Construing and Defining the Out of Control
Addiction in the Media 1968–2008

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Matilda Hellman

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ABSTRACT


The four scientific articles comprising this doctoral dissertation offer new information on the presentation and construction of addiction in the mass media during the period 1968–2008. Diachronic surveys as well as quantitative and qualitative content analyses were undertaken to discern trends during the period in question and to investigate underlying conceptions of the problems in contemporary media presentations.

The research material for the first three articles consists of a sample of 200 texts from Finland’s biggest daily newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, from the period 1968–2006. The fourth study examines English-language tabloid material published on the Internet in 2005–2008.

A number of principal trends are identified. In addition to a significant increase in addiction reporting over time, the study shows that an internalisation of addiction problems took place in the media presentations under study. The phenomenon is portrayed and tackled from within the problems themselves, often from the viewpoint of the individuals concerned. The tone becomes more personal, and technical and detailed accounts are more and more frequent. Secondly, the concept of addiction is broadened. This can be dated to the 1990s. The concept undergoes a conventionalisation: it is used more frequently in a manner that is not thought to require explanation. The word ‘riippuvuus’ (the closest Finnish equivalent to ‘addiction’) was adopted more commonly in the reporting at the same time, in the 1990s. Thirdly, the results highlight individual self-governance as a superordinate principle in contemporary descriptions of addiction. If the principal demarcation in earlier texts was between “us” and “them”, it is now focused primarily on the individual’s competence and ability to govern the self, to restrain and master one’s behaviour. Finally, in the fourth study investigating textual constructions of female celebrities in Internet tabloids, various relations and functions of addiction problems, intoxication, body and gender were observed to function as cultural symbols. Addiction becomes a sign, or a style, that represents different significations in relation to the main characters in the tabloid stories. Tabloids, as a genre, play an important role by introducing other images of the problems than those featured in mainstream media.

The study is positioned within the framework of modernity theory and its views on the need for self-reflexivity and biographies as tools for the creation and definition of the self. Traditional institutions such as the church, occupation, family etc. no longer play an important role in self-definition. This circumstance creates a need for a culture conveying stories of success and failure in relation to which the
individual can position their own behaviour and life content. I propose that “addiction”, as a theme in media reporting, resolves the conflict that emanates from the ambivalence between the accessibility and the individualisation of consumer society, on the one hand, and the problematic behavioural patterns (addictions) that they may induce, on the other.

SAMMANDRAG


I fyra vetenskapliga artiklar presenterar denna doktorsavhandling ny kunskap om hur beroendefenomenet (=addiction) representeras och konstruerats i massmedier under tidsperioden 1968–2008. Diakroniska översikter, kvantitativa och kvalitativa innehållsanalyser av medietexter har utförts med sikte på att urskilja trender under tidsperioden i fråga, samt undersöka underliggande uppfattningar om problemen i samtida medieframställningar.


viktiiv roll i det totala medieutbudet, i och med att de innehåller beskrivningar och förståelser, vilka inte återfinns i det konventionella medieutbudet.

Teoretiskt kan studien positioneras inom ramen för modernitetsteorier och dessas syn på behovet av självreflexivitet och livsbiografer som redskap för att tackla rubbningar i premisserna för individens självdefiniering. Då traditionella institutioner som utgjort hörnstenar i individens självdefiniering (kyrka, familjehärkomst, yrke osv) inte längre känns relevanta i denna process, ställs ökade krav på individen att själv skapa och avgränsa jaget i förhållande till andra. Detta sker i stor grad genom beslut om hur hon skall leva och agera i sin vardagsmiljö. Individen positionerar sig själv i relation till de förståelser hon har av olika beteende. Därmed föds också ett behov av att det i kulturutbudet förmedlas historier om framgång och misslyckanden. Jag föreslår vidare att beroende (=addiction) som ett tema i mediernas rapportering löser en konflikt och en ambivalens mellan konsumtionssamhällets tillgänglighet och individualisering å ena sidan och de problematiska beteenden (beroenden) som de kan leda till å andra sidan.

YHTEENVETO


Moderniusteorioissa itseseinasteluja ja elämäkertoja pidetään välineinä, joiden kautta ihminen määrittelee itsensä suhteessa ympäristöönsä. Instituutiot, jotka aiemmin olivat tärkeitä tekijöitä ihmisen identiteetille ja itsemäärittelylle (kuten oma ammatti, uskonto, suku jne.), eivät enää nykyään toimi tässä tehtävässä. Sen sijaan yksilö kohdistaa huomiota ”sisäänpäin omalle itsensä” ja asemoi itsensä ja käytöksensä suhteessa muihin yhteiskunnan yksilöihin. Ihminen kysyy itseltään useita kertoja päivässä: Miten minun tulisi elää elämäni? Tämä synnyttää myös tarpeen siihen, että kulttuurissa tuotetaan ja välitetään kuvia, ideoita ja kertomuksia esimerkiksi menestyksestä ja vastoinkäymisistä, jotka sisällytetään yksilön tuntemuksiin siitä, miten hänen tulisi elää ja toimia.

Esitän, että riippuvuuden (=addiction) idea ja teema tiedotusvälineiden uutisoinnissa ratkaisee ristiriidanan, joka muodostuu ambivalenssista, joka syntyy toisaalta yksilön itseohjauskywyn ja kykyyn luoda oma elämäntarina kohdistuvien enenevien vaatimusten, toisaalta kiihtyvästi laajenevan kulutusyhteiskunnan ja sen luomien haittojen välille. Riippuvuudesta tulee ideamaailmamme tärkeä etiketti, eräänlainen mittari, jolla mitataan käytöstä, jota emme kykene kontrolloimaan – tämä ongelma on itsessään symptomaattinen sille yhteiskunnalle, jossa elämme.
1 INTRODUCTION

A view firmly established in contemporary affluent societies is that anyone can become completely preoccupied with a behaviour or compulsion of a peculiar, unhealthy or even lethal kind. All citizens of consumer society risk developing a repetitive habit into something that is generally considered and defined as a problem. In what sense we classify this behaviour as a problem, and how large and how dangerous it is perceived, depend on socially and culturally anchored understandings of the problems. The objective of my dissertation has been to investigate such constructs in the mass media about the phenomenon of addiction.

The word “addiction” has roots in both Latin and classical Greek. Its meaning is believed to be inherited from Roman law, where *addicere* signified a giving or binding over of something or someone by court ruling. A lay definition from 2010 describes addiction as a “state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming, as narcotics, to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma.”¹ There are no precise equivalents in the Finnish and Swedish languages, the closest being *riippuvuus* in Finnish and *beroende, hemfallenhet* or *avhängighet* in Swedish. However, the absence of a precise semantic equivalent does not stop the concept and the phenomenon of addiction from playing a significant role in cultures all over the world.

A crucial aspect of the modern conception of addiction lies in the discrepancy between wanting to and coercive having to ingest substances. The idea that alcoholism is a progressive disease – the chief symptom of which is loss of control over drinking behaviour, and whose remedy is abstinence from all alcoholic beverages – is only about 200 years old, writes Levine (1978). During the 17th century, and for most of the 18th, the assumption was that people drank and got drunk because they wanted to, and not because they “had” to. In American colonial thought, alcohol did not permanently disable the will; it was not addicting, and habitual drunkenness was not regarded as a disease (Levine 1978). It was not until the 19th century that the modern notion of alcoholism in the sense of drinking against one’s own will was introduced. By the early 19th century the Temperance movement had captured the current notion of alcoholism, but with one important difference: since alcohol was thought to be innately addictive, the substance was seen as the cause of addiction (Ferenzy 2002, 169; Levine 1978). It was only after the prohibition era that the current concept became prominent, and since then “the cause of alcoholism has been located in individual minds or bodies or both” (Ferenzy 2002, 170). This view has been popularised to a large degree thanks to the twelve

step programme of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement: the contemporary concept of addiction reflects a tension and a struggle between desire and will within the individual (Valverde 1998).

There are many contradictory views on what addiction really is, on how to demarcate and define the phenomenon. Alcoholism and associated problems have been a topical issue in Finnish public debate for quite some time. The country had a period of prohibition in 1920-1933, and alcohol policy interventions are traditionally directed at a societal level, at the population at large. Even though there have been dependency problems associated with medical drugs in earlier times, such as morphine dependency after the war, more widespread, culturally anchored illicit drug use is a relatively new phenomenon in Finland: the first signs of hashish spreading among young people were not seen until the 1960s\(^2\). The country has had two drug waves with peaks in illicit drug use prevalence: the first in the late 1960s and the second in the late 1990s. Problematic alcohol and drug use have been strongly framed as societal problems that need to be addressed by means of population-level policy efforts. One important pillar of Finnish drug policy has been a general welfare policy: the thinking has been that drug-related problems can be prevented by investing in the population’s general well-being and living conditions. In the case of alcohol policy, controlling availability has been considered a crucial strategy.

The societal framing of the problems is typical for temperance-influenced societies, where great emphasis has been placed on the social dimension, especially when it comes to consequences and harms, but later on, as drinking has been normalized, the problems have often been defined more as a private than a public matter (Room 1996, 374; Laslett et al. 2010, 2, referring to Gusfield 1998). Alcoholism, or alcohol dependence syndrome, is classed in the International Classification of Diseases, which defines the condition as a mental health disorder. This, on the other hand, has led to a general predominance of a mental health and public health discourse in governance and research: treatment or counseling are often under ministries of health; consequences are measured in cases of liver cirrhosis etc. (Room 1996, 374). The present study will employ the lens of “addiction” and offer insights into how this notion and concept forms popular images.

When addictions are put in focus of social scientific inquiries questions of “seeing the social through the individual and seeing the individual through the social” will arise. The notion of addiction - an individual's difficulty in breaking loose from a problematic pattern of behaviour and/or substance intake - is comfortably anchored

in cognitive science. It is also in the cognitive sciences that we find the technically most advanced apparatuses for demarcating and defining the problem. In the past ten years or so, the notions of addiction and dependency have been quite visible in the societal alcohol and drug research. The first two objectives listed on the National Institute for Health and Welfare’s (THL) website for the thematic area of “Substances and dependencies” (Päihdeja riippuvuudet) are those of “studying substance [=päihde], tobacco, gambling and other dependency problems” and “developing the prevention of addiction problems” (my emphases). The third objective then refers to classic policy oriented population-based research, such as monitoring consumption trends and policies of substance use not specifically related to addiction problems. This description on the institution’s website and its focus on problematic addictive behaviour can be seen as reflecting a general resonance – at least on the rhetorical level - with the addiction and dependency framing.

This thesis takes its point of departure in the thought that perceptions and common understandings of addictions have direct implications for the way in which the problems are addressed in practice. Elster (1999) has described how culture provides cognitive labels of addiction. Where the cultural boundaries are drawn in relation to compulsiveness and deviance, and how these problems are defined and understood, has implications for prevention as well as for diagnostic and therapeutic practice. The governing views on the problems shape notions of how to prevent them and how to deal with them when they occur, whether it is in the form of penal or therapeutic correction or different personal or societal strategies of risk reduction and prevention. Perceptions of the nature of the problems, of the circumstances in which they occur, and even the experience of addiction itself, are affected by how the phenomenon is understood (see Elster 1999; Harré 1986). Although subject to controversy, beliefs are factors that have to be accounted for: initiation of the use of psychoactive substances is strongly conditioned by beliefs about their physical, psychological and social functions. Another example of the importance of beliefs is the AA ideology and its firm conviction that alcoholism is a disease, which helps many recover. Understandings of the nature of different types of addictions have been described as critical to the possibilities of natural recovery (see e.g. Blomqvist 1998).

In order to grasp popular beliefs and perceptions of such a changeable social phenomenon, this thesis analyses how addiction was portrayed in a leading Finnish

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3 An example of a conscious orientation towards the study of addictions within a social scientific paradigm is the Finland-based international research consortium Theories and Images of Addicted Behaviour (IMAGES). An initiative to theorise addictions in contemporary society was taken by the interdisciplinary book project by the Nordic Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research (NAD) completed in 2004, see Rosenqvist et al. (2004). Additionally, research into how society provides treatment for alcoholics and drug addicts has always been concerned with where to draw the lines of addictive/problematic substance use.

4 http://www.thl.fi/fi_FL/web/fi/aiheet/pahteeja_riippuvuudet (10.11.2010)
daily newspaper in 1968–2006 and in Internet tabloids and blogs in 2005–2008. The material offers insights into how perceptions of the problems have changed over time. I focus on these images and give empirical evidence in four scientific articles on the expansion of the concept, offering interpretations of the meanings of media texts and discussing their consequences for our understanding of the concept and the phenomenon as such.

Throughout history, deviant and wayward behaviour and its consequences have found their way into cultural products and have fascinated artists in all cultural fields and genres. The use of intoxicating substances is a constantly topical motif, from portrayals of hallucinogenic plants used in witchcraft in medieval art to portrayals of celebrity drug addict Amy Winehouse’s transgressive whereabouts in contemporary tabloids. Cultural representations of addiction contain themes of stigma, tragedy, personal struggles with emotions and desires, etc. However, my study focuses on “the story of the story”, that is, the story of the underlying circumstances that have enabled the expansion of the concept and its significantly increased frequency in contemporary culture. The circumstances surrounding this trend not only comprise a concrete state of affairs, which can be viewed as reflected in the material; the development is also underpinned by a dimension of the history of ideas. This is a climate that breeds human conceptualisations. Not only does this enable the process, but it also directly reinforces and brings about the developments. Additionally, my intention is to suggest a framework for understanding the role of the media in this process.

The addiction theme has several functions, and several reasons explain why society is interested in it. Pryor (2006) describes the fascination with addiction as two-sided: it is both real and unreal. We know that addictions really happen to people, that people do get addicted to substances, but at the same time it is a phenomenon of our individual and collective imaginations. Our perceptions and understandings are part of our culture’s total articulation of the problems and vice versa. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) describe how every policy issue is represented in different competing interpretive packages. Some of these packages have a natural advantage because their ideas and language resonate with larger cultural themes (ibid., 5). Scholarly articles that discuss addiction to carrots (Kaplan 1996) or to the Harry Potter phenomenon (Rudsky et al. 2009), films about shopaholics and people trying to give up smoking, mass media reports on new types of problematic repetitive behaviour such as checking e-mail or playing video games – all are examples of a public articulation and circulation of complementing, sometimes competing, images of the nature of addiction problems. Although the concept is sometimes used in a more metaphorical manner, it seems to resonate with a contemporary need for knowledge and information about the phenomenon. My own investigations are primarily concerned with addictions as part of a collective cultural imagination.
The object of my study, i.e. media texts on the phenomenon of addiction from newspapers and Internet tabloids, can be viewed as a highly reflexive one. The notion of addiction contains in itself the idea of a force that displaces life from a common order of needs, drawing boundaries between normal and excessive behaviour. Additionally, the symbolic language, in this case the media texts that construe images of addiction, are inevitably distanced from the social order that it aims to portray. I will also make a small acknowledgement of the fact that the products of the media are not only part of the process of construing social reality, but also and increasingly part of a displaced addictive order serving as objects of addiction.

