illustrate this. The first one comes from the group of creative women, the second from the group of fathers.

- When I go home, I just lay down on the sofa.

- After all these things, you know, eating, homework, and the children's hobbies, I just sit down on the sofa for a while before going to sleep.

Thinking in terms of space, the sofa seems to fall in between institutionalized spaces at home. In the kitchen, one is supposed to eat and in the bedroom one is supposed to sleep, but on the sofa one can do both. Actually, just like when commuting, one is also allowed to do a variety of things on the sofa: read, watch television, chat, relax, take a nap, eat, listen to music, make phone calls, etc. Where else at home is one allowed to do all that? Besides, the sofa appears to represent a legitimate space for escaping the home duties. Once one is lying on the sofa, it is all right just to look at the chores without feeling a real need to do them. As one marketing manager points out:

- *When I come home I may just flop down on the sofa and start to read Gloria (magazine) or something…so that I don't really care about chores.*

One particular feature in the abundant talk about sofas is that it includes a vast amount of bodily descriptions[20]. These expressions symbolize bodily relief, and they refer to attendant body gestures symbolizing rest and relaxation. This is also reproduced in advertisements. For instance, a print advertisement of Lipton Tea pictures a woman enjoying her cup of tea on the sofa, in a relaxed body position. On the whole, the talk about sofa in my data reflects an intimate relationship people have with their sofa. It is talk about my body and my sofa. Below is one such bodily description taken from my data:

- *I enjoy being alone at home, listening to good music and reading good books, hanging loose, wearing woolen stockings and cocoon myself on the sofa or in bed.*

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[20] People used Finnish expressions such as "*lösähtää*", "*rötkähtää",* "*heittäytyä*", "*käpertyä*", "*nykähtää"*

Moreover, temptation seems to be one specific feature of the sofa symbolism. The sofa has the power to attract. Despite being a legitimate space to rest at home, lying on the sofa does not fully meet the expectations of proper free time. One should do something more civilizing. The attractive yet sinful power of the sofa is displayed in expressions about how the sofa draws people to it ("vetää kummasti puoleensa"), but still, it must be avoided. People may actually draw up strategies to resist the attraction of the sofa – and the television. In the group of fathers, the following kind of discussion was conducted:

- *The TV programs are so peculiar, that sometimes when I come home, I really try not to switch it on, I do try my best. Because if you do, there you are…I try to stay away from it, away from that bloody sofa.*
- *Yeah, you get tied to it quite easily.*

The above extract displays the attendant counterpart of the sofa, the television. Although the sofa is a place for reading, socializing, listening to music, etc, above all, it seems to relate to the television. They go hand in hand. The strong presence of the television in my data is in line with the time-use statistics: Finns spend more than third of their free time watching television (Niemi and Pääkkönen 2001, p. 33). One may, however, question whether the question is one of really watching television or just having it switched on. In my sofa stories, it is very often a question of falling asleep in front of the television. One woman from the group of creative women says:

- *I leave work around 5 or 6 o'clock, and I know the schedule of the TV programs, I lay down on my little sofa, and fall asleep for a while, and there I am all night long, dozing, exhausted…I just fall asleep and it is like you permission to fall asleep, to doze secretly.*

This account points toward sleeping. It is culturally regulated where and when one is allowed to sleep. This can be seen in the above account through phrases like "permission to sleep" and "take a nap secretly". As if it would not be legitimate to sleep whenever and wherever in one's own home, especially if one is living alone. Sleeping will be the topic of the following chapter, but at this stage it is enough to conclude that one is even allowed to sleep on the sofa. It represents a mini-scale *other world.*

Symbolic goods that "make one free and bind"

Having discussed the nature of the battle that relates to the idea of "being free" let us now focus on discussing those goods used "to make one free". Obviously, becoming free may be realized by various kinds of consumption activities, such as going to museums (e.g. Ahola 1995), mountaineering (e.g. Tumbat 2003) or going to pubs (Alasuutari 1992). Here, the key focus is put on those goods typically related to the boundaries of free time: coffee, tobacco, alcohol, ICTs, and the media. This is because these particular goods provide a means of outlining the peculiar ambivalent meaning embedded to the very idea of freedom. Namely, these boundary products carry ambivalent meanings: they are cursed and worshipped; they all are artifacts without which one cannot manage and which one wishes to get rid of; they all include some kind of meaning of danger; they give a sense of freedom, and a sense of being addicted – as if we were engaging in voluntary slavery in using them.

Displaying this ambivalent symbolism is the major theme of the present section. It draws on the previous literature that has shown that ambivalent character is typical of artifacts related to boundaries; they are often deviants or anomalies carrying symbolic power (Anttonen 1996; Apo 2001; Douglas 2002; Jetsu 2001). The chapter starts by outlining the symbolism of goods that are commonly related to the quest to be free, going out of order. It ends by showing how the re-connection to the order is realized through certain kinds of goods and, especially, by the refusal to use certain types of goods.

Becoming free

Tobacco, coffee, and alcohol. Let us first consider the symbolic set of tobacco, coffee, and alcohol. Of them, the alcohol is, especially, a powerful boundary symbol. It represents a way of passing from the ordered regulation of one form to the less-ordered form (Gusfield 1987, p. 78). It creates "time outs". Alcohol entails rather special cultural meanings in cultures in general (Douglas 1987; Gusfield 1987; Schivelbusch 1986) and in the Finnish context, in particular (e.g. Alasuutari 1992; Apo 2001; Lahti 2001).

The myth of Finns as heavy drinkers is a persistent one: Finns drink to get drunk. Be it true or not, in Finland one needs to formulate his or her relationship to alcohol. The peculiar meaning accorded to alcohol becomes visible also in the Finnish language: there are a great number of expressions for various kinds of alcohol-related conditions. Alcohol-related topics are also commonly handled both in the media and everyday conversation. These conversations reveal that drinking is an endless source of warnings, dangers, and guidance, as well as stories and jokes (Apo 2001).

Let us take a look at the following extract from the group of creative men.

- *…at work you have to be sharp and smart, polite and so on, and then when you drink, you can do silly things. It's really a good excuse, you can do anything, just anything.*
- *Yeah, no need to think rationally.*

Several studies have discussed how drinking in general, and a state of drunkenness in particular, provides a sense of freedom (e.g. Alasuutari 1992; Gusfield 1987; Lahti 2001, p. 99-100; Schivelbusch 1986). Then one is freed from the responsibility of self-control and rational thinking as the above extract suggests. An associated common Finnish saying "heittää aivot narikkaan" (throw brains to the checkroom) echoes the same purpose.

How about coffee and tobacco? As we discussed in the earlier chapter, coffee occupies a central stage in Finnish culture and is an essential part of breaks and feasts. In a way, coffee represents the antithesis of alcohol. Coffee often starts the day and it may end the party or meal (Gusfield 1987, p. 83). In the Finnish context, moreover, coffee has an interesting historical relation with alcohol: it replaced the morning slugs that used to be taken in the agricultural society (Apo 2001; Karjalainen 1998; Vilkuna 2000)[21]. Tobacco relates closely to coffee and alcohol both in terms of usage and symbolism. Tobacco is often used along with coffee and/or alcohol, it provides a way to take a break, to make oneself free for a moment, and it relaxes and energizes (Schivelbusch 1986).

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[21] For a history of the meaning of coffee and coffee breaks in the American context see e.g. Hirschman *et. al*. (1998).

Do these artifacts have any further similarities? Yes, they carry the meaning of reward – all of them may be taken as a reward after working hard, for instance (Valtonen 2000). Moreover, the usage of tobacco, coffee, and alcohol carry the meaning of sociability. They connect people. Coffee and tobacco breaks are times for gathering together, talking, and socializing. Drinking together, in particular, is a way to enhance social solidarity and dissolve hierarchies. As Schivelbusch (1986, p. 195) notes:

> A cup of coffee every morning and a little drunkenness on Saturday evening provide pleasure and they also connect the individual to the social sphere in an efficient way.

Interestingly, all these three artifacts are hedged with a large set of cultural, political, and legislative regulations and prohibitions. Conflicts over the use and availability of alcoholic beverages, in particular, have been a persistent part of Finnish history (Alasuutari 1992) and elsewhere (Gusfield 1987). The state has constantly tried to limit and eradicate the consumption of alcohol. In the same vein, smoking has been subject to controls and regulations. Today, the law prohibits smoking in workplaces in Finland. Coffee consumption has also been regulated over the years; after the Second World War, for instance, its consumption was restricted. Today, the question is often one of self-regulation, one tries cutting down or giving up coffee.

The marketing and advertising of tobacco and alcohol is also widely regulated if not totally banned. The marketing of these products, if allowed, is commonly associated with warnings. For instance, there are specified warnings on cigarette packs to alert consumers to the dangers of smoking. Conversely, their anti-usage is commonly marketed – how it is wise not to smoke or drink (see e.g. Luik and Waterson 1996; Treise *et al.* 1999).

Regulations and prohibitions are a sign of danger. Dangerous meanings embedded in these products cannot be reduced merely to their physical dimensions as Schivelbusch (1986) notes. The question is also one of symbolic dangers and threats. In Douglasian thinking, dangers, and powers, resign in the margins, the margins referring to some sort of boundary crossing. What kind of boundaries do these products cross?

If we think of products such as coffee, tobacco, and alcohol, we notice that they all help to set the mood in some way or another: they stimulate, relax, help to concentrate, or breaks down controls. As Schivelbusch notes:

> A common goal when using them is to stimulate the human system and adjust it to the conditions of brainwork. The brain is the organ in which the bourgeois culture is most interested. Only the brain was cared for in the17th and 18th centuries. The rest of the body serves merely to support the head, it is seen as a necessary evil (Schivelbusch 1986, p. 117-118).

This feature becomes most clear in the context of alcohol. “I was not myself” one may say the morning after. Over the years, alcohol has been considered to be different from other matters. It has been considered to be living matter, like some evil spirit that could enter a human being and change his or her consciousness and behavior. It has special power (Apo 2001, p. 69). The same concerns tobacco and coffee. They enter the body, change the mood by either relaxing or stimulating. In other words, these products are able to transgress one of the most protected boundaries, that of the body (Douglas 2002). They have the power to change the self.

Media and ICTs. Let us go on by elaborating the set of meanings related to boundary goods such as ICTs and media, and the ways in which they “make us free”.

Throughout my study, I have shown the ways in which the media relates to the performance of boundaries: the habit of reading the morning paper, scanning the tabloids during coffee or lunch breaks, listening to the radio while commuting, and ending the day by watching television. The media field is wide and various both in terms of content and form. Interestingly, the media that carry a somewhat dirty meaning appear to have the power to make one free. That is, if we think of television, soap operas, shows, and series may be seen as such types. Such programs serve to set the brain at zero and forget. Their dirty nature becomes visible in the way they are hedged with disapprovals and explanations. They may cause shame.

Conversely, thinking further about television in the Finnish context, current affairs, documentaries, nature programs, and the news appear to represent the clean ones (Alasuutari 1995, p. 126-127). They are programs that one proudly says one follows. Symbolically, the news, in particular, serves to connect to order rather than make one free of it. The news does not serve to forget. Of the various media forms, the newspaper has a special cultural position in Finland[22]. Its valued status can be seen in the way that its usage is not hedged with prohibitions, but rather with recommendations. School children, for instance, are encouraged to read newspapers.

One common feature relating to the media use and media as such is its repetitive nature. That is, it follows a cyclical time conception (Adam 1995). Cyclical time rests upon repetition, continuity, and un-change. Such temporality can be seen in the way the change in the time of the news, or the change in the layout of a newspaper may cause strong reactions. They should not change. The same concerns coffee, tobacco, and drinks such as beer. They are built upon the notion of un-changeability; the next beer or cigarette is not supposed to be better than this one.

Conversely, the linear time conception is charged with the promise of progress - the future must be better than the present – and goods that rely on this temporality are also charged with that assumption. In particular, this seems to concern technology. The following generation of mobile phones, for instance, is supposed to be better, faster, lighter, and equipped with new characteristics. However, when the new technology is taken into daily usage, it tends to follow repetitive patterns and rely on no-change. When it is not possible to start the day by reading e-mail messages, this may cause a panic. “Last Monday I felt myself loose, because I couldn’t do all my mornings routines, I couldn’t read e-mail messages and do all those things…” said one of my respondents.

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[22] Finland was the leading country in terms of newspaper circulation within the EU in 2001 (of newspapers published at least four times a week). Source: Sanomalehtien liitto, www.sanomalehdet.fi (Finnish Newspaper Association).

Let us discuss the new communication technology in more detail. How is becoming free to be understood in the context of ICTs? They are commonly built upon the notion of freedom in a sense that they are marketed to "free from the boundaries of time". They do have the power to transgress boundaries of time, but in doing so, they also threaten the boundaries of free time as we have discussed.

But how to understand the peculiar character of "addiction", "being hooked", or "enslaved" that is part of the meanings related to these devices? For instance, in their study of technological paradoxes, Mick and Fournier found that the paradoxes of control/chaos and freedom/enslavement "often appear together and were among the most salient across all data sets and informants" (1998, p. 128). Interestingly, the similar kinds of meanings can be found in coffee, tobacco and alcohol. They also carry meanings of "enslavement". Think of, for instance, a common statement "one cannot quit smoking".

Is it so that goods that carry the meaning of "making free" simultaneously carry the meaning of "enslavement"? As if they were linked concepts. As if the very idea of freedom would immediately invite some sort of counter reaction that has the meaning of binding or constraint. This idea is present also in the way these products that "make free" carry the meaning of sociability. They connect people, and in this sense they maintain the link to order and society although they serve to free from it. Moreover, the same idea is present in the form of regulations and prohibitions that surround these products. As if they hindered one from becoming "too free".

