

Anthropological perspectives on alcohol and masculinity in post-Soviet Latvia

V. Skultans*

University of Bristol, Bristol, United Kingdom

Certain geographical and social borderlands breed despair and pessimism. In the post-Soviet Latvian borderlands traditions of alcohol use mark out some of the contradictory expectations of masculinity in the new liberal economy. In this perspective piece I will be looking at how certain discourses serve to conceal the degrading conditions and lack of opportunity in certain occupations. This argument will be pursued in relation to the occupation of timber logging which is an exclusively male occupation (although this was not the case during the early Soviet period). This occupation reflects not just the terms of working conditions but illustrates the gendered nature of misfortune in Latvia. Loggers speak of a lack of perspective in their lives. I will examine the meaning and implications of this lack of perspective.

Received 17 February 2020; Revised 15 June 2020; Accepted 04 September 2020; First published online 06 September 2021

Key words: Inebriation, Latvia, masculinity, post-soviet society.

Background

Anthropological studies suggest that alcohol has a symbolic function in separating work from leisure, the outside world from home and in marking out the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. 'The more that alcohol is used for signifying selection and exclusion the more might we expect its abuse to appear among the ranks of the excluded' (Douglas, 1987). Room identified the tendency of anthropologists to downgrade the problems of alcoholism through 'ethnographic deflation' and the tendency of epidemiologists to amplify the problems (Room, 1984). The existing literature on alcohol in Soviet and post-Soviet society is epidemiological and historical and veers towards what Room would describe as amplification (Trembl, 1982; Segal, 1987; Segal, 1990; White, 1996). Anthropologists have been arguing for the social character of drinking for several decades. A landmark in this approach was the publication of *Drunken Comportment A Social Explanation* by MacAndrew & Edgerton (1969). The authors meticulously review the huge cross-cultural variations in drunken behaviour and conclude that whereas alcohol has the universal effect of impeding motor co-ordination, actual behaviour is deeply influenced by culture. Drunken comportment is, they argue, socially channelled.

In this paper I examine diverse alcohol discourses and drinking traditions in post-Soviet Latvia. From an anthropological perspective I explore what these

discourses and practices reveal about the contradictions embedded within existing gender regimes and their subjects who struggle to retain a sense of dignity and agency in the face of radically altered economic structures. An examination of timber loggers will bring into focus the work carried out by alcohol discourses and their relationship to gender regimes. I want to steer a middle course that does not underplay the health hazards of excessive drinking and yet also encompasses the various discourses and meanings of alcohol use. In the Latvian context I argue that drunken comportment is both a revolt against impossible gender regimes and at the same time re-enforces those regimes.

My reflections are based on research carried out in Latvia between July 2006 and August 2007 and made possible by an ESRC research fellowship (RES-000-27-0203) held between April 2006 and March 2009. The fieldwork was sited both within hospital clinics and wards and in two rural villages. This paper draws upon conversations with 11 doctors and psychiatrists, with the patients in a closed ward as well as a hospital for alcohol dependency, with the residents of a nightshelter, with workers on a large refuse tip and with villagers in north and north-eastern Latvia. Conversations were conducted in Latvian, tape-recorded wherever possible and later transcribed. The transcriptions cover several 100 pages.

Post-Soviet Latvia is played out in a space of contradictions. The neo-liberal message of unlimited opportunity exists alongside ever more sharply drawn features of inequality. These contradictions surface talk about alcohol use and reveal the unrealisability or implementation shortfall of Latvian gender regimes. They

*Address for correspondence: V. Skultans, University of Bristol, Bristol, United Kingdom.
(Email: V.Skultans@bristol.ac.uk)

confirm what the Slovenian philosopher Žižek describes as 'the unfreedoms within freedom'.

Since the time of my research wages and the cost of alcohol have increased but the underlying structural inequalities which fuel inebriation have not changed. Latvia has the highest rate of social inequality in Europe and the highest rate of taxation of low paid workers. Along with Lithuania consumption of and deaths from alcohol also remain among the highest in Europe (WHO, 2018). Certain geographical and social borderlands breed despair and pessimism. The province of Latgale has a long-standing reputation for being a deprived zone. The first published account of the Latgalian health situation by the Baltic German historian Broce in 1801 describes misery, famine, dirt and drink.