In this first chapter of the introduction I will briefly explain the technical and logical structure of my work, moving on then to the main results. In the second chapter I concentrate on the role of the media in an addictive society and discuss the results of the study within its theoretical framing.

1.1 Theoretical point of departure

_Addiction is more than a metaphor for the unspeakable unhappiness it masks. It is an expression of the difficulty of being fully human in a world of modernity, a desert with no lasting oasis of happiness._ (Pryor 2006)

Meanings are attached to behaviour through an infinite variety of symbols and images. By incorporating them and further investing them with meaning we participate in a complex, multilayered and sometimes ambivalent and contradictory semiosis of relations of values and views on the behaviour in question. Images mediated in the media are continuously involved in the drawing and redrawing of cultural boundaries between what is considered behaving out of control and behaving within reasonable limits. They tell us something about how the problems evolve, what they look like, how they can be handled, etc. Significant changes in discursive practices concerning such popular representations are part of larger processes of social and cultural change.

One theoretical point of departure for the social and cultural change that informs a general aggrandised need to discuss and to draw and redraw boundaries of addictive behaviour is provided by theories on modernity and its consequences (Giddens 1991; Giddens 1992a; Giddens 1992b), individualisation, and the risk society (Beck 2007 [1986]; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2006; Lupton 1999). The lines of reasoning behind the modernity track can be simplified as follows: A series of changing scenarios in all spheres of modern life has brought about a general shift from self-understanding
in terms of social contexts (family, religion, occupation, etc.) to a making sense of individual acts. As a result, people have an extended need to articulate and understand their own life trajectories in terms of, for example, success and failure. This necessity of comprehension breeds reflexive biographies (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2006), or narratives of the self that are central to how we understand our lives. The self-narrative, that is, our self-understanding and our identity, is to be continually reworked and lifestyle practices and choices aligned accordingly if the individual is to combine personal autonomy with a sense of ontological security (Giddens 1992b, 75). The self, like the broader contexts, has to be reflexively made. This task is accomplished amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities. In the process, the fundamental question of How shall I live? (ibid., 14), must be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave. Addiction has been described as symptomatic of such a state, as a repetition that has lost its connection to the “truth” of tradition (Giddens 1994, 71). A working hypothesis of mine has been that in this state of affairs the concept – the idea of addiction – performs certain functions in culture.

The thought that contemporary ways of being and living are permeated by a sense of dislocation or a distance to social contexts holds many similarities with Marxist thought on workers’ alienation in capitalism – the estrangement of people from their humanity. In Marxism, however, alienation primarily describes the worker’s situation, while his or her self-awareness of this condition is unnecessary. In theories of reflexive self-formation, the emphasis is placed on the individual’s sense-making of the world through a prism of emotions. The individual’s emotions are tied to sociological trends in their living environment. Another hypothesis underlying my inquiries is that shifts and changes attached to the above developments can be discerned in different public discourses on the phenomenon of addiction. This can be viewed as part of a general trend of therapeutic language and practices expanding into the everyday, including public rhetoric and research discourse. As Furedi (2004) points out, such terms as stress, anxiety, addiction, compulsion, trauma, negative emotions, healing, syndrome and midlife crisis refer to rather normal episodes of daily life; they are no longer unusual problems or exotic states of mind. One result of tying together social developments with certain types of psychology and subjectivity is that we can interpret an illness as somehow characteristic of the particular society in which it is found (see e.g. Littlewood 2002, 74). I will speak of an addictive society where repetitive compulsive behaviour is used as an explanatory framework for a variety of more or less unspecified states, and where there is a need to lump together these compulsions under the label of addiction.

In the corpus of social thought discussed above, self-understanding is tied to changes in the life context that have come about as a result of social change. In such a state –
a breach between ideal and real, self and society – there is an increased need to narrativise experience (Kohler Riessman 1993). This meaning making of contemporary life will be articulated in culture with expanding media products assuming a paramount position. Herein, conceptualisations in public discussion, image milieus and narratives mediated in the different media genres have special functions, not only as a source of information, but also as a gauge, a sounding board, a relevant tool for governing the self and one’s life project.

The role of journalistic texts has increasingly become one of visualising and symbolising risks and different situations, of providing “cultural eyes” for citizens by making threats publicly visible and arousing attention in detail, in one’s own living space (Beck 1992, 120). Mass media representations offer an explanatory bridge between developments in society at large and those within the individual, they equip the citizen with model biographies of the kind that manage to turn social problems into psychological dispositions. It is the individual’s responsibility to find their place in life, to make sense of life and to live according to what is accepted and ought to be strived for. Popular discourses are articulated through the media, and the subjects will inhabit and embody the cultural categories in their everyday lives. Blackman (2008) described such a process as follows: “We are encouraged to develop a relationship with ourselves, where we understand the key to success, happiness, satisfaction and so forth, as being subject to our own efforts and capacity to constantly reinvent and transform ourselves – this increasingly framed by the discourses of counselling and therapy.” (Blackman 2008, 210.)

Both views, that the construction of these relationships to ourselves holds an increasingly important function in social life and that social circumstances are not separable from personal life, are reflected in what the addiction theme performs in the media content under study. The role of the media becomes facilitating; they explain the process whereby people produce and maintain forms of life and society, as well as systems of meanings and values (Christians et al. 2009): “This creative activity, the process by which humans establish their heritage in time and space, is grounded in the ability to build cultural forms through symbols that express the will to live purposefully, and the reporter’s first obligation is getting inside this process” (ibid., 168). News reporting constitutes a social narrative, forming and constructing realities. It answers, for example, demands resulting from individuals’ hopes, longings and imaginings that things could be different, citizens’ expanded need for information that contributes to risk definition and risk estimations in everyday life (Beck 2007, 23). It can play a crucial role in the creation of reflexive biographies. Part of the process by which we gain a sense of selfhood lies in the relation to what or who we are not. Public representations of addiction are part of the very process through which we come to gain a sense of our subjectivity, and those of “Others”
who create the possibility of fear, desire, prejudice, etc. (see Blackman & Walkerdine 2001, 24). Exploring the media as an important part of the self-identity process will offer me certain possibilities to discuss the role of the concept of addiction. However, there are also some obvious problems and limitations to this stance, which I will discuss further in chapter 2.

Attention to the specific content of the news and the attributes attached to the issues reported on can, according to McCombs and Reynolds (2009), provide a detailed understanding of our mental pictures and of our opinions grounded in these pictures. The contemporary media theme of addiction – a phenomenon that by definition is a state of non-control – will naturally present paradoxes and create ambivalence in a hedonistic and consumption-oriented culture where individual control and the making of the right choices are vital qualities, but where addiction problems have nonetheless substantially increased over the past few decades.

Derrida (2003 [1989]) suggests that toxicomania, the notion of drug addiction as a disease, is contemporaneous with modernity, noting that when people have the possibility or when they are frequently exposed to the possibility of taking addictive substances, when this becomes an important theme in everyday life, then it will also become an important theme in our cultural products. The addiction theme will hence be connected to a circulation of objects and ideas linked to the degree of prosperity in society. This thought fits well with the view that lifestyle diseases are accelerating in affluent industrialised societies. The mass media channel knowledge and concerns and heighten the public’s awareness of this acceleration, and are thus also part of a construction of the problems per se. Part of such a process is the articulation of the nature and extent of the problems, a creation of stakeholders, power relations, ideal outcomes and failures.

Derrida (2003 [1989]) also discusses how drugs can be viewed as a cultural construct, as there is no such thing as drugs “by nature”. For example, without their cultural attributes cannabis and ethanol are simply objects like flowering plants or the molecular formula C₂H₆O. The notion of drugs is something that humans have invented, developed and started to value. Sedwick Kosowsky (1992) expresses similar views on the cultural bounding of the addiction phenomenon in a discussion on the gradual extension of the addiction concept – a development that now brings every form of substance ingestion, and any form of human behaviour, into the orbit of potential addiction attribution. She writes that if addiction can include ingestion or refusal or controlled intermittent ingestion of a given substance, and if the concept of “substance” has become too elastic to draw a boundary between the exoticism of the “foreign substance” and the domesticity of, say, “food”, then “the locus of addictiveness cannot be the substance itself and can scarcely even be the body itself,
but must be some overarching abstraction that governs the narrative relations between them.” (ibid., 583.) This should leave no doubt about the importance of studying the cultural construction of addiction problems in an age of extended meanings and definitions of these problems. Additionally, to paraphrase Sedwick Kosowsky, the thesis assumes that studying the overarching abstractions that govern narrative relations in constructions of addiction can be fruitful for understanding trends such as individualisation, dislocation and reflexivity.

Foucault points out that the ways in which the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion by the practices of the self are not something that the individual invents by himself, but rather “patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group” (Bernauer & Rasmussen 1988, 11). The overall objective of my study is to achieve new knowledge about the image of addiction in our culture and about why it is such a frequently used and “misused” concept in the media. Two principal hypotheses underlie my diachronic investigations: 1) the addiction phenomenon is believed to hold a more significant place in culture today than it did 40 years ago, and 2) the addiction phenomenon is believed to hold a more significant place in language use today than it did 40 years ago. The thesis seeks to date the expansion of the addiction phenomenon in our culture and to discover some of the elements involved in this expansion. In two of the studies (Hellman 2009; Hellman 2010a), larger datasets were analysed to contemplate larger-scale developments. In the other two, addiction was viewed through the prisms of contemporary trends, namely the second drug wave in Finland (Hellman 2010b) and Internet tabloid coverage of female celebrities (Hellman & Rantala unpublished).

1.2 Design, data and main results

The study design is funnel-shaped, starting out from a relatively broad overall picture of diachronic developments and moving towards more limited and focused, qualitatively oriented syntagmatic investigations. I read a total of 432 (=N) issues on microfilm from 1968 to 2006 of Finland’s largest daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (henceforth referred to as HS). Each issue and supplement from three randomly sampled weeks from every second year (even years 1968, 1970, 1972, etc.) was scanned for a selection of material that could include items concerning six addictions – alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling, eating disorders, and sexual addiction. From the raw data base (N=579) a corpus of 200 texts was selected on the basis of a synthetic set of criteria for discerning the addiction theme.

I started out my inquiries in a somewhat positivistic initiative, assuming that the knowledge of how addiction is portrayed over time will be discovered through observations and grouping of the texts. By this process, order was imposed on the
material in an effort to construct meaning from what I observed. Categories were formed and counted in order to achieve an overview of the developments. Nevertheless, in the very first study a qualitative diachronic reading was performed that looked into the contextual developments in the reporting of the medium (HS) under study. The three studies that followed are all qualitatively aimed at discerning the meaning attached to addiction in the corpuses of the texts under study. I enter different corpuses of texts performing different tasks and using my material to demonstrate certain relationships observed. How conclusions were drawn from such an interpretive, often intuitive, analysis of the data (see Krauss 2005, 764), is discussed further in subsection 1.2.1. and, to the extent allowed by the short formats, in each of the four articles.

In 1968 Finland was entering its first drug wave. I chose to make this year the starting point for my inquiries, as it was conceivable that the material from that time could contain pieces on addiction. In an analysis of press pieces on drugs in the Finnish state alcohol monopoly Alko’s press archive, Hakkarainen (1992) showed that the drug question peaked in reporting frequency during the period 1967-1972, with the highest figures recorded in 1969. Furthermore, the 1968 starting point allowed me to make use of a body of material covering a full 40-year period.

Systematic data collection from HS came to an end in 2006, the most recent year for which data were available for the whole year at the time of data collection. In a later study I analysed Internet tabloid reporting from 2005 to 2008 on female celebrities, shifting the focus from popular news discourse to the faster, more visual and provoking medium of Internet tabloids and blogs. The advantages and problems of this shift of focus are discussed in chapter 2.

HS is the most significant and widely read newspaper in Finland. In a European comparison HS constitutes a large newspaper, not the least in relation to population size (McQuail & Siune 2003). It holds an uncontested special position in Finnish society in terms of circulation and audience. The publisher, Sanoma WSOY, is one of Europe’s largest daily newspaper groups, and it is the biggest media corporation in the Nordic countries. The paper is the largest subscription-based daily in the Nordic countries as well. It is estimated that HS reached 951,000 newspaper readers in 2009 (Finnish Audit Bureau 2010; the next biggest newspaper, Aamulehti, had a reach of 310,000 readers). The paper’s superiority in circulation and relevance in society was believed to be beneficial for the basic aims of this study: to track a phenomenon in public discourse over time. However, since the concentration of media discourse has been identified as an obstacle to ideological pluralism, an analysis comprising different media products and formats might have yielded a more valid and nuanced picture of the developments. A wide range of complementing
images of addiction from other genres is excluded from the study. Nevertheless, given the overall objectives of the research, it was believed that HS provided the best material for the core study.

Inclusion criteria were set up in order to find the addiction-themed texts. The system of criteria was theoretically informed by literature on the nature of addiction (e.g. Orford 2001, West 2006), as well as the more hermeneutically oriented literature on the function and position of addiction in culture (Levine 1978, Room 1985). Most importantly, however, the criteria system was developed on the basis of reading the actual data. First, the HS texts were read carefully to identify the ways in which the phenomenon was expressed, both directly in the text and also on a more implicational level. The overall basic inclusion criterion was that the text dealt with “problematic continuous repetitive behaviour over which control is impaired”. This description captures certain main understandings of addiction both in science and in lay descriptions: the key lies in loss of control, being governed by a need and a repetition of acts, which increasingly take over the subject’s life. The conception must also include the idea that this was in one way or another problematic.