One may conclude that the question of freedom is as much one of being linked as being free. Total freedom would imply chaos and that kind of state is frightening. Therefore, there seems to be some sort of safety system built into boundary goods that make free – the ambivalent meanings construct a sort of symbolic bridge that maintains the safe link to the order.

Returning

To make oneself free one thus leans on products that have the power to transform to *another world*. How about the return? In a way, a possibility for a safe return seems to be built in these goods through the rules as discussed. How about if we consider the question in terms of clean and dirty free time? How to return from a clean or from a dirty side?

As the visit in the clean side is not polluting, there is no need for carrying out purification. It is sufficient to re-connect, re-incorporate in the other realm. Think of the return from work, for instance. There is no need to purify but the re-connection may occur through practices such as talking with other family members, or through media, by reading a newspaper for instance. However, if one visits the dirty side, the return to the normalcy is not that simple: the re-connection is not enough, purification is needed as well. Let us take a look at the following extract from my research journal.

> I spent a weekend with my friends at a summer place. It was a weekend with a typical Finnish concept: eating, late night drinking, and sauna. The following morning, one of the friends says: “We’ve just decided with Anna (name changed) to give up booze for three weeks.” The following Monday, I meet Anna at lunch and she says: “Yesterday, when I went home, I cleaned up for two hours or so, I had such a bad conscience, you know, because I’ve been away from my family.” I respond: “Well, I just had some pizza and watched the Olympic on TV”.

In the above story the question is of the dirty side of free time, after which one needs to purify. In the consumer society, this purification is played out in the arena of consumption, but it appears to follow traditional practices. Cleaning, for instance, represents a way to re-establish the threatened order (Ollila 2000) and it is present in the above story. Also food and eating represent traditional ways to incorporate into the order, into the normalcy (e.g. Jetsu 2001; van Gennep 1960). Pizza, in particular, seems to have acquired a special status as a boundary food, as a food item that has the power to remedy and re-connect to the order. The story also illustrates the television. The media represents one way to connect to the order, to incorporate into society.

What is of particular interest in the above story, however, is the *refusal* to consume alcohol. In other words, purification occurs through the refusal to use the same artifacts through which one gets free. One quits consuming. Most interestingly, such purification seems to occur through promises – through promising not to visit that bad realm "ever again". Conversely through promising to visit the good realm: "next week I'll go the exhibition". The mere promises, therefore, seem to have the performative power to purify.

The purification may take place after every visit to the dirty realm, throughout the year. However, in the calendar system, there is a particular day for symbolically cleansing the whole year: New Year. The New Year ends the period of Christmas festivities and represents a temporal turning point, when one looks back and forward. It is time to be made pure of old sins and start a fresh period (Anttonen 1996; can Gennep 1960). The New Year is a time for promises: to stop smoking, drinking, and eating unhealthy food and start dieting, eating more vegetables, and participating in sports instead. In the Finnish context, the promises and refusals seem to crystallize in the consumption of alcohol. The saying "tipaton tammikuu", "dropless January" is commonly used and it is part of a shared understanding. It means that one refuses to drink alcohol during January. A crucial part of the idea is the tension over whether one succeeds or not. Today, this game may be played through a flash game.

At the beginning of 2002, I got an e-mail message with a flash game attached called "tipaton tammikuu". In that game, the purpose is to try to avoid alcoholic beverages that keep popping up on the screen. In the upper corner of the screen, there is a calendar marking the passage of time per day. The point of the game is to try to cope without alcohol for the whole of January. The game included the following text:

> A real Finnish challenge: dropless January
> The moral hangover culminates after Christmas and New Year. One has to start a new life – one has to purify.
> Rise to the challenge.

This provides one further example of how the new communication technology is taken into cultural usage. Given that e-mail messages are quite commonly sent and read at work, it also engages in the blurring of the boundaries of work and free time.

To sum up, in this chapter I have discussed the two-sided and morally loaded nature of free time. It has the benefit of illuminating the complexity of this category. Commonly, when free time is discussed it is seen as a unified category; as an opposite of work and as a realm of diversions. Turner, for instance, summarizes such discussion in the following way:

> Leisure time is associated with two types of freedom, "freedom from" and "freedom to". It represents *freedom from* a whole heap of institutional obligations prescribed by the basic forms of social, particularly technological and bureaucratic organization. For each individual, it means freedom from the forced, chronologically regulated rhythms of factory and office and a chance to recuperate and enjoy natural, biological rhythms again. Leisure is also *freedom to* enter, even to generate new symbolic worlds of entertainment, sports, games, diversions of all kinds. It is freedom to transcend social structural limitations, freedom to play (Turner 1982, p. 36-37).

My analysis suggests, first of all, that the division between free time and work is problematized as I have discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, in this chapter, I have suggested that the category called free time has two sides: it consists of two sorts of symbolic worlds that differ by their basic nature. Constructing and transforming these symbolic worlds is not a simple "entrance" or "generation", as Turner seems to suggest, but rather a struggle over them and a peculiar balance between good and bad.

This peculiar nature is reflected also in symbolic goods through which these worlds are made. They are throughout ambivalent: they make free and enslave, liberate and bind. Those goods defined as marginal and hence dangerous are hedged with a set of regulations and prohibitions. Conversely, what is defined as good and appropriate can be seen through recommendations. Both types entail power, power to perform boundaries and to make free. In other words, goods do not just demarcate the boundaries of time, but also entail power to make and transgress them.

6 Symbolic battle with waking and sleeping

This chapter addresses one further boundary, boundary between awake and asleep, that seems to be of particular significance. The theme of sleeping is commonly excluded from the realm of free time at the outset (e.g. Olszevska *et al.* 1989; Niemi and Pääkkönen 2001). My data provide grounds for calling this exclusion into question. Actually, they provide ground to suggest that sleeping represent *another world* in its own right, a real realm of freedom, that seems to be, however, problematized in today's society.

First, the chapter elaborates on the symbolism related to sleeping. Then, it turns to focus on the boundary differentiating between sleep and awake, and elaborates its peculiar strength.

Symbolism of sleeping - *another world*

> Night and sleep are in contrast to mundane labor, they constitute another world, in which our imagination starts to create most extraordinary figures (Turunen 2002, p. 17)

Sleeping and dreaming represent *another world* as Turunen above suggests. They constitute a rich realm of symbolism; lots of stories and symbols center around sleeping (Jetsu 2001; Tedlock 1987; Turunen 2002). My data are also filled with various kinds of sleep-related events and stories. The respondents stress the importance and the beauty of sleeping well; talk about the difficulties of waking up; about the management of children's sleep. They also talk a lot about the difficulty of sleeping well; about the anxiety of waking up because of work issues; about the time pressures or other problems that do not allow them to sleep well.

What is this *another world* of sleeping like? I start the elaboration by calling attention to the following account that is from the group of creative women. The respondents were talking about their leisure time activities. One woman joins the discussion and says: sleeping is my hobby. She also puts forth the relation between sleeping and freedom.

- *I'm the kind of person who enjoys sleeping, sleeping is my hobby, quite often I sleep some 18 hours, that's just fantastic. It is some sort of freedom.*

How is the connection between sleep and freedom to be understood? It might be understood in two ways. First, the statement of sleeping even 18 hours might be interpreted as freeing oneself from the clock-time; to be free to sleep as long as one wants. Second, the sleeping represents a realm that frees one from the whole rational and logical world we live in and by while awake. I elaborate on these two themes in the reminder of this section.

Beyond clock-time

In my data, the ability to sleep as long as one wants is frequently mentioned as an important source of enjoyment. Long and undisturbed sleep is often said to be the best part of free time, even a necessary requirement for it. It was actually used to define free time. One teenager, for instance, defined his free time in the following way: *free time means that you don't have to wake up, you can sleep as long as you want*. This concerns holidays and especially weekends. The same result is visible in statistics: "sleeping over 11 hours at weekends has become more popular" (Niemi and Pääkkönen 2001, p. 10).

This kind of freedom – not letting the clock-time determine how long to sleep - becomes understandable when we think how the contemporary life tends to be largely determined by clock-time (Adam 1990, 1995; Nowotny 1994). We are to do certain things at certain times, and although we are led to believe that ICTs liberate us from clock-time, the reliance on time has become increasingly evident and stressful (Moisander and Valtonen 2002). Therefore, to step out of clock-time creates a specific sense of freedom. This has also been shown in other studies on free time. Belk and Costa (1998), for instance, note in their study of rendezvous of Mountain Man Myth: "Wristwatches are not a period accessory, and virtually everyone awakens and retires with little care or idea about the time" (1998, p. 233).

However, when one wakes up, very often, the very first thing to do is to take a look at the clock. Why do we so desperately need to know what time it is? Because by doing so, we rejoin the order, the society from which we have been out. This simple performative practice of taking a look at the clock reveals the crucial role clock-time occupies in the current society. It is a kind of master symbol of the social order. As Elias points out: "one looks at the clock and finds out that it is now such and such a time, not only for me but for the whole of the society to which I belong" (Elias 1992, p.15).

The specific nature accorded to states beyond clock-time becomes crystallized in sleep, but it is present in other contexts, as well. Forgetting time may create a peculiar feeling of enjoyment and liberation, and it is often related to creativity and creative professions. This is visible in the groups of this study, too. One male designer noted: *when I concentrate, I forget all the meetings, I just do and do.* Going beyond time also forms an important part – or a wish – within academic work (Ylijoki and Mäntylä 2003). Though, being beyond the ordered clock-time may also create feelings of danger and anxiety - if not to oneself, then to people who are close.

In sleep one is, therefore, out of order and a return from that kind of peculiar realm requires certain practices through which to incorporate back to the order. Generally speaking, wake up is a symbolically rich phenomenon. The wake ups and mornings occupy a central stage in my data. The respondents quite vividly describe their wake ups: the ways in which they either try to maximize their sleep (e.g. no breakfast at home in order to be able to sleep a bit longer) or to ensure a nice and relaxing waking up (e.g. wake up before other family members). Actually, respondents identify themselves and/or their family members as "wakers" of a special kind. To illustrate this, let us take a look at the following extract from the group of creative men:

- *I couldn't possible wake up one hour earlier in the morning so that I could spend one hour free time before going to work. Waking up is just so hard for me.*
- *For me it's the opposite, I wake up one hour before I leave home, at minimum. Just because I can have a nice cup of coffee, have some breakfast, look at television and things like that. For me, it is free time.*
- *Well I try to do that, every evening I decide, that tomorrow morning I'll wake up early, make some coffee and read* Hesari *and eat a proper breakfast and feel fresh. But every morning, I just postpone my waking until I notice that now I'm late, just clothes on and on the bus. At work, I have some coffee and read the news on the Net.*

These accounts make visible the performative practices related to wake ups and mornings. Dressing, washing, media (news), breakfast, and coffee seem to constitute the core practices to be performed. They actually seem to represent the practices that one *should* perform; they appear as a norm against which one describes and defines his or her morning. As one marketing manager notes: "I do not eat breakfast, I do not read Hesari or do any other things that good people tend to do."

The end of the above extract ("postpone waking") also refers to the interesting negotiation whether to transgresses the boundary between awake and sleep or not. This negotiation is carried out through postponing the alarm. In particular, it seems to relate to the use of mobile phones. By using the snooze feature of those devices one "buys" some minutes of extra sleeping time. In this way, the new communication devices might be taken as part of the practices through which the boundary between awake and sleep is performed and negotiated – minute by minute. The following discussion is derived from the group of creative women.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS RELATE TO YOUR MORNINGS?
- *Snooze, snooze, snooze…*
- *Yes!*
- *It's six minutes in Nokia phones!*
- *Oh, it's six minutes.*
- *I may keep doing it for one hour, and then, a terrible panic, what time is it!*

Generally, the talk about mornings is talk about minutes: how many minutes does the morning practice take, or how many minutes does it take to go to work. Against this minute-based schedule of weekday mornings, it becomes quite understandable that quiet mornings during weekends appear liberating.

Beyond the rational world

Let us dig deeper into the liberating realm of sleep. In stepping into the realm of sleep, we actually step outside the whole systematic, controlled, predictable, and rational world. We enter into the opposite kind of world, into the world of dreams (Tedlock 1987)[23]. In the Western thinking, the waking represents the real and continuous sphere of life, while sleeping represents the unreal and discontinuous part of it. This division of waking and sleeping is intertwined with the division of day and night with attendant meanings; day representing the safe side of life and the night the dangerous one (Wuthnow *et al*. 1984, p.101; Turunen 2002).

The connection of night and sleep and the particular symbolic and mystical status accorded to them has long historical roots (Turunen 2002). For centuries, the dark night has occupied a symbolical status of threat and dangers. Night has constituted – and still does - a context for a great number of horror stories, and its specific status can be seen in everyday life through prohibitions and warnings; what one should not to do during the nights. For instance, women are frequently warned not to go out at night (Koskela 1997).

The dangers and fear related to the night are present in the following extract taken from the group of mothers. It also illustrates the different statuses related to nights and days, evenings and mornings. Mornings represent safety, in a rather taken-for-granted way. Morning is a symbol of light and joy after the dangerous night. From this angle, therefore, evenings and mornings, falling asleep and awakening represent different sides of the cycle of life; one death, the other rebirth.

- *We tried to meet in the evening, but until we could meet and go for a walk or something, it was eleven or twelve o'clock.*
- *You should have a guard with you. No good.*
- *Then we decided to meet in the morning, to have some coffee.*

[23] The Western tendency to make such a clear-cut division between sleeping and waking is not followed in all cultures: "there are cultures other than our own in which waking, dreaming, and various in-between experiences, though they might be distinguished, may well not be sorted out according to the simple oppositional dichotomy of real versus unreal, or reality versus fantasy" (Tedlock 1987, p. 1).