Reading Dostoyevsky has shaped my thinking about the praxis and discourse of alcohol use in Latvia. In *The Poor Folk*, the departmental drudge, Devushkin, all of whose attempts to find meaning and dignity in life fail, opts instead for public and humiliating displays of drunkenness, particularly significant since he otherwise rarely touches alcohol. There are similarities here with male drunkenness in post-Soviet society although infrequency is certainly not a characteristic of these drinkers whereas public display is. Elsewhere I have written about my origins in Latvia, my lifetime of research into aspects of mental health and collaboration with psychiatrists (Skultans & Cox, 2000; Skultans, 2008).

Alcohol in Latvia

Latvia forms part of what is popularly called the vodka belt stretching from Siberia across the Baltic and Scandinavian countries to Iceland. Latvia is among the 'wettest' countries in Europe in terms of alcohol consumption. Figures from the World Health Organization show that Latvia in 2003 had the second highest rate of consumption of spirits after Moldova thus surpassing the Russian Federation (World Health Organisation, 2003). At that time 15.4% of disability adjusted life years were lost due to excessive alcohol consumption – the third highest rate in Europe (World Health Organisation, 2005). In total, 9% of the population was classified as heavy episodic drinkers with a preponderance of men. Although, from a comparative European perspective, these figures seem high they ignore urban/rural differences, regional and occupational differences and do not reflect the much wider extent of alcohol use in Latvia nor its firm embeddedness in social practice. Rural areas, border areas and certain social groups have particularly high rates of alcohol consumption. Road traffic statistics show that at the time of my research Latvia had one of the highest rates of road traffic accidents in the

world and, although the rate has halved in recent years, it is still one of the highest in Europe (World Health Organisation, 2015; OECD, 2016).

Within Latvia there is a belt of sparsely populated rural border areas where drinking practices are more intense and extensive than elsewhere. These intensive drinking practices are reflected in higher percentage of road accidents involving drink in the borderland towns (Public Health Agency, 2007: 24). Doctors and others I spoke to in the rural north and eastern borderlands consistently quoted figures of 90% or near 100% of excessive alcohol use among men. These figures exceed Segal's figure of 30% alcohol abusers in the Soviet labour force as a whole (White, 1996). In order to understand these figures we need to take a closer look at the competing theories of alcohol consumption and the social and occupational circumstances of the drinkers.

Go to any village in these rural areas of Latvia, search out its geographical and social centre, its heart if you like, and you will find there a crowd of local men, in varying stages of intoxication, who have chosen the most visible position to share and display their bottles of drink and to act out their drunkenness. Other performative displays of intoxication involve the drunken man being supported and led home by his slightly less drunken comrades. In cities it is more often a female partner who leads him home, but not infrequently it is a young female child – sometimes one who has scarcely learnt to walk herself. At other times the drinking companions are left to help each other as best they can. Such scenes are so unremarkable as to merge into the natural landscape and do not evoke any comment. Indeed, prone figures are treated as inanimate objects. Similar scenes are common throughout the countries of the former Soviet Union. This geographical siting of drinking activities outside the home relates to what Gusfield describes as pre-industrial organisations and cultures of male work where 'drinking is more likely to occur within the work period' (Gusfield, 1989). Indeed, women talk of the dirtying and polluting consequences of alcohol or drinkers entering the house.

Stop off at any petrol station and you will be able to stock up on alcohol. Road side cafes offer vodka as part of breakfast. This practice is so routine that customers need not spell out their needs: a short-hand term *simtgramnieks* (a hundred gram one) produces what they want. These scenarios remind us of the social nature of drinking. Putnina refers to drinking and driving as 'protest masculinity'. Being able to hold one's liquor and drive is taken as evidence of true masculinity (Putnina, 2006).

Drinking also has solitary aspects. Bodies lurching unsteadily across busy highways are a common sight

not always successfully avoided by furiously driven large sports utility vehicles. Intoxicated people are referred to as degraded, as garbage and as shit. Such views enable moral boundaries to be drawn which exclude the inebriated. One need not be geographically distant in order to escape the obligation of an ethics of care (Smith, 2000). No one will stop to help an intoxicated person who has fallen over. In public places such as railway or bus stations no one will help a person struggling to pull themselves up onto a bench.

