

Identities on the Periphery

Finland: Identities on the Periphery

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The troubled histories of nations are built from the bones of a million damaged children. But what about the nations and children who are stuck in the periphery between troubled and happy, between damaged and healthy? These are the settings that anthropology can thrive in: nations that have both suffered and benefited from colonialism, oppressed groups discriminating against others, and other ambiguous cultural dynamics. In this paper, I want to focus on Finland as a specific nation that serves as a good example of how collective trauma and ambiguous histories can be contested. These contestations are most commonly expressed through minute inequalities between the two main cultural groups in Finland: Finnish and Swedish-speaking Finns. Modern inequalities between different cultural and linguistic groups in and around Finland are expressed through stereotypes and expressions of identity. These stereotypes and identities are often mixed with ambivalent feelings, especially in regard to Finns' relationship with Sweden: the state and people, both historically and in the present. These relationships are based on the hegemonic and non-hegemonic views that Finnish speakers, Fennoswedes, and Swedes hold of each other. Hegemonically, quiet admiration and casual disapproval are common, hence the ambiguity. Non-hegemonically, extreme emotions and fixations are commonly perceived as strange and distasteful; everything must be just right, or *lagom* in Swedish.

In this paper, I focus the discussion on Finnish issues of cultural and linguistic identity while keeping their relationship with the Swedish state and people in mind. Hence, my goal is to answer these questions: How has discrimination shaped Finnish identities? Has it shaped Finnish-speaking versus Swedish-speaking Finnish identities differently? How does a collective memory of oppression affect Finnish peoples' perceptions of others? However, what I ultimately

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want to answer is what is the source of Finland's ambiguous historical identity: were Finns victims of ethnic discrimination or is this a narrative produced by historical revisionism?

To answer these questions, the paper is divided into several sections that will explore the roles of discrimination and cultural memory on Finnish identities. The sections consist of background context, methods and data, theory, historical issues, modern issues, discussion, and a conclusion. In the Methods and Data section, I outline the methods used to collect and use the sources presented as evidence in the paper. These include primary and secondary news, Reddit, historical documents, academic papers, and analyses of primary material. The theory forms the lens through which to examine the topic of discussion, which is why I employ Social Representations theory. This framework is based on the idea of collective memories reinforced by cultural representations, which was championed by Sergei Moscovici in 1961. These representations can be either hegemonic, meaning mainstream and accepted, or non-hegemonic, meaning unconventional and unaccepted (Sakki and Hakoköngäs 2020). After outlining my theoretical framework, I give an overview of Finnish historical issues, which act as evidential sources for the ambiguous Finnish identities and relationships seen today. Modern issues are expressed through stereotypes and debates over language in everyday spaces. Many issues of the modern world are direct responses to ones from the past and examining them together through a theoretical lens is the central issue in the discussion. Conclusively, I argue that both Finnish and Swedish-speaking Finns have been negatively affected by discrimination reinforced over centuries, and these effects are especially prevalent in Finnish-speaking Finns. Collective memories of oppression have substantially influenced Finnish identities, which results in the fear and lack of trust of foreigners. These are important questions to answer, not only for anthropology but all social sciences, regardless of the case study. Anthropology is the glue that

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holds the social sciences together, and it is our responsibility to uncover the sources of discrimination so that we may know how to prevent it.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

In order to answer the questions of discussion most effectively, it is important to provide some context on the issue. Finland is a Northern European (Nordic) nation located on the Baltic Sea. It borders Sweden in the west, Russia in the east, Norway in the north, and Estonia in the south. Currently, there are two official languages in Finland: Finnish and Swedish, both of which are associated with their own unique cultural identities rooted in history. Finnish-speaking Finns comprise the majority of people within Finland (87.6%), while Swedish-speaking Finns (or Fennoswedes) make up around 5.2% of the population (CIA World Factbook). The remaining 5% are comprised of other minority languages, such as Russian, Sami, and Romani. Historically, Swedish-speaking Finns have been a privileged minority group, while Finnish-speaking Finns comprised the disadvantaged majority. This was due to Finland's long history as a province ruled by the Kingdom of Sweden, from around 1249 to 1809 AD. Before Swedish rule, various Finnish and Sami tribes populated Finland, the former of which were eventually consolidated into the Swedish state. This consolidation was done through three legendary crusades (The Swedish Crusades) between the 12th and 14th centuries, as well as colonialization, which translated to waves of Swedish settlement on the southern and western Finnish coasts. These are some of the ancestors of modern Swedish-speaking Finns, some of whom became noblemen in control of Finland, while others remained peasants.

During Swedish rule, Finland was socially and economically underdeveloped, but that changed when Russia annexed Finland in 1809 and granted it autonomy. Finnish nationalism began to arise and be expressed through the Fennoman and Svecoman movements, which

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emphasized Finnish and Swedish cultural values, respectively. While the Fennomans movement used historical revisionism to serve a victimhood narrative, the Svecoman movement was famous for utilizing the pseudoscience of biological racism to justify their values. Biological racism emphasized white supremacy, and in the Svecomans' case, the superiority of Swedes and other Germanic peoples over the "Mongoloid" Finns and Sami (Keskinen 2019). In 1917, Finland gained independence from Russia, survived a devastating civil war (1918) and was involved in three wars during WWII (first against the Soviet Union and then against Nazi Germany), all of which have led to today's modern issues. (See Figure 1, for a concise timeline of Finnish history.)