The cultural difference between night and day, evening and morning, and sleeping and awaking becomes most clear when it is realized that sleeping symbolically represents death. Sleeping is a brother of death, as Turunen (2002, p. 27) notes. Earlier, it was thought that when a person falls asleep, his or her soul leaves the body. Today, this relation between sleep and death is clearest, perhaps, in eulogies when somebody has died. He or she is said to fall into "eternal sleep".

Knowing this symbolical relation between sleeping and death, it is quite understandable that falling asleep appears a somewhat frightening situation, and requires a set of protective measures to be taken. This cultural fright is seen especially in the way children or babies are put to bed. Those situations have many practices that serve to provide safety: an adult sits beside the bed, reading of fairytales, the evening prayers, leaving lights switched on, having bedtime toys. This does not mean that the danger related to sleeping would somehow disappear once one is adult. The practices just tend to have somewhat different articulations. Examples include everyday greetings such as "Goodnight, sleep tight", and "Good morning, did you sleep well?"; washing up practices such as brushing teeth and taking a shower; grooming; reading books or newspapers, having a glass of milk or a cup of coffee (cf. Rook 1985). They all prepare for the boundary transgression.

Given that sleeping represents such a different and frightening world, it is also understandable that it is regulated and ruled. These cultural rules govern where and when it is appropriate to sleep. Also in families – especially in those having children - sleeping seems to be a current focus of regulation and a source of disputes. Roughly put, the culturally dominant rule for sleeping is that one should sleep at home and at night and an appropriate amount. Perhaps part of the liberating spirit related to the long sleep comes from the liberation of this norm. "I slept all day long, that was so lovely". "We bought that kind of package holiday and we just slept, nothing else, just slept all week long".

How about sleeping on the job? Hardly comes into question. Though, in quite many workplaces it appears to be quite a common topic to plan having a sofa for taking a good nap, but it is less often realized. The realm of work and sleep tend to represent separate cultural spheres not be mixed. This cultural assumption can be seen in the fol-

lowing extract as well. Although one might follow the flexible working hours, the cultural assumption (and practicalities) forces one to follow the somewhat standard rhythm.

- *I have flexible working time…but I have agreed to be there before ten o'clock, just because if clients call, you can't say to them that well, he is sleeping if it is twelve o'clock or something.*

But there are legitimate places for sleeping during the daytime, as well. In liminal states – when one is liberated from prescribed statuses of home and work – such as buses, airplanes, trains, or sofas - then one is allowed to sleep.

Boundary between waking and sleeping

Let us focus in more detail on the nature of the boundary that separates sleeping and waking. It seems to enjoy particular cultural protection and respect. The status becomes clear if we consider the reactions its violation may invoke. If unpleasant work issues, for instance, enter the mind in the night, panic! Why is that? What makes it such a strong boundary? I first characterize the protected status accorded to it, and to end the section, I attempt to elaborate on the question: what makes this boundary such a significant one?

Protected boundary

Dealing with the boundary between waking and sleeping, we are dealing with a boundary that should not be crossed. A very basic characteristic of sleeping is that it enjoys a particular respect. The sleeping person is not to be disturbed. This respect has historical roots that derive from the belief that when sleeping the soul left the body; if one woke up a person, there would be no soul (Turunen 2002). Still today a sleeping person enjoys some sort of cultural protection. In the home context, for instance, others try to keep quiet if some family member is sleeping. Or, the other way round, if sleep is disturbed, it commonly causes strong reactions whether the cause is the noisy neighbor or traffic, or something else. Also in the sphere of social life, waking somebody by calling,

for example, causes reactions and emotions of a particular kind, often for both persons involved. The one who is woken up is irritated and the person who awakens them feels upset, or at least sorry. The question is of transgressing a boundary that should not be transgressed.

In today's society, nevertheless, when people's lives do not follow a similar rhythm this transgression is likely to occur. In the 24-hour society, the relation between night and sleep has become questioned. The night has been colonized, to use Nowotny's (1994) expression; shops, cafes, or gas stations might be open all day long, people work in shifts, or study during the night. In families, working in shifts often produces specific arrangements for managing time and arranging free time. In the group of mothers, one woman, for instance, pointed out: ”my husband works in shifts, so we must be quiet until 12 so that he can sleep”. This comment well highlights the key characteristic of sleeping: it is to be respected.

The likely transgression is further enhanced through the use of mobile devices and the peculiar "now" temporality infused in them. In the following quote one young woman expresses this phenomenon in the following way:

- *Sometimes when I go to work earlier than normal, at eight o'clock, I have sent some SMS messages to my friends, and then suddenly I think about their schedule, if I woke them up….*

In particular, the prohibition to cross the boundary between waking and sleeping concerns work issues. Waking up because of work issues causes a disturbance of a particular kind. The following extract illustrates this point. It comes for the discussion of the creative men working in advertising agencies.

- *I do not disturb graphic designers any more before one o'clock in the afternoon, because they often say that they have been working until four in the morning.*
- *Correct.*
- *You can see from the mail messages what time they've sent them.*

This extract also illustrates how the new communication technology may be used to hinder the likely boundary crossing, not only to cause them. In the e-mail system, for instance, the recipient can see the clock-time when the message is sent. This information provided might be used to infer when one might be allowed to contact the person.

All in all, the boundary between awake and sleep should keep work issues and non-work issues separate. Although free time and work might merge during waking, they should not merge while sleeping. This concerns especially unpleasant work issues; those unpleasant issues that cause nightmares and make one wake up in the middle of night. In the group of fathers, one respondent working in construction describes well the anxiety caused by working in dreams, though, noting the benefits as well.

- *Well, when younger I used to measure while sleeping and woke up with cold sweat on my forehead. Sometimes it was useful, you could repair it the next day…But it hasn't happened for a long time.*

The interesting thing in the account is that he refers to the change through work experience: when younger, work issues entered his dreams, but no longer. He lets us assume that through the work experience one learns to control one's mind so that the work issues no longer appear in dreams. Once work issues are under control and in order, they stay in their right place. To keep them in their right place is the aim of the set of practices we have outlined in earlier chapters; writing down work issues, planning the schedule of the next day, talking them through with colleagues, etc. If, however, work issues get out of their right place they acquire those special qualities attributed to all kinds of things that are out of places. They become impure and dangerous. They may attack and cause panic and fear. They acquire the evil power to pollute; cold sweat at night being one manifestation of such pollution.

This evil power is present in the everyday horror stories we live through: unpleasant issues attack when we are in an unsafe and vulnerable condition, such as on the way home or asleep. One example of such a horror story is taken from the group of creative women. The story tells how the evil is present in liminal states such as at night and on the way home, not in the form of murderers or burglars, but in the form of evil work issues. In order to prevent this, protective measures must be taken: make a list of working

issues in order to capture them, to keep them in the right place. The question is of symbolic cleaning, of a quest to keep two separate worlds clean and pure. To remember work issues at night is perhaps the most unpleasant of the possible boundary transgressions[24]. The question is also protecting for the fear of forgetting: things should be forgotten just for a while, not eternally.

- *Same for me, I'm an account manager and there are millions of things to remember, so I make a list for the next morning, it makes it easier, there is no need to think of them in the evening.*
- *Yeah…while sleeping…*
- *I prepare my next day, basically.*
- *There is nothing more horrible than to start thinking of some work matter on the way home, like what in hell was that thing.*
- *And you don't remember and you panic…couple of times I've turned around to see…*
- *The most terrible is to wake up in the middle of the night.*
- *It really is.*
- *That now I've forgotten.*

To close, it is worth stressing that, as we have discussed, liminal states also represent creative states. They represent times for good and creative ideas to come, and such boundary transgressions are not experienced so negatively. To have a good idea while asleep is not so disturbing.

Setting different worlds apart

To conclude this chapter about sleep, I attempt to elaborate on what makes this boundary between waking and sleeping such a significant one. Why is it protected while other kinds of boundaries, like work and free time when awake, might be blurred? What do we actually protect in trying to protect our sleep so desperately?

In searching for answers, it is reasonable to start by considering what kind of realms this boundary actually separates. It separates two totally different worlds. In Western history, waking and sleeping have been constructed thoroughly differently (Jetsu 2001; Tedlock 1987). Waking represents the real, true, and rational world – all values cherished in modern Western history - while sleeping the unreal fantasy world, the peculiar

[24] There might well be other topics – such as unpleasant private issues – that can also be considered disturbing if they enter dreams. However, they did not come out in my data, perhaps because of the context of the group discussion and composition.

world. Merging these two realms would perhaps shake and shatter our way of conceiving and being in the world in a rather profound way. The merge is allowed only in the institutionalized sphere of expected disorders, in the sphere of arts. Think of the dream worlds of Dali, for instance.

Another way to look for an answer is to contemplate what sleep actually represents. It is *another world*, a symbolic realm of freedom. If we think that "being free", as we are led to understand, refers to time "free from constraints of all sorts" this is realized best in sleep. Then, we are free from the whole rational way of being and thinking. Then, we are able to enter a world where everything is possible: we can transgress boundaries we otherwise cannot, go beyond timelines and space lines, have powers we otherwise would not have.

In particular, sleep constitutes an own world, a private realm where others do not have access. It is truly individual time, "me-time", and importantly, without the need to self-determine one's time. In sleep the will is given away. It is, actually, in the world of sleep and dreams that the whole ideology of freedom comes true. Is it this free world of one's own that we basically protect?

Moreover, in understanding the importance accorded to this free world of one's own, it must be placed in its cultural cycle of which it is part. The alternation of sleep and awake is analogous to cultural cycles when one dies and another is reborn (van Gennep 1960). The repetitive and recurrent cycle of sleeping and waking is one those cycles through which the continuity of life is marked and maintained; part of the on-going circle of death and rebirth. It has, therefore, a close relation to the symbolism of Christmas that likewise enjoys a particular protected status as we have discussed. While Christmas, however, is for renewing the cycle of generations, the family, sleep is for renewing an individual cycle, one's own cycle of life.

One more way to understand the significance accorded to sleeping is that it appears to have problematized in today's society. My secondary data set shows how sleep problems, or talk of them, have become popular. The news report increasing sleeping problems of teenagers and elder people; the Net contains pages for people suffering from

sleep disorders; the doctors are concerned of the amount of sleep; and the magazines are filled with advertisements of beds that enable to sleep well. Sleeping is, therefore, represented not only as a pleasure, but as a problem as well. This is in line with several studies that have discussed "sleep disorders" in today's society (e.g. Coren 1996; Kroll-Smith 2003; Williams 2002). Therefore, to ensure good sleep one must perform boundaries not only to manage dangers inherent in sleeping itself, it represents death, but also dangers deriving from its problematized character.

In this chapter I have discussed the symbolism of sleeping and suggested that it is a fascinating and frightening realm of freedom. It represents a form of disorder that has remained hidden when free time is examined. I have, however, highlighted that sleeping seem to constitute an important source of pleasure of free time and argued for the need to take it into consideration when free time is addressed. The boundary between sleep and awake enjoys a particular cultural status. It seems to be *the* boundary to be protected while we may face a general blurring of other temporal boundaries.

7 Symbolic world called free time

Previous chapters have illustrated that the symbolic world called free time is not an obvious or simple entity, but one that becomes constructed through various kinds of symbolic battles. We have discussed the battles that take place at the boundaries separating work and free time, dirty and clean free time, and waking and sleeping. One question remains to be asked: how should the world so constructed be understood? Let us take a look at the following quote. A female concept planner points out:

> *- For me, free time is not related to time or space, it means that my brain is free.*

This little quote directs our attention to the head. It suggests, in an interesting way, that instead of the time-space dimension, it is the thoughts that determine whether you consider certain time free or not. On the whole, when the respondents of this study describe their free time, these descriptions contain many references to thinking. The phrase "then I can't think of work matters" is repeated throughout the data. In particular, the respondents describe how difficult it may be not to think of work matters. As a man in the group of creative men remarks:

> - *One thing that spoils your free time is your own brain. Once you have some free time, you don't allow yourself it, you just start worrying about the following day's work matters or something like that. It really spoils your free time.*

The present chapter investigates this peculiar relationship between thinking and free time. It suggests that the symbolic battle that we have been discussing throughout the study is, ultimately, a mental battle. It takes place in our heads. The chapter starts by describing the nature of the mental battlefield, and then turns to examine the role of symbolic consumption in this battle.

Mental battlefield

To start, let us take a look at the following quote. A mother remarks:

> *- I make a clear distinction. I have free time and work time. When I close the door of my workplace, then it's over, I don't even think of work after that. Except if there is some specific season that requires hard working, but commonly I do not leave my work until I have finished on-going matters. I forget my work immediately.*

The account brings two interesting themes to the fore. First of all, it suggests that separating work time from free time means that one does *not think of* work after closing the door of the workplace. Secondly, it highlights the idea of *forgetting* as an important condition for free time. This section takes up these two themes.

Thinking about the right things at the right place

As symbolic boundaries serve to separate and organize certain entities, this section elaborates on what is actually separated and organized when free time is produced. It suggests that the very target of drawing boundaries of free time is to manage thoughts. Boundaries enable one to think about the right things at the right place at the right time, and so create a symbolically clean state.