Other conceptual phenomenological features were captured through three sub-criteria. The first sub-criterion for detecting the addiction phenomenon was that the text should apply addiction terminology, words that signify addiction. These could be words such as alcoholic, alcoholism, the AA movement, junkie, bulimia, or expressions such as “being hooked” or “slave to alcohol”. However, some of the texts described states of addiction without applying such terminology, which is why it was necessary to develop a second sub-criterion that allowed for an interpretation of the phenomenon. The second yardstick was that the text should contain characteristics of addiction as accounted for in diagnostic classifications ICD-10 and DSM-IV. For example, one piece (Väänänen & Repo 2000) described tolerance as a process where the body gets so used to cannabis intake that it needs ever greater doses. This description fits in with the diagnostic tools. Finally, some texts spoke of the treatment of people with substance problems or compulsions without mentioning any addiction-related word or diagnostic characteristic, but still implying a problematic continuous repetitive behaviour over which control is impaired to the extent that treatment was needed. These texts were also included in the corpus of texts that was considered to cover addiction problems.

This process of identifying the theme under study highlights some basic

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philosophical questions about how to discern a phenomenon and its conceptualisations in texts. The understanding of the phenomenon is created in each context based on the researcher’s reading. Even though I have systematically motivated all my choices, there is a limit to what can be achieved with respect to validity and reliability.

Each piece in the raw dataset (N=579) was read and interpreted to see whether it matched one or several of the above criteria. The texts that could be said to do so were included in the corpus defined as “addiction texts” (N=200). Initially, I chose to focus on the “core six” or most common addictions (Orford 2001), but since my research was concerned with the expansion of the concept, it was clear that I was going to have to include new behaviours described as addictive.

By the time that the HS data collection period was coming to an end, the fates of certain female celebrities were receiving vivid coverage in globally oriented Internet tabloids. The irrational and unpredictable behaviour of these Hollywood celebrities, pop stars and fashion models was ascribed to substance use and other “excessive appetites”. Study four set out to explore these sources as a complement to the more mainstream news medium of HS. The focus was turned to a textual dataset that works under completely different conditions, construing images of another type and for other purposes. If the shift in the understanding of the problems (towards individualised stances) correlated with a tabloidisation process (Hellman 2010a), what could “hard core” celebrity tabloids capture about such cultural myths “in the making”? The Internet tabloids and blogs constitute another type of site for reflexive identity formation. They allow readers to enter the sites and comment and give personal feedback on the stories, and thus to engage in the making of addiction narratives. Although such comments were excluded from the investigations, they still left their mark on the genre in an ongoing dialogue with the reporting stream. It was also believed that this sort of global blog material would add a contrast to the modernity track, and give a more varied picture of the different ways in which new internalised and conventionalised images of addiction were actually being used in public narratives, and for what purposes. The study draws on global celebrity culture and the material is in the English language, in which the concept of addiction is naturally present and referred to in a routine manner. The voices of the texts work within a personal time-in semiosis (Bruhn Jensen 1995) and do not aim to reflect upon the matters concerned in an objective or news journalistic manner. My colleague and I focused our investigations on the articulation of the addicted body and the habitus of the celebrities, working from the idea that body images, in their lack of definite borders or boundaries, constitute “rich and virtually unlimited sources of value and significance” (Weiss 1999, 165).
An examination into perceptions of women’s irrational and compulsive behaviour brings to the fore some historical views of the female sex as biologically inscribed by irrationality and unreliability. It is also in the history of ideas concerning mental instability and women (and other “weak” groups of race and social class) that we find the first rudimentary appearances of the contemporary notion of an “addictive personality” (e.g. Nakken 1996), one which is more likely to become addicted than others. The female addicted body constitutes a semiotically dense site. When celebrity status is added to this body, it becomes a high-energy field in terms of semiotic tensions. We can compare this to Benjamin’s (1973) description of a prostitute as representing the blurring of boundaries between person and thing in her embodiment as both salesperson and commodity in one visible form (see also Cronin 2004). Likewise, transgressive celebrity bodies blur the boundaries between different significations, evoking mixed emotions between images of the attractive and the disgraced, between object and subject.

1.2.1 Methods

The task set for this research - to investigate media constructions of addiction - implied a process of systematic investigation following the general principles of grounded theory. The first step was to collect the data, from which I proceeded to identify the dimensions to be analysed and to form the categories that I compared to provide the basis for my theorisation.

In both the quantitatively and the qualitatively oriented investigations my main approach to grouping the discursive formations surrounding the idea of addiction can best be described as a process of identifying frames. A frame is an abstract principle, tool, or “schemata” of interpretation that works through media texts to structure social meaning, constituting the organising idea in how matters are viewed (Reese 2003). The theme of addiction, identified according to the system of criteria, can be viewed as channelling certain general ideological and meaning-based stances that are framed by the media discourse. “Frame” refers to the particular perspective applied to bracket or mark off something as one thing rather than another.

The terms themes, frames and discourses allow me to account for the way in which I have worked with my material in the four different studies. These three notions can be taken to represent the different layers of my approach. The layer of investigating themes of addiction concerns all ideas grouped together and associated with the phenomenon as a cultural unit (Eco 1979). My investigations within the layer of frames, then, concern the perspectives we apply when speaking of the ideas of the theme layer. Finally, investigations of the discourse layer are concerned with the narrative and journalistic techniques employed for “how” we speak when we speak
about the idea we are framing. Altheide (1996) describes the relationship between discourse and frame by saying that they “work together to suggest a taken-for-granted perspective for how one might approach a problem” (Altheide 1996, 31). There is no doubt that these layers are to some extent interwoven and inseparable, and some readers might firmly reject the definitions I have offered here. However, I find them extremely useful for my purposes of showing how the four studies ascribed different weight to different elements in the material. Themes can be viewed as primarily related to the ideas of addiction, frames to how those ideas are framed, and discourse to the techniques employed when expressing themes within certain frames. Language and meaning are implicated in all these layers. The investigation of language use is assumed to convey a cultural content, as all patterns of signification are cultural conventions (Eco 1979, 32; 61).

When I speak of formats I refer to what makes “our familiar experiences familiar and recognizable as one thing rather than another” (Altheide 1996, 12). We are able to instantly tell the difference between different genres and channels (articles, TV shows, websites, etc.). Newspaper formats include letters to the editor, short press items, interviews and reports. They can be grouped in different manners, according to focus, length, appearance, etc. Genres invite audiences to take particular stances that imply their social roles as actors in the possible world being represented (Bruhn Jensen 1995, 65). Although both study one and study two provided overviews of developments with respect to reporting formats, the investigation did not extend to a detailed analysis of differences between reporting formats. The main focus was directed to the concept and the ideational dimension of the phenomenon.

Study one (Hellman 2010a) was concerned with all three layers of investigation – themes, frames and discourses. I performed a qualitative reading of the material and a quantitatively oriented content analysis, both of which identified certain tendencies in the reporting. The overall purpose of the quantitative part of the study was to provide an overview of how the reporting had changed in terms of its themes and the framing of the problems. Which addictions were reported on at different times? How were the problems perceived in different periods? When I began my investigations I had no idea whether they would reveal variances over time. One important outcome was that I was able to show that as regards the theme layer of investigations, the number of addiction-themed texts increased significantly in the latter period (1990s and 2000s) as compared to the earlier period (1968, 1970s and 1980s). The idea was obviously achieving greater penetration and its connotations were expanding. This expansion was evident from the significant increase in reporting on new types of behaviours described or signified as addictions during the latter period of the study. It would not have been possible for me to see this had I limited my investigations to counting themes and categories of the “core six” addictions only.
As regards the framing of the problems, there was a clear tendency in later texts towards framings from the individual’s perspective. The introduction and expansion of the idea of addiction seemed to go hand in hand with such an individualised perspective. This was also corroborated by the qualitative investigations aimed at discerning broader trends in the level of focus, the genres applied in addiction coverage (articles, letters to the editor, etc.) and the general developments over time in the nature of reporting (reporting styles, appearance of the newspaper). In this approach some trends were identified that were considered relevant to the overall developments. Reporting during the second drug wave in particular was identified as journalism that strengthened the individualisation and risk evaluation trend.

The frames recognized in study one were viewed as culturally shared, otherwise they would have been neither significant nor communicable. My primary hypothesis was, thus, that cultural perceptions of the problems had changed. This emphasis on the theme layer was important if the analysis was to contribute to the scholarly literature on popular perceptions of addiction problems. The evidence pointed at a perceived increased relevance of the phenomenon in the public discussion. The original plan for my study was to use this material and discourse-based analysis: in my inquiries I neither delved into the various explanations nor did I look into such dimensions as reception or production conditions, although I did make some suggestions for sense-making and aimed at contextualising the trends observed.

As the objective of study two was to identify the bodies of values and beliefs underlying the texts, its focus turned to meaning and language. In order to draw meaningful conclusions from my observations, I needed to look more closely at smaller corpuses of data. I chose to investigate four corpuses of texts from 1972, 1982, 1992 and 2002, in all a sample of 34 (=N) texts representing different synchronic strokes. The first analysis was a basic semiotic investigation. I identified signs and expressions in the texts from different years and observed how they differed with respect to possible meaning-making. At the same time I also tried to determine possible paradigm sets underlying the use of signs and formats. What was the reader invited to understand by the application of certain signs and meanings? In the discussion of article two I have attempted to look at the ideological functions of the choices of signs and the reality claims made by the texts. The importance of accounting for the logical relationship between assumptions and data as well as for the criteria applied in interpreting the results becomes obvious in such kinds of semiotic investigations. The research claims validity based on the extended descriptions of the observations made of the material and the processes in which the conclusions were drawn.

The difficulties of investigating a phenomenon that is not named, but often merely
implied, became obvious in the second study. This analysis also stimulated thought about the political dimensions in the designation and portrayal of the problems. The discussion in the second article suggested a correlation between the developments observed and a trend towards self-governance. Although both study one and two produced overviews of the different text genres applied and reporting trends for the formats employed, my focus was on offering an overall representation of the phenomenon rather than full accounts of the different genres. A numerical analysis of the frequency of different reporting genres would have been impossible due to the small number of units of analysis.

On the same corpus of texts (N=34) I also performed a frame analysis concerning i) the domain in society to which the texts ascribe addiction problems, ii) the sources of knowledge on addiction used in the texts, and iii) the level of courses of events accounted for in the texts. Three simple questions were asked to determine whether certain regimes of meaning could be discerned: where is addiction, who has knowledge of addiction, and on what level are the problems situated? The results from both the language use investigations and the frame analysis were gathered together to gain a comprehensive image of the developments. Performing such an analysis of the possible meaning-making of the developments I had been examining was in itself a result of the developments I was trying to capture. The researcher’s position in construing the conceptions she is trying to capture within the conventionalised paradigm she is trying to describe is an inevitable paradox of such an intellectual project. Overall, study two operates mainly on the layers of language use, framings and discourses, and their implications for understanding the problems. The underlying view is that these layers are important for the circulation of the meaning of addiction.

In studies three and four, my focus moves away from the overall development of addiction reporting and its cultural seating over time to investigating what and how the addiction theme performs in a certain material. The first items under investigation are fourteen (N=14) texts on drug use from HS from the year 2000, when the Finnish press was paying increasing attention to the drug question due to the escalation of drug use during the second drug wave. The investigations can be viewed as being mainly concerned with discourses on how notions of freedom and control are tied to certain views on the users’ agency. Taking departure from Beck & Beck-Gernsheim’s (2006) notions of risk and danger biographies, which are described as states of risk calculation on the one hand (risk biographies) and states in which such calculations are no longer possible (danger biographies), on the other, my aim was to discern how the texts create interpretive packages (Gamson & Modigliani 1989) of light drug users versus heavy drug users. I started by analysing the material as a whole with a view to identifying discourse practices. I then listed
statements appearing in the texts (n=5) that I considered to represent interpretive packages of risk and danger.

My abstract framing of the analysis provides quite a rewarding perspective on the contents of the texts, considering that on the layer of themes and frames something has already been said about Finnish press accounts of illicit drug use (e.g. Hakkarainen 1992; Törrönen 2001). The study suggests that the notion of addiction goes hand in hand with certain self-governing stances, and it shows how the texts under study produce unequal images of the subjects of risk compared to those of danger. Through the different discourse techniques applied in the HS texts, the newspaper channelled different views on different types of drug use, connecting some to open-ended risk assessment scenarios and others to danger scenarios, in which the door to risk calculation has been closed.

The investigations in study four into Internet tabloid texts on celebrity addiction can be viewed against a corpus of scholarly work within the field of cultural studies, which discusses addiction as a cultural condition (e.g. Sedwick Kosowski 1992, Klein 1993, Farell & Redfield 1999, Alexander & Roberts 2003). These reflections have highlighted fundamental questions about subjectivity, ontology and desire, as well as political issues of representation, identification and control (Alexander & Roberts 2003, xi). Their emphasis is on how the phenomenon works in culture, and specifically in products of high culture. The aim of my colleague and myself was to ground the initiative within a similar framework, emphasising that the meaning of addiction is ascribed in the public identities, styles and images of celebrity women’s narratives, women who stretch the cultural boundaries between healthy, normal and pathological behaviour. In contrast to the methods adopted in selecting the texts for the first three studies, we here approached the concept of addiction in a looser manner as being defined and described in the blogospheres under study. Each text mentioned or implied addiction problems among celebrities. In the end we decided to concentrate on 50 texts we selected on the basis that they presented certain entities of the narratives. Many more texts were read in order to discern the narratives during the first rounds of analyses.

An accelerating global celebrity culture has recently provided scholars with new sites for inquiries into all the fantasy and escapist tendencies it radiates. The most basic imperative of celebrity culture has been described as ultimately material: it encourages consumption at every level of society (Cashmore 2006, 269). If addiction and consumption culture go hand in hand (see Bjerg 2008), we can see the most radical public expressions of both in celebrity tabloid narratives. Addiction becomes a consumable style in a consumption-permeated fantasy lifestyle in a similar way as drug use has turned into a “whim of fashion” - a fashion accessory. (Shapiro 1999, 33).
The level of celebrity deviance required to attract media attention is significantly lower, since celebrity status in itself has already created a threshold of meaningfulness (Jewkes 2004, 49). The threshold between private and public behaviour is lower and “ordinary” boundaries between substance use of a private and public nature are consequently blurred. Room (2010) summarizes some ways in which the privacy of different types of substance use varies widely between substances and between cultures. Drinking alcohol in public is acceptable in Western societies, and intoxicated use is fairly widely accepted, although heavy and excessive drinking less so. Drug use is mostly limited to the private sphere, but in some youth cultures and party scenes it is accepted and serves certain social functions. Nevertheless, addiction or compulsive use is always private, and not accepted as public behaviour (Room 2010). Here we can see that celebrity tabloids are actively “outing” a sphere of life which is kept private among “ordinary people” and which is marginalised in news reporting.