While Swedish and Finnish speakers were historically divided by class, the sociolinguistic inequalities have greatly decreased in recent years. However, the remains of this class distinction can still be seen today through subtle inequalities such as stereotypes and regional health-related inequalities (Andersén et al. 2021). In addition, there is a continuous debate over the roles of Finnish and Swedish in modern Finnish society and culture. The primary point of contention concerns the teaching of Swedish in Finnish-speaking schools, a debate commonly referred to as *Pakkoruotsi* (or "Forced Swedish"). Finnish and Swedish-speaking children are taught the other national language through mandatory classes lasting from grades six to nine (Latomaa and Nuolijärvi 2002).

Mandatory Swedish was introduced to Finnish classes in the 1960s as part of a greater educational reform aimed at modernization (Hult and Pietikäinen 2014). There are two main schools of thought on the reasoning for Swedish classes: cultural-historical preservation and geopolitics. In terms of preservation, Finland has had a long and involved history with the Swedish state and language. Finland was a Swedish territory for around 600 years, and Swedish-

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speaking Finns were at the foreground of creating Finnish national identity. Some would even argue that Sweden created the Finnish state, which is not wholly inaccurate. In terms of geopolitics, it is important to note that mandatory Swedish was instituted in the 1960s, during the Cold War. Finland was a neutral country at the center of the Iron Curtain, stuck between appeasing the United States and the Soviet Union. When mandatory Swedish language was implemented, the Finnish government's aim was to emphasize their country's Western connections through increased Nordic co-operation. While some argue that mandatory Swedish has furthered Nordic co-operation, others assert that it has furthered anti-Swedish sentiments (Hult and Pietikäinen 2014).

METHODS AND DATA

The sources used for this paper are divided into two categorizations: primary and secondary sources. In an academic context, primary sources include any and all relevant firsthand accounts of personal experiences, historical events, and original thinking. This type of source is particularly useful in historical and anthropological contexts, the former for an accurate telling of the past, the latter for ethnographic data as well as the individual-level social science specialized in anthropology. Conversely, secondary sources essentially interpret primary sources: they are the professional retellings, analyses, interpretations, and evaluations of primary sources, which produce easily digestible syntheses of information. Both primary and secondary sources each serve their own function to answer the questions laid out in the introduction.

The primary sources used include Reddit, historical documents, and primary news articles. Secondary sources include any and all materials that interpret, analyze, or synthesize primary data, such as history books or anthropological analyses. In regard to the usage of primary sources, their primary goal in this paper is to showcase how discussions of Finnish issues,

histories, and identities manifest among ordinary people in everyday life. Conversely, the paper's goal of using secondary sources is to gain professional, peer-reviewed, and ready to access information and analyses on data that already exists. Nevertheless, no matter the type of sources used in a paper, it is vitally important to contextualize how they are used to control for divergent views and false data. One of the most prevalent primary sources in need of proper data control is Reddit, a social news aggregator site that combines link distribution and discussion platforms. Many have claimed Reddit to be a toxic community and an unreliable source (Quora 2018), however, I object to these opinions for several reasons. 1) Reddit is one of the world's most-used websites, currently with around 430 million monthly users and 2.2 million subreddits (Lin 2021). Thus, to claim that Reddit is toxic is a gross oversimplification of a large website. 2) The claim of Reddit toxicity is more an accurate statement attributed to socially oriented websites than Reddit alone. 3) In the last few years, the moderators of Reddit have begun to enforce stricter measures in order to curb toxicity. This involved new guidelines, policies, and the permanent banning of certain toxic subreddits, like r/The_Donald and r/Incels, to name a few (Fingas 2017, Timberg 2020). In terms of source reliability, Reddit has several advantages, as well as disadvantages, which I have outlined and summarized on Table 1, page 28. 4) Finally, I use Reddit as a primary source due to its popularity among Nordic people as well as its balance between anonymity, social reinforcement, and communal specificity, which reflect face-to-face communication.

Since the goal of this paper is to showcase how ordinary people feel about modern Finnish issues and identities, it is important to distinguish which subreddits are appropriate to use. In terms of subreddit selection, I chose to stay clear of those known to harbour and promote far-right extremism or radicalism. These subreddits include but are not limited to r/Conspiracy,

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r/Conservative, and r/Scandinavia. Most English-speaking Nordic-centered communities are now relatively stable in their politics and thus will be used as the basis for data. Subreddits chosen for the collection of data are r/Finland, r/Nordiccountries, r/Nordichistorymemes, r/Europe, and r/Askeurope. These subreddits were chosen based on the prevalence of regular, everyday interaction between Finns, Fennoswedes, and Swedes, which showcase the effects of historic discrimination on Finnish identities. The time range for selected data was restricted to a maximum of the last five years to ensure the accuracy of modern viewpoints.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When deciding on a theory for the topic of discussion, I narrowed down my options to three distinct theories: social representations theory, postcolonial theory, and theories of macro-level versus micro-level sources of conflict. During the decision process, I asked myself two key questions: how is this theory applicable to the topic of Finnish identity, and how can it be used to explain the history and origins of Finnish identity and discrimination? I think of selecting a theory like picking out filtered lenses: a filter can highlight important details or obscure them in favour of others. Using this analogy, I tried on many filtered lenses, which I have outlined below.