This seems to concern, in particular, separating work-related thoughts from free time. Then, the separation culminates at the door of the workplace, at the threshold, as the above account suggests. Generally, the door represents a key symbol of differentiation (van Gennep 1960), and in the present context, thus, trespassing over the threshold represents both a physical and symbolical step that serves to separate thoughts. As a father points out:

> - *Well, you have to try to do so that once you close the door of your workplace, that's it, you forget those things. The next day, you can think of them more than enough.*

However, the data further suggest that closing the door is not always a sufficient symbolic act. My respondents vividly describe the difficulty of getting rid of work matters during free time. Let us take a look, for instance, at the following account of a marketing manager:

> *- I wish there were a button, so that when I walk out and pass the access control system, it would be fabulous if I could press a button that would make my head blank. Sometimes I think of work matters, I think of them, although I do not do them.*

Firstly, this account nicely illustrates the nature of contemporary symbolism of the door. In current society, the door has been technologized. Therefore, instead of merely opening and closing the door, the question is one of passing through control systems, and of pressing buttons.

Secondly, the account illustrates the difficulty of separating thoughts. Work matters enter the mind although they should not. Then, they become "matter out of place", and consequently, symbolically polluting and dangerous (Douglas 2002). They acquire the force to cause unpleasant feelings and anxiety. Interestingly, this idea seems to concern work matters entering the mind during free time; the opposite did not come out in my data. And to clarify, it seems to concern, above all, work matters classified as unpleasant; good ideas or pleasant thoughts are not necessarily considered polluting.

The above account leads us to believe that separating thoughts may require more active efforts than just trespassing over the threshold. How to solve such a problem? One may solve it by relying on specific consumption activities as will be discussed in more detail in the following section. Moreover, one may solve it by relying on specific symbolic times and places available in our culture that enable one to separate thoughts.

Commuting, in particular, seems to represent such symbolic time. In my data, commuting is repeatedly referred to as time that serves to "clear the brain". As a father remarks: "Then you can set at zero all the things you have in your mind." Another example comes from the group of creative women. One of them points out the benefits of having a long commuting trip:

- *…if your commuting trip is too short, then you can't set your mind at zero. I used to drive to work, and even though rush hours were really awful, yet, you could think that now I go home and now I won't think of anything any more.*

Besides commuting, there are other cultural times available for the same purpose of clearing the mind. During the workday, for instance, coffee breaks and lunches represent times when the mind may be cleared. They represent times when one is supposed to think of things other than work. These everyday breaks serve, therefore, not only to feed and refresh our bodies, but also to clear thoughts. Let us take a look at the following account from the group of creative women:

- *I think it would be great if you could have a one-hour lunch break, so that you could have enough time to clear your thoughts.*

The above account also makes an interesting reference to time. It suggests that one needs a break that is long enough to be able to clear one's thoughts. Besides time, the place, or more specifically the change of place, appears to play an important role in the task of separating thoughts. This concerns both longer and shorter breaks. One may spend, for instance, winter holidays in Lapland "because it's so different there, it makes you free" as a mother says. One may also go outside the office to have a cup of coffee during the workday, because "then work does not enter mind" as a father points out. In the following account, in turn, one respondent describes smoking in terms of thinking. He points out that smoking with the attendant change of space enables one to think differently:

- *When you go out, to the balcony, and look around, listen to birdsong, and think of something else, well, it takes a minute, half a minute…then you can go on working.*

Thus far we have been discussing the topic of thinking in the context of daytime, that is, when people are awake. However, nighttime and sleeping, in particular, represent time when the topic of "right thoughts" becomes most relevant. The realms of awake and sleep represent separate worlds, and these separate worlds presuppose different thoughts. They should be kept separate. If work matters enter the mind whilst sleeping, they are in the wrong place and are able to pollute; nightmares or cold sweats are manifestations of such pollution, as we have discussed. Sleeping represents a symbolic visit in a different realm of thoughts, and after such a visit there is, therefore, a need to sym-

bolically recollect one's thoughts when one wakes up. This phenomenon becomes reflected in questions often asked at the beginning of the day: "What was I up to…?" One respondent in the group of creative men nicely expresses this idea.

- *In the morning, in a way, you have to pick up your thoughts, to reflect on what you were doing the day before.*

All in all, governing thoughts seems to require effort. The boundaries, however carefully imposed, seem to be leaking. As a creative woman, for instance, remarks: "I do not want to carry work matters around, they just enter my mind". What makes them enter? To close this section let us contemplate likely reasons that make it difficult to separate and manage thoughts. My data appear to suggest that the constant presence of mass media plays a role in this phenomenon. As contemporary people are constantly surrounded by a flow of news, signs, and advertisements this may increase the possibility that some of them remind us of wrong issues at the wrong place. This phenomenon is illustrated in the following discussion by the group of mothers. They are discussing holidays.

- *We were obliged to go abroad every time, because I couldn't stand it here…*
- *To be in peace, no work.*
- *Yeah, because when you are here, you face ads and everything that reminds you of work all the time. In driving from here to Hyvinkää, for instance, all you have to do is to take a look around you, and all work matters enter your mind. There's always some sign, or name or whatever that reminds you, so it's just wiser to go to the Philippines.*

We may also expand this elaboration, and ask why there is such a rich presence of thinking in my data. What has brought this theme to the fore? The nature of current knowledge intensive work may have contributed to it (Blom *et al* .2001). If our brains are charged with constant pressures, this problem may become reflected in the amount of talk related to thinking. Moreover, the style of current project work may have contributed to the phenomenon. My respondents often describe their project work using the word "eternal"; that is, work projects never actually end, rather, they are constantly going on. It is these on-going matters that tend to fill the thoughts. A marketing manager expresses the same idea by saying "there is no such thing as a clean table anymore". Though, it is not necessarily apt to assume that this problem of organizing thoughts is unique to people of today. It may well be that earlier studies have paid insufficient attention to this seemingly simple topic of thinking.

Balancing between forgetting and remembering

In characterizing pleasurable free time a teenager says in my group: "I want to forget, to forget all the worries, school things, money problems, everything." In the same vein, the respondents in other groups described their free time as time that serves to forget: to forget work issues, studies, personal worries, worries about the family, etc. Forgetting certain unpleasant issues, therefore, seems to constitute a crucial condition for good free time.

This idea of "forgetting" has also been reported in previous studies addressing free time or leisure time, even though, it is commonly discussed in terms of "escape", especially in the context of traveling and tourism (e.g. Turner 1982; Urry 1990, 1995). Also in my data holidays are presented as a way to forget. A mother says: "Lapland, it makes you forget". And a respondent in the group of creative women points out: "…those package trips, they can be perfect, if you want just be, not to think of anything, lying on the beach for one week, you know". Also summer cottages are often mentioned as efficient places for cleaning and purifying the brain, for forgetting everyday concerns.

In particular, the topic of forgetting has been discussed in the context of drinking: drinking represents a way to forget. Treise, Wolburg, and Otnes, for instance, report in their study about drinking rituals that college students drank in order to forget unpleasant things be they related to stressful studies or personal worries (Treise, Wolburg and Otnes 1999, p. 25). The same idea is present in my data as well.

However, these previous studies seem to have neglected one important dimension related to the idea of forgetting. Namely, during free time the aim is to forget, but just for a while, for a determined period. The question is, therefore, as much one of *not* forgetting, as it is of forgetting. This is because forgetting completely represents a serious symbolic threat. Forgetting means that things have gone out-of-control, to the liminal state, and they have the power to attack and cause moral panic. The statement such as "Oh my God, I've forgotten!" is a reflection of such panic. Therefore, forgetting should take place in a controlled manner. Otherwise, it conveys fear.

The optimal situation, therefore, is an appropriate balance between remembering and forgetting; to remember and forget at the right place, at the right time. Throughout the study we have depicted everyday life as a permanent transition from one realm to another. This means everyday transitions from home to work, from coffee breaks to meetings, from holidays to back to work, etc. These various kinds of cultural time-outs serve to re-energize and recreate by providing opportunities to forget. But in return, one should be able to remember. How to remember? My respondents give examples of their practices: how they write issues down, ask others to remind them, use technological devices, keep repeating things, etc. These practices serve to keep the world in order.

This peculiar balancing between forgetting and remembering is a common practice during the week when work and free time vary daily. “During the weekend I try to forget all work matters” one mother pointed out. In the daily rhythm, sleeping also provides a chance to forget for a while. Interestingly, this particular context of sleeping seemed to make the respondents talk about fears related to forgetting; as if the issues forgotten come to mind just in time when one goes to bed and turns off the lights.

Considering longer yearly breaks, such as holidays, forgetting seems to be of particular importance. In my secondary data, for instance, newspapers and magazines contain articles where experts and consultants guide people as to how to forget work during holidays. They also include interviews with people who report their personal ways to forget. “Boating, that’s my way to forget”, one points out, and the other continues: “Gardening, gardening is so therapeutic for the mind.” In today’s world, one sign of a good holiday seems to be if one has forgotten the key symbols of work nowadays: passwords and user accounts. As a creative woman remarks:

- *Once you start to wonder what’s your user account and password, then you can be sure to have set your brain at zero. It has been a good holiday.*

To sum up, I have here suggested that thoughts constitute a major condition for being free. The symbolic battle of being free appears to be a mental battle: the aim is to think about the right issues at the right time and at the right place, and to balance between remembering and forgetting. This process is one form of symbolic cleaning. Just like we

organize, manage, and clean the material world to avoid chaos and keep it in order, the same concerns thoughts. We try to keep thoughts in their right place. If they do not stay there, they acquire the power to cause panic. If work matters enter your mind at the wrong moment, this entrance represents a symbolic pollution, and is able to spoil free time.

Symbolic consumption and thinking

We have depicted the brain as a symbolic battlefield where the separation between different times takes place. How to understand the role of consumption in such a case? How to relate consumption to thinking? In consumer research, it is common to consider this relationship from a cognitive point-of-view. Then, roughly put, thoughts are seen as entities to be processed in order to make purchase decisions. How to consider the relationship from a symbolic point-of-view? To start to contemplate those questions let us take a look at what Mary Douglas has written about goods and thinking.

> (T)he essential function of consumption is its capacity to make sense. Forget the idea of consumer irrationality. Forget that commodities are good for eating, clothing and shelter; forget their usefulness and try instead the idea that *commodities are good for thinking*; treat them as a non-verbal medium for the human creative faculty" (Douglas and Isherwood 1996, p. 40-41, my emphasis).

This quote is from the *World of Goods*, a book presenting a critique for utility theory and promoting the social and communicative character of consumption. However, the statement that "commodities are good for thinking" is relevant in the present context as well. More precisely, this present context leads to the proposition that *commodities are good for managing thoughts*. The reminder of this section discusses and develops this idea.

Managing thoughts through consumption

The following discussion illustrates how consumption may be accorded the role of managing thoughts. It is taken from the group of creative woman. They discuss their leisure activities.

- *Well, for me, dancing is so therapeutic, because you don't have to….well you could go jogging, or swimming, I used to swim, but it's so routine-like that then you have time to think, but…*
- *Right.*
- *…but if you dance and see a new show, you have to concentrate on it, you know, whether to take the left side or right side and…*
- *Exactly, the great thing in dancing is that you have to think about it and it's so different.*
- *And the physical exercise, you'll have it also, as a bonus.*
- *Yeah, right hand or left hand, oh, I missed that gesture, how to do that movement…*

This extract suggests that leisure activities such as dancing serve to govern thoughts. Dancing forces one to concentrate on the activity itself, to think of body gestures, and in doing so it prevents one from thinking about other matters. Interestingly, the extract also suggests that the choice of leisure activities may be based on the principle of thinking. The routine-like activity such as swimming may not enable one to clear one's thoughts; an activity requiring more concentration may be preferred.

Whereas the idea of "filling the head" has been commonly discussed in the context of drinking, this account suggests that the same idea is present in other types of leisure time activities as well. They serve to fill the brain in such a way that there is no room for wrong thoughts to enter. Actually, this same idea is present in many current debates on the "experiences" (e.g. Pine and Gilmore 1999). Experiences are often characterized as specific times during which one is absorbed in an activity so intensively that it filters out everyday concerns.

Interestingly, in the above extract the question is of sports activities. They are, however, discussed in terms of thinking and not in terms of keeping one's body in shape, or maintaining one's physical health. They are accorded a primary function of not-to-think work matters, and the physical exercise is treated "as a bonus" as the woman remarks in

the above discussion. To further illustrate this function accorded to sports and leisure time activities, I present three further accounts.

> *- I have chosen the most difficult gym just because then I can't possibly think of anything else than the position of my feet (mother).*
>
> *- (riding)…once you have a living creature under you, you can't think about the budget you have not yet done, or about the memo to be written (single woman).*
>
> *- I have found a good way to escape reality, I have some sports hobbies and then I do not think of a single work issue (creative man).*

Although sports activities seem to play a significant role in my data, other kinds of activities may be accorded the same function. One may play computer games, for instance, in order to separate thoughts from work. As one man in the group of creative men points out:

- *I often play [computer games] for a while, do something I never do at work, so that I could immediately separate my thoughts from the work system.*

All these extracts from the data suggest, therefore, that the role of consumption activities is to impose a boundary that prevents wrong thoughts from entering one's mind. In this sense, consumption has a protective function. It must be remarked, though, that the separation of thoughts does not necessarily require any specific consumption activity. One may well impose the boundary through just being and talking with family members, for instance. As one mother says: "Playing with kids, it's a good way to forget all work issues." Though, in today's society, consumption often relates to these everyday activities in one way or another.

Imposing a boundary enables one to forget, but forgetting represents a symbolic threat as we discussed. One should, therefore, forget in a controlled manner. How to consider the role of consumption in the context of balancing between remembering and forgetting? This balancing is played out through various kinds of performative acts: through writing down issues on Post-Its or on calendars, for instance.