Celebrity addictions constitute symbols and narrative ingredients necessary for the ascription of certain meanings to the celebrity’s habitus in the tabloids’ tales. Our investigations were confined to activity in the layers of themes and discourses. We aimed to make explicit the operations that articulate a particular meaning of the addiction theme and ideas in the stories. Knowledge about such meaning-making requires the use of interpretive and hermeneutic approaches which resemble procedures of literary analysis. The texts were first read with the question in mind of how addiction is used as an ingredient in the narratives. We then proceeded to marshalling some basic stories and events. Next, we identified and considered the most important dimensions and elements in view of the role of the addiction theme in the datasets. Then we returned to the texts to locate specific evidence and passages related to the tendencies that we had identified. The reading of the material was conducted in an ongoing dialogue with theoretical texts regarding body, gender and addiction in culture. From a mosaic of theories we distilled some (reflexivity, blurring boundaries, performance of gender) that we found useful for describing and explaining our observations.

The methodological tools we apply in our analysis are somewhat blunt: we are performing more of a critical reading of our material, which means that our conclusions regarding the layers of ideas and themes will appear somewhat unsynchronised with the actual empirical observations. This lack of synchronism turned the study into a large and challenging undertaking. The importance of study four in relation to my other

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7 We are not explicitly employing a Bourdieuan concept of habitus, but its description as a sort of “feel for the game” is an understanding that fits well with the styles of living out one’s addiction observed in the celebrity stories.
studies is that it allowed me to see certain important symbolic content that complemented the newspaper images. The genre of Internet tabloids provided access to internalised and very intimate views on the heavy drug user. For example, the story of Amy Winehouse provided an internalised perspective of a close relative or a co-dependent – if we go back to the description at the beginning of this thesis of public representations as part of the process through which we gain a sense of our subjectivity, and those of “Others” – these images might play an even more important role than the dailies in shaping our subjectivity in relation to addiction.

Turning now to the purpose of my thesis as a whole, its attempt to analyse cultural images of addiction as a complex system makes it first and foremost a structuralist project. I analyse the ways in which addiction is construed, viewing my material in a semiotically informed manner as a system of signs that contains interrelated meanings. This kind of approach is grounded in the belief that the media participate in the creation of our perceived social reality in an ongoing, dynamic process. One way of characterising or grouping different types of investigations in the field of media and communication is to view the level of importance ascribed to language use as a creator of meaning. This dissertation is situated rather close to the far end of ascribing great importance to language. Nevertheless, it has also produced quite positivistic investigations, such as the content analysis in study one.

As I have already mentioned, the theoretical points of departure leading up to and motivating my research are rooted in theories on modernity, in the belief that there has occurred a breach or change in modern life. I look at how the concept, the idea of addiction, has developed in the social context of communicating public messages about that idea. In order to grasp such a development and to explain and support my observations, I must pick and mix knowledge from across the social sciences and humanities. There is a small desynchronisation between the theoretical focus on the texts’ functions on the one hand, and the choice to focus on the content of the text, on the other. In chapter 2 I will try to address this by discussing the roles of media content and genres as well as some ideological assumptions underlying the developments.

In the core study on the HS material (Hellman 2009; 2010a; 2010b), the procedure for defining and discerning the addiction theme in the media texts differed from our analysis of the web tabloids (Hellman & Rantala unpublished). In the core study I started out by constructing a synthetic framework of criteria (as explained at the beginning of section 1.2). The material defined as “addiction reporting” was chosen on the basis of this framework. Each text was assessed to determine whether it could be placed within the addiction category, i.e. the prototype developed by the synthetic selection criteria. In the end, the interpretation of the different criteria relied on the
researcher’s perceptions, although three independent coders were recruited to perform a lightweight reliability check on the material selection (see Hellman 2010a). Although I have strived at an open-minded approach one can say that the process of discerning the theme in the material (i.e. the criteria system) as well as the themes, framings and discourses was imposed on the material. I construed an idea or description of the phenomenon that I was looking for and then examined how the reporting handled this idea.

In the qualitative approaches I created my designs and used terminology that I considered appropriate for each task and that I thought offered the potential to contribute to the construction of meaningful “quantities”. Nevertheless, my approaches have inherent as well as instrumental value. Embedded in them are certain assumptions, such as those based on research I have already conducted, for instance to explore the three aspects of the framing analysis in study two (Hellman 2009) and to examine the second drug wave material in study three (Hellman 2010b). The overall objective of clarifying values, language and meanings within a panoramic view of the developments required the dominance of qualitative approaches. The methods applied in each of the four studies are also described in the articles themselves.

1.2.2 Main results

In addition to a significant increase in addiction reporting over time, the research results highlighted four main trends. Firstly, HS addiction reporting has transformed over time, from outside portrayals of social problems and problems of marginalised groups to descriptions from within that concentrate on the problems and their sufferers. I have named this trend the *internalisation* of addiction reporting (Hellman 2009; 2010a).

Secondly, in addressing the concept of addiction, the research identified a trend of *conventionalisation* over time. This can be described as a naturalisation of the idea of addiction, evident mainly in language use (Hellman 2009; 2010a). It shows that addiction has become a familiar idea – a natural part of people’s lives – to the extent that references to addictions need to add no explanations as to what it means and implies.

Thirdly, with respect to the cultural climate surrounding contemporary reporting on addiction, it appears that the idea of *self-governance* is associated with the “desire to take substances”, whereas no such competence is associated with a compulsive or pathological need. The perspective on addiction begins to diverge from that of taming the “Other”. Instead, the media begin to communicate the perspective of an
individual problem holder who needs to govern her/his own behaviour. This is observed both in the diachronic investigations (Hellman 2009) and in the analysis of the ways that drug use was portrayed in the year 2000 (Hellman 2010b). The individual subject is viewed as being responsible for his/her own body and life trajectory, and hence also to some extent for crossing over to an addicted state.

In study four the theme of addiction is approached as a multilayered cultural symbol, a cultural sign that conveys certain ideas. The phenomenon is used for different narrative purposes, and the constructs attached to these ideas shift in interplay with different meanings having different roles in the tabloid narratives of female celebrities (Hellman & Rantala unpublished). The narrative ingredient of addictive behaviour becomes a way of stirring up drama and reflexivity and is even expressed as sort of a fashion style in the tales of supermodel Kate Moss.

To a large extent the above trends coincide and overlap, constituting preconditions for one another’s existence. Below, I will briefly discuss the results and contextualise them in the theoretical framework of the overall study. An overview of the trends is presented at the end of this chapter in Table 1.

I mapped the themes, formats and frequency of addiction reporting in the HS material from 1968 to 2006, interpreting general changes in themes, framing, discourse and formats. In the content analysis, or what could be described as a quantitatively oriented frame analysis, I looked at the following variables: (1) type of addiction dealt with, (2) who the addict was, and (3) views on the type of problem as portrayed in the text. Study one gives empirical evidence of a significant increase in addiction reporting since the 1990s. At the same time, the concept of addiction expands and becomes somewhat inflated. As the concept and its wording are introduced, the associated idea is obviously applied more often and spreads in language use.

Based on my diachronic reading of the newspaper pieces (N=432), I discuss the contemporaneous changes in HS reporting formats and how this reporting has moved from general concerns over social problems to a more personal domain. Addiction reporting started out as rare glimpses into misery and social problems in the 1970s and 1980s, taking a turn in the mid-1990s towards a more inclusive idea of the addiction phenomenon as involving potentially anybody. This movement is discussed in the light of semiosis, the cultural forms of media expressions. The earlier reporting is identified as placing reality, and with it issues of excessive alcohol and drug use, on an explicit agenda. It addresses addictions as a social and political problem, with addicts representing deviance. They are the “Other” in society, whose newsworthiness lies in a general concern about the existence of such
groups. The angle of reporting is the “normalcy” of the non-addicted state. Contemporary reporting, for its part, articulates the theme of addiction in a tone more reminiscent of the premises and procedures that serve to orient social interaction in everyday life: it represents and incorporates agency and structure like a semiosis of everyday action.

I have demonstrated such a shift in the semiosis of the newspaper texts by using Bruhn Jensen’s (1995) concept of time-in and time-out, well aware that his semiotics of mass communication, from which I borrowed these notions, is not primarily concerned with such a shift. Nevertheless, Bruhn Jensen captures a difference in the nature of semiosis in the complex dialectic between a public discourse and the conversational discourse of everyday life, which I find worth reflecting upon in the light of what I have called a tabloidisation and individualisation of the HS content. Tabloidisation is reflected primarily in a shift in journalistic styles towards “softer” stories and personalised angles as compared to the dominating political news coverage of the 1970s and 1980s. The result of such a shift is a blurred division between public and private in the news material, one concrete outcome being the mix of micro and macro perspectives on addiction problems as observed in study two (Hellman 2009). During the reading of my newspaper sample I observed in HS a general increase in soft news, entertainment and emotional reporting styles, as well as changes in the layout structure that makes content more easily accessible. This is part of a broader international trend: daily newspapers formats have evolved in this way over time and are in constant flux (e.g. Nieminen & Pantti 2005, 182).

The above changes in newspaper content and formats clearly attest to a shift towards a new perspective in reporting. While the earlier texts deal with Giddens’s question of “How shall I live?”, on an overarching level, or in the framework of Bruhn Jensen’s notion of a time-out discourse, positioning ourselves in the existential relation to deviance, subsequent reporting moves on the micro level, is more pragmatically oriented and takes a more personal tone. Previous texts formulated agency in groups of people without addiction problems on the one hand, and in groups of people with addiction problems, on the other. In the more recent texts, the diversities of life choices and technical circumstances in living space in relation to the addiction problems flow from within the individual problem holder, assuming that the matter relates more or less directly to the lives of all members of society.

1 I use the word “agency” mainly in its general sense of the capacity of an agent to act in the world. In media research it has also been used to describe how figures are verbalised and visualised in ways that tone down certain elements and emphasise others, see e.g. Chouliaraki L. (2007) Spectacular ethics: On the television footage of the Iraq war. In: Chouliaraki L. (Ed.) (2007) The Soft Power of War, pp. 129-144. Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Philadelphia, USA: John Benjamins Publishing.

9 Bruhn Jensen’s (1995) concepts are not to be confused with the time-out term applied in alcohol and drug research for describing intoxication and celebration as taking time-out from everyday life.
This can be viewed as an outcome of a heightened awareness of the nature and frequency of the problems portrayed. It can also be interpreted as an articulation of a general individualisation in society in which the individual – i.e. any individual – and her/his life project and body project can take centre stage in media portrayals. As Bird (2000) comments, “it becomes equally valid to pay attention to any and all personal views, no matter how uninformed, bigoted, or irrational” (ibid., 225).

Study two (Hellman 2009) looks at the same time period, working on two interrelated levels: it investigates the diachronic developments in language use in the addiction texts as well as the understanding of addiction. The latter is done by asking where the texts situate the problems, who is considered to possess knowledge on addiction, and on what level the courses of events are discussed. Two main tendencies emerge. To begin with, there is a conventionalisation, or a naturalisation, of the addiction concept, which demonstrates a familiarity with the concept on a semantic level. The other main tendency observed is the growth of support for the internalisation trend.

To find the cause of the conventionalisation process we need to turn to the discursive form of the messages. The conventionalisation of discourses, in turn, needs intervention, the support of codes (Hall 1980), such as reporting formats, cultural praxis of terminology, etc. The signs that are identified as constituting an addiction vocabulary are open to articulation with wider discourses and meanings on their “associative”, connotative level (ibid.). It is at this level that the discursive change in language appears in the interaction between culture and society. According to Barthes (1999 [1964]), the connotative levels of signifiers are in close communication with culture, knowledge and history, and it is through them that the environmental world invades the linguistic and semantic system (ibid.). The primary invasion pointed out in two of the studies (Hellman 2009; Hellman 2010b) is the ideology of freedom as the structuring idea for governance. I discuss the consequences of this stance for views on the obligations of individuals to take care of their own body projects and psyches.

Media narratives of self-autonomy in relation to addiction contain structures relevant to understanding the definition of failure and success in contemporary life. The vast majority of people are rational, freely embracing the consensus of values. In the case of substance intake and other potentially problematic repetitive habits, the underlying values in the later texts tend to imply that everything is permitted so long as it is fun and causes no harm. The exceptions – the “actual” addicts – are a small number of individuals who are determined by psychological, and sometimes social, circumstances. The press pieces on harm reduction interventions in study three (Hellman 2010b) further emphasised the view that the role of the state is to
assimilate the “real” addicts from the margins into mainstream society. The same can be said to hold true for journalism: media stories of addiction problems assimilate the problems into public awareness and underpin their perceived relevance for society at large. The more personal tone of the reporting could serve to create a general solidarity and understanding of the user’s perspective. However, I argue that the material on severely addicted heavy drug users, although discussing ways of supporting these people, contributes to a strong dichotomy between those who are in control and the deviant out of control. The drug users portrayed in the stories are thus in unequal positions. Reporting that discusses the severely hooked does not address the situation of the affected person from within the problems, but rather from a position of distance. There seems to be less space for the perspective of the severely addicted than for the risk estimation discussion surrounding lighter drug use.