Theory Selection Process

The first filtered lens that I examined was that of postcolonial theory. This theory highlighted issues of ethnic discrimination (Seth 2011) but obscured the identities of independent and privileged Finns. It is useful in a modern context where cultures have been systematically oppressed, however, this level of oppression does not reflect most Finns today who enjoy the privilege of wealth and independence. Additionally, the application of postcolonial theory in this

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context obscures other equally important factors that contribute to inequality, such as genetics and regional politics.

The lens offered by various theories of macro-level and micro-level sources of conflict filtered out too much important information since, while good at explaining conflict, they did not explain how Finnish identities have developed (Collins 2009). These filtered lenses focused in on intergroup violence, however, physical violence between Finns, Fennoswedes, and Swedes have always been far and few between.

Finally, when I tried on the filtered lens of social representations theory, they fit my topic perfectly. Social representations explain the processes that go into creating Finnish identity, the ways in which different identities interact with and form each other, and how they can turn into negative generalizations which encourage discrimination. Thus, I decided on the lens of social representations theory to examine my topic. In 1961, a social psychologist by the name of Serge Moscovici championed the concept now known as social representations theory (Wagner 2020). Simply put, it is defined as a culmination of various systems of values, beliefs, and shared experiences that enforce community and social order. It exists as both a theory and a concept, in which the systems of values and beliefs are created through collective memories and are continually reinforced through social representations and cultural activities connected to those memories. These social representations have varying levels of acceptance in a given culture or community, and can either be hegemonic (accepted and common) or non-hegemonic (not accepted and uncommon). Non-hegemonic views can be further split into emancipated or polemic representations, the former being partially accepted as an alternative view but not the norm and the latter being wholly unaccepted and not the norm. While hegemonic and emancipated views are opposing representations, they are both frequently practiced and

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reinforced by dominant and accepted cultures, while polemic views are often practiced by marginalized groups (Sakki and Hakoköngäs 2020).

In academia, social representations theory exists dually as a concept and theory, resulting in its widespread acceptance and criticism within the social sciences. Sometimes referred to as a "common sense theory," social representations theory has been both praised and criticized for its relative lack of abstraction. Its proponents argue that this aspect makes the theory universal and widely applicable (Rateau et al. 2011), while critics of the theory argue that its "common sense" is too simplistic to be used as a social theory and can be more accurately described as a concept or set of guidelines rather than an abstract framework (Confino 1997). In addition, some critics emphasize that what is now considered "common sense" has not always been this way (Bangerter 1995). The ways in which we think of and interact with the world are constantly in flux, but I would argue that this only serves as further proof of the universality of social representations theory. Cultures, thoughts, and ways of knowing are constantly being reinforced through the memories and cultural activities that we as groups and individuals choose to reinforce. How that looks in modern Western culture will be drastically different from how it was in, for example, Ancient China.

There are several components deemed essential to forming social representations. One of these is cultural memory, which, as defined by Jan Assmann (2011), is one of the three main components of levelled memory that aid in creating social representations, maintaining social order, and predicting our thoughts and actions. These three components of memory are individual, communicative, and cultural memory, which are themselves split by Assmann's divisions of inner, social, and cultural levels of time, memory, and identity that form our individual and collective thoughts, actions, and ways of life (Assmann 2011). For example, inner

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memory works with our inner, private identities and personal sense of time to form how we think and act as individuals. Conversely, communicative memory works with combining the social self as a person responsible for creating, following, and enforcing social norms with social experiences of time. Here, we focus on cultural memory, which works by combining memory with cultural identity present in one's identified group, nationality, or ethnicity as well as the historical, cultural, or mythical sense of time (Assmann 2011).

A key factor in understanding social representation is knowing how it builds culture. This process is called sociogenesis and it works as a repeating cycle, which is outlined in Figure 2 (see below) (Wagner et al. 1999). The cycle of sociogenesis begins when a new event or phenomenon is introduced to a group, which is often deemed threatening or traumatic. As a means of coping with the event, the culture in question will engage in mass collective discourse, wherein the event is "anchored" or given a name and is interpreted and expressed through pre-existing cultural symbols and materials. The event could be rationalized or mythologized by the culture, which could be expressed with pre-existing symbolic culture in various representations, such as objects, art, or metaphors. Eventually, this discourse becomes enculturated and a matter of common sense for the culture, which finally fits perfectly into the giant jigsaw puzzle that is a culture's social identity. With these new pieces, the cultural jigsaw puzzle works together to create more culture. Thus, a new social representation is born, and the cycle begins anew (Wagner et al. 1999).