Interestingly, the new information and communication technologies have also entered in this game through which balancing is exercised. The new devices may be accorded the role of reminding, since they contain various features for this purpose. The mobile phone, for instance, may be set to remind one about meetings, deadlines, or birthdays. Or, it may be used as such to remind others; to make sure that one does not forget. A father points out when describing his everyday life:

- *At three or four o'clock, my wife may call to remind me about the shopping list and remind me to remember to pick up our daughter from playschool.*

On the other hand, the new information and communication technologies, especially e-mail, are often mentioned as promoting the possibility of forgetting, in a negative way. Due to the amount of e-mails, for instance, one is obliged to take protective measures in order not to forget them. The following account of one marketing manager illustrates this phenomenon. It also illustrates the fear related to forgetting. One should remember the right things in the right place.

- *…once I've read the messages they become part of history, there could be some sort of alarm, you know, 'hey you should do something about this', I mean some sort of system for reminding…*

All in all, this analysis has directed attention to thoughts as a major determinant of free time. It provides a basis for proposing that it is not necessarily the presence of some leisure activity, nor the presence of a certain time or place, but the presence of "right" thoughts that determines whether a certain time is "free". Furthermore, by illustrating the constant transition from one temporal category to another, the analysis directs attention to the topic of forgetting *and* remembering. The point is not just to "forget" but also to "remember", in a controlled manner.

Therefore, the role of consumption in this process of "being free" is to enable one to manage thoughts; to enable one to think of right things in the right place and to balance between forgetting and remembering. This means that consumption serves to establish barriers that prevent wrong things from entering the world we call free time. In this

sense, consumption may be likened to a border guard: it governs, stops, controls, and prevents wrong things from entering the world.

The apparently simple aim, to think of the right things in the right place, and at the right time, seems to be, however, a difficult one. It appears to be threatened in today's society. Wrong matters so easily enter the mind and pollute free time. Therefore, a set of consumption activities is needed to prevent pollution, to enable one to close doors.
As the IT engineer pointed out in the very beginning of this study:

- *…you can't possibly just close the door and leave all the work behind. If you don't have something totally different during your free time, go to the movies or something like that, that requires your entire attention and takes you to another world, so that's bad.*

8 Conclusions

The category called free time is a cultural and historical construction that has become contested in today's society. Throughout the study I have argued for the need for questioning free time and looking for appropriate ways of looking at and researching it. My overall aim has been to develop a theoretical perspective that would shed light on the complex ways in which free time is produced, renegotiated, and managed in the arena of consumption.

To achieve the aim of rethinking, the study has taken the liberty of ranging over several disciplines. It has brought together theoretical perspectives from anthropology, feminist studies, and critical consumer research. In doing so, the study has drawn together threads, which might otherwise have remained unconnected. It has re-linked different temporal systems, old and new artifacts, good and bad free time, free time and work, sleep and awake. Therefore, rethinking has been re-linking, aiming to bring to the fore ideas commonly obscured when free time is assessed.

A major contribution of this study lies in the re-linking of symbolical and critical perspectives to arrive at a better understanding of a) the current nature of the category of free time and b) symbolic consumption. This is accomplished by directing the major analytical focus to the boundaries, at the point that differentiates free time from some other time. The study acknowledges, in particular, the tensions inherent in these boundaries. Drawing on the symbolic anthropological frame, these tensions are conceptualized through the notion of orders and disorders. In the present context, disorders can be identified that derive from the change of traditional temporal order, and others that derive from the very idea of "being free", going beyond boundaries. This results in peculiar symbolic battles that take place at the boundaries of free time.

Drawing on the empirical fieldwork conducted in Finland, the study shows that free time is not a simple or given opposite of work, but a more complex realm requiring constant management and maintenance. The analysis suggests that various kinds of bounda-

ries and various kinds of symbolic battles can be identified in the context of free time. These together illustrate the peculiar dynamics involved in our everyday attempts to construct a symbolic realm that provides the possibility of “being free”.

Firstly, the analysis suggests that the symbolic battle may be understood as a battle with different temporal systems. Through history, our notions of time and free time have been constructed differently in different systems. The study has identified two such systems, the economic and the tradition-based social systems, that co-exist and encounter each other in everyday life. Therefore, people are forced to negotiate and cope with different, often contrasting, temporal norms and ideals when constructing the category called “free time”. By discussing these historical roots of free time, the study also shows that in the on-going renegotiation of time, the question is not one of “constant change” but rather of an attempt to balance between change and resistance.

Secondly, the analysis suggests that there are three different boundaries that are significant in the construction of free time. Each of these boundaries entails a different sort of symbolic battle. *The boundary between work time and free time* has been contested in today’s information society. Nevertheless, it seems to be persistent. Although the given dichotomy and attendant assumptions may be found futile, it appears to be the one on which people are obliged to lean when thinking and talking about free time. This results in a peculiar battle with assumptions built into this dichotomy. Furthermore, a boundary within the category of free time can be identified: *the boundary between dirty and clean free time*. This boundary places people in a moral predicament: one has to decide which side to take. Highlighting these two sides of free time, and the battle entailed in them, the study breaks down the notion of free time as one unified realm. Finally, *the boundary between waking and sleeping* has been previously ignored when free time is assessed. However, this analysis suggests that it is a significant boundary enjoying particular cultural protection. Sleep actually represents a symbolic realm of freedom: *another world* that makes it possible to become free of everyday obligations and rational thinking. The analysis also suggests that sleeping constitutes a key free time pleasure. Therefore, the study challenges the practice of excluding it from free time studies at the outset.

How, then, to understand the sub-world so constructed? The analysis provides a basis for proposing that the sub-world called free time is ultimately a mental world, and that the symbolic battle is a mental battle. Accordingly, the boundaries of free time serve to separate and manage thoughts: they enable one to think about the right issues at the right time, and in the right place. This implies that it is the thoughts, and not the time/space dimension, or the absence of work, or the presence of a certain leisure time activity, that constitute a major condition for "being free". This very aim of thinking the "right" things during free time seems to be, however, threatened in today's society. The "wrong" matter – often an unpleasant work matter - tends to enter the mind and so pollute free time.

Related to the topic of thoughts, the analysis highlights one further dimension previously obscured in debates on free time. To "be free" is to forget, as has been discussed previously, but this analysis highlights that it is equally important to remember, since forgetting entirely represents a symbolic threat. This balance between remembering and forgetting becomes crucial in everyday life that consists of continuous transitions from one temporal sphere to another.

Finally, how to consider the role of symbolic consumption and goods in this process of constructing free time? The entire study has displayed the complex ways in which the category called free is licked into shape in the arena of consumption. It also has displayed how the process is thoroughly culturally and historically conditioned. Conceptualizing this process not as "ritual consumption" but as "performative consumption", the study is able to highlight the constitutive and repetitive nature of the consumption acts involved. The notion of performativity also opens up room for considering symbolism with politics.

Considering symbolic consumption through the theoretical prism adopted, the study presents three key findings. First, the study presents a new role for symbolic consumption as a manager of thoughts. In doing so, it extends the literature that has considered the relationship of symbolic consumption and boundaries: boundaries are not drawn merely to differentiate social groups, nor to "express" times, but to govern thoughts. Second, it suggests that goods should not only be considered as a means to convey mes-

sages, but also a means to *do* something. The goods have the power to perform. Third, the study extends our knowledge of the everyday interaction of new and old artifacts, by highlighting the complex ways in which ICTs enter into the process of negotiating boundaries.

The following chart summarizes these key findings of this study.

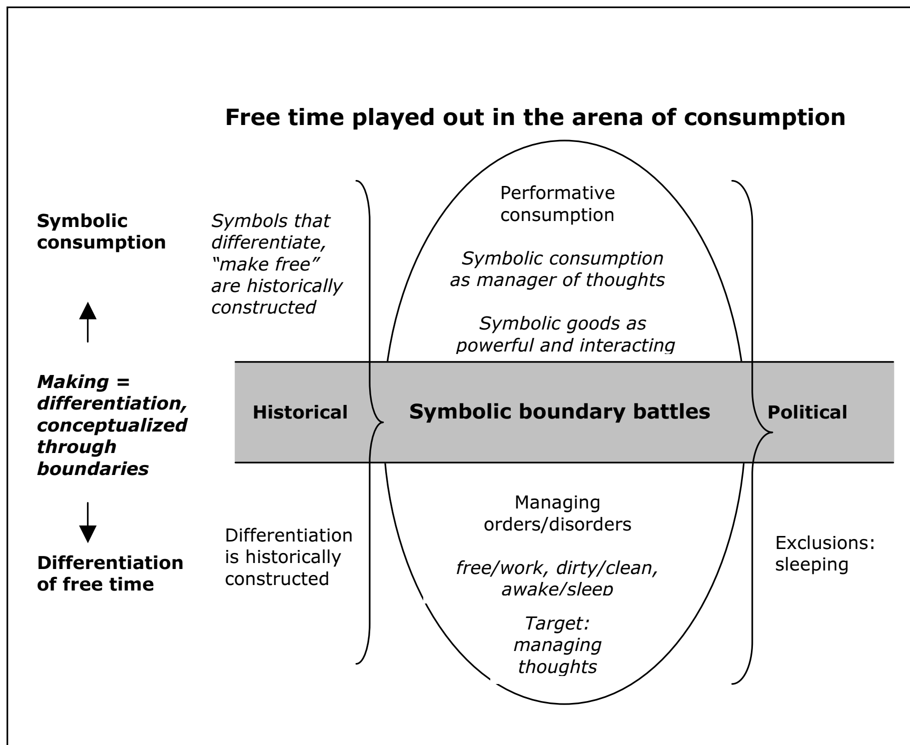

Figure 4. Free time played out in the arena of consumption.

In this concluding chapter, I discuss what kind of implications may be drawn from these findings. I start with theoretical implications by discussing the ways in which the symbolic-critical perspective may contribute to an understanding of the nature of free time, and of the nature of symbolic consumption in general. As methodological implications, I bring to the fore the use of focus groups in culturally oriented consumer inquiries that have relied mostly on personal interviews thus far. As political implications, I take up

the theme of inclusions and exclusions and consider the topic of sleeping that is commonly excluded when free time is studied. To conclude my study, I sketch out some new areas for consumer researchers to debate.

Theoretical implications

Understanding "free time"

The dominant way to comprehend free time, that also shapes our everyday discourse, seems to be based on a set of assumptions. It seems to be common to regard work/free relation as central in addressing free time (Gershuny 2000; Niemi and Pääkkönen 2001). It seems equally common to rely on a time/space relation in investigating this domain (e.g. Urry 1995; Turner 1982). Consumption studies also tend to follow this assumption. For instance, in studying the modern mountain man rendezvous Belk and Costa (1998) consider it a sub-world "jointly enacted using special time, place, and clothing" (1998, p. 219). Moreover, in investigating free time, a key role is often given to "leisure activities" (for conceptualization, see e.g. Stebbins 1982, 2001). It is also quite common to uncritically link free time to social and personal well being as, for instance, Murphy (2003) points out.

The rest of this section elaborates on the ways in which the findings of this study may contribute to extending or challenging these comprehensions. The suggestion that the construction of free time entails three sorts of boundaries - work/free, dirty/clean, and awake/sleep – highlights the question of a more complex phenomenon than separating work from free time. For consumer research, in particular, it is important to acknowledge the notion of dirty and clean free time, because it leads to the consideration of battles possible preceding many of our common consumption activities. While prior studies have shown the symbolic battle that precedes the fall into the dirty side of life ("boozing" e.g. Alasuutari 1992; "little sins" e.g. Valtonen 2000), this study highlights the other side of the coin. Namely, consumption activities also considered "clean" may require a symbolic battle. Before going to a museum, for instance, one may have to "win oneself" in order to "trespass the threshold". This is part of the consumption experience, and therefore, needs to be acknowledged.

Moreover, this study opens up the concept of free time by bringing sleeping to our attention. It suggests that sleeping is a crucial part of free time, and therefore, it does not provide grounds for continuing to exclude sleep from free time studies at the outset. Instead, it points toward further studies of this under-researched topic. By highlighting one such excluded topic, the study forces one to ask: what other topics have remained neglected because they happen to lie outside the particular realm of "free time" as it has been historically defined? This is an important question for future studies to debate.

The significance of sleeping also impels us to reconsider what is counted as "leisure activity". If we consider sleeping as an activity, should we also consider "resting", or "doing nothing" as activities? In the field of leisure studies, these debates are often discussed under the labels of "serious" or "casual leisure" (Stebbins 1982, 2001). Considering these questions in the field of consumer inquiry is of importance as well. In today's society many seemingly passive "activities" like "being" are commercialized. There are commercialized spaces that provide opportunities to "just be" and "do nothing".

Most importantly, the study enlarges our understanding of free time by suggesting that, ultimately, the sub-world called free time is a mental world, and thoughts are a key determinant of free time. This preliminary finding makes us question the prevailing way to consider free time as the absence of work, or presence of a certain leisure activity, or in terms of time and space. Rather, it draws us to consider times and places, such as tourist resorts or theme parks, as ones that provide opportunities to think differently. Ultimately, however, the question appears to be a mental question. Spending free time in a place like Hawaii, for instance, may be spoiled if one keeps thinking of wrong issues.

Moreover, as prior studies typically concentrate on one temporal and spatial enclave at a time, they have well highlighted the idea of forgetting, but neglected the idea of balancing between forgetting and remembering. This balancing is, however, important at the everyday level, and, therefore, should be taken into account in future conceptualizations.

On the whole, the analysis gives grounds for proposing that the everyday understanding of free time as ”time when one can do what one wants” may be changed to as ”time when one can think what one wants”. However, this simple aim seems to be threatened in today’s society. It is not simple to govern thoughts. One may aim at thinking of the right issues, but wrong ones enter the mind. In particular, the data has shown that it may be difficult to switch from work thoughts to those of free time.