The investigation in study three concentrated on notions of governmentality and underlying views of freedom and mastery. Drug users are, firstly, portrayed as belonging to a self-governing majority who are in control and who make their own independent choices within a general contract of civility. They are represented by stories on recreational users. The second group of drug users consists of those who fall outside this contract of civility, whose problems are addressed by new interventions in accordance with new views on fundamental human rights and user needs. These drug users can be positioned at opposite poles of control and loss of control over the addiction process. Both images are needed in order to draw dividing lines between fun and tragedy, control and loss of control, and between life and death in the new myth of illicit drug use evident in the year 2000. The study supports suggestions that discourses on addictive consumption are embedded within wider socio-historical processes of governance and control (Reith 2004). In this layer of ideas, addiction functions once again as a threat or a disorder to which normative and “ordinary life” is compared. The question remains how these mediated views differ from the earlier ones, which more explicitly articulate boundaries between “us” and “them”, between right and wrong ways of existing. The aim is very much a certain civilised competence, but a key difference seems to be the way that the problems are framed as problems of the individual, rather than of society at large. However, study three somewhat contradicts the overall trends described in studies one and two towards a more internalised perspective. It shows how this individualised perspective is not applied to all potential or actual addicts, as the first two studies would suggest. The import and penetration of the concept of addiction (riippuvuus) into the media texts may have brought along certain views on the problem, and these seem to correlate not only with the general societal framing losing ground, but also with the individual perspective of the severely addicted subject: when addiction becomes a common good in the symbolic, including
language use, it follows the logics of all common goods. It is only employed and portrayed in ways that are of interest and relevance to the vast, “normal” majority.

The investigations of studies two and three demonstrated that certain ideologies underlie news material on addiction. The most obvious unequal power relation was found to lie between a “normal”, free and well-behaving majority, citizens whose agency is in control, and the addicts, who have entered another state. Danish sociologist Ole Bjerg (2008) has described the shift between the two states by comparing it to Marxist circulations of objects. A precondition for addictions is that humans handle their desires with capitalist circulations of objects, money, bodies and goods. These objects can slide into circulations of another nature, of a pathological kind, or mania. This displaced circulation of objects does something to humans, and constitutes a (capitalist) precondition for addictions, explains Bjerg (2008, 15). ¹⁰

Using Bjerg’s image of object circulations, we can argue that the media texts under study portray, discuss, describe and define a circulation of a pathological and problematic type and the many possible crossing-overs to this state. They also mediate different attributes and circumstances connected to such states, and by so doing inevitably deliver governing views on normality. Some forms of activities within “normal” circulation also become named as “addictions” in more metaphorical applications of the addiction vocabulary. But there still remains a clear boundary between an in-control state and the addiction state of a “seriously” displaced circulation, where the logic, the means and focus are related in a different way than in “normal” everyday life. In view of this, the extended addiction concept does not correlate with its connotative definition. Although all people can be addicts, we are not equal with respect to the threats. There are still boundaries to what states the core idea of a serious state of dependency can be attached to on a deeper connotative level, although the surface terminology has been inflated. This would make sense regarding the frequent ironic or humorous twists of the “looser” metaphorical use of addiction terminology on the superficial layer of language use, compared to the worrying variant reporting on increased hard drug use, for example. Furthermore, the limited portrayals of the individual perspective from the point of view of the seriously addicted noted in study three indicate that indeed, clear boundaries in the ideas surrounding the phenomenon are also drawn in the contemporary material. The way of signifying the problems reflects the circumstance that some addictions are considered more basic, more worrying and more serious in our understandings. Dependency on drugs, alcohol and tobacco is still strongly

framed as a “real” and “serious” problem, whereas there are almost no descriptions of serious states of new types of addictions, most notably gambling. It is possible that material on gaming and gambling dependencies has only begun to receive more conspicuous attention since 2006.

Study four (Hellman & Rantala unpublished) additionally shows that the public discussion is not only drenched with experience, but it also very much “plays with cultural symbols” (Beck 1994, 31). Beck (1994) says: “It is not an excess of rationality, but the shocking lack of rationality, the prevailing irrationality, which explains the ailment of industrial modernity” (ibid., 33). The lack of rationality and its newsworthiness is indeed the main ingredient in the “junk food news” (Jensen 2001) investigated in study four. The term describes quite well the web tabloid genre that serves to entertain, sensationalise and emphasise or exaggerate gossip in a quick flow. At a time when the concept is becoming conventionalised and inflated and its cultural symbolisms are in flux, the coverage of the phenomenon in a bold and outspoken genre offers added value to insights into the mental constructions surrounding it. Not only does this format channel contempt of celebrity lifestyles of intoxication and substance use, but the stories also communicate images of “the true tragedy” – a perspective absent, and maybe even regarded as outdated, in contemporary “serious” newsreporting.

We examined three Internet celebrity stories: those of pop singers Amy Winehouse and Britney Spears, and fashion model Kate Moss (Hellman & Rantala unpublished). The article constitutes a narrative interpretation of these episodes in the celebrity tabloids and their meanings. Each of the three stories represented different fields of popular culture as well as different styles in music. The various addictions or addiction-related deviances represented in the narratives were connected to different images and perceptions of that state.

Star agency has been most famously discussed by Richard Dyer (1998, 1986), who argued that stars performed ideological functions, representing dominant or oppositional views on sexuality, gender and race. Since then, Geraghty (2000) has divided stars into different types according to their public roles: the professional, the performer and the celebrity, the latter being mostly famous for her/his persona in the public eye. All three of the story subjects examined in our study fall into the celebrity category. Nevertheless, study four is not primarily concerned with stardom per se, but more with what the narrative ingredient of addiction performs in the tales about the stars. Societies have long used alcohol consumption and its effects for purposes of differentiating, symbolising and regulating gender roles (see e.g. Ravndal 2008; Obot & Room 2005). In recent decades, however, many societies have experienced a trend towards decreasing gender differences in drinking.
behaviour. A common hypothesis about such convergence in drinking patterns is that women now have more opportunities to perform traditionally male roles, which has enabled and encouraged women to increase their drinking, with adverse consequences (Bergmark 2004; Bloomfield et al. 2001; see also Obot & Room 2005). The thought of a wider repertoire of gender performance also underlies in part the conclusions drawn in article four, in which we claim that the range of media images of female transgression has increased and that we are witnessing a movement towards a new variety of images on the level of the symbolic.

Williams (2007) notes that in studies of female stars, the notion of star agency is clearly demarcated between those who have “too much” control and those who do not have enough control over their careers and lives (ibid., 112). In a study on news discourses about pop star Karen Carpenter’s and Princess Diana’s eating disorders, Saukko (2008) discovers that the portrayals were politically heavily invested and the representations constructed notions of disordered and nondisordered ways of being a woman. She also points out that there is a lack of research into contextual factors within which these images become meaningful and acquire their effects (ibid., 59). It is often speculated that media coverage of female compulsions tends to stir up women’s anxieties about not being strong and independent enough or adaptable and caring enough. Similar politics of representations are also discussed by Furedi (2004, 123), who has interpreted media images of celebrity addicts like Kate Moss, Princess Diana and Kurt Cobain as signalling a state of vulnerability as a norm. The investigation carried out in study four partly contradicts such a stance in that it also discerned new, more varying in-control images of female transgression. This framing has been called an addiction feminist paradigm, within which scholarly work by Ettore (1992) and Friedman and Alicea (1995), for instance, has aimed to make women visible and to avoid pathologising. The main thesis is that taking drugs, going out and having fun is not only a means of experiencing pleasure for women, but can also be liberating and a form of resistance to male domination (Thorsen 2010). Likewise, study four showed that Internet tabloids constitute a field where addiction is invested with meaning that can be viewed as sort of a liberating script.

In our article we emphasise the reflexive dimension of Internet and blog reporting on female celebrity addicts. By reflexivity, we mean shifting meaning relations concerning addiction in the material, ultimately a reflexivity whose focal point is the agency of the subject portrayed. The underlying stance is that such reflexivity has a function with respect to the meaning communicated in relation to notions of addiction. In this sense our use of the term “reflexivity” is less specific and comes closer to the understanding of Beck et al. (1994) rather than to conceptualisations of reflexivity as a process in which the text calls attention to its own status as a fabrication. We view reflexivity as something that is achieved by the text’s multi-
positioning object-subject and through the blurring of boundaries between the states of life and death, control and out of control, etc. On the other hand, we note that the more reflexivity is pronounced, the more the narrator’s voice shines through; thus the notion of reflexivity represents both the reflexive ingredients and activities in the stories per se and the narrator’s positions in relation to the stories.

One of the findings of our study was that the more detailed and intimate the coverage of the addiction process, the more unclear was the main character’s subject position. The main characters alternated between villain and victim, subject and object. The reporting on Amy Winehouse’s whereabouts, representing her as seriously addicted, shows signs of new, more complex internalised and perhaps even realistic views on the nature of addiction. Bodily symbols had an important function in these stories. The subject and object positions of the main characters varied depending on their bodily and intoxication styles as well as on the role they were assigned in the narrative as a whole. Style, in the Moss story in particular, was associated with being on the edge, playing with values of health, as well as with those of life and death.
### Table 1. Main trends and their expressions as observed in the four studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TREND</th>
<th>EXPRESSIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INTERNALISATION</strong></td>
<td>Addictions are portrayed from within the problem.</td>
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|                            | * increasingly detailed physiological and psychological accounts from the individual’s perspective  
* familiarity in relation to addiction and uses of the concept  
* media texts give guidance to the individual in an addictive society |
| **CONVENTIONALISATION**    | Addiction is referred to frequently and naturally in language.                                                                                                                                              |
|                            | * an expanded concept of addiction use, and terminology having many different expressions and signs  
* addiction concept used in new contexts  
* addiction applied to describe almost any repetitive behaviour or need to behave in such a way |
| **SELF-GOVERNANCE**        | Addiction problems are framed by the idea that individuals are responsible for their own lives, bodies, psyches, etc.                                                                                         |
|                            | * view that consumers are to take prime responsibility for their own choices, with notions of personal freedom as an underlying value  
* dichotomy between “competent” majority who need no intervention from any authority and “non-competent” minority who remain outside this contract of civility |
| **CULTURAL SYMBOL**        | Addictions constitute cultural signs and expressions of certain constructs in the cultural imagination.                                                                                                       |
|                            | * addiction works as a symbolic discursive force that increases multiple subject and object positions  
* addiction is used for entertaining and fictionalising, as a narrative tool in tabloid stories  
* theme of addiction causes turbulence in popular stories on celebrities |
This thesis is concerned with a particular item (addiction) on the news agenda and how it develops over time. Knowledge about the dynamics of a single issue makes a valuable contribution to the “how” and “why” of agenda setting. How is the increased salience of an issue reflected in reporting? What societal and journalistic trends correlate with such a development? This chapter discusses the roles and performances of the media and media texts. First, I comment briefly on the materials that have been analysed here. This I do by, firstly, presenting rather established and perhaps not very complex views on media roles in general. I then discuss the roles that the media play in an addictive society. I problematise the theoretical stances underlying my investigations and crystallise certain views that reflect the present enterprise as a whole. In conclusion, I suggest a connection between digitalised culture and the perceived relevance of the notion of addiction. The purpose of this short sequence is to suggest a contribution to future studies supporting certain trends in the sociology of addiction. I want to suggest not only that the mass media are players in the symbolic, but I also want to recognize the marks that technological progress in this area might have left regarding the “closeness” of the phenomenon of addiction.

In my analysis, the shift over time in HS agenda setting (individual perspective, more addictions reported on, etc.) is explained by a change in the value climate, including trends such as individualisation, self-reflexivity and self-governance, but also an orientation in journalistic reporting towards more personal tones and formats. In section 2.1 I discuss the functions of different reporting genres and styles, and in section 2.2 I move on to discuss some ideological aspects related to the role of the mass media.

A basic function of media representations in channelling and supporting the suggested value climate can be described by the notion of attribute agenda setting (McCombs & Reynolds 2009). Both the selection of objects for attention (i.e. different types of addiction problems) and the selection of attributes for picturing these objects (social, personal, untreatable, etc.) have powerful agenda-setting roles. The attributes that journalists and, subsequently, members of the public have in mind when they think and talk about the phenomenon of addiction are an important part of our perceptions of the problems, of their social and cultural construction. The news reporting and tabloid texts under study emphasise different aspects to varying degrees. Certain attributes of different addictions (personal, social, good, bad, lethal, etc.) become compelling arguments for their distinctiveness and general salience. The general developments observed in the core studies of the HS material fit comfortably with the media’s basic agenda-setting role. By establishing a salience in
such a way that an issue becomes the focus of public attention, thought and perhaps even of action, the media are involved in the formation of public opinion (ibid.).

A society where addictions are viewed as a common phenomenon affecting potentially all people is one where the mass media employ a certain type of reporting style. The application of a more individualised and internalised perspective correlates with the more widely spread symbolic good of addiction, which in turn can be explained by the perceived proximity to the matters portrayed. The terms “obtrusive” and “unobtrusive” are sometimes employed to describe the closeness to a certain issue, obtrusive being that which we experience personally. The need for orientation is believed to be greater for obtrusive issues, since they affect the subject personally. McCombs & Reynolds (2009) describe how stories with low psychological distance – e.g. events that could easily happen to a member of the audience – raises the perceived salience of certain issues. My argument based on the study results is that when the framing of the addiction theme becomes one of everyday life involving potentially anyone in society, its salience is heightened and the amount of reporting increases significantly. And this also works the other way round: when addiction reporting increases, the public will become more aware of these problems in their own lives. The transmission of culture and of certain social perceptions is thus to a great extent linked to the agenda-setting process. A heightened obtrusiveness is generally perceived by the public and by the journalist, and hence becomes further confirmed in the extent and the nature of the reporting.

2.1 Reporting styles and genre differences

My reading of HS over time provided insights into what Fairclough (1995) calls the flux of media practices. The creativity of discursive media practices is usually tied to particular social conditions, i.e. those of change and instability. In a log that I kept during data collection, I recorded observations about changes in the formats and in the visual appearance and content of the newspaper. The log captures some interesting developments and in itself constitutes a mini-study of the evolution of Finnish journalistic climate towards more commercialised and individualised reporting styles and looks. In the 1980s HS was described as a monopoly institution that together with the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE had a monopoly on public debate (Klemola 1981). During the 1990s and 2000s new commercial players began to enter the Finnish media landscape, especially television. The new competition from the commercial media enterprises, globalisation, information technology and commercialisation left its mark on the range of formats and content in the Finnish media market from the 1990s onwards.

