

ABSTRACT

Självklara drycker? Kaffe och alkohol i social samvaro
Natural drinking? Coffee and alcoholic beverages in social intercourse

Ingegerd Sigfridsson

Doctoral dissertation, Department of Ethnology, Göteborg University, 2005.
Written in Swedish with an English summary.

The dissertation deals with the role of coffee and alcoholic beverages in social life. From this perspective it discusses matters of significance in a situation of mixing with others: the individuals, the experience of being together, and the drinks that are consumed.

The investigation builds upon 37 interviews with persons aged 19 to 97 during the period 1992–1997, as well as answers to eight questionnaires collected by the tradition archives in Uppsala, Stockholm and Lund.

Attitudes toward, and uses of, alcoholic beverages and coffee are discussed in terms of norms and deviations. These drinks are often perceived as natural and self-evident in a situation of mixing with other people. Serving and drinking them is considered normal. Not to take a self-evident drink is regarded as a deviation. Those who drink according to the norm (i.e. norm drinkers) see it as a greater deviation not to drink alcohol than not drinking coffee, whereas the opposite is experienced by the deviants. To avoid deviating, various strategies are used.

Taking a drink together is a way of expressing affinity. This may mean that the solidarity is more important than the drink itself, and that the drink is taken for the sake of the company and solidarity. The meaning may also be that one consumes the drink in spite of not liking it. These drinks are pillars of social intercourse, as is expressed in the form of both solidarity and community.

Different alcoholic drinks are related to both class and gender. The material presents partly a stereotyped picture, and partly a more realistic view. Choices of drink are connected in diverse ways with what is considered a "right" choice from class and gender perspectives. Here the context plays a great role. In private surroundings, one can behave more freely according to one's own desires than in a public environment. Thus, the choice of drink is a socially distinguishing factor: social position and cultural competence are exhibited through what you drink, when you drink and whom you drink with.

Keywords: alcoholic beverages, coffee, learning, change, solidarity, affinity, gender, class, identity, norm, deviation.

Distribution: Arkipelag, c/o Etnologiska föreningen i Västsverige
Box 200, SE-403 50 Göteborg, Sweden

ISBN 91-85838-68-3 • ISSN 0283-0930