This jigsaw of social representations is crucial to the state, which is at the forefront of this paper's research. According to Michel Bouchard (2011), the anthropological concept of the state relies heavily on Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities* (1983). In it, Anderson states that the state's concept is socially constructed and reinforced in all levels of society, specifically

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by the people who identify themselves as belonging to that nation-state. However, we must distinguish between state and nation: a state is simply a sovereign territory with its own laws, regulations, and borders. A nation is a community of people who live within the borders of a territory and are connected by history, language, culture, or any other commonality (in Bouchard 2011). Suffice to say, a state is a sovereign and bordered land; a nation is a community of like-minded people living in proximity; and a nation-state is a sovereign and bordered land in which like-minded people live. Thus, it can be argued that any state in which social representations are reinforced can also be a nation, and subsequently a nation-state.

However, how can a state securely exist if its existence is not continuously reinforced? I could argue that a state can indeed be a nation-state, and even the most internally disconnected states are communally bound, whether that be from shared experiences, dissatisfactions, or sense of duty. In fact, I would argue that for any state to securely exist, they must have populations that share a collective history, language, or culture that builds solidarity and connection. In other words, a state can only survive if it becomes a nation-state. In my paper's case, Finland has an emotionally strong, but in practice insecure, feeling of nationhood. This is due to its prolonged history of being controlled by other nations and its supposed centuries-old national identity. In this upcoming section, we will dissect this idea.

HISTORY OF FINLAND

When Finland was first given a name, it was the newly colonized province of the Swedish kingdom, dated to around 1249 AD (Weibull 1940). Before that, Finland was not a consolidated society but rather a collection of various Iron Age Proto-Finnish and Sami tribes (Raninen and Wessman 2014). As a note, when discussing the modern territory of the Swedish state during Swedish rule over Finland, I will refer to Sweden as the mainland and the Swedish kingdom as

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the full territory, which included modern-day Finland. This is because Finland, while an integral part of the Swedish kingdom, was culturally and politically distinct from the rest of the kingdom, despite their own identification as Swedes. Finns had legal rights equal to Swedes and identified themselves through a combination of their Swedish nationality and regional place of residence, likely a remnant of Iron Age tribal divisions. However, one must remember that equality in law does not translate to equality in practice. Finland was often underdeveloped compared to Sweden as a result of many factors like geography, culture, and climate. Finland has also always been situated in a geographically compromised position, sandwiched between Sweden and Russia. This meant that Finns often bore the brunt of Russian attacks and occupations, which was a large factor in the development of Finnish identities. Finns and Swedes were frequently conscripted into Swedish wars, which took its toll over centuries (Meinander 2011).

This issue reached its peak during the Great Northern War (1700–1721 AD) when the Russian Empire occupied Finland and issued a scorched earth policy, involving the systemic torture, murder, and rape of local people. In addition, Finland was struck by widespread famine, an outbreak of the bubonic plague, and received no fundamental support from the Swedish government, adding to mass devastation. This occupation lasted from around 1714 – 1721 and was consequently dubbed the *Isoviha* (or the Great Wrath/Hatred) (Meinander 2011).

Contemporary scholars argue that Russia's scorched earth policy in Finland was so destructive that it kickstarted collective Finnish identity as a defensive response to the trauma and feelings of betrayal stemming from Sweden's lack of support. Essentially, the *Isoviha* gave rise in Finland to the question of how, if at all, Sweden could protect Finland from the growing Russian Empire (Meinander 2011).

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As the Russian Empire grew, the sociopolitical situation within the Swedish kingdom worsened. Finns were becoming more aware of their unique Finnish identity and Russia began utilizing propaganda and psychological warfare as a means of separating Finland from the Swedish kingdom. Such propaganda included claims that the Swedish king was planning to trade Finland for Norway and that Sweden and its king have never had Finland's interests in mind (Kristensson Uggla 2009). These tactics eventually worked as Finland was easily annexed by the Russian Empire in 1809 AD, signifying the birth of the Finnish state. Finland received extensive autonomy under the title of a Grand Duchy, which allowed Finland to retain its Swedish laws and language (Meinander 2011). As a means of coping with separation, both Sweden and Russia-governed Finland launched their own historical revisionism campaigns, essentially erasing one another from history (Kristensson Uggla 2009). Swedish historical revisionism practically erased Finland from history while Finnish revisionism heavily exaggerated narratives of Swedish oppression, going so far as to blame Sweden for Finnish suffering and hailing Russia as a saviour from Swedish tyranny (Elmgren 2008). The latter views were intricately related to the rising Fennoman (pro-Finnish nationalist) and Svecoman (pro-Swedish nationalist) movements in Finland, both of which acted as direct responses to Russian rule and emerging Finnish identities.

When Finland was first incorporated into Sweden, it was continually settled by Swedish farmers, fishermen, and nobility. These continuous waves of settlement to Finland throughout Swedish rule consequently resulted in the Swedish-speaking Finns or Fennoswedes, one of the most influential cultural groups within Finland. This group, distinct today by their linguistic and cultural proximity to Sweden, was responsible for much of Finland's upper-class culture and society. This was due to factors such as inherited wealth, Swedish connections, and social factors of language and culture that benefited them in Finland (Kemiläinen 2004). Hence, it is a safe bet

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to say that any powerful or influential Finn born between the 12th and 19th century was most likely a Fennoswede. This influential group was also central to the development of Finnish identity by way of the Fennoman and Svecoman movements. Initiated by Elias Lönnrot and Johan Vilhelm Snellman, the Fennoman movement was a reactionary response of Finnish nationalism in opposition to Russian rule. The movement can be summarized by a quote credited to Adolf Ivar Arwidsson, one of the initiators of Finnish nationalism: "Swedes we are no longer, Russians we do not want to become, therefore let us be Finns" (Sommer 2019).