The changing media market and new reporting formats are reflected in the different
voices describing and discussing the phenomenon of addiction at different times. If the research material had consisted of a weekly or monthly women’s magazine, the personalised telling voice might have been present from the very outset. As it is, we are witnessing a development in a serious mainstream daily, a development that reflects a general tabloidisation and modernisation in this newspaper’s journalism over time. The “Othering” reporting on marginalized addicts of the 1970s and 1980s feels very much outdated when in the 1990s and 2000s the tone becomes more personal and psy-oriented. The new formats bring us closer to the individual problem holder, although study three demonstrates how discursive boundaries are drawn between competence and non-competence with the ideal assistance of the addiction concept. There is a limit to how far the new reporting can go in terms of openness and empathy; in pieces on heavy drug use the drug users themselves are given only limited exposure in order to exclude their voices as far as possible.

The journalistic mandate and assignment of HS became particularly clear in the light of study three and study four. Study three raised the question as to why HS news coverage failed to give proper coverage of and take stands on the policies adopted to tackle the growing problem of severely addicted illicit drug users (see Hellman 2010b). This lack of engagement also in the more practical side of drug policy interventions can be viewed in the light of a literature that understands the news media as functioning in a relationship with governmental debate and news journalists as having a special relationship to official sources (see e.g. Bennett 1990). The media manufactures consent (Robinson 2005); it upholds a general conformity between the coverage and executive policy interests, which in turn prevents media influence on executive policy.

Another way of understanding the lack of involvement in the above mentioned perspective, as well as the introduction of the recreational/experimental drug user and her line of reasoning in journalistic texts, is seeing it in the context of policy uncertainty. In situations where society is unsure about how to tackle the problems it faces, as in the case of the second drug wave, a window is opened for new types of media narratives on illicit drug use, such as the recreational user’s perspective. Not only the second drug wave, but also the alcohol tax policy turnaround in 2004 and the extensive media debate around the tax cuts in 2003-2004 contributed to escalating policy uncertainty in questions of alcohol and drug use. In this situation, the addiction perspective – an established and generally recognized aspect of alcohol and drug use – may assume an increasingly central role in our understandings of the problems. At times of uncertainty, when confronted with confusing information, we revert to “basic knowledge” and tend to speculate about the motives for new behaviours. At times of policy changes, when different interests are at stake, the addiction label may also serve to give more room for the perspectives of “normal”
people who want to claim their freedom to drink and get drunk – a perspective which potentially represents vast numbers of people in Finnish society. We feel more secure in and at ease with our own recreational use if we know that we do not belong to a group of “problem users” (=addicted persons).

Another possible explanation for the lack of the perspective of the severely hooked in study three lies in the journalistic narrative to be potentially produced from the theme of the actual addiction process and its struggles. Herman and Vervaeck (2001) apply Greimas’ actantial model (object, subject, sender, helper, receiver, opponent) to the case of a person who wants to quit smoking. They point out that in this narrative, one character may play all actant roles: “… the subject is the smoker and his object is quitting. The sender is also the smoker – he himself wants to stop, he himself thinks it is necessary – and the receiver is the smoker as well – he will benefit from giving up. The smoker’s willpower is the helper and his old addiction amounts to the opponent” (ibid., 53). The narrative construct of a good and proper news story is probably better fitted with a success story of quitting an addiction, or a story where someone is clearly victimized by the influences of others. Thus, the growth of the addiction theme in 1990s reporting probably reflects more a demand for the concept and the phenomenon in our cultural imagination than a real growth of interest in the actual situation of the addicted user. The journalistic norms of personalisation, dramatisation and novelty (Boykoff & Boykoff 2007) apply better to certain aspects of the addiction theme than to others, and this will shape the selection and composition of HS news coverage. Turning back to my argument at the beginning of the chapter that when the addiction theme is framed as one that potentially involves anyone in society, it gains added salience and the volume of reporting increases significantly, we find that when the addiction theme enters the realm of the everyday, this is to a large extent on the level of the “banalised” and metaphorical, and perhaps to a lesser degree as a result of serious debates initiated by outspoken and strong agenda-setting forces such as political activist groups or other stakeholders. Nevertheless, a strong self-governance view will sneak into the reporting together with the concept and leave its ideological mark in journalistic texts.

Various factors contribute to change in journalism, including socio-cultural, business-related, technological and professional-normative elements (Heinonen 1999). My analysis in study two of the development of HS reporting over time revealed a clear trend towards personalisation in the journalistic texts examined. This trend has been described as a tendency to downplay the big social, economic or political picture in favour of the human trials and triumphs that sit at the surface of events (Boykoff and Boykoff 2007 citing Bennett 2002). It is believed that news should be about individuals and personalities rather than group dynamics or social
processes; structural or institutional analysis is skipped in favour of personalised stories that stress the trials and tribulations of individuals. We can trace the reasons for these changes in the epistemology of journalism, i.e. in the ways that journalism operates as a knowledge-producing practice. The changes are expressions of changes in the normative order that influences news content, such as norms about the proper role to be taken by the press; the normative constraints of the business side of news organisations, or norms about the journalism profession and the attributes linked with it (Bennett 1996). The forms of the news embody claims about such matters as how journalists think of themselves, their endeavours and the position of journalism in society (Matheson 2004). Evidence of journalistic rules, routines and procedures can be discerned from the layout, style, perspectives and voices of the texts, but also by contrasting the mainstream news reporting to a totally different material and perspective on the same theme.

The switch to a weblog and web tabloid material in study four highlights contrasts between quality and entertainment journalism, between amateur and professional commentaries, between global and national content. The weblogs and tabloid reporting examined in study four can be characterised as online diaries, small entries chronologically organised down from the latest entry. Technically speaking, users log on to their weblogs to add text, hyperlinks, images, audio files and other objects; the software formats the material in HTML, records a date at the top of the entry, and inserts the text at the top of the blog, pushing previous entries down the page (Matheson 2004). The products of these short real time comments have, in relation to classic news journalism, been described as a format that provides opinion and information “as process” rather than “as product” (Matheson 2004). In study four (Hellman & Rantala unpublished) we compare, in a metaphorical manner, the role of these tabloid stories to ancient travelling storytellers who got to see the reactions and received comments from their listeners. Furthermore weblogs are noteworthy for often triggering discussions involving readers and the original author (Baoill 2004). Such intimacy and levelling of roles leads easily to a very personal and opinion-centred tone of voice in the blogosphere. One of the main materials for study four consists of blog inserts by perezhilton.com, updated by Perez Hilton, real name Mario Lavandeira. Podnieks (2009, 68) writes that Hilton is “one of the loudest, most forceful mouthpieces for his generation. His blog is visited about 10-12 million times a day and by some three million unique visitors per month”. In Eatonweb's strengthranking for blogs 2010, Perezhilton.com has a stable rank among the top 10 (see Eatonweb 2010). The blog is often referred to by news media, and Perez Hilton has been named as one of the most influential bloggers in the US.

By studying blog images in study four, we believed we could gain new insights into images of addictive bodies of a specific kind, i.e. the melting pot of
celebrity+woman+addicted. The format of Internet tabloid texts maintains a strong focus on the performance and the aestheticised side of addiction problems. The narratives could be viewed as a kind of hyperreal phenomenon, almost as what Baudrillard (1983) calls a third order simulation, a “real” made up of illusions and phantasms. The images are more than the narratives and problems they symbolise – they become themselves fetishes of addiction, valued by their readers. In many accounts of contemporary cultures as obsessed with intimacy and affect, tabloids, blogs and television reality shows have been ascribed a central role in this development. Koivunen (2001) points out that this interest in affectivity has been fuelled among others by the intensity of large-scale media events such as the death of Princess Diana, the proliferation of reality genres on television, new media interfaces and the strive for interactivity. Although a seemingly banal episode, the head-shaving by pop star Britney Spears can be viewed as the type of large-scale media event that constitutes a point of intersection between celebrity gossip fora and professional news institutions. Although substance use among famous female musicians had been a public topic historically speaking, as in the cases of Billie Holiday and Janis Joplin, it is in the age of the Internet that the messages have received such force that such a haircut statement puts the traditional media market under great pressure to acknowledge the symbolic tensions produced by these kinds of individual transgressive acts.

The negotiations and struggles not to cross over to the “out of control” constitute a bridge between tabloid narratives and the ordinary lives of their readers, a touching ground between the realities of a celebrity and an ordinary person. The fact that new media formats and forms breed certain narratives and meaning-making processes makes them an all the more interesting arena for investigation, providing reflection on differences in images in comparison to other genres. The globalised celebrity tabloids also turned out to be an arena for acknowledging the true tragical aspects and inner struggles of the personal addiction fates – a dimension noticeably absent from HS reporting on the second drug wave in study three. In this way, the tabloids come to channel the perspective of the seriously hooked “through the backdoor”. The role division between “serious” mainstream reporting and such commentaries becomes obvious, and the importance of the role of the tabloids and weblogs should not be underestimated. The reason why we find close-up portrayals of heavy addiction and the everyday struggles of addicted lives in this media format and not in mainstream dailies, lies not only in a story-telling genre that prefers contents describing the intimate, the outrageous and the scandalous. Such images are also bred by the design and the functions of Internet tabloids and blogs, whose process-like information flow is better suited to the narrative of the addiction process. Although they follow certain narrative patterns, the stories are “improvised” on a day-to-day basis in a constant dialogue with the readers, and the audience’s activity
is constantly monitored and measured. Through this ongoing feedback system and direct contact with its users, this arena might also be more sensitive to a perceived relevance of, or feedback activity on certain themes, and also to the functions and pertinence of certain themes in the lives of their audiences. The interactivity together with the immediacy and reach of the web tabloid format makes it a source of choice for celebrity extravaganza. Indeed, it seems that these commentaries have something crucial to offer to our understanding of the changing media images of addiction. In view of their important role of acknowledging and revealing the inner struggles and negotiations of serious addicted states it is, interestingly enough, the HS content that seems to be undergoing a trend of banalisation.

In my analyses I have concentrated on socio-cultural developments and discussed how these might underlie the changes in the contents of the texts. This bridging between specific text contents and more far-ranging cultural changes leaves out many important perspectives and relationships. I have primarily discussed the developments observed over time from a cultural perspective, focusing on questions of value and identity. My investigation is also a selective socio-cultural analysis in that it is concerned only with certain aspects of the changes identified, that is those that I argue are relevant to the phenomenon under study. I will return to these limitations in section 2.2., and will suggest that the bridging between the theoretical and the empirical may be found in the relationship between the psychological and the media.

One aspect that would require further exploration is the ownership of addiction phenomena in different genres and at different times. This could be addressed through content analyses of larger datasets looking at the voices appearing at different times. Study two suggested a very likely trend towards a stronger representation of medical expertise, but in order to receive more empirical support for the variations discerned in this study and to identify other patterns and variations, it is important that this research task is addressed in the future.

2.2 Ideological aspects and the role of the media

The general trends observed in HS reporting reflect broader developments in Finnish culture and in the tone and formats of the Finnish media landscape. These trends and developments are closely interwoven. The shift in the use of discourse types in addiction reporting from a normative to a rather creative mixture of discourses (see Hellman 2009; Hellman 2010a) reflects the broader changes happening in society (Fairclough 1995, 60). The variety of the problems portrayed and the heterogeneity of the reporting formats seen in the more recent material can be taken as evidence of social and cultural contradictions in a society where the idea of addiction has
become widespread and where the concept and its understandings are open to various uses. A hegemony model (see Kellner 1990) might argue that this reveals certain dominant ideological formations and discourses that are reflected in a shifting terrain of consensus, struggle and compromise. Indeed the material under study can be seen as part of a process of economic, political, social and cultural change. One contradiction that could be regarded as symptomatic of an ongoing discursive struggle is that the boundaries of compulsive states are in some senses quite strict (e.g. recreational drug use versus drug addiction in the reporting during the second drug wave), but quite vague as regards the use of addiction terminology, for example. Hence, meaning and discursive action work differently in different layers of the texts. Nevertheless, a superficial mainstreaming and normalising of views on the problems, a tendency to explain them away by a loosely defined notion of addiction in terms of “loss of control over self and behaviour”, contradicts such a suggestion of a struggle over ownership and definition of the problems. The smooth and rapid turnover of social, individual, marginal, everyday and many other types of problems into an addiction discourse suggests a narrowing down of the images or a homogenisation of the representations. The concept – in its new expanded understanding – receives a general cultural resonance without any obvious interference or struggles, with the exception of some voices raised over imprecise terminology. Nevertheless, the changes observed in the diachronic analyses must be connected to some sort of societal change.

The role of a politically unaffiliated and nationally dominant newspaper like HS in construing images of addiction can comfortably be described as agenda-setting. HS journalists determine which problems are to be discussed and how they are to be framed and represented. This is a power position in which language use and changes in language use are integrated. The newspaper’s portrayals of addiction become part of a general mainstreaming of our views on the phenomenon (e.g. Gerbner et al. 1980). The changes in expressions work in accordance, and by negotiating, with a certain cultural context. The change in addiction reporting does not constitute a conscious or outspoken agenda by the producers of media content; rather, it is the result of a certain susceptibility among media professionals to how the problems are to be framed in keeping with ruling conventions.

The notion of framing is useful in seeking to understand the role of the media in the ideologically charged field of addiction problems. We must ask what are the journalists’ principles that give rise to certain ways of expressing the issues that are discussed? What important ideas and symbolic elements emphasise the frames identified in the study? This question should be posed within a systematic study of the underlying ideology and its strategies of representation.
Although this has not been among the main objectives of my research, my examination of the addiction vocabulary has allowed me to compare the competing frames underlying the choices of meaning entities. I argue that a switch from the framing of “alcohol problems” to “alcohol addiction problems” conveys some assumptions and rules about making sense of the world. Individualisation and its associated view of the individual citizen as responsible for governing her/himself was identified as an underlying ideological stance correlating with the frequent appliance of the concept of addiction and its new uses and understandings. Increased adherence to values that define certain matters as matters of free choice, or that define the individual’s happiness, self-development and self-determination as the prime goal of behaviour, leads to an enlargement of the free-choice space of values and behaviour and will inevitably lead to value fragmentation (Halman & Pettersson 1995). This is very much supported by the analysis in study three showing how borders to accepted and non-accepted illicit drug use are discursively negotiable. Nevertheless, at the same time, study two shows that the contemporary use of the addiction concept becomes an increasingly important mainstreaming “gathering” force that offers us an escape from overly pluralistic stances vis-à-vis the world. As the current use of the concept is one that incorporates many expressions and activities, one could assume that the mainstreaming of this somewhat uncomplicated view of the problems, one that bunches together problematic activities, would be a particularly strong and functional one in the symbolic. The notion of addiction may offer an explanatory solution or bridge between common confusion in view of multiple lifestyle disorders on the one hand, and a comprehensive way of dealing with them, on the other. It could be assumed that such a “diagnostic” project which gives us a certain tag, or etiquette, to paste upon the problems is best performed by a strong and penetrative mass media establishment that represents story angles that resonate with the governing (sometimes banalised) ideas connected to the phenomenon.