This phenomenon relates to on-going debates on the nature of work in the information society (e.g. Blom *et. al.* 2001; Julkunen and Nätti 2000; Moisander and Valtonen 2002). In the knowledge intensive professions, the brain is the major tool with which to work. Importantly, the brain needs breaks: it should be cleared and set at zero every now and then. Our culture provides such breaks in the form of holidays, coffee breaks, and commuting, as we have discussed. However, the efficiency discourse of the information society seems to threaten these breaks: it dictates that these moments should also be filled efficiently (Moisander and Valtonen 2002). Given that these cultural time-outs represent also times for creativity, a critical reflection of the consequences of the norms and ideals of the dominant discourse is needed.

In such a situation, the crucial question is: how then are thoughts governed? Above all, through consumption. Various leisure activities may be used for the very purpose of governing thoughts; that is, not merely to express social status or identity, nor to take care of health, but for the sake of preventing wrong matters from entering the mind. To quote Foucault, again, consumption “frees thought from what it (silently) thinks and so enables one to think differently” (Foucault 1986, p. 9). In the current society, in particular, the idea of ”clearing thoughts” and ”setting the brain at zero” has been commercialized. The set of products and services marketed under the label ”experience” is abundant (Pine and Gilmore 1999). That label invites one to become absorbed in an activity with such intense involvement that it filters out everyday concerns. In Douglasian terms, hence, these activities clean the head.

All in all, this idea that drawing the boundaries of free time does not necessarily follow the time/space distinction, so neither the presence nor absence of a certain activity, but the thoughts, is worthy of further investigation.

Understanding symbolic consumption

I turn to discuss how the findings of this study may have the potential to inform our understanding of symbolic consumption. In general, by considering "everyday life as the site for expressions of cultural symbolisms" (Firat and Venkatesh 1995, p. 249) the study extends the understanding of the mode of consumption that is often labeled repetitive, ordinary, or routine (e.g. Gronow and Warde 2001). In particular, by focusing on the context of free time and seeing it through the adopted theoretical prism, the study has the potential to inform our understanding of symbolic consumption in three ways. First, it suggests a new role for symbolic consumption as managers of thoughts. Second, it suggests that goods are not only a means to convey messages, but also a means to *do* something. Third, the study extends our knowledge of the everyday interaction of new and old artifacts.

Consumption as manager of thoughts. The finding that the boundaries of free time serve to manage thoughts enlarges our understanding of the role of symbolic consumption and symbolic boundaries. Previously, studies have widely elaborated the ways in which consumption serves to establish, maintain, and negotiate boundaries between social groups. This is discussed, for instance, in terms of social class (Bourdieu 1984; Veblen 1899), lifestyles (Holt 1997), and ethnic groups (Penaloza 1994). This study suggests that consumption may also serve to establish and maintain boundaries between thoughts. Accordingly, consumption activities such as sports or having a beer may be given the role of a fence: they govern, stop, control, and prevent wrong issues from entering the mind. That is, they draw a mental barrier, not just a social one.

Furthermore, by drawing attention to the process of balancing between remembering and forgetting, the study further enlarges our understanding of symbolic boundaries in the context of free time. While previous studies have shown the importance of "escape" and "forgetting", especially in traveling and holidays, the study points toward the everyday ways to forget. Also seemingly small consumption goods, such as coffee or chocolate, provide a metaphorical transfer to *another world* (e.g.Valtonen 2000). In particular, this study points out that forgetting also represents a symbolic threat, and therefore, it is to be avoided. Accordingly, the study draws our attention to seemingly insig-

nificant acts that enable one to remember, such as writing down issues on Post-Its or using ICTs to remind one, that play a significant role in the everyday attempts to produce and manage a "good" balance between different times.

All in all, this study has addressed the relationship between thinking and consumption from a symbolical framework, and not from the prevailing cognitive framework. In doing so, it suggests that thoughts may also be treated as symbolic entities, and not just as information to be processed. Just like we organize, manage, and clean our material world to keep it in order, we do the same with thoughts. This process is one form of symbolic cleaning. This notion draws us to enlarge the ways in which the cultural or symbolic approach may also be applied to topics such as thoughts.

Performative consumption. The notion of performativity, as applied in this study (Butler 1999; Turner 1992), draws our attention to the theoretization of symbolic goods and consumption. First, it highlights that goods *do* something instead of being merely social messages. Second, it leads to the consideration of consumption as a repetitive staged phenomenon, and importantly, to conflate symbolism with politics.

The vast majority of prior studies on symbolic consumption have stressed the communicative and expressive aspect of symbols and signs (Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Levy 1981; McCracken 1986, 1988; Mick 1986; Solomon 1983). They have considered symbolic acts and goods primarily as a means of carrying and conveying messages. This way to apprehend consumption has roots in the widely shared idea that consumption and goods may be seen as a language-like system (e.g. Barthes 1983; Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Levy 1981). The notion of performativity, in turn, has roots in those linguistic theories that stress the constitutive and active role of language. Speech acts do something (Austin 1962).

Accordingly, goods are more than messages; they *do* something. The use of certain goods constitutes cultural categories, such as free time, not just marks them. Though several authors have discussed the constitutive role of consumption (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Hall 1997), what is important here is that that the constitution does not necessarily succeed. We may also fail in our attempts to perform free time. This means that con-

sumption is engaged in a dynamic process of producing, managing, challenging, protecting, and transgressing the boundaries of free time.

In conceptualizing the way in which consumer goods acquire the power needed to perform such a set of tasks, this study has drawn on Douglas' notion of symbolic power. In *Purity and Danger* she presents and discusses how symbols are charged with powers. In the *World of Goods* that focuses on consumer symbols, however, she presents a more communicative role for symbols. In the present study, in a way, these two works are combined, and therefore, the study suggests that the world of goods is the world of powerful goods.

Furthermore, the notion of performativity makes us consider consumption as a repeated staged phenomenon. People perform boundaries in the arena of consumption in order to cope and manage their world. In particular, it enables one to highlight the repetitive dimension of consumption acts; that they become repeated and repeated from day to day. On the whole, thinking of consumption as a staged phenomenon has the benefit that it leads to putting symbolic goods on the same stage, so as to see their simultaneity and interaction. It also has the benefit of considering different market actors on the same stage. Both "consumers" and "marketers" may be seen as cultural performers that engage in the same play (cf. Penaloza 2000).

Furthermore, the notion of performativity as discussed by Butler (1999) forces us to consider the politics embedded in symbolic boundaries and consumption, even though the topic of politics of boundaries has been discussed previously in consumer research (e.g. Holt 1997, p. 344; Penaloza 1994a). The political nature is also present in Douglas' classic work *World of Goods* (Douglas and Isherwood 1996), although it has been mostly acknowledged as promoting the social and communicative role of goods. Yet her political nature is perhaps most visible in *Purity and Danger*. With that book, in particular, she aims to liberate the "primitives" from the burden that Western researchers have put on their shoulders as she explicitly describes in the preface of the Finnish edition of the book (Douglas [1966] 2000).

On the whole, such a theoretical stance may provide a fruitful, yet critical stance to assess the topic of symbolism. As contemporary consumer symbols serve as important cultural resources, they play a significant role in people's overall being in the world (e.g. Holt 2003). It is, therefore, relevant to critically contemplate the meanings and politics involved. This leads to considering symbolism not as a "dimension" added to goods (Levy 1959), nor as the opposite of material or tangible consumption (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), but as part of the cultural structures that condition and enable us to be in the world. Consumer symbols that carry the idea of freedom, for instance, are connected to, and become understandable within, the existing frame of meanings that presupposes freedom as something to be valued. This is not without consequences.

The following table summarizes the view of symbolic consumption that stresses the notion of symbolic power, symbolic repetition, and conflates symbolism with politics. Obviously, all these above aspects require further studies and consideration in other empirical contexts.

	Consumption	**Symbolic goods**	**People**
This study	Drama-like "performative" - repetitive - symbolism&politics	Powerful Interacting	Cultural performers
Earlier structuralist studies on symbolic consumption	Language-like "communicative"	Means to convey messages	Consumers

Table 3. Perspectives on symbolic consumption.

Interaction of new and old symbols. In elaborating on the ways in which consumer goods enter the renegotiation of boundaries of free time, the study placed ICTs as part of the cultural set of goods through which boundaries have been placed over time. In doing so, the study is able to give a representative picture of the role of ICTs in the process of renegotiating free time. The prevailing discourse tends to accord a rather simplistic role. To put it roughly, the market discourse seems to suggest that the acclaimed ICTs "free us from boundaries of time" while the counter-discourse suggests

that the evil ICTs “threaten all the temporal system”. This analysis suggests that the picture has more nuances. ICTs are used to maintain traditional boundaries, not just efface them; to protect times, not just ruin them; to create new classes, not just spoil old ones. For instance, the practice of logging on to read e-mail every morning to start the workday is an act of incorporation and a way to reproduce the traditional boundary between work and free time. At the same time, however, the given act may display the blurring of work and free time in the form of private e-mails.

ICTs work, the study suggests, both as symbolic polluters and cleaners. They serve to keep temporal boundaries pure and clean, but they enable the polluting character as well. The polluting character derives from the fact that ICTs carry the possibility of boundaries becoming blurred. It is this possibility that is polluting, not technology as such. They are like contemporary doors through which the unpredictable outside world, the threat, can enter. These doors are always to be kept open due to temporal norms built in the devices. Consequently, boundaries are to be constantly managed and controlled.

The historical viewpoint of the study illustrates, in an interesting way, the continuity of goods and meanings related to boundaries. Despite the abundance of products available in today’s markets, we still rely on the very same artifacts as our ancestors in performing the boundaries of free time. They drank coffee and smoked tobacco in order to create breaks and so do we; they cleaned up and changed clothes to mark and produce change and so do we. In this sense, consumption carries history and provides continuity. What is particularly interesting is that when new artifacts are adapted to these boundary performances, they do not seem to replace old ones. Rather, artifacts and practices seem to pile up. Consequently, our mornings, for instance, are filled with boundary products and practices.

Furthermore, even though we face a tremendous increase in material goods, the analysis gives grounds for questioning whether we face such a tremendous increase in meanings. Rather, the meanings of goods engaged in boundaries seem to be ambivalent by their very nature: they free and enslave whether it is a question of the mobile phone or tobacco (Douglas 2002; Turner 1977, 1982). In doing so, the study makes it possible to

notice that paradoxes such as freedom/enslavement are not only attached to the new technology (Mick and Fournier 1998, p. 128), but are also rather a normal condition of certain types of boundary products.

On the whole, my study supports the findings of sociological studies that have demonstrated how new technologies are adopted as part of the cultural and historical structures and practices (Pantzar 1996, 2000; MacKay 1997). It also supports the idea of the continuity of consumption patterns, structures, and meanings as presented in the field of consumer inquiry (Holt 1997; Thompson and Troester 2002).

Methodological implications

The vast majority of studies taking a cultural view of consumption have relied on personal interviews as the primary data production technique (e.g. Holt 1997; Joy 2001; Penaloza 2000; Thompson and Troester 2002). The present study extends the set of methods by discussing how focus groups may be used as a method of producing cultural data.

The appropriateness of focus groups for culturally oriented studies derives from their basic collective rather than individual nature (Madriz 2000). This basic nature conditions social interaction and invites the kind of discussion that is fruitful for cultural analysis. A focus group setting may be treated as an arena where cultural members meet, talk, negotiate, and reflect on their culture. This situation invites discussion about symbolically charged topics and about widely shared topics, and non-discussion of culturally tabooed or "taken-for-granted" topics. Moreover, as the responsibility for the discussion rests on the shoulders of the respondents, the focus group provides an opportunity for interesting topics to emerge, topics that would otherwise remain unnoticed. In the present case, the topic of sleep is such an example. On the whole, therefore, the focus group discussion provides fruitful "fractions" or "hints" through which culture can be researched (Alasuutari 1995).

Furthermore, the focus group produces discussion that is rich in nature. This is due to the open nature of a focus group (Morgan 1993): it can cover different situations and people and transcend time. In doing so, the group produces a rich and comprehensive description of the topic in question at a level that is relevant to everyday life. Such discussion is fruitful for cultural analysis. As Holt (1997, p. 339) points out, in researching cultural meanings one cannot ask them directly. The analyst should infer them from the data and when it is a question of identifying and analyzing relational differences, rich and grounded discussions are needed.

The ethnographically inspired studies tend to stress the importance of doing fieldwork *in situ*. That is, to conduct interviews at people's homes so that they would be at ease when discussing their consumption behavior (Holt 1997) or at places that are the subject of the study, such as trade shows (Penaloza 2000). Such a strategy has advantages in gaining an insight into the phenomenon. When the aim is to elaborate on cultural meaning structures through language, as in the present case, they become researchable through focus groups as well. The meaning structures of Friday, for instance, do not suddenly disappear if they are talked about in a group conducted on Tuesday.

Political implications

I started the study with the curious question "What is free time?" The question is not, however, just curious, but also political. As Rojek (1995) reminds us, the assumptions on which we as researchers build our study of free time, and the way we impose boundaries on the research topic are not without implications. On the whole, the question of the politics of doing and representing research has aroused lively interest recently (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Coffey 1999; Denzin 2001; Marcus and Fischer 1999; Moisander 2001; Richardson 2000).

What kind of political implications may be drawn from this study that has critically reflected on the category of free time? In the earlier literature on free time, the political dimension has been mostly discussed in terms of gender (Aitchison 2000; Koskela 1997; Rojek 1995, Firat 1994), or in terms of inequality that derives from the reliance

on money in defining time (e.g. Adam 1995). There are also studies that aim to problematize the tendency to link free time to a wide range of personal and social benefits (Murphy 2003).