Eventually, the Fennoman movement turned into a question of language, and more specifically, the role of the Finnish language in Finnish identities. The Swedish-speaking intelligentsia switched their everyday languages to Finnish, and many even changed their names to reflect a Finnish background. This caused a reactionary response amongst other Swedish-speaking Finns, who in turn emphasized the Swedish language and culture. This led to the Finnish language strife: a drawn-out culture war over the control of Finland. The Svecoman movement, in particular, was influenced by the rising pseudoscientific field of biological racism (Akintug 2019) invented by Carl Linnaeus. He initially classified people into four categories but later split them further into subcategories such as Swedes, Finns, and Sami. Swedes were classified as the most racially superior of the three, with Finns being inferior to Swedes but superior to the Sami (McEachrane 2018).

Finland eventually declared independence from Russia following the Russian Revolution in 1917, the official and final "birth" of the Finnish state. Still affected by the conflicts of the language strife, Finland's contested identity was challenged in a devastating civil war that claimed over 25,000 lives in 1918 (Meinander 2011). Following the civil war, Finland faced two Soviet invasions in 1939 and 1940–1944 AD, followed by an invasion by Nazi Germany in

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1944–1945 AD (Meinander 2011). Finland managed to retain its independence throughout WWII, but it came at the price of war reparations and trauma, all of which took a heavy toll on Finland's people, economy, and foreign relations. Over time, Finland's people and economy recovered, and the country now enjoys its rich and privileged status as a modern and highly developed Nordic country (Meinander 2011). However, modern countries have modern problems, which is where our discussion of history ends and the one of modern issues begin.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN FINLAND

If one were to ask random Swedes and Finns of both languages what they thought about one another, the results would be highly varied. Swedish views can range from positive: "Finland's cause is ours" (old Swedish phrase dating back to WWII), to neutral: "I don't think about Finland," to negative: "Finns have no culture" (r/Sweden 2017). Conversely, Finnish views about Swedes have the same range of positive: "Sweden created Finland; Sweden is our big brother," to neutral: "Swedes are people," to negative: "Swedes are pretentious colonizers" (r/Finland 2020). This is a direct reflection of Finland's longstanding history as a land with an ambiguous history and ambivalent relationship with Sweden. On average, these dynamics are often referred to among contemporary Swedes and Finns as that of a "big brother – little brother" relationship. This analogy is meant to represent how Finns and Swedes view one another as siblings: there is frequent fighting, banter, comparisons, but at the end of the day, there is a deep familial love and connection that keeps these groups close. However, being familiar with Finnish social history, I can say that much of this "big brother – little brother" dynamic is a great oversimplification of a far more complex dynamic. Alas, most people are not aware of their countries' histories, so these contemporary groups have social dynamics that most often emerge in the form of jokes and various generalizations. There is a great variety of jokes and stereotypes

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to choose from, all with varying levels of offensiveness. These can range anywhere from innocent pop culture references and banter such as "Finns sound like Moomintrolls" (popular children's character) (r/Sweden 2018) and "Swedes are fashionable" (r/Askeurope 2019) to offensive generalizations like "Finns are alcoholics with no culture" (r/Sweden 2017) and "[Sweden is] a kingdom stuck in the past with a short eye for the future" (r/Finland 2020). Generalizations of the latter are less common than those of the former, however, these examples represent only two sides of a complex issue.

Generalizations between Swedish and Finnish-speaking Finns also exist. However, contemporary discourse amongst ordinary people is often tamer than those between Finns and Swedes. Stereotypes of Fennoswedes can range from being seen as happy and sophisticated, to rich snobs who demand Swedish service, to colonialist Svecomans who control the Finnish state (r/Europe 2020). Conversely, Fennoswedes' stereotypes of Finnish speakers can range anywhere from being seen as quiet and melancholy, to knife-wielding loners living in the forest, to violent alcoholics who hate everything associated with Swedes (r/Europe 2020). These generalizations are also congruent with the issue of mandatory Swedish, or *Pakkoruotsi*.