In Latvia as in many other societies, alcohol is not only a symbol of degradation but also of prestige. The most widely read daily newspaper *Diena* runs weekly features on wines. However, it rarely recommends any bottle costing less than 12 or 15 lats (1 lat is slightly more than £1). A litre of excellent Latvian vodka costs roughly 6 lats. By contrast a litre of pure spirit costs 3.50 lats. Two thousand or so illicit alcohol vendors will fill your glass or mug with 100 grams of 80% proof spirit for 20 santimes (about 20 pence) at any time of night or day. Popularly known as *tockas* they supply what is called *krutka*, all words taken over from Russian. When laced with methanol or other industrial spirits this has fatal consequences as happened in Preili in the autumn of 2006 when several dozen people were taken to hospital with alcohol poisoning.

Unlike its Nordic neighbours Latvia has not implemented any measures to curb the illegal sale of spirits, despite hundreds of fatal poisonings each year from the ingestion of adulterated drink. There is a popular belief that Russians brought their drinking traditions with them and 'infected' Latvians with alcoholism. During the 1980s 'Illicit distilling became well established in areas of the country where it had previously been unknown' (White, 1996). Among these was Latvia. During the Soviet period many Latvian words and grammatical forms were russified including talk of alcohol use. Rather than just drinking beer or spirits Latvians spoke of using alcohol as in 'Es nelietoju alkoholu' (I don't use alcohol) or 'Vins lieto alkoholu regulari' (he uses alcohol regularly), although I did not hear anyone make the claim 'Es lietoju alkoholu' (I use alcohol). Such turns of phrase point us towards a semantic infrastructure in which, alcohol is perceived as being rationally chosen and deliberately used as a means to an end. Examples of this kind of instrumental discourse are to be found both among medical professionals and lay people.

Thus in Latvia alcohol is both a symbol of prestige and sophistication and a sign of degradation. In either case, the consumption of alcohol involves public and highly visible practices, which yet succeed in not being noticed. As Bauman writes: 'We dispose of leftovers in the most radical and effective way: we make them

invisible by not looking and unthinkable by not thinking' (Bauman, 2004). As in Russia, the tolerance of illegal sales emphasises the political uses of alcohol in damping down social discontent: 'It's easy to order a drunk about, as he has no idea of social questions; he doesn't need a flat, rent, decent living conditions or humane working conditions' (White, 1996).

Discourses of alcohol use

Understanding the role and intersections of these discourses is important because, 'How I and others understand who I am profoundly affects the range of actions open to me' (Lindemann, 2001). Alcohol use is embedded in a variety of contrasting discourses. There is a discourse of voluntarism and rational choice. There is a discourse of moral degeneracy and lack of character. There is a discourse of social determinism and pathology. And then there is the users' discourse of alcohol as pleasant, as strengthening male bonds and compensating for life's hardships.

A visiting psychiatrist in the north-eastern part of Latvia painted a sardonic picture of alcohol use. He argued that it was quite simply men's rational and logical response to the perceived impossibility of their particular life circumstances. The phrase he used was 'They feel better that way'. In the local town with a population of some 8000, the official unemployment figures stand at around 25% but local perceptions are that there is virtually no work to be found. What employment there is, is thought more suitable for women such as working in shops and government institutions. And yet men are expected to provide for their families and so failure to do so brings shame. Alcohol according to this practitioner works well in that it alleviates the anxiety and shame of not being able to look after and feed one's family.