The emphasis put on boundaries in the present study guides one to assess politics in terms of inclusions and exclusions – what is included and excluded when free time is researched and what kind of implications this may cause. Rojek (1995, 1998) has considered this theme by calling for a need to elaborate on those forms of free time that are excluded from the realm of free time research. Whereas he highlights the marginalized nature of "deviant" free time activities claiming that free time analysis "focuses on the socially approved forms of leisure…they do not talk about deviance or deviant activities" (1988, p. 14), my intention is to highlight the marginalized nature of "normal" free time activities. One such excluded activity is sleeping. In the remainder of this section I contemplate the ways in which this exclusion should concern public policy makers.

As we have discussed, cultural classifications play a crucial role in our being and behavior in the world. We see the world through them and therefore consider them natural and taken for granted. The naturalization has implications. Classes may prevent one from seeing the simultaneity of issues, for instance, simultaneity of good and bad in free time (Rojek 1995, p. 39-39). In particular, the naturalization of classifications becomes important when the question is of classes considered "official". For instance, wage differences may be enhanced through the "obvious" way of classifying professions in statistics (Kinnunen 2001).

Free time appears to have become naturalized as happy time for happy activities (Rojek 1995). Things that are defined as "bad", "tabooed", or "deviant" in culture tend to be hidden or excluded from the sphere of free time research, as well as "necessities" and "passive activities" such as sleep. Such a comprehension of free time has social and political implications. One may ask, for instance, whether the comprehension of free time as happy time partly prevents one from seeing, or helps one to neglect, the fact that domestic violence takes place during time labeled free.

The social and political implications of naturalized classifications become crucial, in particular, when public policy making and allocation of money is based on them (Rojek 1995, p. 44). In considering the allocation of money to "free time", only those activities and events that are counted as belonging to free time become considered. This means that financial support may become allocated to free time spaces such as museums, theatres, sports halls, or outdoor environments; that is, to those that are found to be part of "normal" free time. Those parts excluded, like sleeping, are less likely to become considered something that should or could be supported or promoted.

However, it would be of equal importance to enhance conditions for a good sleep, as it is to enhance conditions for sports and outings. The significance of sleeping highlighted in this study indicates these conditions should be taken seriously. This means, for instance, promoting silence: paying attention to good soundproofing of buildings, or solutions aiming at reducing traffic noise. Namely, studies that have examined conditions when noise is found to be an annoyance have reported that "in the evening or during the night, annoyance by noise is most significant" (Schade 2003, p. 279).

Studies have also reported increased health risks caused by disturbed sleep – even noise below the wake-up threshold may have health impacts (same). Currently, the implicit and explicit rules in apartment blocks, for instance, take the question of silence into account by imposing regulations to avoid noise during the night. The question of silence may, however, already be taken into account in the building planning phase, as well as in the city planning more generally.

These questions should be considered since the costs of various kinds of sleep-related problems are significant, as have been reported in several studies (e.g. Coren 1996). Many mistakes, errors, and accidents have occurred, simply because people had too little sleep. Obviously, all the consequences cannot be calculated in terms of money.

Areas for future research

I conclude this work by suggesting some areas for future research. My suggestions include topics such as time, free time and consumption; sleep and dreams; virtual boundary work, and finally freedom.

The relation between free time, time, and consumption. The current study calls for further examination of the complex category called free time and its relationship to consumption. While this study addressed the category at a somewhat rough level, more detailed research is needed. For instance, focusing on specific consumer groups may provide more detailed understanding of the ways in which free time may be comprehended differently among different groups. This perspective may also shed light on the ways in which different groups may use different goods to construct and negotiate free time.

Moreover, approaching the topic from a different methodological perspective might complement the findings of the present study. For instance, through an ethnographic study as outlined by Arnould (1998) one may be able to illustrate in more detail the ways in which free time becomes negotiated in various everyday contexts. In particular, the kind of ethnographic method that prefers visuals to words might nicely complement my textual analysis (Penaloza 1998, Taylor 1994; see also Schroeder 2002). The reliance on visuals – photographs and videos – may, as Bonsu and Belk (2003) also suggest, open up insights into the consumption phenomenon obscured by other methods. In the present case, in particular, it would open up the possibility of elaborating in more detail on the meeting of new and old symbols; how symbols such as mobile phone, cigarette, and coffee, for instance, meet in everyday life - at our workplaces, at cafes, at home, when commuting, etc.

Visual methodology may also provide an insight into the ways in which the body enters into the production of times (cf. Veijola and Jokinen 1994). Think of what happens on the sofa, for instance: all the possible body gestures when watching television, chatting on the mobile, taking a nap, etc. Highlighting the body would be fruitful for consumer inquiries in general, since it has had a marginal position in the field compared to the at-

tention accorded the mind. The body represents, however, an important dimension within consumption. As Firat and Venkatesh note "To ignore the body in any discourse on consumption is to accept a very restrictive view of social reality" (1995, p. 258, see also Valtonen 2004b).

Furthermore, considering that not only free time but time in general has become problematized in today's society, consumer researchers should pay more attention to this topic. There has been a special issue on consumption of time in the *Journal of Consumer Research* in 1981, but since then time has been the primary focus in few studies (e.g. Kaufman, Lane and Lindquist 1991, also Valtonen 2003). In particular, there is a need for studies that do not uncritically consider time as a resource, and new technologies as a means to use this resource more efficiently. Instead, the research attention should be targeted at the ways in which times and temporal ideals are manufactured in the current economy. How temporal ideals such as "being busy" or "saving time" become constructed through advertisements, time management courses, product designs, or business textbooks? What kinds of agencies do they provide for people? We have discussed this theme elsewhere (Moisander and Valtonen 2003), but further elaboration is needed. Moreover, it would be relevant to explore the ways in which different types of products carry different temporalities. How, for instance, specific temporality embedded to hand-crafted products may provide value for consumers (Luutonen and Äyväri 2002).

Sleep and dreams. This study may be viewed as a stimulus for more research on the topic of sleeping. On the whole, sleeping seems to be a somewhat marginalized topic among social scientists. As if it were merely a necessary prerequisite for being able to work and consume, and not an interesting realm to be addressed as such. Those researchers who have addressed sleeping are likely to be psychologists; it appears to be a field reserved for them. They have studied phases of sleep, REM-sleep, and non-REM sleep, or have adopted a psychoanalytical view of dreams as messages from the subconscious.

The current study provides grounds for believing that it also deserves to be addressed from a cultural perspective. The study has highlighted the significance of sleeping as an important source of pleasure and as a symbolic realm of freedom. In today's society, however, sleeping appears to have been problematized (Coren 1996). Current media reports, for instance, inform us that there is an increase in sleep disorders just like there is an increase in eating disorders (Kroll-Smith 2003). This should provide rationales for elaborating such an issue as a cultural phenomenon. What does it tell about our current society and our way of life? Sociologists have elaborated on the topic of Western sleep disorders to some extent, often in relation to health (e.g. Williams 2002). There are also some studies that have touched upon the topic of sleep from a cultural perspective, but they tend to concentrate on non-Western contexts (Tedlock 1987), and/or discuss its symbolic relation to death (Jetsu 2001; Turunen 2002).

Interestingly, consumer researchers seem to have neglected the topic of sleeping almost entirely. This is somewhat peculiar knowing the size of the market of sleep-related issues. Consider bedroom decorations, sleeping pills, guide-books for sleeping well, technical mattresses and pillows, fully-equipped luxury beds, sleepwear, etc., etc. However, Holbrook (1987) makes an exception by drawing attention to the topic of sleeping. He remarks: "People get up in the morning, start consuming the moment their toes touch the carpet, allocate their time to various consumption activities throughout the day, and continue consuming until they finally drift off to sleep at night, after which they confine their consumption mostly to dreams, pajamas, and bed linen" (Holbrook 1987, p. 131).

Taking sleep as a serious research topic should benefit the field of consumer research in understanding the nature of the given market. Moreover, it should help to complete the picture of the way in which meanings embedded in "natural necessities" become negotiated and played out in the arena of consumption. We have a sound understanding of the ways in which necessities such as eating and clothing, for instance, carry a huge number of cultural meanings that are reproduced and enhanced through a set of market activities and advertising. Why should this not concern sleeping? Future studies on sleeping may, following paths opened by studies of these other "necessities", consider the set of cultural meanings and symbols related to it and the ways they become produced in the market.

One further interesting avenue for future studies on sleep may examine whether we keep consuming while sleeping. The theme of consuming in daydreams has been discussed earlier (e.g. Campbell 1987), but how about consuming in dreams at night? Do we go shopping in our dreams? Do we have nightmares when we lose wallets and credit cards? Do we enjoy ourselves or feel anxious when buying something in our dreams? Do we use ICTs in our dreams? Do we drive cars or motorcycles, a BMW or Harley Davidson? Such an inquiry might be conducted through asking people to keep diaries about their dreams. As dreams and stories about dreams are culturally constructed and conditioned, not just reflectors of a personal state of mind (Jetsu 2001, p. 227; Tedlock 1987), such an inquiry might provide an interesting angle on the current consumer society and its shared symbols. It may help to fully recognize the power of consumer symbols as cultural resources through which contemporary people negotiate their being in the world. Perhaps this negotiation takes place not just when awake, as previous studies have discussed (e.g. Holt 2003), but also when asleep.

Virtual boundaries. In addressing how contemporary boundaries of free time are produced and negotiated, I have concentrated on the everyday context, and only slightly touched upon the virtual context. Focusing on this particular context would be interesting, however, since an increasing amount of consumption takes place virtually (Uusitalo 2002), at cyber-marketplaces to use Venkatesh's (1998) term. The theoretical framework of boundaries outlined here may provide tools for trying to understand the nature of consumption in these places. In surfing on the Internet, the question is one of constant criss-crossing between different times and spaces. Using the bank Net services and then going to the website of a newspaper, for instance, entails the idea of transgressing boundaries. How is such boundary play managed? Importantly, focusing on this new environment may provide further understanding of what kinds of boundaries are essential for people; so essential that we keep on leaning on them also in the new cyberspace that is a realm of "limitless possibilities" or the "free-est of spaces" (Venkatesh 1998, p. 672-673).

Freedom. I conclude my study of free time by calling attention to the topic of freedom; the topic that underlies the category being studied but one upon which I have touched only slightly. Actually, the notion of freedom seems to underlie not only the category of free time, but also very many consumption studies. It tends to pop up no matter whether the study deals with cattle trade shows (Penaloza 2001), leisure sites (Belk and Costa 1998), a macro-market (Firat and Dholakia 1998), or cyberspace (Venkatesh 1998). Therefore, if we take Thompson's (2002) suggestion seriously – take a critical look at the stories we consumer researchers tell - it may be time to critically reflect on what kinds of stories we tell about freedom. Putting freedom at the center of research would help the field become fully aware of its powerful and insidious nature. Under the label of freedom, it is quite easy to sell very many issues and it is even easier to buy them. I started this dissertation project simply because I used to believe in academic freedom.

Methodological appendix

Focus groups

Focus groups have been used extensively in practical market research, and recently, the usage has also been increasing within academic research (Bloor *et al.* 2001; Madriz 2000). Theoretically, the basis for understanding the group and group interaction derives from social psychology. This theoretical background is visible in textbooks dealing with focus groups (Bloor *et al*. 1991; Morgan 1993; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). These textbooks tend to center around the particular nature of interpersonal communication, and they give operational guidance on how to make "a successful group". Books pay attention to issues such as the role of the moderator, dominance, verbal and non-verbal communication, recruiting, participant payment, and group composition. Based on my five-years experience of moderating groups as a market researcher, I fully agree that these guidelines are helpful in making the group work.

Focus groups might be applied within a variety of theoretical frames, and the way it is used and analyzed differs from one frame to another. For instance, one might use focus groups within the attitude theory in consumer research (Bristol and Fern 1993; Bristol 1999), or within culturally-oriented feminist research (Madriz 2000). In this study, the use of focus groups is seen as an arena for cultural talk.

How groups were conducted in practice? The previously-mentioned analogy between theater and focus groups is relevant also in terms of the practical structuring of focus groups. Like a drama, focus groups also have a phase structure – beginning, mid, and end. The beginning of a group, in particular, is an important phase. Its function is to introduce the play and, above all, to invite the participants to enter in the same play. The moderator attempts to do this by welcoming, describing the topic, rules of the groups, and by placing the participants in the cultural position from which they are supposed to talk ("as fathers", "as mothers"). The moderator exercises power at this phase, but, little by little, the balance of power is tilted toward the group when the proper discussion is underway. At the end, the moderator reclaims the power in order to close the group, by thanking, giving incentives, or asking if there is anything participants would like to add.

The feeling of belonging to the same play is created through the group criteria and through basic group practices. As several cultural researchers have discussed (Douglas 2002; Jetsu 2001; Mäkelä 2002; van Gennep 1960), food, and especially sharing the food, carries a strong symbolic message of unity and coherence. It creates bonds among the participants. Therefore, some food – sandwiches, fruit, and cookies - was served, as well as beverages like soda, beer, and cider. The beverages, in particular, convey a message that it is a question of a free-form discussion and they demarcate a time-out situation that characterizes focus groups; it represents a time set apart from the ongoing business of everyday life. As one father remarked in the midst of the group discussion: "For me, *this* is free time."