The change of style in HS reporting could be viewed as a translation of official viewpoints into a public idiom that invests the viewpoints with popular force and resonance, naturalising them within the horizon of understanding the public (Hall et al. 1978). The use of the colloquial addiction vocabulary has both ideational and interpersonal functions: “it draws upon a particular representation of the social reality in question, but at the same time the newspaper, by using it, implicitly claims co-membership, with the audience, of the world of the ordinary life and experience from which it is drawn, and a relationship of solidarity between newspaper and audience” (Fairclough 1995, 71). I have tried to capture such a function with the help of Bruhn Jensen’s (1995) notions of time-in and time-out semiosis and the notion of the tabloidisation of journalistic formats and content; the content starts to resemble more everyday face to face communication tones and styles. But what is
the political or ideological investment in naturalising addictions? The observed trend could surely just be viewed as part, as well as an outcome, of the general trend of Finnish newspapers becoming increasingly tabloidised in their formats and launching more personalised, psy-culture, lifestyle and entertainment oriented supplements in magazine formats (e.g. Jyrkiäinen 2007, 107). In this light, one could view the trend as an economic investment on the part of the newspaper in producing content that is seen by as many readers as possible as relevant, entertaining and easy to identify with. The ways that addiction was discussed during the second drug wave (Hellman 2010b) reflect a need to discuss risk assessment in experimental drug use from the perspective of the in-control, “normal” subject. In view of the general development of the history of ideas this would, once again, fit quite well with the major societal trend of individualisation and its subject who is turning her attention inwards towards the self. The subject capable of doing so and allowed to do so is the person who lives in a society in which people are expected to govern themselves, able to adjust their behaviour according to existing knowledge about how to live, how to conform to the expected and keep their contract of civility.

Through an increasing emphasis on the individual’s self-governance and the overall dominance of the perspective of the individual, the mass media content is indeed brought closer to its urbanised and “modernised” audience, among which negotiations on how to lead a decent and attractive life – and images of risks and problems if they don’t hold relevance and significance in everyday life. The developments can be viewed within the broader movement towards a hedonistic leisure culture where consumption is centred on the quest for gratification, integration and identity formation. Consumers are allowed to “let go” and experience the pleasures of indulgence without attendant risks in hedonistic yet bounded drinking and drug taking styles (see Measham and Brain 2005; Measham 2002; Brain 2000; Hayward 2002). Measham and Brain (2005) describe how the changes in alcohol-related attitudes and behaviour have occurred against a backdrop of profound economic, social and cultural change which has been characterised by a shift from an industrial to a post-industrial consumer society and culture of consumption. O’Malley and Valverde (2004, 39) write that “A ‘right’ to pleasure as an incentive or reward is far more extensive in this culture of consumption, even where it may involve all manner of drugs. But this is distinct from the duty to govern avoidable risks – including those arising from the irresponsible use of drugs. It is perhaps this tension in the current era of liberalism, between a presumptive right to pleasure and a duty to govern risks, that is reflected most clearly in the policies of harm minimization.” The boundaries drawn between pleasure and problematic drug use becomes obvious in study three, but the calculation of risks is expressed in the media texts as a capacity within new recreational drug use, not as a separate risk management task. Measham and Brain (2005) and O’Malley and Valverde (2004)
have discussed hedonistic dimensions of substance use and binge culture. In particular, the era of dance, dated by Measham and Brain (2005) to the period 1988-1998, has been suggested to have put its mark on the binge drinking style in the UK, emphasising the “time out” aspect of substance use occasions. In Finland a binge drinking style was common before the techno dance era in the 1990s, so the turn in the culture of recreational use has perhaps been less dramatic compared to the one in the UK. Nevertheless, a new party and dance scene with new recreational drug use in Finland in the 1990s in combination with an overall increase in alcohol use may explain the general rise of interest in and a demand for drawing boundaries to addiction. From 1968 to 2008 total alcohol consumption and regular alcohol use increased dramatically (Mäkelä et al. 2010). During this 40-year period alcohol consumption tripled, and between 2000 and 2008 per capita consumption increased by 17% (Karlsson & Österberg 2010). If a powerful media institution such as HS is to reflect upon current topics of general interest and overall developments in society (ideas, values, ideological climate, etc.), the growth of and the new perspectives on substance use and its consequences will obviously be included among those themes.

In the discussion of study two (Hellman 2009) I speculate about the consequences of gathering health, lifestyle as well as social problems under the sole umbrella of addiction, and identify the social perspective as losing out. Such a shift in the perspective can also be traced in the surges of the ideology of the twelve-step movement (AA movement) that has boosted the addiction definition of “the struggle within the self”. Reinarman (1995) has pointed out a remarkable cultural resonance of the twelve-step ideology’s reconceptualising of alcohol/addiction problems as existing “within the person”, the core problem being loss of self-control. He follows the same lines as Giddens in his explanation of the focus: “...the collapse of traditional communities and cosmologies said to characterize postmodernity has left millions of people without the sustaining cultures and stable identities that help regulate desire. In such a state, they are especially torn by the contradiction between a need for self-control (temperance culture) and increasing incentives for indulgence (the culture of mass consumption)” (ibid., 91). The present thesis offers empirical evidence for a correlating shift in our understanding of addiction problems, a perspective which, according to Reinarman (1995), stimulates self-examination, the inevitable turn of attention inwards towards ourselves in order to understand our behaviour. This would also explain the change of perspective in the reporting that correlates with the new fixation on the addiction theme over time. Also, influences from a globalised mass media content, such as American TV shows presenting and reinforcing the AA solution to addiction problems, might have had an impact on

11 “Time out” refers here to the dimension of taking time out or relaxing in the everyday.
12 The AA movement was established in Finland in 1948 and has advanced and expanded steadily over time. In 2009 there were around 1,200 meetings a week (AA, 2010).
people’s views on the problems on a personal level, and the desirable action to be taken in order to solve them.

Again, in this case, we can draw a connection to the idea of addiction as an order or condition that springs out of capitalism. Could, then, a shift towards the perspective of the individual addict at the expense of the perspective of the societal context mark an ideological shift towards consumerism and the free market as the dominating order? Although this may be somewhat provoking in relation to a single newspaper’s ideological stances, the possible intrusion of this order in the discourse is certainly a relevant question to pose in view of the literature on the connection between free market society and the prevalence of and certain understandings of the phenomenon of addiction (see e.g. Reith 2004, Granfield 2004; Cronin 2004, Alexander 2004, Alexander 2008, Bjerg 2008). As Reith (2004, 283) points out: “the notion of ‘addiction’ has particular valence in advanced liberal societies, where an unprecedented emphasis on the values of freedom, autonomy and choice not only encourage the conditions for its proliferation into ever wider areas of social life, but also reveal deep tensions within the ideology of consumerism itself”. The theme seems to serve a special role in consumerism, explaining the danger and likelihood of free consumer choice spinning into an extreme situation of no choice. In its enlarged understanding the phenomenon thus serves important functions and describes real threats in contemporary consumption-oriented life.

Although an important underlying motive for my investigations, I have chosen to exclude from consideration the images that people interpret from the media portrayals under study and how those images might have changed general perceptions of addiction. In my four studies I primarily see the changes that have taken place in newspaper content as reflections of changes in culture. This is a fruitful perspective, albeit not entirely unproblematic. Wilkins’s (1964) classic deviancy amplification model stresses that less tolerance leads to more acts being defined as crimes, more action taken against criminals, and more alienation of deviants, which in turn leads to more crime by deviant groups and less tolerance of them. This lesser tolerance will in the end lead to the same chain reaction in a spiral process. The research conducted in this study shows that greater tolerance of addictive behaviour in media accounts certainly does not lead to less acts being signified as addictive on the level of language use, but perhaps rather to less acts being defined as deviant and “truly” problematic. This can serve as a model for seeing the role of newspapers in the naturalisation of concepts as interconnected with the discourse on the same problem.

The perspective adopted in study four marks a departure from the earlier articles. The study can be viewed from the perspective of the increasing newsworthiness of
reflexivity evident in a body modification culture (Pitts 2005, 291). Claims of mental illness situate body modifiers outside the legitimate social sphere, and mental health discourse therefore tends to mutilate its subject. Agency is rendered as a rationalisation of self-harming desires. Such mutilation framing (see Pitts 2005) certainly provides an interesting perspective on the tabloid stories of self-mutilating celebrities Amy Winehouse, Britney Spears and Kate Moss, whose bodies are engraved with their addictions. Reflexivity can be viewed as having been produced in the sense-making of the irrational elements of their behaviour that is tearing their bodies apart. Signs of addiction and the addictive body are used for narrative purposes. The important contribution - especially in view of the absence in study three of an internalised individual perspective of the “actual” severely addicted subject - is that the tragedy and true complexity and ambivalence of the problematic sides of the phenomenon of addiction are mediated in this arena. Readers can go online and follow the lives of people who are said to have addiction problems on an hourly basis, providing an incarnation – of quite an extreme type – of the subjectifying role of such representations. The fact that celebrity images are the focus here means that it is under quite paradoxical and twisted circumstances that the tabloids and blog spots take the radical journalistic stance of portraying “all equal” in the face of the threat of addiction. It is in this forum that intimate images of the addicted body are displayed, explained and understood in their mutilated state. The tone of voice is personal – whether it is condemning or encouraging.

The conclusions of my studies, as overviewed in Table 1, can be translated then into the ideologically invested roles of the media as agenda setters, reflexive life script providers, active linguistic agents, and users and developers of symbols and myths in an ongoing interactivity with its audience. The media representations narrativise the experience that the individual reflects upon and incorporates in her autobiographical project. Other functions of the media in the addictive society could be added to those already mentioned. For example, for the individual the media constructs serve as mirrors or explanations for one’s own and others’ addictive behaviour; talk shows featuring addicts and their relatives can serve almost as therapeutic communities, making viewers feel they are not alone. The media voices are storytellers that make us attentive to the difficulties that the problems cause for the addict, her peers and society at large. In the case of celebrity images, they may evoke a sense of moral superiority; by defining the deviant, the images simultaneously define the normal and strived-for-state.
2.3 Theorising the study outcomes

Dictionaries offer various definitions for the word “addiction”, but the myth order signification of this sign (and the equivalent ideas expressed in Finnish and Swedish) is everything that the concept means in a particular social and cultural context, and this myth will to a large extent be constructed in public and popular discourse. There is a governing interest in society to frame compulsive lifestyle problems from the perspective of the individual problem holder’s struggle. This trend is supported by the application of the idea of addiction. This is how journalistic accounts tilt certain dominant discourses in favour of some interests rather than others. Those accounts, discourses and interests that take less central stage are those that would question and complicate the ruling representations.

In chapter one, I have described the results of my empirical investigations and also presented some thoughts that explain on a general level which roles the representations studied might play in society. In order to build a bridge between the two entities, I want to draw attention to the fact that the subject of this dissertation activates the problem of how to theorise the psychological in and through the social. In a society that Young (1999) calls an assimilative one, it is the role of a corpus of experts, skilled in the use of the therapeutic language of social work, counselling, clinical psychology and allied disciplines, to formulate agendas for the assimilation of deviants into society. In a similar way, journalistic texts provide maps or compasses that orient the self in certain directions. Blackman (2008, 211) points out that such theorising either tends to see subjects as “free to choose” from the cultural categories shaping their identities, or constructed in such ways that there is no room to manoeuvre. An example of the latter is by far the most popular media narrative on the causes of anorexia nervosa being consumer/beauty culture and the thin body ideal in media images (Saukko 2008, 61). How, then, can the relationship be formulated on the basis of the present study?

The strength of the theoretical framework of modernity and individualisation lies very much in the articulation of self-identity as non-static, a reflexive project, an endeavour that we constantly work and reflect upon. It accords with the topical question of how we desire without entirely consuming – or being consumed by – our objects of desire. Moreover, the choice of the study material of media texts is a “happy” one: the capacity to keep a certain narrative going, that is, the individual’s biography, relies on the repertoires of stories that our culture equips us with. Nevertheless, the theoretical frameworks convey certain weaknesses especially in their supposition of a “past”, a monolithic intellectually hegemonic history; they present an artificial construction of a breach in culture. Another downside to applying these stances as my point of departure is that the study becomes “locked”:
it remains confined to a certain basic, but quite unspecified, view of the media as an important actor in the creation of a self-reflexive biography. Given this point of departure and focus in the empirical inquiries, the project does not readily lend itself to other dimensions of media-theoretical thought, such as those that discuss the distribution and diversity of media power roles or journalistic norms. The theoretical starting point of the study presumes some relationships (the ideological power role and impact of journalistic texts) and leaves out certain others (the many formats and voices that these may have and the interaction created by the readers’ negotiations of the meaning suggested). Nevertheless, my choice of theoretical framework is relevant to the basic questions of the study, especially in view of the key role that the media has been suggested to have for distributors of knowledge and information in risk society and in the trend of individualisation (see e.g. Cottle 1998; Tulloch & Lupton 2001). Also, the study can be considered to lend empirical support to certain broader cultural trends that has been suggested in the literature.

One circumstance that has influenced the nature and framing of my inquiries concerns the theme of addiction itself. Because the phenomenon holds such self-evident symbolic weight and constitutes such a dense field of imaginary tension, it would be odd to claim that cultural images and representations are not important in this phenomenon. The extent of their importance is pointed out by Sulkunen (2007) when he suggests that images of addiction can in themselves be viewed as ingredients of the addiction process. If my focus had been on how the images of addiction are negotiated by the readers, and the effects of this – i.e., the actual empirical initiative to clarify the relationship assumed and already articulated by the theories applied – the research initiative and the material would have offered other possibilities. As it is I can only speculate on which roles the media seem to play based on my interpretations of the results in view of relevant theory-making.