Related yet distinct from the approach which sees an internal logic and inevitability in drinking, is the view that we are all masters of our own fate. A psychotherapist phrased this as follows: 'We are blacksmiths of our own lives' (*Mes esam pasi musu dzives kaleji*). This kind of individualism permeates popular literature, the press as well as popular psychology and problem programmes on television. Many American manuals of popular psychology have been translated into Latvian. A late night phone-in problem programme called *Seit un Tagad* (Here and Now) attracts large audiences and by and large offers advice of an individualistic nature. A popular hypnotherapist (transologs) appears regularly on television as well as travelling the country and giving invited talks on hypnotherapy. The talk I attended and tape-recorded lasted nearly 4 hours, but a few extracts will convey the flavour of what I call therapeutic individualism. 'There is no such

thing as chance in the world. Everything is predictable (*likumsakarība*). Everything lies within ourselves. What we think determines the course of our lives. Stress does not come from the outside. There is always a way out. There is no such thing as a dead-end. Nothing happens from the outside. Everything takes shape from the self. You must fulfill yourself. We won't be able to change the system. Only if you know how to adapt will you survive. From this circle only the strong will escape'. He uses his own career and success as evidence supporting his therapeutic philosophy. He claims he worked and paid for his studies himself now earning 40 lats for a hypnotherapy session. He is, in short, a living embodiment of the kind of entrepreneurial spirit he advocates.

Similar opinions were expressed by a young psychotherapist in a Latgalian town. She also practices hypnotherapy and advocates individualism as a break with the communist past when 'the mass and the crowd led individuals', although she concedes that 'there are still people who find it very difficult to break with mass psychology'. By contrast she argues that 'At present each person has to rely only on themselves because there is nothing else'. In her group counselling sessions she encourages everyone (seemingly unaware of the paradox of so doing) to become a leader. To a certain extent this therapist is also an exemplification of what she preaches. Qualifying as a teacher, she has through a forceful and charismatic personality built up a very busy private practice, as well as landing a job as director of a prestigious clinic.

Such language of self-help sees excessive alcohol use as a lack of moral fibre or character deficit and puts the onus for success or failure entirely on the individual, denying any relationship between the social system and the self. In a society that is characterised by uncertainties at all levels, it is surprising that so much emphasis should be put on regularity and predictability. For example, Riga psychotherapists gathered in a focus group to discuss the sources of mental health problems refused to acknowledge that the high rates of male excess drinking had anything to do with social dysfunction. When I pointed out that estimates suggested that 95% of men in parts of rural Latgale had alcohol problems they replied that 5% did not and that these men found good jobs in Riga. Their replies are in the tradition of Gorbachev's 1985 moralistic campaign against alcohol (Tarschys, 1993; McKee, 1999). These findings confirm the results of a collaborative study organised from Finland which also found that excessive alcoholism was largely explained in terms of individual weakness (Simpura & Tigerstedt 1999).

However, where economic activity had been virtually extinguished I encountered views that attributed a causal role to social dysfunction. For example, in a

north-eastern border village, population about 1000, brick making was established on a large scale during the Soviet period. The closeness of the railway line meant that bricks were exported throughout Russia but after independence and the collapse of the eastern export market this village became a ghost village with possibly a dozen jobs. Some Russian-speaking workers left for Russia, others sought work in Riga or, after European Union accession, in Western Europe. The industrial buildings fell into ruin and the half built apartment blocks were vandalised. Timber from the interior of these blocks was used as firewood. Grass and mud covered the roads. At the time of my visit several classes in the school were being closed down because there were not enough children to justify employing their teachers and offer no work opportunities. In this village unemployment is the rule and all the men drink. One patient at the local family practice explained that her son's problems revolved around the fact that he did not drink. Since all the other men in the village did, he was left isolated and without companionship. The family doctor said of alcohol use 'This is an illness of our entire society' (*Ta ir visu musu sabiedrības slimība*). And towards the end of our conversation she made the poignant remark, 'We are not able to pity everyone, there are so many' (*Mēs nevaram visus žēlot, ir tik daudz*).

Seeing excessive alcohol use as a form of social pathology is confined to areas where economic life has ground to a virtual standstill. Similar views are not those of large sectors of the population whose experience of a lack of perspective does not extend to an analysis of social pathology and yet their experience tells them that cultivation of the self is not a substitute for the absence of choice. One country woman who claimed that her husband drank too much voiced her position with powerful simplicity: 'So many huge events' she said, 'in such an insignificant life'. Her sentence captures the magnitude of social changes and their disregard for the individuals upon whom they impinge. The word 'perspektīvs' was used repeatedly to attempt to capture this situation. So many people spoke of their lives lacking a perspective. The lay meaning of perspective refers to space, proportion and prospects. But these meanings in turn are supported by earlier meanings drawn from art theory. In 1994, Wilde wrote of the way in which the introduction of perspective in art created the possibility 'for the construction of a unified and homogenous pictorial space'. And this space 'concerns the relationship between a rational and lucid order of depiction and a rational and authoritative ordering of social and public affairs'. As I understood such talk it seemed that people were referring to an absence of rational ordering, an inability to chart their own trajectory within a social picture