There are countless arguments both for and against mandatory Swedish language; many pro-Swedish arguments revolve around cultural and geopolitical preservation of national heritage, while anti-Swedish arguments typically center in on the practical usage (or lack thereof) of Swedish in everyday adult life (Hult and Pietikäinen 2014). More divergent arguments from each side use the ambiguous nature of Finnish history and its complex relationship with the Swedish state to their advantage. In this case, pro-Swedish views emphasize the need for "gratitude" from Finns, as well as cultural and historical connections between Finland and Sweden (r/Finland 2019). Conversely, many divergent anti-Swedish views emphasize the

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narrative of Fennoswedish and Swedish control over Finland, claiming that these groups maintain colonial control (r/Finland 2019). Arguments against mandatory Swedish language include that it takes up class time that could be used for other classes or languages; that it is a useless language; and that there is little to no motivation amongst Finnish-speaking teenagers to learn Swedish (Hult and Pietikäinen 2014). Conversely, many pro-Swedish arguments emphasize Swedish connections; cultural and linguistic preservation; job opportunities; and the argument that the more languages a child learns, the better off they will be (Hult and Pietikäinen 2014). While few can agree to a consensus decision, there has been increasing thought on using English between the two groups as a sort of *lingua franca* as a common and bridging language. However, this is deemed by some Fennoswedes as yet another threat to their language (Sonck 2021), as is illustrated in image in Figure 3.

These contentions over the Swedish language are a major source of linguistic tension between these two linguistic groups. Swedish-speaking Finns argue that their language and culture are being oppressed, while Finnish-speaking Finns retort that their own historically oppressed group is bearing the brunt of modern discrimination. Some Swedish-speaking Finns feel like they are "foreigners in [their] own home" (r/Nordiccountries 2021) while others say that they are "just Finns who happen to speak Swedish" (r/Nordichistorymemes 2021). There have been records of occasional public conflict between the two groups that have mostly revolved around language use. One such incident involved two people ordering tickets to Turku (a Finnish city) in Swedish. When the bus driver did not answer, the customers asked for two tickets again, which was met with this response: "Shall we agree that in Finland we speak Finnish" [translation by Google] (Heinrichs 2021). Charlotta, one of the customers, said: "What irritates me the most is the attitude, but also the idea that it would not have been as easy for the children to handle a

similar situation... In addition, it was clear that this was not the first time that the bus driver in question drove with the same attitude. The reluctance to even try to serve in Swedish feels strange" [translation by Google] (Heinrichs 2021).

DISCUSSION

If one examines Finnish identities from the outside looking in, patterns of ethnic discrimination are difficult to see. Finns, Fennoswedes, and Swedes tend to be similar in appearance, values, culture, and patterns of behaviour. Yet, when one examines these cultures with a filtered lens, one can easily point out the small remnants of ethnic discrimination. In a way, these remnants are like pebbles in a shoe; when you walk, sometimes a pebble will roll under your foot and make you wince. But then that pebble will roll away, and you will forget it ever existed until another one rolls in. Ethnic discrimination between Finns, Fennoswedes, and Swedes is small, but it can have big, if momentary, impact. Take generalizations and stereotypes as an example: while they are generally frowned upon, generalizations in our case study's dynamic lie on a spectrum of acceptability between the messenger and receiver, wherein generalizations are selectively picked to generate identity.

For example, a common joke from Finns about Swedes is that "Swedes are gay" (r/Askeurope 2020). This can either be accepted by the Swedish recipient: "That's our thing... Finns are sad alcoholics... and we are amazing at [being gay]" (r/Nordichistorymemes 2020) or rejected: "Grow up... don't use homophobic jokes" (r/Askeurope 2020). Conversely, a common joke from Swedes about Finns, most often used online, is that Finland is Eastern Sweden (r/Askeurope 2020). As with the previous joke, this one can either be accepted: "How are you going to do that with the majority of your army on the opposing side though?" (r/Askeurope 2020) or rejected: "Most Finns find that offensive" (r/Nordichistorymemes 2020). If one

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considers the histories and cultural memories of the two countries, a clear image of deeply established views appears. From a Finnish perspective, Finns have more often emphasized masculinity and grit in their culture, which combines with the cultural memories of war, Swedish abandonment, and Finland's long history as a periphery to produce jokes and generalizations that associate Swedish men with various homophobic stereotypes. Conversely, Swedish perspectives have typically associated their nation with imperial might, progressive thinking, and modernity, all while associating Finns with poverty, violence, lower classes, and alcoholism (Latvalehto 2018:53). This set of generalizations about the self and others creates a recipe for feelings of superiority and control of countries no longer under Swedish control and are the results of centuries of social representations reinforced via sociogenesis. If jokes about Finland as Eastern Sweden are not common, jokes about Finnish alcoholism are. These are the negative generalizations that are both surprisingly accepted and rejected within Swedish circles, a reflection of Swedes' contradictory views of self, of others, and of Finns.

In regard to this Swedish view of Finns, conflicting characterizations of Finnish people have been commonplace since at least the 18th century. At that time, Finns were often labelled as savage, violent, and prone to alcoholism. However, Finns were also labelled as loyal, mysterious, and brave warriors whose sacrifices during wartime were highly honoured (Kemiläinen 2004). In the 19th century, following the loss of Finland to Russia and the erasure of Finland from Swedish history, Finns were placed into an even more romanticized space where they were savage, inferior, "Mongoloid", and violent, but also wise, philosophical, brave, and loyal (Bohlin 2018). This ambivalent characterization is best described as a "noble savage" archetype, wherein a dominant group exoticifies a marginalized culture as primitive, undesirable, but admirable and exemplary at the same time. Essentially, the archetype of the "noble savage" between familiar

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groups can be described as love at a distance, a description readily applicable to Swedish views of Finnish identities (Borg 2016).

