My main research field is in the broadest sense in cultural history. My work incorporates perspectives from gender history, religious history, colonial encounter histories, history of emotions and material history which all have influenced my theoretical orientation and my methodologies.

My historical research is mainly located in the early modern period, but a number of projects have also taken me into the later colonial period of the 19-th-20th century.

**Witchcraft and the body**

My first book *Magic, Body and the Self in Eighteenth-Century Sweden* (Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden and Boston, 2009) explored new ways of how to understand the cultural meanings of magical practices in Sweden in the eighteenth century. I suggested that magical practices still made sense in to the contemporaries of Carl of Linne – even at the time of Enlightenment—if we look at the underlying concepts of an early modern world view, especially the understanding of an interconnected world linking the spiritual (the Christian god, water spirits and sprits of the earth) with material realities (the health of humans and animals for example), and that magical rituals could impact on this lifeworld in a positive as well as a negative way (‘white’/ ‘black’ magic). The eighteenth century Swedish magical rituals and practices also revealed that emotions had an important role to play and were understood as having their own material force.

**Emotions research**

The perspective of historical emotions research has emerged in most of my work during the last few works (witchcraft, dynastic families, mission encounters) but it is strongest now in my projects on colonial encounters in the early modern period.

The colonial archives of mission societies, such as the Moravians, pose questions about power relations and the formation of ‘emotional communities’ like mission societies, the emotions involved in colonial conversion processes and the gendered power hierarchies formed as a result of these religious encounters, emotions in mission texts such as memoirs, diaries and letters.

During my very productive fellowship in Umeå (selected periods 2012-2014) I had the opportunity to liaise with colleagues in Gender Studies, English Literature, Pre-Modern Studies, Religious Studies and the Centre for Sami Research. The following publication is the direct result of a workshop which I organized with Jonas Liliequist during this time here at Umeå and it contains the articles by several scholars based here at Umeå:

Other relevant publications in the field of emotions research:


Gendered power and the dynastic family of Orange-Nassau

I have recently completed an ARC DP “Gender, power and identity in the early modern Nassau family” on which I was a Chief Investigator (with Prof S. Broomhall) where we developed a new analysis on the gendered forms of power that were open to men and women of a leading Protestant dynasty in Europe.
Our method, to read gendered materiality and dynastic power politics of the early modern Orange –Nassau family as a form of dynastic colonialism offers scholars in the field a new
theoretical outlook on early modern power relations. This research has resulted in two monographs (both published in 2016 with Routledge), one co-edited book, a series of articles in leading international journals and several book chapters in edited collections.

S. Broomhall and J. Van Gent, *Dynastic Colonialism: Gender, Materiality and the Early Modern House of Orange-Nassau* (Routledge, 2016)


**Colonial histories, gender and indigenous responses to Protestant missions in Australia**

Encounter histories through the lens of colonial mission archives are also the central theme in my late colonial research on Protestant missions and encounters with indigenous people in Australia. This has been published most recently in two co-authored books:


**Colonial histories and early modern Moravian missions**

My current research concentrates on the early modern global missions of the Moravian Church. I currently work on an ARC-funded research grant which investigates the agency of slaves and indigenous people around the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean in their responses to eighteenth-century Moravian missions. This research project analyses a wide range of written sources, such as letters, mission diaries and reports, travelogues and sermons, with particular attention paid to letters and memoirs written by indigenous people and slaves. I also analyse a series of paintings of indigenous converts in terms of colonial representation politics. I have published a number of articles and chapters on Moravian conversion processes and the dynamics of emotions in them, eg J. Van Gent and S. Young, “Emotions and Conversion”, Special issue of *Journal of Religious History* (December 2015).

I am currently writing a monograph on this topic.