lacking perspective. Lack of order deprived them both of an anchoring point and a vision of the future. In contrast to some of the earlier individualistic ideas discussed, lack of perspective is not an individual failing in the sense that one might argue character weakness is. Perspective is not constructed by each individual *de novo* but rather its presence is an enabling feature of our world just as its absence is disabling.

Just as people referred to the future as without perspective, so they spoke of their past lives as wasted. A word frequently used was *nekopta dzive*. We can translate this as a wasted or an unfulfilled life, but also as a life that has been smeared, sullied or degraded. It is also a word that is used in relation to clothes becoming dirty. There is another word *izskaidita* that is used. Again this word can be translated as wasted but it also conveys the idea of possibilities and opportunities lost. One can describe precious ingredients being spilled with the word *izskaidits*.

What then are the specific circumstances that contribute to this view of a world without perspective and which thereby encourages both the solidarity and the self-abasement and destruction involved in male drinking? One of the most important factors is to do with the closure of collective farms and the debasement of manual labour. Whereas manual labour had a certain glamour during the Soviet period and was relatively well paid, its remuneration is now 'degradingly low' (Putnina, 2006). Moreover, most unskilled manual work is occasional, without social security or health benefits. This means that manual workers' lives are interspersed with regular periods of unemployment and as Putnina writes, 'Loss of work means loss of personality' (Putnina, 2006). This is in complete contrast to the security of employment and the relatively unchanging constitution of the work collective. Now each man has to fend for himself and a sense of collectivity is only achieved in the drinking group. Drinkers themselves refer to the lure of the opened bottle, the camaraderie and warmth of drinking together and the release and protection that drink affords from everyday worries. In a world rather limited in its opportunities for pleasure alcohol soothes exhausted bodies and anxious minds. It is the reward for hard physical work as much as for its lack.

Timber logging

Timber logging provides a good illustration of the loss of prestige suffered by manual labourers and the contrast between ideologies of freedom and the constricting conditions of manual labour. Forestry is an exclusively male occupation although this was not the case during the early Soviet period. Foresters speak of a lack of perspective in their lives. In many parts of rural Latvia, particularly the north and east, it is the

only occupation available for men. It is also one of the hardest, most dangerous and most badly paid of occupations. However, timber is a major building block in Latvia's economy.

Latvia is among the most highly forested countries in Europe with 45% of its land mass covered in forest. Timber is the principal export of Latvia amounting to more than a third of all exports. The gross volume of timber has increased systematically since 1991 as has the export value of sawn timber since equipment has been introduced to enhance the finished quality of the product. Timber is a major source of wealth in Latvia and constitutes 10% of the GNP. Latvian timber exports are now on a par with those of Sweden and Austria. However, there is a major discrepancy between national wealth, the wealth of entrepreneurs and rural poverty. In total, 7% of the country's entire labour force is involved in forestry and timber work. In large tracts of rural Latvia this is the only work available for men. This applies particularly to the sparsely populated border areas of northern and eastern Latvia.

Timber logging is physically demanding and dangerous. Too dangerous to undertake singly, timber logging is always done in a team or a *brigade* to use the local military term. In summer, forests are infested with mosquitoes and in winter the temperature can reach -30°C . Loggers are paid by the cubic metre of timber felled and not by the hour. The going rate as of 2008 is between 4 and 7 lats per cubic metre depending upon the level of finish required. In order to approximate to decent earnings a high degree of skill is required, endurance and an unbroken expenditure of energy. A very fit and skilled logging team will be able to produce some 10 cubic metres of felled timber a day. Overgrown bushy forests slow down work and produce a lower yield. If a tree is felled awkwardly, it is not only dangerous but requires more time and effort to be sawn. Thus loggers are very dependent on their co-workers to ensure safety and proper earnings.