What is my own role in the groups? On the one hand, I am a commentator from the same world as the participants, and likewise sharing with cultural assumptions about free time. On the other, my position as a moderator is a specific one. Above all, I facilitate the discussion: I ask questions, try to handle silences, maintain a democratic atmosphere, move the discussion along, give verbal and non-verbal feedback, etc. Typically, the discussion about moderation derives from the psychological frame and centers upon professional skills and personal characteristics. Things like empathy, warmth, and listening skills are often mentioned as desirable characteristics of a good moderator (Fern 2001, p. 75-78; for a more critical view of moderator's role in the interaction, see Puchta and Potter 2002).

However, when considered from a cultural framework, it must be acknowledged that moderating is thoroughly cultural work. Moderating occurs according to cultural rules incorporated into the interaction, and not only through language, but also through visible and watching bodies (Coffey 1999). The following example of this thoroughly cultural nature of interaction is from the group of fathers. These fathers, aged 30-40, were recruited to come and talk about their free time as fathers of small children. The following example shows my opening speech where I address them as men. The point to be focused on here is the interesting intervention when my speech is interrupted.

Moderator*:* *So, let's start. First of all, I welcome you all again. My name is Anu, and for the next hour and a half or so, I'm going to talk with you about your free time. It's the male viewpoint that is of interest here, how do you, as men make yourselves free, what is your free time like during the week and on weekends....I'll tape-record this discussion, but this device (I point at my MD) is just a tool for making notes, so you can forget it, I won't give it to anybody…*

Male participant*: No copies for the wife? (with a humorous tone – all the others laugh)*

Moderator: *(laughing as well) Well, if you insist we can arrange it, do you prefer MD or C-cassette? So, we could start with every one telling what kind of family you have, and what a typical day is like? Could you, for example, start, please?*

In terms of group dynamics, this kind of brief intervention might be considered a good start for the group. It happens at the very beginning of the group, when the participants often feel a bit insecure. The intervention generates a common laugh, which is generally a good sign of a relaxed atmosphere. When people laugh together, they find each other and start to become a group.

If we take a look at what I as a moderator said before that intervention, we notice that I addressed them as men and in doing so I actually invited them to talk from the male position. And from that particular position, the idea of free time seems to carry a meaning of something hidden and forbidden, something that should not be told to wives. That is, this intervention implicitly summarizes the cultural idea of Finnish male freedom that has also been covered in other studies (e.g. Alasuutari 1992). Moreover, the way the statement is made reveals its cultural meaning. It is just mentioned once, laughed at and then silenced by mutual agreement. All of us in the group, including me, tacitly know that we are risking crossing a cultural boundary if we continue talking on this issue. We simply could not discuss it any further, in any detailed way. We would enter into the (too) dirty side of free time.

Moreover, it is likely that it was not just the linguistic hint that invited that statement. I invited it also with my visible body. First, it was question of an interruption, which I guess, has to do with my person, body, and position as a woman. I am a small woman, which implies that in Finnish culture I am not easily considered too dominating or dictating. If the respondent interrupted me, it implies that he was not afraid of me, which is obviously a positive feature in terms of the group dynamics. Furthermore, at that time I was a single woman, which was not explicitly stated, but could be interpreted, since I did not have a wedding ring. This, I guess, partly invited the statement. I was no one's wife, and not part of people to whom these male stories should not be told. Despite my "different" female position, I was, however, not an outsider. I responded to the joke, by laughing at it and by continuing it I entered into their "male" world, which is partly also my world; the joke belongs to the shared knowledge, otherwise, I could not have responded to it. This example highlights that it is the group situation as a whole that may be considered data.

Process of data analysis

How did the analytical process proceed in practice? My answer to this question is based on the notes of my research journal that I kept in order to facilitate the analysis and to preserve the construction of inference making.

In the beginning of the data analysis, I had quite a general notion on what I would like to look into in the data. I was just interested in free time as a cultural category with a presumption that it is under negotiation at some level and that the new communication technology has something to do with it. With this rough aim in mind, I read and re-read the transcripts several times in order to become familiar with the data and in hope of starting to see something interesting in them.

I also coded the data with the help of the NVivo computer program in order to break down the seemingly obvious surface of the data. The coding proceeded along the general time-space dimension. It helped to identify some of the key elements, later called symbols, around which the data seemed to be structured: door, sofa, and table. However, I found the computer-based coding somewhat mechanical. It seemed to capture thinking instead of liberating it: as if I had to think in the same way as some software engineer. Therefore, I looked for some other ways to approach my data and I ended problematizing them through the techniques of estrangement described earlier in the introductory chapter.

Thus, instead of rigor coding, my analytical strategy relies rather on the rigor reflective and dialogical process of reading, writing, and questioning (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Silverman 2000). In reading data descriptions, that at first sight appeared most "normal" to me, I tried problematizing them by generating questions. This questioning largely follows the procedure suggested by Alasuutari – asking why when reading the data (1995, p. 133-139). What do the respondents actually say? Why do they talk this way and not another way? Through questioning, I tried to get some understanding of what is going on in the data. I looked for answers in the theoretical literature, from the surrounding, everyday world, and from my own experiences. This process in turn produced new

questions with which I returned to my data to see whether they provided answers. It made me also look for new data that might provide clues as to what is going on in the data. In this way, I gradually built up a body of observational data and other cultural materials, and also a body of interpretive comments, which were submitted to analysis. This sort of process for interpreting qualitative data is often referred to as "hermeneutical circle" (see e.g. Thompson and Troester 2002).

In other words, I put my data into a constant dialogue with the theory, literature, with the surrounding environment – and also with my own thoughts. That is, during analysis I constantly ask myself the question: what makes me think so? Why do I consider this piece of data interesting? Such reflective questioning was possible since during analytical process I wrote all the time: memos, drafts, working papers, and summary sheets. And I returned to my writing, reading them in a reflective way: what is my writing all about? As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) and Richardson (2000) point out, writing constitutes an integrated part of the analyzing process. Writing is a method of inquiry.

This kind of reflective, back and forth moving dialogue method of analysis is time-consuming, no doubt, but I do not believe in quick alternatives. In this sense, I rely on ethnographers who stress that speed and urgency are the enemies of good research. As van Loon puts it: "it requires patience to be surprised", (2001, p. 281).

Let us illustrate this kind of analytical process by two examples. The following questions – taken from my research journal – illustrate the kinds of questions that emerged when I read my data. Roughly put, I generated questions on two levels: in terms of contents of the discussion (what do respondents actually talk about), and in terms of single expressions (like *ashamed, going away*).

> *Why do they talk so much about eating at their workspaces, and not that much about work? Why do urban workers in an information society use agrarian language when they describe their work, like doing spadework? Why do all the groups devote so much time to talking about grocery shopping? Why did the group of fathers even stay after the session to discuss the appropriate size for a supermarket? Why do single women need grocery shops to be open on Sundays, if they state that they never go to grocery shops? Every group talks about sleeping, why is that? Why didn't I probe more into sleeping, why did I exclude it? Free coffee seems to be important for the respondents, and, of course, free drinks, but well, what's new in that? Why should it be new – what makes me think that way? They actually talk about conversations, that is, what they talk about during coffee breaks and in pubs, what does it mean? Is this what Douglas refers as speech rituals? They talk a lot about Friday, and when they do the tone of the conversation changes: why do they laugh when they talk about Friday? Why do they keep questioning what free time is? Why do I hear it all the time, also in seminars?*
>
> *Why do they use words like must, ashamed, necessity? This is about free time, isn't it? The word "away" is repeatedly there – a kind of synonym for free time? They create another world, interesting spatial expression. Christmas is associated with death. Is there any other context where death is talked about? If free time is not solely a happy time, what then? What makes me think it should be happy time?*

The following example in turn attempts to illustrate how the whole research process is submitted to analysis. It is a story about one presentation of my on-going study. This event made me realize not only the tremendous strength of some cultural boundaries, but also how cultural boundaries become visible in various contexts. It also shows how the boundary between researcher/researched becomes questioned in this kind of analysis where culture is constantly present.

The death of Christmas?

> I enter an empty classroom and I am worried about whether anybody will attend the seminar where I am supposed to give a presentation. I am glad to notice that people are arriving. When the time is quarter past, I start my presentation: "Welcome everybody. I shall present my on-going Ph.D. study that addresses free time as a cultural category."
>
> The presentation continues pleasantly, and there is also quite a vivid and open discussion. Suddenly I notice that I am going to run out of time and I say: "Well, I shall close my presentation by describing briefly how my respondents talk about Christmas. The younger respondents, in particular, seem to view it as time for duties and musts rather than as free time. They frequently used the phrase 'family hell' when they talked about Christmas. They referred to divorces and re-marriages being common. It is also interesting that the discussion about Christmas evoked a discussion about death. In my secondary data set, there is also an interesting account: 'Sometimes, I feel that I cook for dead people.'"
>
> After saying this there is complete silence in the audience. I think that I was un-clear and I repeat what I had said. Then one man raises his hand and says: "But after all, it's good to have families, we all have family… there might be new kinds of families, friends can be families." Others join the discussion speaking up for Christmas: "It's so nice to have Christmas, isn't it?" No one says a single word about death.

What happened? What caused the silence? How might the reactions of the audience be understood? Why was family commented on and defended while there was silence about death? Reflecting on this afterwards, I realized that in my presentation I had crossed two profound cultural boundaries: that of (nuclear) family and that of death. Family represents something sacred in our culture, something not to be insulted; death in turn represents a taboo, something not even to be talked about. The reactions of the audience made me clearly realize what cultural boundaries are about.

Therefore, little by little, I realized that my data is best captured through the notion of symbolic boundaries. Focusing on them with the aid of the theoretical lenses described earlier in this work showed that there is actually much going on at the boundaries. This boundary work appeared to be best understood as peculiar battle and management of different sorts of disorders, different sorts of threats.

In identifying issues that represent order or disorder, clean or dirty, the analyst pays attention to certain cultural clues in the data. Examples include such clues as shame or pride; what is reasoned and explained, or what is considered evident and taken-for-granted. Moreover, issues that are silenced or tabooed stand at the center of such analysis. Let us take examples of how they may be identified in the data.

Boundaries that are threatened because they are under cultural redefinition, become indicated, first of all by the amount of discussion. Culturally threatened things need social negotiation. Therefore, the abundant talk about the difficulty of getting rid of work issues is interpreted as a symptom of renegotiation of the boundaries of work and free time. Second, it becomes shown in the overall questionable style of the discussion – in the groups, respondents constantly asked reflective questions "after all, what is free time?" In the same vein, the re-negotiation of Sunday became visible in the amount of discussion related to it; no one talks about whether one is allowed to shop or work on Tuesdays.

How, then, to recognize the dirty side of free time? One important indicator of the "dirty" kind of free time is shame. Shame reveals symbolic categories at stake and it is attached to the violations of boundaries. Its counterpart is pride. Therefore, taking a look at shame on the one hand, and pride on other, one can have clues as to what is considered clean and what is dirty free time. One might state: "Last Sunday, I went to a museum, I am so proud of myself" or "I am ashamed to say, I did nothing on Sunday". Moreover, visiting the dirty area requires a symbolic cleansing of some sort: talk about purification rituals such as promises to never drink again are, therefore, read as indicators of the dirty side of free time.

This kind of reading made the dramatic nature of the seemingly mundane phenomenon clear. It guided me to focus on pieces of data that might be called drama units. Reading more literature also made me realize that these boundaries have historical roots and that they are of a political nature. Moreover, it made me realize that boundaries become reflected, created, and maintained through free time research as well. The free time research was, therefore, also made a focus of the study. I took an analytical look, for instance, at what is counted as free time in mainstream studies. Considering both the data and literature alike as empirical material, as food for re-thought (Alasuutari 1992), made me notice one significant gap. My data are filled with stories of sleeping while the prevailing free time research excludes it.

Reflections of an analyst

The question of reflection and self-reflection is a rather wide current debate (see e.g. Coffey 1999; Meriläinen 2001; Thompson, Stern and Arnould 1998). Basically, the debate arises from the premise that an analyst is not a neutral outsider but he/she "is historically and locally situated within the very process being studied" (Denzin 2001, p. 325). The interpretation that takes place from that position is necessarily partial. As Marcus and Fischer summarize:

[Ethnographers] are thus motivated to emphasize the reflexive dimension that has always underlined ethnographic research. This reflexivity demands not only an adequate critical understanding of oneself through all phases of research, but ultimately such an understanding of ones' own society as well." (Marcus and Fischer 1999, p. 109-110)

The demand for critical self-reflection is justified, no doubt, but in practice it is rather difficult - how to know one's own ways of knowing? In the case of this study, when I study the culture I breath I was, and still am, locked by the same assumptions I try to subvert. In the process of trying to make them visible, the theoretical lenses provided by the "strange" discipline of anthropology and by the "critical-by-nature" feminist research have been of great help.

In explaining one's subject position in the research report, a rather common solution has been to express it in terms of gender, class, education, etc. and on one's own relation to the phenomenon under study. For instance, what kind of relation does the researcher have to sports when researching company as Nike (Penaloza 1998). In thinking about the analysis of my study, that rest upon language, perhaps the most relevant thing to reflect on is the relation I have with the language.

I have reflected elsewhere on my peculiar relationship with words (Valtonen 2004a). This passion for words is visible in the way I do academic research. I am not interested in research that reduces the world into variables. Discovering how A affects B does not fascinate me. Instead, I am interested the kind of research that acknowledges the whole set of alphabets and the power that results from combining them. What power and politics is embedded in single words such as "money", "busy", "consumer" or "woman"?

Passion is also visible in the way I read my data transcripts. When reading them I tend to stop at a word and start contemplating it. What is this little word trying to say to me? What kind of world does it open up? Where does it lead me? The outcome of my analysis mainly rests on the power of words. For me, words do not lie. They just open doors to new possible worlds.

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