All of these views form a social dynamic of distant love, reinforced over centuries of sociogenesis. The aforementioned significant year of 1809, when Russia annexed Finland from Sweden, proved to be a momentous change for both countries. To cope with the new event, Finnish and Swedish cultural groups anchored it in their own familiar terms by giving the event a name (*The Separation of 1809*, translated by Google) and expressing it in familiar terms such as poetry, biological racism, and propaganda. Eventually, these were objectified and internalized in the cultures' identities through metaphors, artistic expressions, and collective memories, which created new social representations that are used to create and reinforce newer ones today. Thus, the issues of linguistic debate, generalizations, and history feed off of each other in a vicious cycle of falling dominoes. As we inch closer to the truth, newer questions appear: which issues came first, and which ones were the first dominoes that knocked over all the others?

CONCLUSION

Twenty pages are not enough to fully explore such a complex and fascinating topic, but this does not mean that this paper is fruitless. Any number of pages that can reveal the truth about how identities' social representations came to be is a worthy pursuit. Thus, as we conclude this paper, I can attest that ethnic discrimination has affected Finnish and Fennoswedish identities. However, I did not expect to find that a culture's historical usage of ethnic discrimination could turn around on itself as it did with Swedish culture's expressions of Finnish generalizations. In addition, I found that differences in identity between Finnish and Swedish-speaking Finns were most prominent in the past, however, even though cultural and ethnic differences between the two groups have decreased, they have not been wholly erased. Whether

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that is for bad or good is something that Finns and Fennoswedes must decide. The cultural histories and memories of ethnic discrimination have shaped Finnish and Fennoswedish identities in different directions. However, with the rise of globalization and various issues more pressing than that of language, Finnish and Fennoswedish identities and cultures have begun to shape back incongruent directions. To answer my fundamental question on the existence of Finnish ethnic discrimination, I can say that: yes, there is discrimination, but not to the claimed extent. Finns did indeed suffer from discrimination based on ethnic markers, however, the extent to which some claim a victimizing narrative is simply a reflection of Finnish historical revisionism funded by the 19th-century Russian state.

Now, someone reading this may be asking the question of why studying this is important. After all, Finnish discrimination was not as widespread as some make it out to be. But that is just the point! This paper is important because we need studies that examine the ways in which discrimination, historical revisionism, and cultural memory play in changing and forming identities. If we as scholars can identify how reactionary identities are formed, we can use papers like this to help minimize the spread of misinformation. These complex and ambiguous cultural dynamics are where anthropology thrives. Anthropology allows us as scholars to contribute to modern, complex issues by analyzing them with a culturally holistic view, one that permeates nearly every facet of human life. One can even say that anthropology is the glue that holds the social sciences and humanities together. It should be up to us as anthropologists, historians, and other researchers to uncover how our pasts affect our present selves, so that we may improve, helping ourselves and others in the process.

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TABLES AND FIGURES



Figure 1. Finnish history timeline (Created by author)

Advantages	Disadvantages
One of world’s most popular websites; diverse discussion topics	Echo Chamber – encourages radicalization
Popular in Nordic countries – especially amongst young adults	Community specificity – excludes certain demographics
Hegemonic vs Non-Hegemonic views – easy to see; Reddit upvote-downvote system	Anecdotal evidence difficult to prove; must be taken with pinch of salt
Relative anonymity combined with social reinforcement – social dynamics that reflects the real world	

Table 1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Reddit as a Primary Source