The sharing of alcohol is deemed the proper end to a tense and exhausting day. It obliterates anxious thoughts of the future since few loggers are able to continue working after the age of 45. Schwartz writes that 'Generations of Latvians have defined Latvianness in terms of a particular relationship to nature and have constructed nature as a particular embodiment of Latvianness' (Schwartz, 2006). This applies particularly to forests and good stewardship of forests is central to Latvian identity. So one might think that timber loggers would occupy a hallowed place in Latvian society. However, this is not the case. The reputation of loggers, especially among their employers is that they are degenerate and that 95% of them are damaged by alcohol. Rather than look more closely at the

circumstances of their work, their employers seek to allocate the blame to an intrinsic fault. Loggers themselves hint at the stress of unrelenting work, the fear of falling behind and the fear that they may not be able to continue such work indefinitely. However, to complain more directly would be to endanger their own reputation as proper men. 'Work is work' they say. Certainly, there is no time for timber loggers to engage in contemplation of the folkloric and mystical attributes of the forest, although individuals who log timber for their own use as winter fuel to speak of the peace and beauty of the forests. Felling trees and chopping firewood are important male tasks.

One telling feature of the loggers' work is that they are frequently driven to the forest site by the timber entrepreneurs in old vans seating up to a dozen or so men. In contemporary Latvian culture the possession of cars is an important dimension of masculinity, particularly where these are large, fast, expensive military-type cars. These, however, are an unrealistic dream on timber loggers' earnings. One sees more Bentleys in Latvia than in Hampshire. These cars race along country roads, thereby demonstrating the masculine prowess of their drivers. By contrast loggers are bussed in old vans to their sites of work at daylight and returned home at dusk. What Hummers and loggers have in common is their adulation of 'the hard body', although loggers are made aware of the handicap of mortal flesh. The cruel working circumstances of loggers serve to emphasise the inadequacies of their male bodies. As Bauman has written, 'When it comes to designing the forms of human togetherness, the waste is human beings' (Bauman, 2004). This is how old loggers speak, 'I'm of no use to anyone'.

Some conclusions

So what kind of work do the various discourses of alcoholism do in Latvia, particularly in the borderlands? From the point of view of the new entrepreneurial individualists, be they psychotherapists or timber merchants, alcohol abuse reflects lack of character. Indeed, one could draw a map of economically deprived areas of Latvia that fits almost exactly onto a map showing imputed lack of character among the population of the borderlands. Like so many individualist explanations this one absolves others of responsibility. Despite its patent absurdity it works by attributing success and failure entirely to personal qualities and effort. One clinician who tried to avoid working with alcohol problems described it 'as useless as battling with a windmill'. The discourse of character deficiency enables people to avoid examining the real implications of life in the borderlands and acknowledging the unfreedoms in freedom.

Similarly, the discourse of rational choice underplays 'the limits of human agency' (Littlewood, 2007). The argument that alcohol is rationally chosen ignores the anguish produced by lack of perspective, the feeling of having no tomorrow, of being trapped in an eternal present as well as the vulnerabilities of the inebriated body.

By contrast, I would argue that the performative dimension of drinking and drunkenness tells a different story. It is a street theatre that speaks of male comradeship and understanding the shared anguish of a lack of perspective. It is about bravado and public display. In one sense drunkenness is seen as an excess of masculinity whereas female drunkenness is the opposite, it is a reneging of femininity. It is about everyday resistance to marginalisation both geographical and social. 'We are nothing' is the common refrain. It speaks of the pain of being left behind as well as the pain of witnessing their children's border crossings (Walkerline, 2006). But it is also about repudiating the stigma of alcohol and drunkenness and embracing a certain hedonistic version of masculinity. As one sober informant who had brought his drunk and sick companion to an alcohol rehabilitation clinic remarked, 'It is not a disgrace to fall down, but it is a disgrace not to get up', in this way acknowledging alcohol use as an ongoing and intrinsic feature of male behaviour. Gender regimes, in which the man is the provider and fixer of problems, do not work in the new market economy. Where manual work is both dangerous and degraded there exists what we might call an implementation gap. This gap is filled by the street theatre of shared drinking.