I will now summarise some theoretical stances as regards the bridge between the mass media and the phenomenon of addiction. Firstly, the mass media, as a site of meaning generation, play a part in the actual phenomenon and process of addiction, and not only represent or distort “the real”. They actively perform this role through the meanings mediated to the public and circulated back into the representations. The media discourse is heavily invested with and affected by psy culture – language and views borrowed from cognitive science, which is a natural part of the conventionalisation and internalisation of the problems in the media, and which further emphasises the signification of addiction problems as a personal struggle within the individual’s body and psyche. Images of psychopathology (including ideas and themes of addiction) will be deployed in media representations to describe those who have disturbed the boundaries through which normalcy is constructed (Blackman & Walkerdine 2001, 12). Psychology works with and through the media
representations circulating signifying practices that we find useful and that we can relate to and experience. They are part of the milieu in which we constitute our own subjectivities and identities. Changes in these signifying practices can be discerned on the level of discourses, and appear, for example, when certain views infiltrate the culture, either as overall larger developments, as a result of the interplay of many forces and actors, or as certain goal-oriented forces that aim at changing the ideological stances that permeate society at large. The use of journalistic representations and their roles in the life of the individual may vary over the whole spectrum of alternatives: they may carry no weight or relevance whatsoever, or they might serve to measure the self in relation to other types of behaviour, or act as script providers influencing the individual in her own (addictive) behaviour.

There are certain blank spots in this puzzle, in the shape it is given by theories of modernity. For example, these theories do not provide a satisfactory explanation for the actual expansion and importance of the notion of addiction – they merely explain the increase in the problems. Why is the notion of addiction so important to us? What is it about the idea that makes it usable, and gives it salience?

Another suggestion that I want to make regarding the bridging between the mass media and the phenomenon of addiction is that the media are not only part of the process of constructing the phenomenon and its problems, but their products themselves are objects of addictive behaviour, as 24-hour media access has led to a dramatic increase in the amount of time spent on media entertainment (see e.g. Bovill & Livingstone 2001; Oksman & Turtiainen 2004; Kaiser Family Foundation 2010). The use of new ICT has taken up a central position in everyday life both in leisure and professional activities (Räsänen 2008). The discussions on whether there is such a thing as Internet addiction exemplify the new negotiations of boundaries to out of control behaviour that occur in the age of new media (see e.g. Young 1998; Block 2008). This also receives some support from the analyses of my study: during the diachronic reading of the data collected it was evident that formats and themes of the new internalised type of addiction reporting coincided with newspaper material on new communication technologies, such as the advertising of mobile phones and items about e-mail and the world wide web – all of which were being increasingly employed by Finns at the time. Contemporary information and media culture seemed to provide preconditions for new understandings of addictive behaviour, and the new media and communication culture could even constitute a component in the developments that were strengthening the position of the addiction phenomenon in society. These circumstances led me to draw parallels between the use of new media and communication technology on the one hand, and perceptions and processes surrounding addictive behaviour, on the other.
In his “Ecstasy of communication”, Baudrillard (1985, 24-26) describes how the promiscuity which reigns over communication networks is one of a superficial saturation, and “endless harassment and extermination of interstitial space”. He suggests that we need to employ metaphors from pathology to describe how a plethora of communication has invaded our lives, confusing our sense of knowing what we want. This is a displaced order that is not so far-fetched to view from the perspective of the displaced addictive order. It would, for example, be important to study how the body, time and space disappear as scenes in the digitalised age and how this development together with compulsive repetition of certain daily action might support the penetration of the etiquette and diagnosis of addiction in our culture. Could it be that a new media culture, in which time is increasingly spent (and “disappearing”) on both fragmented and emotionally involving repetitive acts, is serving as a breeding ground that gives the theme of addiction relevance and penetration? Could a fascination with the obsessive or compulsive variant of the ordinary be something that engages people exactly because they are, more than before, in their repetitive and engaging everyday practices, living in a grey zone between an addicted and non-addicted state according to the new understandings of the problems? I will be discussing the connection between new time and space apprehensions, on the one hand, and a general penetration and spread of the addiction theme, on the other, in a forthcoming study conducted as a sequel to this dissertation.

My studies have shown that a naturalised and expanded use of the concept of addiction correlates with a significantly higher frequency of the addiction theme and with new interiorised views on addiction problems explained from within the problem or problem holder. This, of course, reflects the fact that the conventionalised use of the concept signifies a familiarity with the phenomenon. This familiarity, it has been suggested, has evolved together with consumer society and an ideological process of general individualisation. Members of society are assumed to have interests in dependency problems on a personal level: all members of society are approached as potential “addicts” in a new personalised tone. Through excessive consumption and repetitive acts of different kinds, our priorities and needs might shift to resemble those of the “hooked”.

These developments tie in with the analysis of contemporary media messages’ discourses that have observed a general trend of normalisation towards a standpoint of looking at addictions as cultural practice, “just as [any] other patterns of consumption” (Manning 2007, 26). This trend reflects a new general ability to apprehend and relate to addictive behaviour. Why, then, would people today not only have an increased interest, but also an increased ability to understand problems of compulsive repetitive behaviour? A key determinant may lie in our accelerating
digitalised culture that produces and circulates meanings and pleasures, breeding a hankering for an immediate fulfilment of needs. In a state of addiction, a sense of stagnation often emerges from being unable to relate fragmentary occurrences to each other across temporal boundaries. The fact that a fragmented society is struggling with the same challenges may bring new demands for the human mind to create meaningful narratives of our lives and to sense the meaningfulness of the acts with which we fill our lives. In this state, the phenomenon of addiction serves as a feasible and useful explanation for our shortcomings and temptations. Addiction problems feel relevant and are easy to relate to. As human life in general has by definition become a little, and in some cases a lot, more similar to the logical reasoning in the border region to addicted life, the references to problems related to such repetitive acts will occur more naturally and frequently.

Alexander (2008) poses two questions that my dissertation has touched upon: why are so many people in the twenty-first century dangerously addicted to destructive habits, and why does the range of addictions now extend far beyond alcohol and drug use to gambling, shopping, dysfunctional love relationships, video gaming, television viewing, Internet surfing, etc.? The two questions, although related, are not the same. Alexander still suggests that the mechanisms underlying both developments are related to the inability to arrive at a necessary psychological integration, an inability that leads to dislocation – or disconnection, alienation – in contemporary society. The idea that addiction springs from dislocation does not sound very new or revolutionary, but there is a scarcity of research in which this dislocation is contextualised in relation to repetitive habitual acts, temporal and corporeal apprehension and the “actual, concrete” dislocation of virtual life. Given the broader changes towards a state in which the spectator, i.e. the consumer of contemporary mass media products and services, frequently enters a world of pleasure and enjoyment, becoming emotionally more involved and hooked, can be viewed in relation to our culture’s new need to explain certain behaviours as addictive. This suggestion desperately needs some empirical support to back it up.

According to Alexander, the comfortable professionalism of today’s addiction scholars is endangered by the mere fact that they may not have paid enough attention to the continuing global advance of a free-market society, which, he claims, is necessary in order to understand addiction. He writes: “[existing] theories and models of addiction conflict in every imaginable way, and yet they all threaten to live forever, since they can be neither proved nor disproved” (ibid., 57). However, he also claims that historians tend to be the exception, as they often agree on the causes of addiction when they encounter it in a particular historical context: indeed, “historical scholarship seems to lead naturally and easily to promising understanding of addiction in the modern world” (ibid., 57). Hence, the best way to identify causes
and consequences would apparently be to look at the developments taking place at society at around the time when addictions began to proliferate in the material.

Although media texts have constituted my material in all four investigations and I have discussed and emphasised the role and relevance of the mass media in the developments observed, I have also aimed to include some suggestions that could contribute to the sociology of addictions. This reflects my research initiative as anchored in the rather scarce strain of addiction research that is concerned with cultural and qualitative investigations. From the earliest planning stages the project was never rigorously tied to any one specific discipline; a cross-pollination with the sociological field has been particularly evident. Three academic fields can suggestively speaking be interested in the study as a whole: the disciplinary strain of media research and theory focused on the mass media’s meaning producing role in society; the social scientific research field of addiction studies focused on knowledge judged as of importance for the development of different problems in society and the understandings of those problems; and partly, the strain of cultural studies concerned with the images *per se* and their relations to a surrounding cultural and societal climate. The crosswind between different fields may have strengthened the initiative as a whole. On the other hand, it has also contributed to an enlarged and demanding research effort, which might neither be satisfyingly not thoroughly discussed from all perspectives.

3 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has put together some small pieces of the enormous puzzle that constitutes our cultural understandings about addiction problems. The analysis lends strong support to basic semiotic understandings of the production of perceptions in culture and language, observing a process whereby addiction codes and concepts are conventionalised in the context of media texts, myths and images. Additionally, the analysis discusses how the conventionalised phenomenon creates boundaries between competence and non-competence and mediates a wide variety of symbolic values and meanings.

Based on my work, I conclude that the significance of the addiction phenomenon in culture and language use, as well as its role in construing meaning, has grown over time. There is a demand for the addiction concept, it is used for transmitting a variety of important significations, and it is applied today much more, and much more loosely than it was twenty years ago. It has become a natural ingredient in our ideas and mental perceptions of the world. Some references to addiction are just loosely applied metaphorical expressions describing everyday habits (e.g. TV use, coffee drinking), whereas others concern more fundamental addictions causing
serious problems for the individual, family, and society at large. The increased significance and salience of the concept is reflected in a significant increase in reporting and in new, more personal and detailed accounts.

The use of genres, the different combinations of words as well as the choice of news angles in creating messages about addiction rely on and express conventions and rules according to which we organise the messages. The conventionalisation of the addiction concept is a sign of a certain redundancy of such messages, and of an obvious and natural resonance of the addiction messages. Once it is conventionalised in culture, the addiction phenomenon can be applied as a symbol that carries many different meanings, and an increasing number of words and formats are employed to articulate it. The use of the concept will convey meanings other than the original ones. The myths and representations will still draw boundaries between normalcy and deviance, but these will shift, be contested and present paradoxes, as in the case of the images of female transgression in study four (Hellman & Rantala unpublished). In this way, myths and connotations of addiction will support one another and interact.

The dichotomy between in-control and out-of-control states portrayed in drug use myths shows that although there is a myriad of representations of addiction, the number of connotations and meanings still remains limited, and these emphasise some subjective perspectives in favour of others. This seems to correlate with a cultural resonance of certain views on the subject and the subject’s agency and competence in society at large. Even though the paradigm of signs and images expands over time, such a second-order paradigm has not necessarily expanded to a similar degree. Nevertheless, there is some unequivocal evidence of clear overall changes: that includes trends of internalisation and an orientation towards underlying views on self-governance, as well as some new symbolic functions taken on by the phenomenon in media myths.

In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the spectrum of addiction coverage – for example, in terms of the position of the addict and ways of dealing with the problem in the stories – displayed a relatively fixed horizon of action. Subsequent newspaper reporting began to reflect a social order in which tradition changes. The more fast-paced, individualised culture with its focus on risk formulation, emotion and psychological aspects of questions made its mark on the penetration, comprehensions and uses of the addiction concept. The reporting bears witness to a society where individuals must construct and envision potential futures, producing and staging their biographies themselves. Giddens (Beck et al. 1994) calls these self-made biographies “reflexive”. In a world replete with different models, moral codes and tradition do not rule the individual, and nor do they govern views on addiction.
My investigation of the addiction theme in journalistic texts has shed interesting light on recent changes in society and media over time. It has served as a prism through which to witness general developments in society. Anxiety, obsessions and addictions seem to be the results of human beings turning inward, becoming self-preoccupied and individualised in their world views. Although based physiologically and psychologically, addictions are very much social and cultural phenomena, and their cultural relevance responds to contemporary demands to explain “the social through the personal” as well as the “personal through the social”.

I suggest, firstly, that addiction as a media theme resolves a basic conflict or ambivalence in consumer society between the increased availability of life choices and activities of reflexive self-formation, on the one hand, and the troublesome and risky behaviour that this multiple self-choice world can lead to, such as alcoholism, drug addiction, excessive shopping and gambling, on the other. It reflects the dilemma accompanying the fact that “free choice” can slide into “no choice”.

Secondly, I suggest that the mass media hold an important position of power in identifying and naming the defining problem, its social rubric and its governing images, and that the role of media texts is clearly increasingly occupied with articulating an individualised perspective on the problems. I claim that the media content underpins a perceived “normal” social and economic order that is based on the systematic creation and fostering of a desire to purchase goods or services in ever greater amounts and a general orientation towards saturation and hedonism. Viewing the problems of addiction on a population level as issues of social responsibility is inevitably toned down in this perspective. Lifestyle risks are increasingly managed through persuasion rather than law, and this persuasion is couched in rational arguments about health, well-being and safety, appealing to everyone with apparent moral neutrality (Sulkunen 2009, 142). Sulkunen (2009) suggests that Foucault’s metaphor of the pastoral power of the welfare state must be replaced with the metaphor of epistolary power, which describes the ethics of not taking a stand, that is, leaving all open for the individual to decide and act upon. In this state of affairs, control is exercised through abstract guidance in the symbolic. However, this is not indisputable when it comes to the role of the mass media images under study, especially as the more personal reporting tone and framing can be viewed as an opening up to and a support of the ordinary “nobody” in her day-to-day struggles, and in such a way democratising the journalistic perspective (see e.g. Gripsrud 2000: 285). The tabloid blogs under study even invite the reader to understand quite complex and ambivalent situations in terms of a personal struggle.

In this introduction I have also briefly suggested that digitalised culture and new media use strengthen the cultural position of addiction. Furthermore I have
suggested that the increasing dependence of media-saturated life on personal wants and needs that require immediate fulfilment, as well as the perceived closeness of these wants and needs to the out of control, have been boosted in this, the digitalised age.

In his book on a runaway world, Giddens (1999, 48) draws a parallel between how addiction problems are tied to the social and historical instability where there is a need for the modern citizen to create a self-identity, on the one hand, and how people come to AA meetings and recount their life histories and receive support from others present in stating their desire to change, on the other. First, people today are increasingly dependent on personal wants and needs. In order to provide balanced and realistic fulfilments of these needs, we live our lives in a continuous reflexivity. This process involves an interactive negotiation with a milieu of mass media images that can be viewed as a counterpart to the biographies of AA meetings. Second, this runaway world is constantly on the verge of swerving out of control. A total breakdown, a complete loss of control (i.e. addiction, by definition), is always lurking around the corner.
REFERENCES


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Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos.