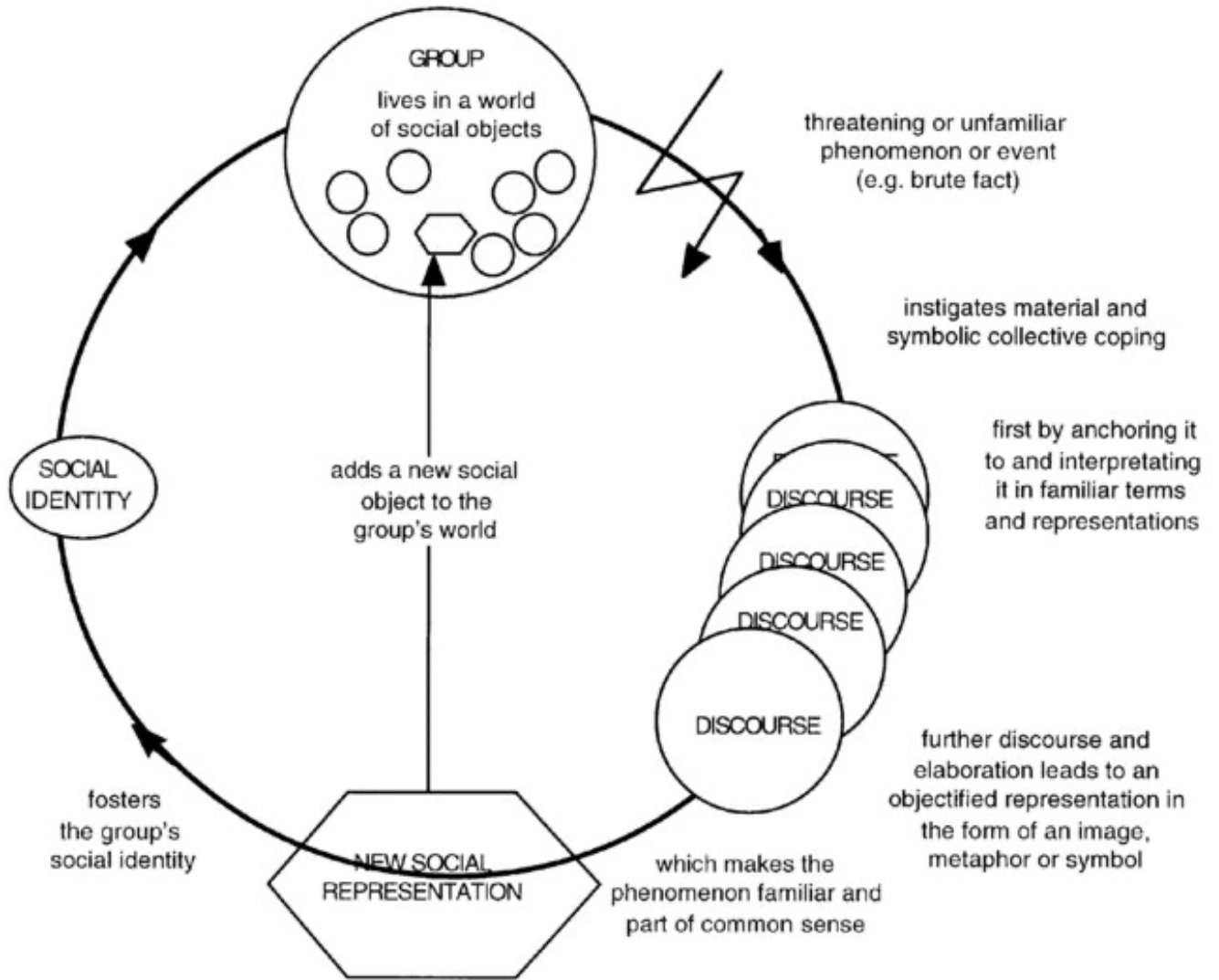


Figure 2. Schematic depiction of the sociogenesis of social representations, by Wolfgang

Wagner. (Wagner et al. 1999: Figure 1)

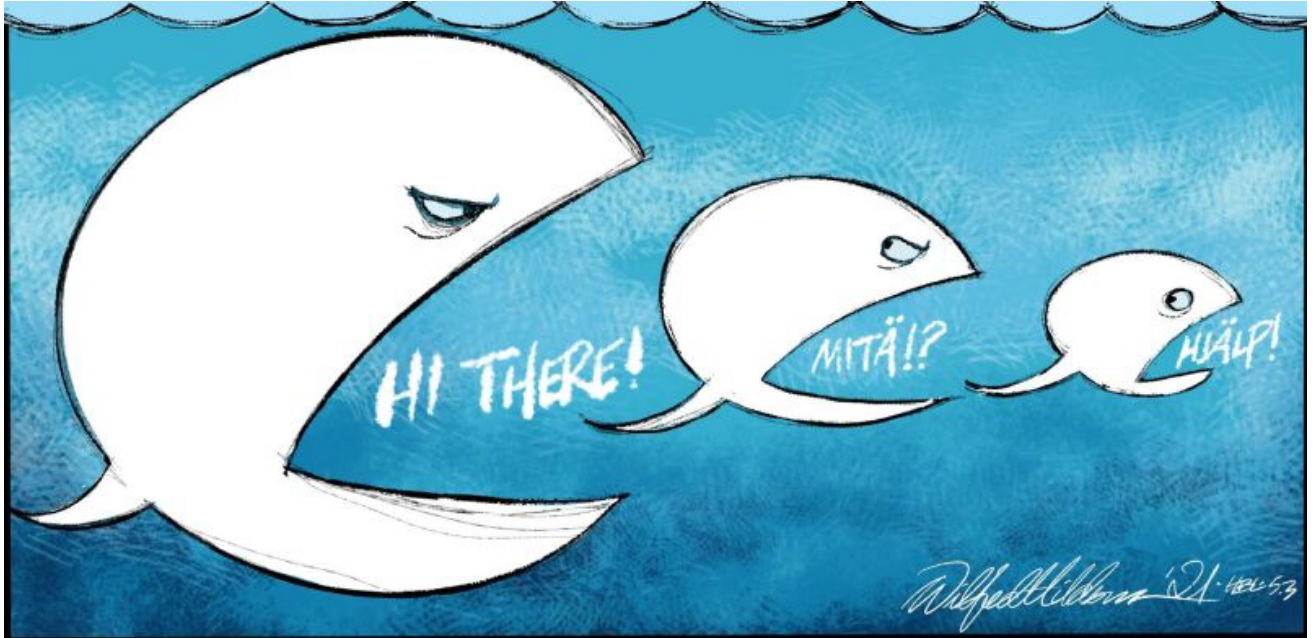


Figure 3. Artistic interpretation of Swedish language anxieties, by Wilfred Hildonen. (Hildonen, 2021)