My own experience of falling down some slippery stone steps leading to a basement restaurant gave me some small intimation of the kind of reception drunken women are given: they are ignored. Everyone carried on busily eating and pretended that I was not there while I miserably tried to gather together my scattered belongings. Looking back I can see that this was an exemplary incident or an epiphanic moment in my understanding of perceptions of drunkenness in post-Soviet Latvia.

Conflict of interest

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

Ethical standards

The author asserts that all procedures contributing to this work comply with the ethical standards of the relevant national and institutional committee on human experimentation with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2008.

Financial support

The original research for this paper was made possible by an ESRC research fellowship (RES-000-27-0203) held between April 2006 and March 2009.

References

- Bauman Z** (2004). *Wasted Lives Modernity and its Outcasts*. Polity: Cambridge.
- Douglas M** ed. (1987). *Constructive Drinking Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York.
- Gusfield J** (1989). Passage to Play: rituals of drinking time in American society. In *Constructive Drinking Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology* (ed. M. Douglas), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York.
- Littlewood R** (2007). Limits to agency in psychopathology: a comparison of Trinidad and Albania. *Anthropology and Medicine* **14**, 95–114.
- Lindemann NH** (2001). *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca.
- MacAndrew C, Edgerton RB** (1969). *Drunken Comportment a Social Explanation*. Aldine: Chicago.
- McKee M** (1999). Alcohol in Russia. *Alcohol and Alcoholism* **34**, 824–829.
- OECD** (2016). *OECD Factbook 2015–2016. Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*. OECD Publishing: Paris.
- Public Health Agency** (2007). *The Prevalence and Consequences of Dependency Inducing Substances in Latvia* 15th edn. Ministry of Health Riga: Riga.
- Putnina A** (2006). Men in Latvia: a situation sketch. In *Demographic Situation: Present and Future*, vol. 2 (ed. P. Zvidrins), *Commission of Strategic Analysis Research Papers* (Zinatne: Riga).
- Room R** (1984). Alcohol and ethnography: a case of problem deflation? *Current Anthropology* **25**, 169–191.
- Schwartz KZS** (2006). *Nature and National Identity after Communism. Globalizing the Ethnoscape*. University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh.
- Segal BM** (1987). *Russian Drinking: Use and Abuse of Alcohol in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*. Rutgers Centre of Alcohol Studies: Brunswick New Jersey.
- Segal BM** (1990). *The Drunken Society: Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in the Soviet Union*. Hippocrene Books: New York.
- Simpura J, Tigerstedt C** (1999). Alcohol misuse as a health and social issue in the Baltic Sea region: a summary of findings from the Baltica study. *Alcohol and Alcoholism* **34**, 805–823.
- Skultans V** (2008). *Empathy and Healing: Essays in Medical and Narrative Anthropology*. Berghahn Books: New York & Oxford.
- Skultans V, Cox J** (eds.) (2000). *Anthropological Approaches to Psychological Medicine: Crossing bridges*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London & Philadelphia.
- Smith DM** (2000). *Moral Geographies. Ethics in a World of Difference*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.
- Tarschys D** (1993). The success of a Failure: gorbachev's Alcohol Policy, 1985–88. *Europe-Asia Studies* **45**, 7–25.
- Trembl V** (1982). *Alcohol in the USSR: A Statistical Study*. Duke University Press: Durham NC.
- Walker JK** (2007). The return of the hard body. In *The Hummer: Myths and Consumer Culture* (ed. E. Cardenas, E. Gorman), Lexington Books: Lanham.
- Walkerdine V** (2006). Workers in the new economy: transformation as border crossing. *Ethos* **34**, 10–41.
- White S** (1996). *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- World Health Organisation** (2003). *WHO Atlas of Health in Europe*. World Health Organisation: Geneva.
- World Health Organisation** (2005). *European Health Report*. World Health Organisation: Geneva.
- World Health Organisation** (2015). *European Facts and the Global Status Report on Road Safety 2015*. WHO Regional Office for Europe: Copenhagen.
- World Health Organisation** (2018). *Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2018*. World Health Organisation: Geneva.
- Zizek S** (2008). The one Measure of True Love is: You can Insult the Other. (<http://www.spiked-articles/0000002D2C4.htm>). Accessed 6 March 2008.